

Jean M. McNeil, former mayor, dies

WATSONVILLE — Jean M. McNeil, a former city councilwoman and a Watsonville resident since the early 1950s, died Wednesday at her apartment at Valley Heights retirement community after a long illness. She was 85.

A native of Scotland, McNeil served as mayor of Watsonville and was the second woman to serve on the City Council. She served two terms, from 1973-81. She served on the Santa Cruz County Transportation Commission after leaving the council.

She served as a British Army nurse during World War II. McNeil operated the McNeil Rest Home in Watsonville from 1952 to 1964. She belonged to the Watsonville

Woman's Club and served on local water boards and was active in the Republican party.

Former Mayor Ann Soldo said McNeil was the person she consulted when she ran for City Council in 1979.

Soldo didn't know McNeil at the time, but they later became close friends.

"She encouraged me to run," said Soldo, who said she learned from McNeil "to do your homework, consider all sides, and to make your own decision."

McNeil's husband, John McNeil, died in 1992. She leaves one sister, Margaret of Scotland; a niece, Cathy Szekely of Dallas; and a nephew,

Michael J. Manley of Detroit.

At her request, no services will be held. Cremation and scattering at sea have been arranged by Mehl's Colonial Chapel.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions be made to Watsonville Hospital Foundation, 298 Green Valley Road, Watsonville, or to Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children, 1701 19th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122.