

The Contrarian

By C. Mark Smith '61

Throughout his life, longtime Tacoma Mayor Harry Cain defined who and what he was as he went along. He was a fervent supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the early New Deal, a commercial banker during the Great Depression, the director of a highly successful celebration marking 50 years of Washington statehood, a legitimate war hero, a conservative and controversial Republican U.S. senator, a dissident member of President Eisenhower's Subversive Activities Control Board, and a widely acclaimed civil libertarian. He also had a long string of connections to the University of Puget Sound.

Harry Pulliam Cain was born in Nashville, Tenn., in 1906. Both sides of his family sent men to fight for the Confederacy during the American Civil War, and distant relatives had fought in the War of 1812, run for governor of Alabama, and led that state out of the Union in 1861. One of Harry's uncles was a newspaperman and the first commissioner of the National Baseball League. The family moved to Tacoma in 1910. Both of his parents were writers—his mother an author of children's stories and a column for the old *Tacoma Tribune*, his father publisher of a respected trade journal for the lumber industry.

Harry and his twin brother, Bill, attended Hill Military Academy in Portland, Ore. While enrolled there Harry was a star athlete and editor of the school paper. When it came time to attend college, Harry returned to Tennessee to attend the liberal arts-oriented University of the South. There, he studied history, literature, and classical languages. He lettered in four sports, was a member of the school's drama society, a varsity debater for four years, and editor of the school's student newspaper. He was so successful at the latter that, upon graduation in 1929, he received but declined an offer of work as a reporter for *The New York Times*.

Returning to Tacoma, he found that his father was ill and would need to retire from active work. To help support the family, Harry obtained a job as a clerk at the Bank of California—this, four months before the stock market crash that brought on the Great Depression. He stayed with the bank for another 10 years but proved to be a unique kind of banker for those times. Hardly the starched social conservative, Harry was a very public person—an active community joiner who performed in local theater productions and a prolific correspondent. After a decidedly low-budget tour of England and the Continent with his wife, Marj, in 1935–1936, he began making speeches about the dangers of Hitler's Germany to anyone who would listen. Some felt he was an alarmist, but all agreed he was an entertaining and energetic speaker. Newspaper and radio reporters loved him because he was always great copy on a slow news day.



In 1939 he was chosen to be festival director of the Washington Golden Jubilee—the 50th anniversary of Washington’s statehood—the celebration of which was largely convened in Tacoma. It turned out to be one of the most successful events in the city’s history, and the resulting acclaim led Harry to a decision to leave the bank and enter politics. In 1940 he ran for mayor in a special election. He came in third in the primary, but fate intervened. Four days before the general election, the leading candidate collapsed and died during a candidate forum. Harry’s name was put back on the ballot. Most of the leading candidate’s backers

Warner to hold in Tacoma a three-theater world premiere of the new film *Tugboat Annie Sails Again*, starring Marjorie Rambeau, Ronald Reagan, Donald Crisp, and Alan Hale. Four days later he became the first Tacoman to register for the draft, which had just been narrowly approved by Congress. Hours after that he was on the Puget Sound campus at the groundbreaking for Kittredge Hall, the school’s first student union building, along with board of trustees chair Norton Clapp and student body president Lyall Jamieson ’41.

Back then, Tacoma was growing rapidly as the result of the buildup for World War

Six days later, on December 13th, Eleanor Roosevelt arrived at Harry’s city hall office on a scheduled West Coast tour promoting civil defense. Then, following a meeting with local civil defense officials, she and Harry did something remarkable. He arranged for her to meet with Japanese-American students who represented the 39 Japanese-American students attending the College of Puget Sound. In their meeting with Mrs. Roosevelt, the students expressed concerns about the negative impacts the war would almost certainly have on them. She said that she would talk with the president about the matter. Unfortunately, her efforts

In October 1940 Harry persuaded Hollywood mogul Jack Warner to hold in Tacoma a three-theater world premiere of the new film *Tugboat Annie Sails Again*.

switched their support to Cain and, at age 34, he became Tacoma’s youngest mayor.

A devotee of New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and a trained newspaperman, Harry used the media in a way unequalled before or since. He commonly delivered several formal speeches a week and made informal remarks at countless other events. He was a devotee of the use of the radio to reach his citizens and spent three hours a week preparing a weekly 15-minute radio broadcast.

He was everywhere. In October 1940 he persuaded Hollywood studio mogul Jack

II. Shipyards on the Tacoma Tideflats were launching ships for the Navy. McChord Field had just been activated, and Fort Lewis was expecting more than 45,000 new draftees to arrive by the end of 1941. When war did come on December 7, members of the local Japanese community began to experience angry discrimination, as anti-Japanese sentiment escalated. Harry immediately went on the radio asking his listeners to “frown on hysteria” and “protect the rights of those Japanese who know so well what it means to be an American.”

failed to keep Roosevelt from authorizing the detention and internment of almost 120,000 Japanese Americans living on the Pacific Coast. Harry Cain was one of the very few national or regional officials in the country to speak out formally against the action.

New municipal elections were scheduled for Feb. 24, 1942. Elected originally to complete the term of the former mayor, Harry now ran for a full four-year term in his own right. The campaign was a low-key affair, and Harry won the election in a landslide, receiving 20,147 votes to his closest opponent’s 5,266. It was the largest plurality ever recorded in a Tacoma municipal election, making a general election unnecessary. The *Tacoma News Tribune* editorialized, “Few mayors in the short time available have cut as wide a swath in the administration of city affairs as Harry Cain.”

For the next year, Harry immersed himself in Tacoma’s wartime challenges: rapid growth; inadequate military and defense-worker housing; commercialized prostitution, gambling and unlicensed speakeasies; and the city’s increasingly ineffective management system. Under Tacoma’s commission form of government, the mayor was but one of five elected commissioners, in theory equal but each with



At the Kittredge Hall groundbreaking, Oct. 16, 1940. Harry Cain (right, in shirtsleeves), Norton Clapp (center), and college President Edward H. Todd (hand raised with Clapp).



Eleanor Roosevelt met with young Japanese Americans in Harry Cain's office on Dec. 13, 1941, less than a week after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In this photo Shigeo Wakamatsu '42 stands with hands folded and Waichi Oyanagi '43 is second from right. CPS students who were sent to internment camps during World War II will receive honorary degrees from the college at Commencement in May.

his own constituencies and his own area of responsibility. The commissioners were completely unaccountable to each other. The mayor, while he was the city's official spokesman and chief promoter, was, in fact, responsible only for the city's sanitation department.

Cain's approach to improving city life was to identify a problem, appoint a committee of local experts, and charge them with studying the issue and reporting back with specific recommendations as soon as possible. Because of his interest in long-range planning—in particular for the growth he recognized would surely follow the war—in 1942 he appointed a distinguished panel to study city expansion and named Paul R. Fossum, an

economics professor at the College of Puget Sound, as its chair. After two years the committee produced an extensive report titled "Tacoma, The City We Build." It contained 29 recommendations requiring administrative action, suggested needed planning activities, and identified a number of important capital projects. (Later, while Harry was on a leave of absence to serve in World War II, the rest of the City Commission accepted the final report, thanked Fossum for his service, and quietly filed it away. It had been Cain's study, not theirs.)

In April 1943, after a second unsuccessful attempt to remove the city's public safety commissioner following a series of state-led

vice raids, rumors began to circulate that Harry was considering going into the Army. In fact, he was being recruited as the first sitting mayor in America to attend the Army's new School of Military Government at the University of Virginia.

Completing the four-month course in August, Cain was sent to North Africa and arrived in Sicily just after the successful invasion of the island on Aug. 17, 1943. The attack on mainland Italy began several weeks later. Now-Maj. Harry Cain landed on the beachhead at Salerno with an element of the 82nd Airborne Division. As the Allies slowly fought their way toward Naples, Cain was given responsibility for an area containing 29 mostly

destroyed towns and villages northwest of Salerno, the starving populations of which had fled into the hills. His primary job was to find food and shelter for the refugees and try to restore basic services.

The Allies moved north through Italy, and Harry was assigned to ever-more responsible positions with the Allied Control Commission, which administered the occupied areas, and at Gen. Mark Clark's Fifth Army headquarters as the top civil affairs officer for the commander of the Rome Area Command. In that capacity he observed two of the major battles of the Italian campaign: the assault on the Gustav Line and Monte Cassino, and the nearly disastrous Allied invasion at Anzio, southwest of Rome.

In March 1944 he was assigned to General Dwight Eisenhower's London Supreme Allied Headquarters, where he was responsible for all psychological warfare and public relations activities carried out by Eisenhower's civil affairs staff. As mayor, Cain had known both Clark and Eisenhower when they were stationed at Fort Lewis before the war. The job allowed him to associate with the leading military and political figures of the day, including newspaper and radio war correspondents covering the war, like Edward R. Murrow.

It was there in London—in the middle of a war, 7,000 miles from home—that Harry Cain was drafted to run against Washington Democratic Congressman Warren G. Magnuson for the U.S. Senate. Harry, now a lieutenant colonel, agreed to run only

with conditions: He would answer no political questions while he remained in the Army, if nominated he would not leave the Army to campaign, and if elected he would not serve until the war was over. Not quite Shermansque, but close. Harry beat 11 other candidates in the Republican primary, but he lost to Magnuson by 88,000 votes.

After the invasion of Normandy, Harry was eager to leave London and join a tactical command for the final defeat of Germany. He got his wish when he was named one of five senior staff members for Maj. Gen. Matthew

alienated large blocks of his constituents. In the second-most unionized state in the union, he voted for the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act. In a state in which building aircraft was the largest industry, he voted against the creation of a 70-group Air Force in the buildup to the Cold War. The final straw was a historic, non-stop, six-and-a-half-hour filibuster against the nomination of popular former Washington Governor and U.S. Senator Mon Wallgren to be chair of the National Security Resources Board. Harry simply didn't think Wallgren was qualified.

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B. Ridgway's newly activated XVIII Airborne Corps. There, he was responsible for all civil affairs and military government activities of the various divisions attached to the corps. He participated in the Battle of the Bulge, winning a battlefield promotion to full colonel, and helped plan and implement the massive operations involved in the crossing of the Rhine; the elimination of the Ruhr Pocket, including the capture of 300,000 German troops; and the final advance into north Germany as part of British Gen. Bernard Montgomery's 21 Army Group. Along the way he was responsible for dealing with millions of displaced persons, former prisoners of war, and victims of German concentration camps. He finished the war as an inspector of military government operations in Bavaria, where he got involved in the controversy between Eisenhower and Gen. George Patton regarding the latter's use of former Nazi officials to administer his occupied areas. In the process Harry won the Legion of Merit, three Bronze Stars, and five battle stars, and he qualified for dangerous glider duty.

Back in Tacoma at the end of 1945, Harry announced that he would not run for reelection as mayor but instead would seek the Republican nomination for Washington's other U.S. Senate seat, to be contested in 1946. This time he was successful, defeating incumbent Democratic Senator Hugh B. Mitchell in a postwar Republican landslide. Harry went on to serve a single, highly controversial term in the Senate that was highlighted by a series of personal crusades, which, while they may have represented his personal convictions,

During those years, Cain became known as one of the more reactionary anti-communist members of the Senate, often supporting Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy and defending General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's recommendation to use Chinese Nationalist troops in the Korean War.

When President Truman fired MacArthur, it set up Harry's last public involvement with the College of Puget Sound. On November 14, 1951, MacArthur visited Tacoma during a triumphant multicity tour following his recall by President Truman. Harry, just finishing his Senate term, was on hand to introduce MacArthur to the standing-room-only audience at Memorial Fieldhouse. Harry called MacArthur "the greatest citizen your junior senator has ever known." MacArthur replied with equal praise, telling the audience, "I don't think you people in this part of the world understand what a great record he is making in the other part of the world. His fearlessness, his courage, and his Americanism are hard to realize unless you are in the halls of the U.S. Senate itself."

MacArthur's support didn't keep Harry from losing his Senate seat to Democratic Congressman Henry M. Jackson in 1952. Harry always felt that his greatest failing as a senator had been his inability to explain to the people at home why he had taken the positions he had.

Alas, his personal convictions did not translate into good politics. After Harry's defeat, President Eisenhower made him a member of the Subversive Activities Control Board, the government entity that was em-



Paul R. Fossum (center, left), Puget Sound economics prof and author of the Tacoma growth study Cain commissioned, with British Ambassador to the United States Lord Halifax (center), in front of Jones Hall, July 1943.

powered to order the registration of organizations that it found to be “Communist fronts,” “Communist action” groups, or “Communist infiltrated” groups. In this position he again turned out to be a maverick, as he came to the conclusion that the government’s efforts to control subversive activity were largely more dangerous to individual freedom than the activities themselves.

Harry spoke out publicly against the administration’s policies and defended well-known individuals like Arthur Miller and John Goldmark in Washington state against

reporters. He highly valued his friendship with Puget Sound President R. Franklin Thompson and rarely missed a chance to drive by the campus, amazed by its growth and success.

Harry Cain died in 1979.

Soon after Cain’s death, C. Mark Smith ’61 created the Harry P. Cain Memorial Public Administration Scholarship at Puget Sound. At the time, Bill Baarsma ’64, now mayor of Tacoma, was chair of what was then called the Department of Public Administration. The

endowed fund was expanded in 1985 by Harry Cain’s daughter, Candy Cain Tingstad ’79, and her brother, Harry P. Cain II. The scholarship assists students who have a particular interest in the humanities, history, or political science. The selection committee for the scholarship looks for specific qualities in recipients: a deep commitment to public service, individuals in need, and human rights; a well-rounded education with emphasis on history and political science; a proficiency in public speaking; and the courage to publicly defend personal principles even if (and especially if) they are opposed by the majority.

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allegations that their membership in organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union made them security risks. He finally spoke out against the tactics of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, although the two remained personal friends. Not surprisingly, President Eisenhower did not reappoint him to the SACB, but Harry won the appreciation of civil libertarians, editorial writers, and the families of the individuals whose rights he fought to protect.

Cain went on to spend the final 20 years of his life in Florida, where he was chair of the Miami-Dade County Commission and a deeply involved community activist. He led the fight to impose one of the first smoking bans in public buildings in the country. He made bilingualism the official policy of county government in Dade. He campaigned tirelessly for quality housing for senior citizens. And civil liberties groups honored him for his past and current efforts.

Harry would make periodic trips back to Tacoma, including one in December 1977 when he received a special award from local Japanese Americans for his support during the dark days of World War II. Invariably on these trips he stopped by *The News Tribune* to trade memories and political war stories with old

Cain (seated) with General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, wife Jean MacArthur, and Puget Sound President R. Franklin Thompson in Memorial Fieldhouse, Nov. 14, 1951.

