

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

Doris Heller Teufel: A fierce and fearless dynamo



PHOTO PROVIDED Doris Heller Teufel sits in a Lycoming College yearbook photo for being the crown bearer at the May Day celebration.

Doris Tanger Heller Teufel (1933-2022) — or Dodie, as she was affectionately called — grew up in Williamsport. Thus, it was convenient for her to attend Lycoming College as a commuter student coming to school from her home at 1215 Penn St. However, unlike many commuter students, who stayed on campus only long enough to attend classes, Teufel thrived on everything the college had to offer. Williamsport Junior College had become a four-year institution in 1948, and the

new Lycoming College was establishing itself with all the accreditation procedures, traditions, and organizations that a four-year school should have.

Many insights into Teufel's college years can be gleaned from the documentary evidence: her scrapbook, her yearbooks and the college newspaper.

The Scrapbook

Printed on the first page of Teufel's plain purple scrapbook is "1950-1954." The photo on the page is of a young woman wearing formal dress and a corsage, accompanied by her date in a tux.

Although the scrapbook does not say that Teufel graduated cum laude, it does include a certificate commemorating her being awarded the Faculty Prize in 1953. What primarily fills the book is evidence of Teufel's passion for music. As she said, *"Singing enriched my whole college experience immensely."* She was chosen for The Singers, a select Lycoming College choral group that toured and was much in demand at churches and schools. As a member of the A Cappella Choir, she sang at the dedication of Long Library, a building essential to the accreditation of the new four-year school. Her senior music recital included works by Bach and Schubert.

Also in the scrapbook are programs and letters showing that Teufel maintained a musical connection with the city's Civic Choir. In fact, she was selected as one of the soloists for the choir's annual performance of Handel's "*Messiah*," held at Pine Street Church. She was to sing many lead roles with the group through the years after graduation.

The Yearbooks

The yearbooks confirm Teufel's position as a presence on campus. In the annuals for both her sophomore year and her junior year, she is pictured as one of three students (one per class) selected for a "*Who's Who*" feature. The yearbooks also show her to have been a crown bearer at the May Day Celebration, a fraternity sweetheart at Homecoming, and Crescent Queen of Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity. In honor of her coronation as queen she received both a kiss and a bouquet of white roses.

The College Newspaper

A search of the college newspaper, The Courier, turns up many instances of the name Heller. Doris Heller Teufel was involved in the business management of the newspaper, as well as in such organizations as the Non-Resident Women's Association, of which she was vice-president; the Pre-medical Society, associated with her biology major and psychology minor; and student government. But being mentioned in the newspaper was nothing new for Teufel. On August 30, 2021, an article in the Williamsport Sun- Gazette's "*A Piece of Our Past*" column included a picture in which ninth-grade Doris at Curtin Junior High School was featured for appearing in the operetta "*Pirates of Penzance*."

A college newspaper article titled "*AWS Plan to Eat*" describes many of the activities of the Associated Women Students, an organization of which Teufel was the first president. The article pictures young women in saddle shoes sponsoring coffee hours, holding teas for Christmas and Mother's Day, meeting together at local restaurants, and serving refreshments when guest speakers came to campus. Lycoming was one of the few colleges to adopt such a program, open to all female students and designed to foster relations among women on campus. The organization's mission was "*to encourage and sponsor activities and to encourage cooperation in community living and create a spirit of mutual helpfulness and understanding.*" To instill a spirit of community, the group held activities such as talent shows, picnics, and a masquerade ball. Later this organization would fall under the auspices of the national Intercollegiate Association of Women Students, a

group dedicated to developing attitudes by which women could govern themselves throughout college and life.

It should be noted that not every newspaper reference to Teufel was a complimentary one. A gossipy mention of her in the school newspaper stated, *“We wish Doris Heller, ’54, would pay attention to chapel speakers.”*

“The Arts Make Life Worth Living”

Teufel’s connection with her college lasted a lifetime. She came back to present a recital for the Clarke Chapel Alumni concert series, and she participated in many other alumni activities including fund raising. Her love of travel led to the establishment of a scholarship for students to study abroad. She is quoted in a college newsletter as saying, *“It is such a pleasure in giving outside of yourself.”*

Teufel believed that *“the arts make life worth living,”* and she devoted her talents and resources to the causes that she felt passionate about. She was dedicated to her career as an art and music teacher, instructing students at George Becht, Jefferson and Sheridan schools and later at Roosevelt Junior High School and Williamsport Area High School. She sang in community productions, and her artwork appeared in local exhibitions.

As cultural director for the summer programs of the Williamsport Recreation Commission from 1971 to 1979, she started Home Made Days. Her membership in the Williamsport Music Club spanned 60 years, and during that time not only did she direct the Williamsport Junior Music Club for 17 years, but she was also instrumental in coordinating the Budd Memorial Scholarship to support young musicians.

Teufel was proud of her family’s history in the community. She was a member of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and served as Regent from 2004 to 2007. Her name is prominent in the programs, which cite her as serving on committees, hosting meetings, helping to write original music, and singing at events.

Teufel married late in life. She and her husband, Thomas Teufel, were long-time members of Messiah Lutheran Church. They had no children, but she mentored many young women who considered themselves her *“student daughters.”* Some young people were inspired by her gardening to seek careers in the horticultural field.

Thomas Teufel's obituary stated that "*community involvement and service to others were prominent in his life.*" The same was true of Doris Teufel. She was described at her funeral service as "*fierce and fearless in her dedication to people and programs,*" a "*dynamo*" with her enthusiasm for causes that she believed in, and "*generous*" with her time and many talents. Teufel said that her father, who worked at the Williamsport Water Authority for over 50 years, taught her that "*as long as you know you've done it, that is all that counts.*" Doris Teufel's life is a testament to the difference one person can make in a community.

Sieminski is the former director of the Madigan Library at Penn College. Hurlbert is a Professor Emeritus of Library Services at Lycoming College. Sieminski and Hurlbert are founders of the Lycoming County Women's History Project (www.lycoming.edu/lcwhp). Their column is published monthly, and they may be reached at lcwhcmanager@gmail.com.

Janet Hulbert, a founder of the Lycoming County Women's History Project and a contributor to this Lycoming County Women's column for the last 10 years, is relocating to Ames, Iowa, her hometown. Janet had a long career as a librarian, including many years Dean and Director of Library Services at Lycoming College. Her research, writing, and insights into women's lives will be sorely missed.

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