



June Jane McVey

June 17, 1926 - September 26, 2020

June Jane McVey, 94, who taught dance in Turlock to generations of area students for 55 years, passed away at St. Thomas Retirement Center. She was born at Emanuel Hospital to Frank and Marie (Santos) Ripley.

June Jane Ripley's dancing days began at age 3 when her mother took her to Merced for her first lesson. June showed promise, and as her natural ability blossomed, she spent every Saturday and Sunday practicing and refining her steps. She learned the art of dance from a series of capable instructors and developed her singing voice along the way as well.

Throughout grammar school, June danced for countless Portuguese, fraternal, service, and charity organization events, as well as for talent contests, festivals, and fundraisers throughout northern California. Shy as a child, June became more confident with the support of her quasi-partner, "Fred Astaire," a life-like dummy made by a family friend when she was nine. June performed during Kiddies-Hour at radio station KTRB in Modesto, as well as at KYOS in Merced for a Portuguese program. In 1939, she danced the tango at the World's Fair on Treasure Island.

June was a majorette and thespian at Turlock High School – Class of 1944 – and when not in school, she could be found practicing and performing. She learned to ice-skate for performances at the Polarink in Modesto.

In the 1940s, summers were spent with family at Monte Rio on the Russian River where in 1942 and '43 June served as Mistress of Ceremonies in charge of summer entertainment.

During World War II, June became a member of a USO troupe, and with a repertoire that included Carmen Miranda numbers, she became widely known in entertainment circles – an “Argentine Bomb Shell” and “show stopper” as she was described in some newspapers. The troupe traveled throughout the valley and Bay area to perform at canteens, USO clubs, and veterans’ hospitals and homes, as well as at Hammond Hospital in Modesto and the army prison camp at the fairgrounds in Turlock.

For several years, June took lessons from professional dance instructors in San Francisco, and after considering a career under the “bright lights,” she chose instead to share her love of dancing by opening a studio at the family home on N. Center St. Her first group of students numbered seven and performed in a revue held at the American Legion Hall in 1945.

In 1950, June married John McVey, a fellow high school student, who for the next 56 years was her life partner, as well as her sound, scenery, prop, and “Mr. Everything” man.

Throughout the decades, June taught such dancing steps as tap, Hawaiian, ballroom, ballet, jazz, disco, character, ethnic, and acrobatic to students whose talents were showcased at dance recitals, the Stanislaus and Merced County fairs, California State and Stockton fairs, Cal-Expo, benefit events, talent contests, and a myriad of venues extending as far south as San Diego, north to Santa Rosa, and west to the Bay area. June often participated as well.

Proceeds raised by the June Ripley McVey Dance Center were consistently donated to local charities and causes.

One of June’s “favorite and fun experiences” was being asked to choreograph the Turlock High School musicals produced in the 1960s. They included “The Boy Friend,” “The King and I,” “Oklahoma,” “Annie Get Your Gun,” “Bye Bye Birdie,” “Finnian’s Rainbow,” and “Brigadoon.”

She was a member and past president of the Soroptimist Club, Native Daughters of the Golden West, Eldora Parlor, and Turlock Art Guild, as well as a member of Upsilon Kappa Chapter, Beta Sigma Phi, U.P.E.C., Turlock

Community Players, and Dance Masters of America.

June and John traveled the world over numerous times throughout their marriage. They were avid sailors as well. In 1980, June closed her studio and John retired from teaching at Turlock High School, after which they relocated to Monterey Bay where they made their home on their sailboat, "Mitara." Their adventures took them up and down the Pacific coast for the next five years. Returning to Turlock, June reopened the dance studio in 1985, and among new pupils were "re-entry" students who dusted off their dancing shoes to practice and perform again under the tutelage of June. Such middle-age groups as the Crickets and Rhythm-ettes were born.

In 1988 and '89, June organized the "Over 40 Follies," a vaudeville show made up of local talent (most alumni of THS) to raise funds for the Turlock High School auditorium restoration.

In 1990, she was honored as Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce, one of a number of awards she received throughout her career. By the mid-1990s, June slowed down to 80 students a week, four hours a day, ranging in ages from 4 to 84. Besides recitals, dance programs were presented at Hawaiian Luas, retirement and convalescent homes, Parents Without Partners, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Turlock and Modesto Senior Citizen clubs.

June and John were instrumental in the establishment of Turlock History Museum when they suggested to June's brother and sister-in-law, Ellis and Idamae Ripley, that they donate the Ripley building at 120 S. Center St. to Turlock Historical Society for use as a museum. After the Ripley's donated the property to Turlock Historical Society in 1999, restoration work began, in part with the revenue generated by the McVey's at their annual recitals.

June and John presented their last dance recital in 2006 when both were 80 years old.

John passed away later that year, and June remained independent until moving to St. Thomas Retirement Center in 2014. Her students had

performed there years before.

Besides her husband, June was preceded in death by her brother Ellis Ripley and his wife, Idamae, niece Sharon Peterson, nephew Randy Ripley, brothers-in-law Elton and Bruce McVey, and sister-in-law Barbara Tower and her husband, Harold.

She's survived by niece Diane (Ripley) Marquard and sisters-in-law Bonnie and Margie McVey. Also surviving are niece Janice Fickel and nephews Ed Tower, and John W., John B., and Jim McVey, as well as a host of friends, many of whom are former students.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 2 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020, at Turlock Funeral Home, 425 N. Soderquist Rd., Turlock.

To view the services from your home, visit <https://www.viewlogies.net/turlock/DBRIRnoFu>. The password will be june (all lowercase).

Special thanks go to the wonderful caregivers at St. Thomas Retirement Center, whose quality and tender loving care given to June throughout the years has been greatly appreciated.

Memorials may be made to: Turlock Historical Society, P.O. Box 18, Turlock, CA 95381; Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock, CA 95380; or Friends of Turlock Animal Shelter, 2620 Ball Ct., Turlock, CA 95382.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

NOV **12**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home
425 North Soderquist Road
Turlock, CA 95381
(209) 632-9111
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *June Jane McVey*

January 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM