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Former Board Chair Mary Sue McElveen Passes Away

Winthrop University

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Former Board Chair Mary Sue McElveen Passes Away

Quick Facts

- McElveen was the first woman and first Winthrop graduate to have served as chairperson. She was elected chair in 1985.
- A lifelong Presbyterian and 1943 graduate of Winthrop University, she remained devoted to both throughout her life.



Mary Sue McElveen

Former Board of Trustees member and chair **Mary Sue Britton McElveen** passed away on Friday, July 9. She was the first Winthrop alumna and the first woman to chair the **Winthrop Board of Trustees**. Her obituary is below:

COLUMBIA, S.C. - **Mary Sue Britton McElveen** was born April 30, 1922 in Kingstree, S.C., to the late Harry and Susie Kortjohn Britton. She passed away July 9, 2010.

A lifelong Presbyterian and 1943 graduate of Winthrop University, she remained devoted to both throughout her life. **McElveen** was active in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) at local, district, and national levels, receiving a lifetime membership to Presbyterian Women (U.S.A.) in 2008, and in 1991 was a Commissioner from Charleston-Atlantic Presbytery to the National General Assembly. She was instrumental in establishing the Belle Isle and Santee Presbyterian churches and served as an Elder. A former member of Lake City Presbyterian Church, she was a current member of Seven Oaks.

McElveen served as permanent president of the Winthrop Class of 1943 and during her senior year, organized and played drums in an all-woman dance band, "The Swanks."

After serving on the Board of Trustees for 20 years beginning in 1970, she retired as chairperson. She was the first woman and first Winthrop graduate to have served as chairperson. **McElveen** also was president of the Alumni Association for two years and receive the Mary Mildred Sullivan Award and an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. One of her most cherished honors was the establishment of an endowed scholarship in her name at Winthrop, because it provided the opportunity for a less fortunate, but deserving student to receive a quality education in the teaching profession.

Following graduation, **McElveen** worked as a cryptographer with U. S. Military Intelligence in Washington, D.C., and later as a stewardess with American Airlines, both very new and rare occupations available to women during the 1940's. Former Governor Robert McNair appointed her to the Legislative Committee to study co-education at Winthrop; former Governor John West appointed her to the Legislative Committee to study automobile liability insurance; and former Governor Carroll Campbell awarded her the Order of the Palmetto.

McElveen was a member of the Lake City, S.C. Advisory Board of Republic National Bank and Citizens and Southern (C&S) National Bank and became the first woman to serve as chairperson. She was listed in Who's Who of American Women.

McElveen enjoyed fishing, birding, travel, learning, and University of South Carolina and Winthrop sports. She pioneered equality for women in that many of her accomplishments and membership on boards and committees were traditionally exclusively male roles at the time. **McElveen** was a "gentlewoman" who found a way to fit into a gentleman's world while focusing on accomplishing the group's goal, not on her. She was active in charitable organizations and inspired many to contribute to improving the lives of others and their communities.

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Surviving are her husband of 63 years, James Davis “Jim” McElveen; daughter, Susan, and husband, Dr. O.H. “Hank” Powell, of Columbia; son, James Davis, Jr. “Dave” and wife, Jean, of Tallahassee, Fla.; and grandson, Michael H. Powell of Dalton, Ga.

A sister, Harriet B. Stackhouse of Pensacola, Fla., predeceased her.

The family wishes to thank Harmony Care Hospice and their caring staff, especially Debbie Sloan, Deborah Livingston and Pam Johnson. The family also expresses deep appreciation to Dr. Tripp Jones and his staff and the Columbia Presbyterian community for their loving care and concern.

McElveen and other family members also established the **Mary Sue Britton McElveen ’43 and Susie Kortjohn Britton ’17 Scholarship** at Winthrop, which honors her mother’s and her own experiences at Winthrop. The scholarship provides scholarships for students majoring in education with a first preference to students from the Pee Dee region of South Carolina.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial contributions to the **Mary Sue Britton McElveen and Susie Kortjohn Britton scholarship** at Winthrop University, 638 Oakland Ave., Rock Hill, S.C. 29733, or the charity of one’s choice.

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