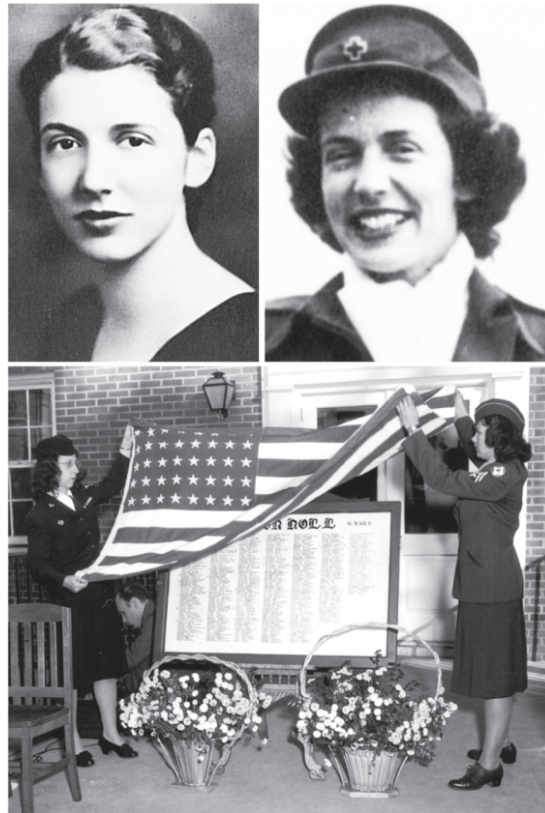


WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

Jean Jackson McCormick: A local girl turns lawyer, then war hero



PHOTOS PROVIDED Portrait from Mount Holyoke College's 1934 yearbook, courtesy of the Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections. Used with permission. Pictured in her Red Cross uniform, circa 1945. Photograph courtesy of Jean's nephew, Tim Sinclair. Unveiling of the Honor Roll during the dedication of Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, circa 1945. Photograph courtesy of the Lycoming College Archives. Used with permission.

1 article remaining...

Starting at \$4.62/week.

Subscribe Today

dedicated Soldiers and Sailors Memorial
mes of 435 alumni that had served during
heir names noting that they had made the
1: Jean Jackson McCormick.

Early life in Williamsport

Jean Jackson McCormick was born Jean Lundy Jackson on Jan. 11, 1914, in Williamsport. She was the youngest of A.R. and Josephine Jackson's five children. A.R. Jackson had a long career as an attorney in Williamsport. Jean was raised at 344 Campbell Street in Williamsport and attended Central Presbyterian Church on West Fourth Street.

In 1919, Jean began attending Williamsport Dickinson Seminary. The school newspaper mentioned her in a recap of an April 1920 performance, noting that Jean and her sister Helen gave recitations between acts that *"added to the enjoyment of the evening, as the recitations were full of wit and humor."* Jean attended there until 1928, eventually enrolling in the College Preparatory Department. She was popular, serving as a herald to the 1928 May Queen, and performed well academically, earning the 1928 Benjamin C. Conner Prize for the highest grade in Junior Mathematics. She then attended Highland Hall Preparatory School in Hollidaysburg for the 1929-30 academic year before enrolling at Mount Holyoke College.

Highly educated and active

Ad closed by Google

1 article remaining...

Starting at \$4.62/week.

Subscribe Today

Jean's personality was also on display at Mount Holyoke and she demonstrated traits that would serve her well during the war. She danced (in the Class of 1934's presentation of their class song), she spoke (supporting President Herbert Hoover's reelection), she played (on the 1933 basketball and soccer teams), and she led (chairman of the Scholarship Fund Committee in the midst of the Great Depression). She was crowned the 1934 May Queen before a crowd of 2,000. Newspapers across the country featured a photograph of Jean as the May Queen *"acclaimed as most beautiful senior at Mount Holyoke College."* She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Economics in 1934.

During her time at Mount Holyoke Jean became acquainted with Henry Tucker McCormick, a student at nearby Amherst College. In June 1935 the two married in Williamsport, and in the fall, they enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. According to the Sept. 9, 1935, Grit, they were the first husband and wife ever to be admitted. After graduating, they relocated to Houston, Texas, where they both practiced law. Henry served as lieutenant in the Navy during World War II.

In service of others

Jean began her war effort by joining the American Red Cross in 1942. She went overseas in September 1943, arriving in London the following month. Jean couldn't detail the risky ocean voyage in her letters for security reasons, but she did note that it was *"not without interest."* Jean's first assignment was as a recreational staff assistant at a Red Cross Club in Cambridge, England. By 1944 she was a supervisor of her own Red Cross Club.

In 1944 Jean gave up this relative safety and volunteered for the Red Cross Clubmobile Service. Clubmobiles were two and a half-ton GMC trucks complete with a kitchen, primarily for coffee and doughnut making, operated and maintained by a team of three specially trained women. Jean was part of Clubmobile Group G that landed at Utah Beach in August 1944 and was attached to the Army's XV Corps as it fought through France.

In a Dec. 3, 1944, article in the Scranton Times-Tribune, war correspondent Morley Cassidy described Jean. *"a pretty brunette with a soft heart for homesick kids,"* as

1 article remaining...

Starting at \$4.62/week.

Subscribe Today

b in Luneville, France, a spontaneous Red it lines. Cassidy said the club *"set new ling, letter writing, and listening to k home."* Cassidy highlighted Jean's l to dry soldiers' wet socks and warm their fooling a French guard into allowing them

into a nearby coal dump to load up tons of coal. When an M.P. demanded they put it back, Jean and the women complied, but only returned a ton and kept the rest. Cassidy deemed them four of the smartest girls in France and said that any G.I. would be proud of their scrounging abilities. Cassidy believed that the thousands of soldiers that visited the “*Up Front*” club would remember it as one bright spot in the war.

Jean’s unit followed the XVI Corps as it entered Germany. As the war came to an end Jean went on leave and in a letter to her parents she documented her journey. Flying over the Ruhr industrial area of Germany she witnessed “*Areas...just peppered with bomb craters. Whole towns without roofs and very few houses left at all.*” Arriving in Paris the day before V-E Day, she wrote, “*I have never seen such a hilarious world. People thronged the streets...All sorts of people in all sorts of clothes kissing each other and acting like a carnival.*” Quartered at a general’s house in Paris, Jean juxtaposed the elegant dinner with her recent time near the front: “*I put on another blouse under my dirty uniform and went down to dinner... Dinner was long and delicious, with beautiful chrystal [sic]...after months of Germany it was like a dream.*” Arriving in London on V-E Day, she described it as “*just as frantic as Paris.*” Jean’s letters also expressed concern for her parents. “*I have been thinking so much of you and of how you are getting along with moving and all the hard things you are having to do.*”

At the end of her leave, Jean returned to her Clubmobile to meet the needs of the troops transitioning to occupation duty. Tragically, on Aug. 15, 1945, she was killed in a plane crash in the Alps while flying from Germany to Paris. As the Sept. 15, 1945, issue of the Sun-Gazette put it, “*For two years she served overseas, escaping injury during the war, only to meet death in an airplane crash last month.*” She is buried at the Lorraine American Cemetery and Memorial in France. In 1946 the Red Cross posthumously awarded her a bronze medal for heroism and devotion to duty. Mary Mills, alumni secretary at Mount Holyoke, wrote in a letter to A.R. Jackson lamenting his daughter’s death: “*She was an outstanding girl and it was so like her to join those who have so unselfishly served their country.*”

The honor roll listing Jean and the other World War II veterans is now part of the

1 article remaining...

are copies of the letters quoted in this

Starting at \$4.62/week.

Subscribe Today

Lycoming College and the collection
en’s History Project. He has a master’s
sity of West Florida. He can be reached

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.

NEWSLETTER

Today's breaking news and more in your inbox

I'm interested in (please check all that apply)

☐ Daily Newsletter

☐ Breaking News

☐ Obituaries

Are you a paying subscriber to the newspaper? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

SUBSCRIBE

1 article remaining...

Starting at \$4.62/week.

Subscribe Today