

Jean Grace
A Profile by Tony Seton

The question is often asked, what's in a name? In the case of Jean Grace, hers is remarkably apropos, as would say most people who know her personally or through her years as Mayor of Carmel-by-the-Sea. She was born in Hollywood, a first generation American; the daughter of a German father and a British mother. Her father had overheard Hitler talking in a bar in 1929 and had realized that he had to leave Germany unless he was willing to become a Nazi follower. He left with a suitcase and \$200.

Arriving in California, he made a very good living as a master furniture maker. "He was a renaissance man. He made most of the furniture in our house. He was actually a scientist and almost a professional guitarist." Assembly line furniture put him out of business so he joined Technicolor and worked the rest of his life in the film industry.

"When I graduated from high school, I had a semester at UCLA and I decided I was tired of people telling me what to study." Plus Jean was enjoying sailing, including races down to Tijuana, and she was working on her own boat, a 28-foot double-ended lapstrake. She built bunks into the hull with power tools that her father loaned her. She was 17 at the time and earning a living by working on other people's boats, varnishing and painting.

The next year, she signed on as a cook on the *Gloria Maris*, a 110-foot schooner, on a scientific expedition to Micronesia. "It was a beautiful racing boat, only twelve or fourteen foot of width, very sensitive; a hard boat to sail." The trip was sponsored through the Museum of Natural History in Philadelphia, and the crew signed on just for the ride. Except for Jean, who insisted on being paid \$60 a month to cover the slip fee for her lapstrake.

She was on the expedition for four months, and then spent another month sailing through Micronesia and then another several weeks visiting Japan. She wanted to see Japan because her mother's brother had been in the British Navy stationed there when the Second World War broke out, and he and his family had been put in a concentration camp. Nonetheless, Jean loved the country, staying in the Royal Hotel in Yokohama, traveling around the country, and taking the bullet train to Osaka. "That was 1955 and we still can't do that here," she noted.

Her trip back to The States was on a freighter, and Jean was one of only four passengers. "And through that I learned to always travel that way. You're the king." She landed in Newport Beach, and the first day she was home, she learned there was a new rigger - someone who does all the wiring and cabling on boats - who had heard about Jean and her travels and wanted to meet her. He turned out to be her first



husband, and father of her three children.

Mac and Jean started a rigging business together and built their own 30-foot cruising boat, pouring 4,000 pounds of lead for the keel. They decided to move to Hawaii, and Jean had to talk Mac out of sailing their boat over the 2,000 miles of ocean since neither of them was skilled at navigating by the stars. So they sold their boat for \$21,000, a very good price in 1960, and with two young children, flew a Constellation 12 hours from Los Angeles to Honolulu.

Jean graduated *magna cum laude* in liberal arts, geography and philosophy, was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa society, and earned a Master's degree in Geography at the University of Hawaii. She also worked as an environmental/conservation writer/editor funded by the University's Sea Grant Programs.

But after 20 rich years, and another marriage, Jean found herself going "island crazy" and decided to return to the mainland. She and her daughter moved up to Carmel. "I never would have gone back to the city. I hated the city. I don't like cities at all. I had fallen in love with Carmel in 1948 when I was 13 and decided that someday I was going to live here."

The year was 1978 and Jean quickly found work with the Big Sur Land Trust, and then the Harrison Memorial Library. She worked as a Field Officer for the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, worked in real estate, and in 1989 she started a 19-year career as an Instructor in Geology and Geography at Monterey Peninsula College - it was her ideal job. She also served as President of the Asilomar Corporation for State Parks, as a trustee with the Robinson Jefferson Tor House Foundation, and on the board of the Henry Miller Library in Big Sur.

Oh, and she was Mayor of Carmel-by-the-Sea for four years. She says she was "curmudgeoned" into the job. "I fell into it only by necessity. Out there was a hole and somebody said I could plug it. I didn't go looking for it."

Jean still pays attention to the politics of Carmel, of course. "I think Carmel is doing pretty well now," she says.