Smith: First of all, thank you again for doing this. Tell us how your path first crossed with Betty Ford’s.

Chase: Well, if you want real words about what time it was, I can’t do it.

Smith: That’s okay.

Chase: I lived in New York and she was in California then, I guess, most of the time.

Smith: This was after the presidency?

Chase: Oh, yes. They were out. And she wanted to see some people because she wanted to do a book, and so I think I was with William Morris. I don’t know. But anyway, I went with some people from William Morris out there and she and I had lunch and then she said, “That’s the one.” And I didn’t know why I was the one, except that I was – like her – I was kind of timid. It’s not timid exactly – but I didn’t talk much. I just listened to her and I watched her.

Smith: Was she shy?

Chase: No.

Smith: Because you think of her as a free spirit.

Chase: She wasn’t shy, but she was watchful.

Smith: Careful? Cautious?

Chase: Yes, I think so.

Smith: Was that, do you think, being a politician’s wife? Or do you think it was intrinsic to her?

Chase: I think that was her.
Smith: Then when you are telling her story, and particularly at the end – the intervention and all that – did that caution make it more difficult for you? Was she reluctant to talk about things?

Chase: No, she wasn’t at all. There are things – I don’t think it would be nice to even tell – just funny, if you won’t use it. We were working on one of the books – I don’t remember which one and I said no to something she had just decided on. I said you can’t do that, it will make you look awful. And she said, “Chris, when we did the first book, I was not the writer I am now.” They all think they did it. But I wouldn’t tell that while she was alive.

Smith: No, I understand. How did you work with her on that first book? What was the - for lack of a better word - the mechanics of putting it together?

Chase: You spend a lot of time with the person, and the person goes on and on and on, and then you take it home and you…

Smith: You taped her reminiscences?

Chase: All the time. I don’t know what happened to all those tapes, but I always went home and typed them so I’d have it all. And it was very easy. She is not a hard person to work with. In the beginning she was still drinking and it was very hard because you’d go in the morning – I don’t like to do this because I’m afraid in some way it would get to her.

Smith: I guarantee you that it will not.

Chase: Okay. She would be okay. She’d wake up and she’d have her breakfast and everything. By lunch she’d start drinking and so we really couldn’t work until maybe…right after lunch we’d just give it up. So I had to meet her in the morning and there was always a guy outside – even if they knew you, they’d open your bag and look at it. It was so funny. But she was sometimes just in her nightgown until afternoon.
Smith: She was not a morning person.

Chase: No, I don’t think she was. I don’t know because I did work in the morning.

Smith: Did she know she had a drinking problem?

Chase: Oh, I think so. I think she was very careful about letting other people know it. But she had rough time a lot of the time and that went way back with her, when he was away.

Smith: Was that a significant thing? I often wondered whether he felt some degree of guilt – looking back at all the time he was away and the demands that that put on her. Not that he felt responsible – but he felt in some ways that he had contributed to her problem.

Chase: I think he did. He was away so much and she was left there with the maid and the kids and she was bitter about it. As far as I know. She felt neglected – which she was.

Smith: Well, she saw a psychiatrist for a while.

Chase: That was way later, wasn’t it? I think.

Smith: I thought that at some point in the Sixties…

Chase: I thought it was after she had been through the whole thing and she was going to a doctor as well. But I could be wrong.

Smith: The reason why is – and again, you don’t want to overdo this – but if you look at her in the mid-1960s, with an ambitious, rising husband who’s off doing his job and making good, and a bunch of kids; a woman who had accomplished things on her own, been a dancer and all of this, when you think about Betty Freidan, and a whole generation of women who were looking for their place - in a sense, who were neglected. She really is, in some ways, representative of that. Don’t you think? I’m sure there are people in Washington who took one
look and said, “This Cub Scout den mother, Sunday school teacher, West Michigan…” and kind of wrote her off. But there was always a lot more there than on the surface. One senses that she enjoyed a lot about being First Lady because, first of all, he wasn’t away as much as he had been, but secondly, for her, she was onstage again. Do you think there is anything to that?

Chase: I think she was afraid of it a little bit in the beginning, and then I think she liked it, she enjoyed it. I didn’t know much about it – I wasn’t there all the time. When we started working, she was already out. They were not in the White House anymore. But we had to go there for some reason, and she called some man and sent me in, a girl that was working for her and me, through the whole building, which I think you ordinarily don’t get to do that. Out in the garden and everything. And that was really fine, but she didn’t have to do that. We went to the cook and everything. She liked it, she thought that would be a wonderful thing for me to see, and it was nice. It was very nice.

Smith: Was she close to her kids?

Chase: Oh, yes. There were four of them, right?

Smith: Yes.

Chase: And they had to be. I mean, when they brought in that thing they started with her – I warned you.

Smith: The intervention?

Chase: The intervention, when she was so angry that it all kind of broke up and then it came back again. But that first time she was not amused, and she was not grateful that they were trying to make her be better. She was angry, angry, angry.

Smith: Really?
Chase: Yes.

Smith: Angry at them?

Chase: She cried – yes, she was really furious that her family would do that, that they would just embarrass her in that way, which she didn’t like at all. And I don’t remember quite how it…

Smith: Well, then she went to Long Beach Naval Hospital.

Chase: She didn’t want anybody to know that either. I think I said, you can’t hide, because you stood out there on the platform and said that you were a drunk and now she just didn’t want anybody to know anything about it. And I said you can’t do it now. You did it and so you have to stand by it. And it was good. She eventually met a lot of people she never would have met – sailors and soldiers and everything and she was kind of charmed by it. I think they are very stern there on your having to pay attention. I mean, she wanted me to go with her with everything, and so I would go in there and watch them. They played games or whatever it is they did, and I got caught. Because they said, you have to do this, you have to be in this. And I didn’t want to be in it, I just wanted to watch it. They were very stern, I guess is the word. But in the end it was a wonderful thing. They were so many of them saved from dying of drugs.

Smith: We’ve heard that she was in tougher shape than perhaps the public suspected. That her condition by the time she went in was…

Chase: Yes – she didn’t want to tell anybody, though, that’s the thing. You have to say, you’ve got to tell because everybody knows anyway.

Smith: Did she really believe that people didn’t know?
Chase: I think she thought that she could just go into the hospital and get well and come out and that it would be simple. I don’t think that she thought it was going to be a big deal.

Smith: Okay. And did you talk with her while she was in the hospital?

Chase: Oh, yes. I was there. I had to stay – I didn’t have to sleep over, I don’t think. It’s funny, one of her sons, the younger one.

Smith: Steve.

Chase: Steve, yes. Everybody thought that he was my husband and all these people – it was such a strange thing. Steve was there quite a lot. Of all of the children, he was the one that was there the most. And I was there because I was told I had to be there. You remember things like getting across the street – strange, stupid things that aren’t important. But most of the time she was very good. In the beginning, she wanted a certain kind of room and she didn’t want anybody in it, and that all went away. She really liked those guys.

Smith: So the anger and the resentment evolved into acceptance?

Chase: I think so. I think it was a place that she was safe in and people were all having the same problems she had, so that it was quite comforting, I think, to her. And I think she was probably a little proud of herself that she would do it. That they could force her to do it is a whole other story. I don’t think she got up one morning and said, okay, I’ll go there. I think she was sort of pulled there.

Smith: Sure. Was the President a frequent visitor?

Chase: Yes, and he was feeling bad. He’s a very sweet man, really, and he felt that it was his fault, a lot of it that she had been left alone. And, actually, right up until they did the intervention, I don’t think he said much about it. But then when that happened, he was right there.
Smith: It’s interesting, because he stopped drinking, too.

Chase: I didn’t even know he ever drank. She blamed it all on being alone with four kids. And actually, she was mad at him a lot of the time and she didn’t know it.

Smith: Exactly. Which I’m sure is a common reaction of people. I’m sure there are lots of people in that dynamic, in that situation.

Chase: Yes, I think so.

Smith: It’s never been terribly clear to me what role the drinking played and what role pills played. She clearly had the pinched nerve, and she had this condition that was painful and for which she was medicated. And was it simply that sort of unwitting combination of prescription medication and alcohol multiplied the impact?

Chase: I don’t think we could ever figure it out because for one thing, she didn’t want to admit that she drank. And so I never knew whether she made up the thing about all the pills. I saw her drinking; I never saw her taking pills. And maybe she took all the pills in the world, but that wasn’t what was going to kill her.

Smith: You’ve worked with a number of people on books. How was she generally speaking, to work with?

Chase: She was swell. I mean, I had a lot of fun with her. She was not in any way a problem.

Smith: By the way, it’s fairly well known among their intimates, although I don’t think the public, that she had a much more ribald sense of humor than he did.

Chase: Yes, she was funny. And she was pretty smart, too, I think. I remember something that was funny. We were talking about him being elected and he came in – we were talking about that – and he said, “Girls, girls, I was never
elected,” that’s not the right word – what is it? Anyway, “I was not elected, I was put there after Nixon left.”

Smith: Inaugurated.

Chase: Inaugurated, yes. But he thought we were very shabby then. We had it all wrong, so we thought that was funny. But every once in a while he would stop in and help a little bit when he was home. He did a lot of – he was very busy. Bob Hope and he went and played golf all the time. He enjoyed his life. And then when he wasn’t in the White House anymore, he was still on all those…

Smith: He was on a lot of boards.

Chase: He was on a lot of boards and that made a lot of money.

Smith: In fact, he took some heat for “commercializing” the ex-presidency.

Chase: He was on a plane.

Smith: He loved to travel.

Chase: He did.

Smith: And that never changed. I mean, he may have very well felt guilty about leaving her at one point, but he didn’t give up his travel.

Chase: It’s true. I think probably she saw him more when they were in the White House than when he got out. I don’t know about that.

Smith: A theory is that the problem became more of a problem because, when they moved out to California, by that time the kids had basically grown up and were on their own, and he was on the road and she was alone.

Chase: Well, I remember when they built that really big house. Do you remember the guy that was their close friend and did so much?
Smith: Leonard Firestone was their neighbor.

Chase: Leonard, yes, he was a great man. Wonderful man.

Smith: We’ve been told that she saved his life.

Chase: Well, she certainly tried to. He just was angry, as she was. She talked to him about drinking, and he was really just furious.

Smith: What was the source of his anger?

Chase: Because he didn’t want to be fixed – he drank and he was a very pleasant, nice, funny man. But he did not want anybody to do that. And she had been through that and she knew what it was like for him. And I wouldn’t be surprised if she saved his life. There was a very rough time there at one point.

Smith: In my eulogy in Grand Rapids, I talked about the cliché that people, as they get older, become a little more conservative. Maybe it’s nostalgia for the past, or maybe they have more to conserve or whatever. He was always a fiscal conservative, but in a lot of other ways, he actually became more liberal with age, and on a number of issues. I’m wondering whether it was her influence. Stop and think: he was very involved with her in the work of the Center. And he saw all of these people, good people, accomplished people, friends, whom he liked and admired, who happened to have a weakness. And the compassion factor – I just wonder whether that was part of it. We’ve been told ten years before he died he told friends that gay marriage was coming and they might as well get over it. Attitudes that you wouldn’t associate with a conservative Republican president.

Chase: Leonard was very generous to everybody. And when Mr. Firestone had the last – when it was in that icy part of the world where they had a new house – I think he gave the Firestones the house. Certainly gave them land to put a
couple of houses on while I was there. He was a very good friend to them. He went dancing when he was about two hundred years old. He’d go out.

Smith: She, of course, had been a dancer.

Chase: Yes.

Smith: When she went to Studio 54 – first of all – tell us about Studio 54. What prompted that?

Chase: She wanted to see it. She came into New York and she had read, I guess, a lot about this stuff and what happened there. She really wanted to see it. And the other girl and I…

Smith: Penny Circle.

Chase: Was it Penny then? Yes, we went and it was a strange place. I had never been there, but there was all this screaming and there were all these people with their nose up against the wall. And the guy that owned the place was saying, “Dance, dance. Nobody wants to see you watching.” It was a horrible place. Betty was very interested in it. And she sat behind that curtain – we were all there – and she was sitting on a couch, and some crazy woman from Canada who was married I guess to the head of Canada…

Smith: Margaret Trudeau.

Chase: She got down on her knees and crawled across to Mrs. Ford, sort of like wanting to lick her shoes or something. It was funny. The weirdest night I’ve ever seen.

Smith: Did the Secret Service come, too?

Chase: Yes, there’s always somebody. That’s kind of fun. If you go to a movie with them, even, one of them is on either side and a guy is on either side of them.
You never are alone – ever. There are two people following you all the time. But that thing was strange – like, crazy girl down on her knees.

Smith: Penny remembers this vividly because she had never seen it before. She went into the ladies’ room and there were lines of cocaine…

Chase: There was a guy in there, too. We went in – I went in with her because she wanted somebody to go with her, and there is this guy standing in the middle of the room. And I said, “Sir, this is not for you. This is a ladies’ room.” And he said, “I’m not going to hurt anybody,” and just kept on with whatever he was lighting up. He would not go out. It was an odd night. She was staying at the Waldorf. It’s this odd thing – you come off the elevator and there were men there – all up the row.

Smith: I’ve been told they liked New York.

Chase: She did. She liked it. She liked to come, and she came without him several times.

Smith: To go to the theater?

Chase: Yes, went to the theater. She liked New York and everybody liked her.

Smith: One thing that I found surprising, and I don’t want to exaggerate it - notwithstanding that she had been a dancer, she’d been on the public stage, giving a speech was really tough for her. There was an element right before of what can only be called stage fright. Did you ever sense that?

Chase: No. But actually I heard her do a lot of speaking and I think she got to a point where she was very good at it. I’ve read some of the things I thought, I didn’t know she had done that – that was good what she did. But I think with the dancing, it probably wasn’t as much dancing – it sounded good and it looks sort of exciting and everything. But I don’t know that she ever was in a company, I doubt that.
Smith: My sense is that her father’s death was always sort of tiptoed around a little bit. The question of whether it was an accident or suicide. Remember he died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Chase: In a car?

Smith: In a car. Which begs the question. And I just wondered – going back almost to your first comment about her caution, withholding things, whether that was one of them. Susan has said, for example, they all assumed that he took his own life. But it seemed it was something that she was very, very uncomfortable with. Were there subjects that she really wanted to avoid or that you felt were painful?

Chase: I don’t remember her ever talking about her father. But I was not in that place. Once I met her when they brought me out there and we started to work, and those people I could watch and see and know. But I never really knew anything about her early life. What she said I took as the right story.

Smith: That intrigues me.

Chase: She had an interesting thing with that first husband where she actually – he was not a great guy – and she was about to get rid of him, to divorce him, and he got sick and she stayed for two or three years and took care of this guy, and then when some miraculous thing happened where he got better, where everybody had said he was going to be dead tomorrow, and he got better, and then she left. And I thought that was an amazing thing. But by that time I know she didn’t like the man, the man had disappointed her in many levels, she stayed for five or six years, I think, taking care of this guy. So she’s done some good stuff. Stuff I wouldn’t have done. I would have somehow got rid of him. But she just waited until he was better.

Smith: Do you think that experience made her reluctant to contemplate remarriage?
Chase: I don’t know. I think, like a lot of us, she wanted to get out of the house and there he was. I don’t remember if he was a big handsome man or what, but I don’t think she knew much and she was young and had no idea what it was going to turn into. So I think a lot of it was just, “Oh, God, I have to help this guy,” and she did it. I don’t know many people that would.

Smith: If someone tells you something that you don’t believe – or that is incomplete – or that needs in some ways to be challenged. Do you feel comfortable pushing people?

Chase: Once in a while. It’s like when I said to her, you can’t do that. And she said, yes, we can. But then she would do it. No, I had no problems at all with her, nor I guess, she with me. But I lived with them. I had to go to dinner and I had to whatever. Whatever house they were in, in the summer and the winter, I was there.

Smith: And how long was this period? Several weeks, several months? Or were there different periods when you would be with them.

Chase: I’m sure, but I cannot remember a single one. Whether it was a month that I was there, I would think maybe that was right.

Smith: For example, when the first book was about to be published, and that’s when the intervention took place, and I think you added on chapters.

Chase: That was horrible because she didn’t want it. The people from Random House, I guess it was Random House, said this book cannot be done unless – she had just come out – and the whole book was sweet and nice they were pointing out flowers in a nice glass of water, and here’s this terrible thing – terrible for her because she did not want to be exposed like that. She was very unhappy about that. And there was nothing in the book about it – nothing. And so these people that were going to publish it just said we can’t, we can’t unless you put another chapter in and tell what’s happened, we’re not going to
do it. And so she said she wasn’t going to do it. She said no. So I said, well, the only thing I can tell you is you’re not going to have the book because they are not going to do it. And she thought about it – she was already in the hospital – she thought about it and after a bit I think she wanted the book, and so she said, “Okay, Chris. Do it.” So I wrote a whole thing – I don’t remember it. But she did not want that known at all and she did not want that chapter in that book. I don’t know how I got onto this.

Smith: But that’s fascinating because it is a continuing form of denial.

Chase: Yes, and she wanted a million people knowing that she was a drunk, too. Because she was a very careful woman. She had very nice clothes, she kept her make up, her hair, everything was perfect, and I think the idea that she was some sodden drunk really outraged her.

Smith: That’s fascinating. I think that is a core issue here, and I wonder – she was famously unpunctual.

Chase: I didn’t know that.

Smith: Talk about opposites attracting – he was never late. And she was never on time. And it was sort of a joke in the family. And I’ve often wondered if, in fact, it was a manifestation of this perfectionism. That she was not going anywhere until she had done everything humanly possible to be as nearly perfect as she could. Which is a real burden, in some ways. It goes beyond liking clothes.

Chase: The whole world is so different. I remember at one House where a lot of people from China arrived with presents. People come to you when you’re in that position, with big boxes as though it were Christmas. And they just sit there and open it up and thanking Mr. so and so. The whole world is so strange there to a regular person.
Smith: Can you explain to people who weren’t around in 1974-75…

Chase: God, was it that long ago?

Smith: Well, what a big deal it was at the time of her cancer operation. And the degree to which breast cancer was in the closet. She really transformed public attitudes.

Chase: She did.

Smith: Describe what the attitude was then. What was it she changed?

Chase: I’m not sure. She talked about it, which most women would not have done, you know. And she talked about it loud and clear. She wanted women to know that there was a future and not to be so frightened and all that. She just did it.

Smith: It’s hard, I think, for people today who take for granted the openness, to realize just how secretive the subject was.

Chase: I imagine it must have been very hard for her to make the decision to do it. But then she liked very much having helped. Why did she start that place, if she hadn’t really been like that. She wanted to be somebody that was useful and that people would admire. I guess everybody does, but she did it.

Smith: As you say that, it occurs to me whether it was a conscious ambition or not, you stop to think; here was a woman who for much of her life, like millions of other women of her generation, had these talents, these skills, these latent abilities, but really didn’t have outlets for them. And ironically by going public with her alcoholism, she created an institution, and arguably made a bigger impact on how ordinary people live their lives than some presidents ever do.
Absolutely. It’s strange, I think, until the children all got there and said you’ve got to quit, I don’t think she was taking anything very deeply. And then when she finally just said, okay, she never stopped. She said she had to go and be healthy and other people had to go and be healthy and build a place where people can go and be healthy. Once she decided to do it, she did it. She did it all the time. It was interesting because she was a pretty, young woman when it all started, and she liked good clothes. She was in so much trouble, remember when she had the face lift? And suddenly everybody, including my mother, said, “What a ridiculous woman.” Up until then, everybody had thought about how she’s a worker, she’s out there helping everybody, and then this silly woman comes along and has a face lift. And people really were horrible to her about it, really, really bad. It cut off a lot of stuff, I don’t remember what that was.

It made her seem frivolous?

Yes. And they wanted to think of her as this wonderful, strong woman.

You don’t think of Mother Theresa getting a face lift.

Right, she’s not going to do it. He asked her to do it, she won’t do it. No, I think she was surprised that people didn’t like it.

It’s fascinating that you say that, because I’ve often thought – again, we all tend to put labels on people – there’s a kind of shorthand and Washington does it more than any other town. And the fact is that she didn’t fit into any obvious pigeonhole. On some things she was a traditionalist; and she was an activist. She was a pioneer, and she was a woman who worried about her husband and her children and her grandchildren and her face.

She was shocked, I think. When she said, “I’m going to have a beautiful face to go with my beautiful new life.” It was something like that that she had said to people. And all these women were saying, “This is awful.”
Smith: She also had a great one-liner. When people would ask her why did you have a face lift, she said she wanted to look like her portrait in the White House.

Chase: Great. It apparently hurt her in many ways that hadn’t been expected. Not just by her but by other people that were working with her saying, “Oh, God, she’s in deep shit now because people are saying this is a wonderful woman, all she thinks about is herself and her looks?” I remember that. She did send at one point one of the girls to test a doctor – to see if he could do something good. I think it was something at the knee or something, but she wanted a good doctor and had people looking around for that.

Smith: Did she have a lot of friends?

Chase: Yes, she had a lot of friends. A lot of actors and actresses – I mean I had dinner with a lot of those people that were friends of hers. She had a lot of friends, I think. The family had a lot of friends, you know.

Smith: When they were in Vail, they were beloved out there. Among other things, a lot of people think that they really put the place on the map.

Chase: I bet they did.

Smith: Particularly as a summer resort.

Smith: Did you go out to Colorado with them?

Chase: Yes. It is nice. I don’t remember much, but they moved around a lot. I remember that thing that went up and somebody got caught in that. I was just thinking about those strange things. Always, though, Leonard was there a lot. He bought their stuff and his stuff right together, two houses. I had a house all to myself. He said to me one day, he said, “You don’t want to be in the house with everybody all the time.” And I said, “I don’t care.” And he said, “No, no, no. Right across, you go through these bushes and there is this beautiful little house and a lady comes and leaves cookies that have just come out of the
oven.” And I once had slept there – I had broken up the whole place because it was cold when I woke up this one morning, and I went to this place and tried to set _____________ and suddenly the whole house seemed to blow up. And I thought, “Oh my God, I’ve destroyed this entire place – and they’ve been so nice to me.” And what it was, it was an earthquake, and I really believed that I was just standing there and everything was….and oh, they are going to kill me. I ruined this beautiful place. It was an earthquake. He’s very useful.

Smith: Did the President check in at all while you were working?

Chase: Oh, sure. He would just tease us. I told you that one thing where he said, “Girls, girls, I wasn’t elected.” He would read something if we wanted him to, he didn’t come around much, but he was there. They both actually had to fly a lot. God, I hated it. But sometimes it would be some little thing – she and I were sent to be someplace and it was a small plane, and there were just her and me and they brought us lunch on this little bitty plane. And then we came down and there was a red thing going all the way to the front. You know, you have this little bitty thing and you’re going to make a speech in there. But there was a red carpet wherever she went. And you never touched – if you had to stay over and you had a bag – you never touched that. They picked that up and it was at the hotel when you got there. Very high living, really. I remember that. A lot of that was fun, a lot of it was irritating.

Smith: I think you said before that she was very conscious of her weight.

Chase: Oh, yes. She didn’t eat a lot. No, she was very careful. And she kept her figure as long as I knew her.

Smith: Did she cook at all herself?

Chase: Never. Not once did I see it. Maybe I would have – I didn’t know them then. I was thinking I don’t know that she even cooked when she was home with the
kids and everything. Because they had servants all the time. But no, I don’t think she had any wishes to cook.

Smith: I know later she was a reader. She read quite a bit. Was that something you were aware of?

Chase: No, but I could have forgotten it. I’ve forgotten so much that it upsets me.

Smith: There were two books – was the first book judged successful? *The Times of My Life.*

Chase: Yes. That was a big lightweight, fun book, really. The other one…

Smith: *Betty: Glad Awakening.*

Chase: All about what she went though – good works and everything. It wasn’t as much fun or as charming, I think as the first one, but it had news in it. It had some stuff that might help people.

Smith: Did you ever talk politics?

Chase: No. Sometimes if you’re sitting at the table and they’re arguing about something, you hear stuff.

Smith: Did you have a sense of what her cultural/social views were? She had a reputation, obviously, for being somewhat more liberal.

Chase: I don’t think she ever would have gone against him, though. It was truly a Republican person. I don’t know what she, in her heart, felt, but I don’t think she ever blamed him for anything.

Smith: Did you ever hear them talk about Nixon?

Chase: Yes, I did. They despised each other, you know. I don’t remember what it was, something I think that Betty felt - that he had wrecked her husband’s
chance at something. I don’t even remember all that. Was it the presidency? Nixon and he had not liked each other at all, at all.

Smith: Do you remember the last time you saw her or had contact with her?

Chase: I have a bunch of letters, and none very recent at all. I would say maybe 1990. I haven’t heard anything from her. And you don’t want to do it yourself, you know, bother somebody. I never called her. I got a lot of phone calls, but I think she is tired. I haven’t seen any pictures of her, haven’t seen any stories of her. It’s almost as if she were in a nunnery or something. I don’t know, maybe she’s just protected to go out and protected to go in, and that’s it. I don’t know what you’d feel like if you’re a hundred and three years old.

Smith: How do you think she should be remembered?

Chase: It’s hard to say because there is such a split. I was reading something the other day, and it was people saying what a silly woman she was, and how she got credit for all this stuff that other people did. Just really mean. It was a book review and it was perfectly nasty about her. And then there were other people that think she is a goddess. I think for the most part, people liked her. You didn’t have to admire her, or think she was a wizard, but I think she was a nice woman and she was decent to people and she tried to help. So I don’t know why anybody would go after her. But they do, they do just to get it in the paper. I’m surprised at that, especially because it was a woman that was printing it.

Smith: Well, she became in some ways a lightning rod for criticism, particularly from the social right. They objected to her views on abortion, and they objected to her support for the Equal Rights Amendment. There were people who thought she should have been a more traditionalist – not have outspoken political views of her own.

Chase: Yes, walk six miles behind him or something.
Smith: Although, apparently her husband didn’t feel that way.

Chase: No, he didn’t. He really liked her. I was surprised, when he died, I didn’t know how old they were, and I just thought how could it be him that died. He’s so strong and she was so much more fragile. I think she was surprised. It was awful.

Smith: Devastated.

Chase: Yes. Terrible.
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