

Citation Speech for Susan Paddock
Peacemaker of the Year Award
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As we all know, our hometown and county recently experienced a “trying time.” This seems like a reasonable judgment, on whatever side of the controversy you found yourself. I refer, of course, to the prospect of a casino being licensed immediately east of Gettysburg—as many of thought, perilously close to the “hallowed grounds” of the National Park. That was our persistent concern, though many among us had other reasons for standing up against a casino. But what would be the best strategy directing resistance to three thousand slot machines in our home town—and in the town with a famous historic aura about it for millions of other Americans?

When the prospect of a casino surfaced, there was a fairly quick negative response by a sizable group of citizens. At the first gathering of those who were either curious or opposed to a gaming establishment close to the intersection of Routes 15 and 30, one of the first persons to raise her voice against a casino was Susan Paddock. But she surprised me—and perhaps many others—by her opening remarks. I remember quite well the substance and tone of what she said on that fateful evening to the large assembly gathered at the Ag Center: “Maybe we should be grateful for this proposal. It could give all of us an opportunity to discover a sense of community where we live.”

That was a fascinating insight. Most communities across the country consist of folks who live side-by-side, but without consistent interaction. Ours is a society that values individualism over community—unless or until our imaginations are provoked by a common cause. A cause of such proportions or unpredictable consequences that many of us felt we had to **do something**.

When the local citizens began to realize what the stakes might be, the question was just that: “What can we do; what should we do?” And the question surely rose on both sides of the issue—by those who would say no to a casino and by those who would say yes to a casino.

It became clear immediately that there was little possibility of a friendly discussion that would resolve the differences. The issue seemed to reside exclusively in the hands of a legislatively appointed Gaming Commission. And what would be the criteria by which they would make their decision to license a casino?

Susan Paddock in the face of such uncertainty kept her head and persuaded many others to do likewise. She was opposed to licensing a casino east of town—or anywhere else, for that matter. But, as I said, she kept her head. Those opposed to a casino in our neighborhood should take the high ground. That is, we should do our best to maintain the peace in a situation that could easily dissolve into hostile camps. When I say this, however, I do not presume to judge the tactics and attitudes of those on the other side of

the fence. I am concerned only to characterize the perspective and the strategy of Susan, who very early on found herself in a position of leadership. And we are here tonight to acknowledge how well she stepped into that position and how she helped to orchestrate those whose commitments quickly began to appear on lawn signs: No Casino Gettysburg.

She enlisted the cooperation, expertise, and commitment of many individuals and organizations beyond Adams County—to raise their voices and to bring authority and knowledge to the No Casino cause.

And—here is the point—she always maintained a level of clarity and integrity that impresses many of us, long after the casino enterprise was diverted from our neighborhood. If anyone deserves a Peacemaker Award for the way she maintained sane leadership and a consistent perspective in an environment that was often tense and chancy—Susan Paddock is that person. She helped us resist the temptations that could have turned those weeks and months into a second Battle of Gettysburg. That Battle, however, would have no winners.

So, rather than recreate her biography and tell you all the things she has done with her other life, I want only to acknowledge what she did for us and for this community. Her home was open to all of us; her time was spent freely to keep the No Casino cause alive and well. I know her phone rang constantly during that time. And she and her husband, Jim, seem tireless, despite what must have been a relentless stream of things to do, people and organizations to consult with, opportunities to be seized. And through it all, she kept the peace.