

Life Tributes

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Everlasting
memories
of loved ones

Jean Landis

September 28, 1918 - December 13, 2022



SAN DIEGO —

Jean Landis was born on September 28, 1918, to Felix Landis and Alice Katherine Nesch Landis in the small farming community of El Cajon, California. Jean was the middle child of three — Felix Jr. was two years older, and Jerry was 10 years her junior. Jean was a tomboy and loved sports, the outdoors, and riding her horse, Apache Maid bareback through the fields.

After high school, Jean attended San Diego Teachers College (now called SDSU) where she was Homecoming Queen and active in campus clubs. Upon her graduation in 1940 with an A.B. degree in Physical Education, Jean taught at Grossmont High School in San Diego. That same year,



she took the first step in pursuing her lifelong dream of flying. Jean joined the Civilian Pilot Training program (CPT).

When the country entered WW II, Jean volunteered and was chosen for the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), a paramilitary organization where women flew military aircraft on non-combat missions, freeing male pilots for combat roles. She was one of a few women trained to fly the P-51 Mustang and spent the bulk of the war flying these amazing machines from the factory in Long Beach, California to Newark, New Jersey where they were loaded onto Liberty cargo ships and sent across the Atlantic. Jean would then

fly a P-47 Thunderbolt back across the country where it would be used in battle in the Pacific Theater. She also flew the B-17, C-47, P-39, P-40, and the P-63 on special missions.

Jean served until the WASP program deactivated in 1944. The women who served as WASP went unrecognized as American patriots. That ended when the U.S. Congress passed a bill to award the Congressional Gold Medal — the highest award of honor for civilians — to Jean Landis and all other female WASP pilots, giving them full veteran status.

After the war, Jean went back to teaching physical education, which she loved. She attended graduate school and obtained her M.S. degree from Wellesley College in Massachusetts. During her academic career, she held faculty positions at Park College, West Chester State Teachers College, and Ball State Teachers College. Her last faculty post was at her alma mater, San Diego State. She held the position of Assistant Professor of Physical Education from 1968 until her

retirement in 1979, then was awarded the status of Emeritus Assistant Professor of Physical Education.

In 2015, Jean was awarded the SDSU Alumni Association's prestigious "Monty" award from the College of Health & Human Services in recognition of her contributions to SDSU and the country.

Jean moved to assisted living at Lantern Crest in Santee in 2017 and that is where she peacefully passed on Tuesday, December 13 at the age of 104.

She loved all animals and was a big supporter of animal rights.

Jean is survived by her niece, Daylene Landis Polich; nephew, David Polich; nephew, David Landis; niece, Sharon Landis; niece, Dana Landis; nephew, Noah Landis; and several great-nephews and nieces as well as lifelong friends, Carmen Moreschini and Gail Tissier. A private family service will be held early in 2023. A plaque in her memory will be added to the Veteran's Memorial on Mt. Soledad.

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