



Elly Peterson: "Mother" of the Moderates

Sara Fitzgerald

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"A magisterially written, well-researched, informative, and entertaining biography of a woman who helped throw open the doors to broader participation and power for women in the Republican Party and American politics."

---Dave Dempsey, author of *William G. Milliken: Michigan's Passionate Moderate*

"*Elly Peterson* will be a text to which historians and researchers turn for insight into the yin and yang of mainstream politics in the mid-century."

---Patricia Sullivan, past president, Journalism and Women Symposium

"This lively portrait of a leading woman in the Republican Party between 1952 and 1982 also charts the party's shift to the right after 1964, revealingly viewed through the eyes of liberal Republican women. Intensively researched with ethnographic attention to the subtleties of political culture, Fitzgerald's book is essential reading for anyone interested in how the Republican Party changed during the turbulent decades after 1960 and how women and women's issues shaped those changes."

---Kathryn Kish Sklar, Distinguished Professor of History, State University of New York, Binghamton

"Sara Fitzgerald tells Peterson's story in this superb and timely biography. It carries a message that deserves the widest audience as the nation struggles to find needed consensus on critical issues amid poisonous political partisanship that has made it increasingly difficult for public officials to bridge their differences. I hope that every American reads it."

---Pulitzer Prize winner Haynes Johnson, from the Foreword

"To understand the quest for equal rights in America you really need to meet those women who were active at the time of transition. In this gripping biography we meet one woman who entered a male dominated world and triumphed."

---Francis X. Blouin Jr., Director, Bentley Historical Library

"Sara Fitzgerald's writing is as intelligent as it is entertaining."

---Best-selling novelist Diane Chamberlain

Elly Peterson was one of the highest ranking women in the Republican Party. In 1964 she ran for a Michigan seat in the U.S. Senate and became the first woman to serve as chair of the Michigan Republican Party. During the 1960s she grew disenchanted with the increasing conservatism of her party, united with other feminists to push for the Equal Rights Amendment and reproductive choice, battled Phyllis Schlafly to prevent her from gaining control of the National Federation of Republican Women, and became an independent.

Elly Peterson's story is a missing chapter in the political history of Michigan, as well as the United States. This new biography, written by Sara Fitzgerald (a Michigan native and former Washington Post editor), finally gives full credit to one of the first female political leaders in this country.

When Peterson resigned in 1970 as assistant chairman of the Republican National Committee, David Broder of the Washington Post wrote that "her abilities would have earned her the national chairmanship, were it not for the unwritten sex barrier both parties have erected around that job."

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