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**Politics a Turnoff?
Not for These Kids**

by Ruth Winter



Shanin Specter is congratulated by Margaret Truman Daniel upon receiving his Truman Scholar award. Inset shows Shanin meeting a Philadelphia voter with his politician-father Arlen, right.

Young People Who Love Politics

by Ruth Winter

Why would bright, talented young people want to train for a career in politics? Haven't the Abscam scandals, Watergate and Koreagate soured them? The answer is "no!" Some of the nation's outstanding college students are headed for jobs in city, state and federal government service. They are doing so with the aid of a foundation set up by Congress as a living memorial to that master politician, President Harry S. Truman.

"I'm sure my father would have been very happy with such a memorial," says Margaret Truman Daniel. "He wanted to be educated. He shoved me

through college. I wanted to go to New York and have a career instead, but he felt strongly about education. The scholarships permit young people to enter the field and see what a fine career it is. My father felt politics was wonderful, that all you had to do was to be honest. He was an honest man."

Since 1977, 53 Truman Scholars have been chosen annually, one from every state plus the U.S. dependencies. They are each awarded up to \$5000 a year for the last two undergraduate and two postgraduate years of college. The awards are based not only on academic excellence and leadership but on the desire to become a public servant.

Truman Scholar Kiron Skinner, 19, a senior at Spelman College in Georgia, made up her mind at



Stephien Shames

age 14 to enter politics. At 15, newly graduated from high school, she became the youngest Congressional intern when she went to work in the Washington office of Rep. Pete McCloskey (R., Cal.). Kiron's goal now is to become an ambassador.

The current Abscam scandals have not changed her mind about a career in government service. In fact, Kiron was exposed to political corruption early in her own life when she ran for class secretary in junior high school.

"I had a standing ovation when I finished my campaign speech," she recalls. "The other girl's speech received lukewarm applause. Yet, the next day I was told I had lost the election."

Kiron's mother came to school and demanded a

recount. "There were 800 students in the school," Kiron says. "When the votes were recounted, I had received 500."

Truman Scholar Shanin Specter (shown on this week's cover), the 22-year-old, 6-foot-3 captain of Haverford College's squash team, was also exposed to politics early, but his experience was with professional campaigns. His father Arlen was district attorney in Philadelphia 1966-74, ran unsuccessfully for Pennsylvania governor in 1978 and is currently a candidate for the U.S. Senate. Shanin's mother Joan is a Philadelphia councilwoman.

Shanin said he is "terribly frustrated" by the Abscam scandals. "I've met some of the people involved, and I feel they are honorable men. Abscam may speak to the fundamental weakness in human personality. If you approach members of any profession—journalism, law, you name it—you might have some that will take money. In my opinion, public servants are no more corruptible than others. It is just that they are so visible."

Radcliffe College senior Margaret Ziegler, 21, a Truman Scholar from Billings, Mont., claims she is more embarrassed for the FBI than for the politicians involved in Abscam: "Of course, if there were a breach of public trust, it had to be investigated. But I am concerned about how the targets were chosen."

One Truman Scholar who is delighted with the Abscam investigations, however, is 24-year-old James St. George of Mount Iron, Minn., the son of a Chipewa Indian father and an English-Irish mother.

"I like the idea that the FBI tried to counteract white-collar crime involving businessmen and politicians," says Jim. "Politics has been given a bad name, and to a large extent it is well deserved. Too many people in Washington are simply power- and wealth-oriented, and there is no way one person can change it all. But as individuals we can do a great deal."

A student at the University of Minnesota, Jim is aiming for a career in a Washington agency involved in international development. Right now, however, he is working for The Citizen's Party, a nationwide organization intent on becoming a third political party.

"The reason we need a third party," Jim explains, "is that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans are talking about the real problems. We have to do something to bring about public control over energy and the medical establishment. We have to stop inflation."

While Truman Scholars such as Jim and Kiron ultimately want to enter the international political arena, Joannene Coppinger, 23, of New York City feels she can change the world right from the command post of her Queens neighborhood.

In 1973 when the city offered to plant a \$200 tree in front of any home for \$20, Joannene was excited. The catch was that you had to get nine other people to pay \$20 each for a tree for their homes too. Joannene learned about the program at 4 p.m. on the last day of the offer. Before the deadline, she had the other nine trees sold.

"O.K., kid," the program director said to her. "You're coming to work for me. You're the only one in the city that put the package together so quickly."

These youngsters are motivated by the desire to become tomorrow's public servants



MARGARET ZIEGLER



ERNEST CALDERON



JOANNE NE COPPINGER



JAMES ST. GEORGE



KIRON SKINNER

Joannene has been working for the city ever since. "My one goal in life is to be a bureaucrat," Joannene says. "It's not a dirty word. Bureaucracy is the ideal system. It has just been bastardized by the politicians. They don't like it because we bureaucrats use the system and they avoid it."

Joannene is assistant district manager of the Community Board, a "little City Hall." She attends New York University at night on the Truman Scholarship, and on weekends she works in a lawyer's office to earn extra money.

Truman Scholar Ernest Calderon, 22, a Mexican-American law student at the University of Arizona, has also seen politics in action first-hand. He worked as an intern for Arizona Rep. Morris Udall and Sen. Dennis DeConcini during the summer of 1978 and last summer was employed in the office of Gov. Bruce Babbitt.

"The thing that impressed me," Ernest says, "was the potential for helping people that politicians have. The doors would be closed for the average person, and a letter from the Governor or a call from a Congressman would open them up."

"You have to utilize your talents in drawing the good from power," he added, "rather than letting the power draw the bad from you."

Ernest feels, regarding the Abscam scandals and

Watergate, that many politicians misplace the ability to fulfill the public need. "They assume they are the only people who can provide the service. They get caught in maintaining their position when they should be relying on their integrity and the integrity of the office. You probably do have to make deals, but compromise in itself is not an ugly word. I think we all compromise. If you have a really sensitive perception of the public needs and if you have the common sense to realize your own limitations, you will minimize the compromises you have to make."

Speaking of compromises, Margaret Ziegler will have to make a big one of her own before she can fulfill her ambition to run for the Senate from Montana. She is engaged to a Harvard student majoring in astrophysics. "And he claims there is no astrophysics in Montana," Margaret says with a laugh.

Nevertheless, at a political rally when she was 8 years old, Margaret informed Mike Mansfield, then Senator from Montana, that she intended to run for the Senate.

"Good luck—I'll back you," he said. He may soon have to make good on his offer.

For further information about the scholarships, write to: Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, 712 Jackson Pl., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.