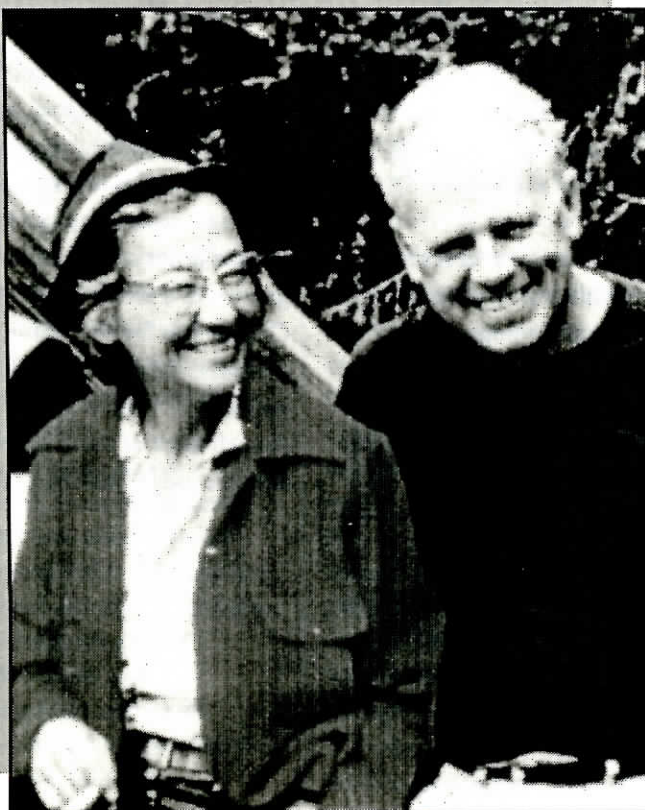


## Jane



*Jane and Grant McConnell*

**M**y grandmother, *Jane Foster McConnell*, lost her battle with death this February 21, 1998. Until that moment, I would have placed my money against death — I wouldn't have bet against my grandmother in any contest where force of will counted. It was that will, that tremendous life force, along with a gift for storytelling, that made my grandmother the memorable person she was. She devoted both her energy and her storytelling to the North Cascades.

Jane told the best stories I ever heard (they got better and better over time). In another culture she would have been the village storyteller, the holder of the community's oral memory. Many a time she coaxed me up hot and dusty trails by distracting me with new stories or new telling of old ones. In Stehekin, she taught me how to make bread, the dough left to rise in a warming oven on top of the wood stove in

the kitchen or in the sun in the meadow in front of the cabin. She would take me down the road to visit and gossip with neighbors, took me fishing, and on hot days would take me down to the cool slough in the river to swim.

In trying to write about Jane, it is difficult not to find oneself writing as much about Grant, the husband with whom she shared a life of passionate love. She shaped her life around his, assisted him relentlessly in his academic career as a political scientist, and made the mountains he loved her home. It is paradoxical in a eulogy of her to press an independent entity that she insistently denied in life. Yet that very insistence spoke loudly of the strongly independent character she was, despite the self-effacing ends to which she devoted herself.

Jane was born in Minnesota, where her family suffered great financial reverses in 1929. She graduated from St. Mary's Hall

and was awarded a scholarship to Swarthmore College. Two years later, financial difficulties forced her to transfer to the Yale School of Nursing. She became a public health nurse and college nurse at Reed College, where she met her future husband when he broke his arm in a skiing accident. Despite being from the non-mountainous Midwest, Jane soon became a remarkable mountaineer with at least one first ascent in the North Cascades to her credit. She served as a nurse in the London Blitz and as a Red Cross recruiter through most of World War II.

The happiest time of her life was the three years she and Grant lived year-round in their cabin in Stehekin. There she gave birth to her daughter Ann (my mother). Her son Jim was born shortly thereafter. Jane and Grant brought their children, and then me, to Stehekin every summer. It was Jane who got me up my first mountains with her stories of the old Stehekin community, and it was she who showed me that friendships could be maintained in Stehekin despite drastic political differences. It was also she who first showed me citizen politics in action, and that they could be fun — she spent many sociable hours at the Stehekin boat dock collecting anti-James Watt signatures.

Jane played an important role in efforts that led to the creation of the North Cascades National Park. She helped found the NCCC and over the decades hosted hundreds of strategizing sessions at her picnic table. Through her life she continued tireless efforts to protect wild lands, both in the North Cascades and elsewhere. She is now gone, but her tremendous energy still reverberates.

CAROLYN MCCONNELL  
JUNE 1998



# McConnell

## "Whose ice axer?"

What have you climbed?" asked Jane McConnell, entering in Stehekin Landing's famous pie cafe, the summer of 1955.

Phil and Laura Zalesky and Polly Dyer replied, probably in unison. "We haven't been climbing — just backpacking east of the Cascade Crest to learn about its defacto wilderness." That, The Mountaineers were working on "wilderness" for Glacier Peak and environs and pretty much knew its western and northern surroundings, but not the east side. This was sort of a "study" backpacking trip.

Jane McConnell immediately said they had been trying to keep the Stehekin valley from being logged — a real and major activity and continuing threat. Jane continued, saying that Phil, Laura, and Polly really needed to meet her husband, Grant, but he was seven miles up the valley.

The team of Jane and Grant McConnell soon joined forces with the wilderness activists in The Mountaineers and in the Sierra Club. Polly, on her next trip to California, visited their Berkeley home. Immediately evident was that, indeed, this was a conservationist family. When introducing eight-year-old daughter, Ann, she was told that Mrs. Dyer and others wanted to protect the wilderness country she knew so well in the North Cascades, Ann responded, to the effect, "In that case, you are welcome in our home."

Although Grant McConnell was a professor of Political Science, it was always very apparent that Jane McConnell, a nurse, was equally involved in their aims to stop logging in Stehekin, in the Agnes River valley, keep dams out of the Agnes Gorge,

make sure Cascade and Park Creek passes remained pristine or restored to that state after heavy hiker travel through them, and more. Grant's political science mind and education generated first-rate thoughts about achieving wilderness preservation in the public arena.

In consultation with Jane, it was Grant who proposed a single-purpose group as the way to achieve a Glacier Peak Wilderness and a North Cascades National Park. The Mountaineers conservation leadership recognized this step was essential — to focus on the primary goal for securing permanent protection for Glacier Peak, the North Cascades, and the Stehekin valley. The new group would build on The Mountaineers' work of the 1950s, with members of its conservation committee continuing to be active both in the club as well as in a new organization. So — based on the advice of Jane and Grant McConnell, The Mountaineers invited the northwest member clubs of the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs to a meeting in Portland, Oregon, in the Mazama's clubroom, to form what became the North Cascades Conservation Council. The rest of the story is well known — the long continuing efforts leading to President Lyndon Johnson signing the North Cascades National Park Act in 1968.

Thank you, Jane McConnell, who, with your husband, Grant, did so much to assure the wild country that you, that we all, cherish will be there for generations long after yours and ours. We continue your work, to finish those goals not quite yet gained. In your memory, they yet will be.

POLLY DYER

## Sempervirens Fund

Gifts may be made in *Jane McConnell's* name to the Sempervirens Fund which sponsors the planting of thousands of redwood seedlings as part of a forest restoration program in Redwood National Park, California.

Funds which were given after Grant McConnell's death were sufficient to establish a grove in his name adjacent to Big Basin State Park, to Jane's immense gratification.

The Sempervirens Fund has purchased threatened lands in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which have been transferred to Big Basin Redwoods, Butano, and Castle Rock State Parks.

Contributions to Sempervirens Fund are tax-deductible.

*Sempervirens Fund*  
*Drawer BE*

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# In Memoriam: Jane McConnell

Phil Zalesky remembers this moment in the history of the North Cascades: "First meeting with Jane McConnell at Stehekin: Laura and I had invited Polly to see the Glacier Peak Area. We had hiked up past Lyman Lake, over Suiattle and Cloudy Passes, and spent the night in the late June snow short of Image Lake, dodging a mining helicopter. We then retraced our steps and went down Agnes Creek. We arrived at Stehekin and spent the night in the picnic area. In the meantime, Mrs. Rick Mack from Yakima was at the McConnell's where the discussion had been heavy on what to do about saving the Stehekin valley and preventing logging up the Agnes River. Jane and Rick came down to meet the Lady of the Lake. Rick greeted Polly, called Jane McConnell over, and introduced us. They informed us that Grant had a facial skin rash and did not want to leave the cabin and come to the landing.

While at the home of Grant and Jane in California, Grant and Polly decided to get a group of Sierra Club people together at her home in Auburn. Not being a Sierra Club member, I was not present. It was at this meeting that at Grant's urging a strategy was made to form a single-issue conservation group. Patrick had gone there feeling as I did that The Mountaineers Conservation Committee was doing just fine. He came back convinced otherwise in favor of a single-issue conservation organization. Whether they had decided at that meeting that the object was a national park, I do not know. I was not aware of those plans if that was what they were thinking. They asked me, nevertheless, to become the president of any new group. I agreed.

Our problems with the Regional Office of the Forest Service were immense on the issue of Glacier Peak. Moreover, some prominent conservation leaders had been co-opted. President Chet Powell of The Mountaineers sent out the letter to conservationists in the Portland and Eugene areas and the Praters in Ellensburg. We went to

## The People Who Created the NCCC

Portland to meet with Regional Forester J. Herbert Stone knowing full well that we could not shake him or his bureaucrats from their opposition to a Glacier Peak Wilderness Area. I do not believe that it was an invitation to FWOC members to come to the meeting, primarily because of the co-opted conservationist leader who had been co-opted. The conservationists present, by pre-arrangement, were asked to adjourn from the regional office to the Mazama Clubrooms. Those who were not Mountaineers were surprised when we told them what we planned. We then hauled out a set of by-laws prepared by those of us in The Mountaineers, voted on them, elected officers, and a board. We excluded Dave Brower because at the time we in The Mountaineers felt the organization should not have a professional conservationist on the board. We voted him in before the year was out. Grant was not included either, for what reason I do not remember. That was the beginning of NCCC as my memory serves me.

Yes, there was some opposition to a Sierra Club chapter in the N.W. My recollection was that the biggest opponent was Leo Gallagher. Yet when the organization formed, Leo joined. When a N.W. Conservation Representative was hired, Leo paid half the salary, sending the money

through the Sierra Club. Mike McCloskey was the first hired.

If there was a proposal by Grant to go for a Glacier Peak Wilderness Area and at the same time a separate national park, I was first aware of it when Brower sent a letter to Patrick (the Sierra Club brotherhood connection again) suggesting that I should not be working as a seasonal ranger in a national park. It was the next year with Patrick as president that Dave Brower, acting on Grant's suggestion, proposed a park to the NCCC Board. I had not considered it a serious question up to that point because as I recall it had been barely mentioned and not previously brought up at board meetings. One of our directors resigned because she felt the Sierra Club had preempted The Mountaineers on a major conservation issue. I considered resigning too, and putting conservation activity behind me. However, I changed my mind, and here I still am.

—PHIL ZALESKY