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Nellie McLaughlin (pointing) helping to recruit nurses in this Army Air Corps publicity shot. The movie, *So Proudly We Hail!* (1943), was an effective wartime propaganda film based on a book written by Juanita Hipps, a WWII nurse titled "I Served on Bataan." A love story was inserted into the main plot line, but the difficulties and emotional toll of war are strongly shown. Since the Army needed evacuation nurses badly, the movie opening was a perfect vehicle to promote the contribution that women could make to the war effort. Nellie was not a recruiter, but was herself recruited one evening to have some photographs taken. One suspects that the assigned publicist recognized that someone a little closer in appearance to Claudette Colbert and Veronica Lake was necessary to make the shot work.

### OBITUARY

Nellie V. McLaughlin, an Army Air Corps nurse who cared for wounded soldiers on flights from Pacific Theater to the West Coast during World War II, died June 1 of natural causes in Paoli. She was 91.

Born in East Vandergrift Pennsylvania to Constant and Anelia Vidunas, Nellie chose to live with her aunt Antonette Vidunas Raskauskas, affectionately known as "Kristumom" (Godmother), and her uncle Constant Raskauskas, after her own mother died when Nellie was 5. They lived on Pittsburgh's south side where her uncle worked in

the steel mills and her aunt worked as a domestic for a wealthy family. After her aunt bore two children of her own, the family moved to Vandergrift Pennsylvania when her husband got work with Apollo Steel. Although Nellie was close to her father, brother and sister, her father had remarried and eventually had four half brothers and sisters. Nellie was essentially raised by Kristumom and her husband as their own child. They owned a nice house near the center of the planned town of Vandergrift. (The first company built town in the United States where the workers were sold the houses and public facilities were all supplied. The town plan was by Frederick Law Olmstead, the designer of Central Park in New York City) Her stepfather and father were steelworkers. Lithuanian was spoken at home as a second language. She attended public grammar school until 1929, and moved on to the upper grades, graduating in 1933. Nellie took additional classes after graduation and was admitted to the nursing program at Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh. (Earning her certificate in 1938)

She worked at Mercy for one year and then moved to Miami, Florida where she worked at St. Francis Hospital for several years. There she met her future husband, William L. McLaughlin, a Girard College graduate (Fully endowed school established by Steven Girard in the 1840's to educate, free of charge, orphan boys) and army air corps medical administrator called "Mac" by his army friends. He was in charge of supplying seven hotels taken over for hospitals on Miami Beach. These mostly art deco hotels are now part of the posh Miami Beach strip. Mac had dropped out of City College of New York to join the Army Air Corp in 1942. With their similar Pennsylvania working class backgrounds, their loss of a parent at an early age, an ambition to become educated despite a lack of resources and outgoing personalities, compatibility was assured.

Having joined the army air corps in 1943, Nellie served as a "flight nurse" (Air evacuation nurse) ferrying wounded soldiers from the Philippines, Honolulu, and other locations in the South Pacific to the West Coast. Before her discharge as a first lieutenant in 1946, she married "Mac" in Vandergrift in 1945, after a flight from Hawaii where two of four engines failed after the "point of no return". In February 1947 Nellie gave birth to William L. McLaughlin, Jr. at Pittsburgh's Mercy Hospital where she had once worked.

After his discharge from the Air Corps, her husband entered Dickinson Law School in Carlisle, PA. The couple acquired a small mobile home, and they both worked and took care of their son, while Bill attended classes. In 1950 Bill graduated and obtained a preceptorship in Philadelphia. Bill and Nellie decided to move the mobile home to Philadelphia. As close as they could get was a trailer park over 20 miles west of Philadelphia in Frazer, near Paoli. (The trailer park still exists.) Bill commuted on the "Paoli Local" train (Now the R-5) to begin his legal career and started looking around Paoli for a house. Bill and Nellie recognized that the hamlet that grew up around the railroad yards was attracting many new residents and Bill decided to put out his own "shingle". It is believed that he was the first lawyer to open an office in Paoli. Nellie not only worked as nurse at Chester County and Bryn Mawr Hospitals on a part time basis but also enrolled at Temple University in Philadelphia, eventually obtaining a bachelor's degree in Education 1953. She maintained her RN license for many years after but

increasingly provided more assistance to her husband's law practice performing accounting and secretarial services.

Nellie and Bill bought a home in Willistown Township (With a mortgage from the GI bill.) but eventually moved to a house near the train station in Paoli, where the first floor became an office and the second and third floors were living space. Their son attended public schools and graduated from high school in 1965, later attending Villanova University, Penn State University and Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord, NH. Bill Jr. joined his father and mother in the practice of law in 1986, and continues McLaughlin Law Offices at the same location today.

Nellie and Bill took an interest in travel and long summer vacations during the 50's and early 60's returning to Florida and Miami for several years. They also vacationed with their son on the lakes of Ontario and Nova Scotia, typically spending over a month in rented cabins. Later, they bought a house in Margate, NJ, where they could retreat year round. In the summer Nellie and young Bill could enjoy the beach and especially boating on the bay while dad commuted from Paoli when he could. Nellie and Mac joined the Margate Yacht Club where Bill, Jr. learned to sail and race small boats. They later bought a bay front house, which is still in the family and to which Nellie enjoyed visiting until last year.

Nellie also enjoyed reading and playing cards. She was a member or participant over the years in the Margate City Yacht Club, The United States Power Squadron Main Stays, Temple Alumni, World War II Flight Nurse Association, PTA and Cub Scouts. Nellie and Bill were famous for attending numerous special occasions on both sides of their family.

Nellie remained at the office and home in Paoli after Bill passed away in 1993, assisting her son and his wife in running the law office, gradually tapering off as her arthritis became more severe.

Nellie spent the last 3 ½ years in residence at Highgate Assisted Living in Paoli. She had the reputation there of participating in every possible activity offered within her physical limitations. She was very well liked by the other residents and many of the staff made a point to tell her family and friends how kind and sweet she was to everybody. Nellie was fortunate to remain alert and maintain her good humor during her time at Highgate.

She is survived by her son, William L. McLaughlin Jr., Esq. and her daughter-in-law June R. McLaughlin of West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Please forgo flowers and make a like kind contribution to Upper Main Line Kiwanis Foundation, Inc., care of Bill McLaughlin P.O. BOX 494, Paoli, PA.

A service is to be held at St. Norbert's church in Paoli, PA on Monday June 19, at 11 AM. An afternoon lunch will be held afterwards where friends and family will speak of her life and times. The location is to be announced. For information please contact Bill McLaughlin at 610-644-4545 or [wmlaw@usa.net](mailto:wmlaw@usa.net).