



Peggy Misch

Margaret (Peggy) Misch is recognized as a Town Treasure for her decades of work as a community activist. Misch has been tireless in speaking out forcefully as a voice for change and citizen involvement. Peggy's definition of "community" is broad and historic, ranging from a small nucleus of neighborhood mothers to anti-nuclear, environmental, free speech and anti-war campaigns that have national and international goals. What these causes have in common is Peggy Misch's commitment to social justice for all, and her vision that citizens can be empowered to make a difference on issues that matter to them.

Misch's political activism began with the town's earliest days of de-segregated public schools. Misch recognized the paternalistic and racist separation between the white community and the African-American community, and she was part of challenging it. After participating in the integration of the PTA at Glenwood Elementary, she went on to run for the school board in 1971.

Although she lost that race, she does not regret entering it. The networks she established were used when she ran the first campaign of Richard Whitted, who became the first African-American county commissioner in Orange County. She used person-to-person techniques, like house parties, to introduce

Whitted and his ideas, and to get people talking to each other about the issues that were important in that race.

Misch has eagerly embraced and led Chapel Hill's traditions of free speech, marches and rallies. She chose to be photographed for the Town Treasure award at the Peace and Justice Plaza at the corner of East Franklin Street and Henderson Street, the site of decades of protest and advocacy for both local and national causes. Some of her favorite memories of Chapel Hill are the rally against the Speaker Ban law, a rally to support building of a mosque in Orange County, and a rally against entering the war in Iraq, at which she spoke after racing from the Community Church to announce that the church had just voted its support.

In 1986, as the only delegate from North Carolina on a trip to the Soviet Union sponsored by the Student/Teacher Organization to Prevent Nuclear War, she took keys from Chapel Hill to officials in the cities of Moscow, Leningrad, and Riga. She helped establish the Orange County Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Orange County Peace Action, North Carolina Stop Torture Now, and the Orange County Peace Coalition. She co-chaired a local chapter of the ACLU, and she works with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Orange County Peace Coalition, and the Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East. She has successfully advocated for our local municipalities to adopt resolutions against the Patriot Act.

But Peggy Misch doesn't spend a lot of time reflecting on her past. One current local concern to her as a biologist, demands she advocate to keep natural areas as undisturbed as possible, so she has committed time to Friends of Bolin Creek so Chapel Hill and Carrboro maintain areas free from as much disturbance as possible. Taking much of her time now is working on the establishment of the North Carolina Commission of Inquiry on Torture, that seeks accountability for our state's role in extraordinary rendition of suspected terrorists and demands justice for victims of their torture. She continues to be a voice for the underdog to facilitate change, using local connections and networking to mobilize on significant issues at times when no one else seems to be organizing to address those concerns. Her hope for the community is that we recognize that our voices matter, and that our local issues and concerns connect directly with state, national and international peace and justice.