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once the proposal failed to be ratified by the required number of states. McCracken believed more women had to be elected to political positions.

"The feminization of power takes time. It takes awhile to get people into the pipeline. But we have to elect, in two, four or six years, people in Congress who are supportive of the ERA."

And she faced reality. About the ERA amendment in 1988, McCracken added: "The chances of it passing realistically with the existing Congress and with an abortion amendment, is unlikely."

Despite setbacks with the ERA, McCracken was nonetheless optimistic about the future political, economic and social state of women.

"But like all civil rights and progressive groups, we have been lucky because we have maintained the status quo," she said in 1988. "All the things we have stood for have moved into the mainstream."

Longtime friend and colleague, Maryso Long, called McCracken a natural leader. You just didn't know you were being led.

Consider just the Michigan Education Association's Women's Caucus and the Democratic Women's Caucus, Long said, "that's a wide variety of people you have to pull in."

Though Long first met McCracken when she taught her children at the former Bond Elementary School, they became fast and good friends while Long was involved with the Michigan

Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights and McCracken was the reproductive rights vice president for the Great Lakes NOW. "We're talking history now," Long added.

**Political activity**

McCracken was always seen at meetings carrying a big brown envelope. Those who knew her knew what it was about. Those who didn't could only wonder.

"It was wherever she went. She would pass it around and you would put it in for whatever cause," Long said.

She was honored for her years of political activism with a host of awards, which she never spoke about. But a peek into her house showed the acknowledgement of her efforts. "She just appeared to be different about the awards. But her house was filled with them," Long said.

Added Nicoll: "She was one of the most modest people I ever knew. She was always fighting injustice where she found it. She was an inspiration to feminists."

Along with the characteristic brown envelope that McCracken carried to meetings, she at one time made about 400 wall hangings that boasted, "I will not grow conservative with age," and sold them to raise money.

With her work in education, labor negotiations for teachers and with NOW and OWL, few people may have seen the more personal side.

"People don't know that much about her as a mother," said her

daughter, Kit McCracken of New York. "She was a fantastic mother. She was my advocate, my friend and definitely my teacher. She did it all. She was also a wife and a mother. When she was working, she eventually was politicized by the economic condition of women in education."

**Kit McCracken daughter**

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Unless you knew McCracken well, you might not have known that her late husband, Don, took ill with multiple sclerosis while their children were still young, and she went back to school for an education degree and went into the work world, all while raising the kids and making her mark on the feminist and political world.

Kit McCracken said her mom had such a love of learning that she continually encouraged others to embrace education. "She embodied that as a teacher. She was a natural teacher. The point was to inculcate people with learning."

Long would agree: "Her passion was the 'Birrites of Penzance.' She had it down to a one-act play for the kids. They did it every year," Long said, recalling McCracken's tenacity.

Described as a "woman of con-

dition," McCracken was a devout believer that church and state should remain separate, particularly in education. "It was important that no one tell her how to worship or where to worship. She was very strong on that,"

Long said.

**Making her way**

In addition to the gamut of women's rights, including abortion, opposition to prohibitions on Medicaid-financed abortions and equal pay for equal work, McCracken was also a strong union supporter, which she exemplified in her work as a labor negotiator for the teacher's local.

Kit McCracken said her mother's feminism came naturally. "She came from feminist stock. She was the oldest of four girls and was always independent. My sense was that the Depression affected her. She knew you had to make your own way."

"She did it all. She was also a wife and a mother. When she was working she eventually was

about the time Mikhail Gorbachev was leaving his position.

McCacken said, "She met with women's groups. She showed such a zeal and indignation on the condition of women. To see the depth of her commitment ..."

In the end, Kit McCracken said she was given a most precious gift. "She let me take care of her."

In addition to daughter Kit, McCracken is survived by her son, Chris of Chicago, as well as nephew, Keith, and nieces, Kristine and Karen.

A memorial service will be scheduled in the future, according to family members.

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