

Jane McHenry, wife of first UCSC chancellor, dies at 101

By J.M. BROWN

jbrown@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Jane S. McHenry, who was the wife of UC Santa Cruz's founding chancellor, Dean E. McHenry, was a fixture on campus and in city life during the often tumultuous 1960s and 1970s before retreating to a quiet life tending to her family's vineyards, died Friday at her home in Bonny Doon. She was 101.

Henry McHenry, one of her four children, said she died peacefully with family members gathered at the home shared with her husband after his retirement in 1974. Dean McHenry, for whom UCSC's main library is named, died in 1998.

Jane McHenry was a prolific entertainer during the 13 years her husband served in the top post, hosting governors, univer-

SEE MCHENRY ON A4



CONTRIBUTED

Jane McHenry died Friday at her home. She was 101.

MCHENRY

Continued from A1

sity regents, faculty leaders, city dignitaries and students at the chancellor's residence, University House, which offers sweeping views of Monterey Bay.

"She was the hostess for everything, and she was not a natural extrovert," her son said. "But she did that role very well."

And the role was much more than just hosting teas and receptions for the sake of entertaining. It required political acumen.

Jane McHenry played a critical part in building relationships on and off campus at a time of social unrest sparked by the Vietnam War. There was also deep tension within Santa Cruz about what impacts the nascent campus would have on a small, mostly politically conservative beach town steeped in logging, fishing and manufacturing.

"Relations with the old-time Santa Cruz community were not always good, and it depended on the McHenrys reaching out with diplomacy and working with the community," said California's Secretary of Natural Resources John Laird, a 1972 UCSC graduate and former mayor and state assemblyman. "And she was really part of that. She was maybe not as out front as he was, but she was part of the team with him all the way."

Norm Lezin, mayor of Santa Cruz in 1964-65, remembered McHenry fondly.

"She was very vivacious, enterprising and took you in her confidence," Lezin said. "She was of good humor, enjoyed the complexity of their lives and was marvelously tuned in to the dynamics of the university."

Jane Snyder McHenry was born in Hollywood on Sept. 16, 1912 to William Snyder, a principal at Hollywood

BIOGRAPHY

JANE SNYDER
MCHENRY

BORN: Sept. 16, 1912

DIED: Dec. 20, 2013

WHO: Widow of UC Santa Cruz's first chancellor, Dean E. McHenry; matriarch of McHenry Vineyards

RESIDENCE: Bonny Doon

FAMILY: Children Sally Mackenzie, Dean McHenry Jr., Nancy Fletcher, Henry McHenry; nine grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren

High School and a founder of Los Angeles Community College, and his wife, Emma. She graduated with a master's degree in political science from Stanford University.

McHenry met her husband at Stanford, where she was a roommate to Catherine "Kay" Kerr, the future wife of Clark Kerr, who as president of the UC system later appointed Dean McHenry to the top post at UCSC. President Kerr and Dean McHenry, who helped Kerr plan the development of UC campuses in San Diego and Irvine, also were roommates at Stanford, where Deah McHenry received his master's degree.

Married in 1935, the McHenrys lived in the eastern U.S. while Dean McHenry taught government at Williams College in Massachusetts and political science at Pennsylvania State. While pursuing his doctorate from UC Berkeley, the couple lived in London for a year while he wrote his dissertation.

The McHenrys eventually returned to California when Dean McHenry accepted a job teaching political science at UCLA in 1939. Jane McHenry was active in the League of Women Voters and a member of the grand jury in Los Angeles County, chairing the schools commit-

tee whose investigations, she said, led to the indictment or resignation of several top officials.

"I remember a deputy sheriff who went to jail for perjury because of notes I kept on the testimony he gave us in the grand jury," she told the Sentinel in 1974, just months before her husband's retirement. "He was telling two different stories."

In the interview with writer Barbara Burklo, McHenry said she looked forward to the freedom afforded by the impending retirement.

"I have felt a bit restrained to say and do what I wanted to, but shortly, I can," she said, adding that "I have opinions."

A NURTURING ROLE

Dean McHenry was tapped to head UCSC four years before the campus, following the residential college model, opened with a class of 650 students. The student body was 5,000 when McHenry retired and has since grown to more than 15,000 undergraduates.

In a 1961 Sentinel article about the incoming chancellor, Jane McHenry told of the family's life in her husband's native Lompoc. It seemed to prepare them well for the natural beauty that defines UCSC.

"We loved the out of doors and all that goes with it — swimming, horseback riding, hiking and even the simple chores of the farm," McHenry said at the time.

"Jane McHenry was a very important figure in UC Santa Cruz's early history, partnering with Dean as they nurtured the new campus through its infancy," UCSC Chancellor George Blumenthal said Friday. "The many students, faculty, staff, and community members who had the good fortune to know Jane will never forget her. She was insightful, engaging, and — above all — gracious. I can

still remember the warmth she displayed as she welcomed me, a young faculty member at the time, to University House for the first time."

McHenry was known to many as "super hostess, one who is totally organized and absolutely unflappable in any social situation," Burklo wrote in her 1974 article. She often found herself entertaining students, by invitation and not, when young people sometimes dropped by "just to talk things out."

McHenry said one or two students always showed up early for events, and she would simply hand them a book and "go about her preparations," Burklo wrote.

McHenry, who along with her husband took care of some of the gardening outside University House and all of the plants inside, was involved with the UCSC Arboretum. She later planted vines at the couple's Bonny Doon farm, which has produced wine commercially under the name McHenry Vineyards since 1980.

Even though the vineyard died in the early 1990s due to a bacteria carried by insects, they replanted several years later and the generations still gather with friends for the annual harvest.

Henry McHenry, an emeritus professor of anthropology at UC Davis, said the family has made no decision about memorial services for his mother, but said no public event is anticipated.

Jane McHenry also is survived by daughter Sally Mackenzie of Kansas, son Dean McHenry Jr. of Claremont, daughter Nancy Fletcher of Los Altos, nine grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren.

Follow Sentinel reporter J.M. Brown at Twitter.com/jmbrown-reports