

A Profile of Jean Otto Wallace MacIntosh

by Barbara Kerr Carrozzi

October 3, 1919, dawned a typical, seemingly routine, early autumn morning in Naples, New York, a small village southwest of Canandaigua Lake, population 1200. However, inside the two-story white colonial Main Street home of Harry Otto and Josephine Nelson Otto, it was a very special day filled with excitement and rejoicing as they welcomed the safe arrival into this world of their third daughter, Jean Wallace Otto. Also caught up in the wonder and joy were their two older daughters, Dorothy and Frances. In 1921, a fourth daughter, Ruth, would complete this loving and happy family! Jean's parents were a civic-minded couple; her dad served as mayor of the village and, as president of the school board for many years, was instrumental in getting a centralized school system approved and implemented. Jean's mother, a vibrant, vocal and supportive wife, was also an active participant in the life of the village and local church and devoted to properly raising her four beautiful and popular daughters.

Almost 95 years later, on a sunny spring morning at Kendal on Hudson in Sleepy Hollow in her cozy, comfortable apartment with commanding, spectacular, sweeping views of the magnificent Hudson River and the breathtaking Palisades as a backdrop, Jean, with her keen mind, candor and humor, reminisced and shared an amazing, to date, life's journey.

And so we begin: Jean spent her childhood in a warm and loving home where, around the dinner-table, frequent thought-provoking, stimulating discussions on politics, education and any other topics of interest were common occurrences and, as Jean tells it, they always seemed to be active and involved. She fondly recalled many road trips the family took; the memory of a particular one with all six of them in the old Reo (complete with window shades and a tiny vase mounted on the rear interior wall) heading for Chicago to visit family and friends, brought a big smile to her face.

Popular and friendly, Jean formed many friendships and relationships within the small vil-

lage; surviving members of a close group of eight girls formed early in youth remain in touch today through correspondence and telephone calls. She sang in the glee club at school and the choir at church, was a Naples High cheerleader, a French horn player in the marching band, and a member and leader of the 4-H club, to name a few of the interests and activities that kept her days of youth busy, fun and exciting!

Completing elementary and high school in Naples's public school system, it was off to college for the beautiful and outgoing young woman! Keuka College for Women, on the shores of Keuka Lake, was her choice, and true to her nature, Jean became involved in many campus activities. Always a good student, she continued to excel in her studies, and filled with the hopes, dreams and expectations of a twenty-one-year-old young woman, she eagerly and happily graduated with a Bachelors of Arts degree in English as a member of the Class of 1941.

In the fall of that year, she began her first "grown-up" job, a two-year employment as a high school English teacher in South Onondaga, New York, receiving an annual salary of \$1100, with a whopping \$75 raise in the second year. Coinciding with this period was the state of unrest in the world and the United States' involvement in World War II.



Jean enlisted in the U.S. Navy in September, 1943.

A Profile of Jean Otto Wallace MacIntosh, *continued*

Taking a lead from her youngest sister, Ruth's support of the war effort (having recently graduated from Boston University, she entered the Army Medical Corp along with her two college roommates in June 1943 as first lieutenants), Jean, with two years of teaching behind her, enlisted in the U.S. Navy in September 1943. Little did she know at the time the impact that decision would have on the rest of her life!

After boot camp at Hunter College in the Bronx, Jean was assigned to Atlanta, Georgia, where she trained to become a control tower operator. Schooling completed, she served in that capacity at the Charleston, South Carolina Naval Air Station (the aircraft there being blimps and seaplanes!). Additional officers' training at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and St. Simons Island, Georgia, followed, culminating in her assignment to the air traffic control center at the naval air station in Vero Beach, Florida, where a program for training fighter pilots in the use of radar for night flying was being set up.

It was at this naval air station that Jean met Herbert George MacIntosh, Columbia University Class of 1936—a tall, dark, handsome naval officer who had just returned from two years' active duty in the Pacific. Sparks flew, as the proverbial saying goes, and it wasn't long before a romance blossomed and bloomed for the handsome personnel director of the naval air station, Lieutenant Senior Grade, and the outgoing, very attractive brunette WAVE (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service). After two years of dating, they were united in marriage at the Community Church, Vero Beach, Florida, on March 23, 1946, and left for a honeymoon trip to Cuba!

With the war ending, Commander MacIntosh, as the Number 2 man (executive of the naval air station), closed down the station and both Herb and Jean, now honorably discharged from the military, headed to New York City where Herb, who was fondly called "Mac," had a job waiting for him at Stern's Department Store, having been employed there prior to the war's outbreak. When Stern's closed its doors, Mac began his employment in 1958 with Brooks Brothers Men's Clothing Store in their Manhattan headquarters.



Jean and Mac on their wedding day, March 23, 1946.

Back in the New York area, they came to Irvington and lived with Jean's sister and brother-in-law, Dorothy and Mitchell Vincent, and their family in Cedar Ridge until February 1947. With Jean in Dobbs Ferry Hospital after having just given birth to their first child, Barbara, Mac found an apartment on Bradley Street in Dobbs Ferry where they resided for two years until the impending birth of their second child, William, had the young couple seriously house hunting. Within three months, they found the perfect home and it was almost too good to be true! It was one of only four houses on Meadow Way in the Cedar Ridge section of the village, two houses away from the Vincent family and behind Ruth and Roswell Harriman's home, who besides being wonderful neighbors, had a daughter, Susan, who was to become "babysitter extraordinaire" for the MacIntosh children, as well as a life-long friend. Nicely settled in their new home, Jean and Mac were delighted, two years later, to once again welcome a new baby into the family with the arrival of their second son, Donald. Several years later, with Jean and Mac expecting their second daughter, Susan, the search was on for a larger home. After a considerable time of searching and lengthy negotiation, they purchased their beautiful house on Fargo Lane in 1957.

Jean and Mac were blessed with a loving family and a happy and full life together. They were active participants in village life, with Mac serving two terms

A Profile of Jean Otto Wallace MacIntosh, *continued*

as Village Trustee. As members of IPAP (Irvington Past And Present, a group of 12 couples that was in existence from 1988 to 1999), they traveled once a year to different East Coast destinations, spending a fun-filled weekend together, and as a couple traveled extensively throughout the United States, South America, Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. Avid curlers (Jean curled up until her 94th year!!), they also traveled internationally on teams, with Jean in later years becoming a member of "SLICCS," Senior Ladies International Curling Club.



Jean and Mac with their four children, circa 1956.

In 1979, as Executive Vice President of Brooks Brothers, Mac officially retired, but spent the next five years back working for the company, a job he dearly loved! As the years progressed, Mac became ill and after four years of lingering illness, passed away New Year's Eve 2000 at the age of 86, a time of tremendous loss for his beloved family, many friends and the community.

Jean continued to reside in their Fargo Lane home until 2005 when she moved to Kendal. Even though she is currently residing only two small villages away in Sleepy Hollow, she keeps in contact with her many longtime Irvington friends. A member of the Irvington Presbyterian Church for 62 years, Jean has held many positions of leadership within the

church, including serving on its Board of Elders at the time the Good Shepherd Nursery School was founded. Currently, she can be seen singing alto in the church choir, participating in the church's *Messiah* concert every December, and serving as a faithful member of its women's group.

Throughout her children's school years, Jean volunteered her time and talents to a variety of community events, activities and organizations, among them the Cub Scouts and PTA. In 1975, under the auspices of the Visiting Nurse Service, Jean instituted Irvington's Meals on Wheels program. With "a wonderful group of volunteers," Jean remained at the helm for 21 years, until the program came to be administered by the Town of Greenburgh. Always keenly involved with the life of Keuka College, serving on its board of trustees for two terms and as president of the Syracuse, lower Westchester and Connecticut, and New York City alumni clubs, she remains devoted to its alumni association, and continues as life president, Class of 1941. A weekly bridge game with longtime Irvington friends, along with active participation in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the Dobbs Ferry Garden Club, the Westchester Genealogical Society and the Irvington Historical Society are just a few of the activities and organizations that keep her fully living her life and loving it! At Kendal, she serves on the education and trips committees, planning excursions to New York City and Connecticut museums and places of interest, as well as being responsible for obtaining weekly guest speakers for resident programs. The Kendal bus is often seen in our village as Jean encourages and organizes trips to McVickar House to view the exhibits and tour our village, with, you guessed it, dynamic Jean as hostess and tour guide!

Over the years, Jean has been blessed with the addition to her family of six grandchildren—three boys and three girls—as well as two great-granddaughters. An involved and devoted mother and grandmother, she lives a happy, contented life surrounded by her loving family and many, many friends. What a privilege and joy to sit and visit with her; to listen to the wonderful stories of growing up in a small village in upstate New York, the

A Profile of Jean Otto Wallace MacIntosh, *continued*

relating of her and Mac's experiences during the war years, the early years of marriage and motherhood, and all the amazing joys and happenings in a remarkable life well-lived! Her recall and attention to detail, dates, times, and places is utterly amazing! When you're in her presence, you're reminded of the old expression, "If you want something done, ask the busiest person to do it!" Possessed with what seems to be a tireless spirit, and her beautiful, welcoming smile, positive attitude, and uplifting nature, Jean attracts like a magnet! Involved, active, energetic, kind and compassionate, generous with her time and talents, always willing to lend a hand, and committed to keeping in touch with extended family and lifelong friends with a handwritten note or a phone call, Jean epitomizes living life to the fullest with thanksgiving. A lover of Irvington since the mid 1940s, Jean has not forgotten her "roots." Every year, she and her children, as well as her sister's families, share the weeks of summer spending times of R&R at the family cottage on Canandaigua Lake, one of New York's beautiful Finger Lakes.



Our collective hats are off to Jean Wallace Otto MacIntosh, a woman of great and varied accomplishments, celebrating 95 years of an extraordinary life on October 3, 2014—a woman of faith, service, loyalty, patriotism, and integrity, and a truly remarkable example and inspiration to us all! Blessings always, dear Jean!

Barbara Kerr Carrozzini

*Coming in September
to the McVickar House—
Irvington Unfolds:
A Village History in Maps*