By Wendy Elliott ('75)

A campaign has begun to commemorate Wolfville’s unlikely war heroine, Mona Parsons.

Found guilty of treason in Amsterdam, Holland on Dec. 22, 1941 for hiding Allied soldiers in her house, Parsons was sentenced to death by firing squad, but instead of sobbing and pleading for mercy, she turned and simply walked to the prison van.

The judge was taken by the beautiful 41-year-old woman’s dignified demeanour. On her way out of the room, he suggested that Parsons should enter an appeal and that he would recommend it. Her sentence was commuted to a forced labour camp.

But how on earth did a Canadian find herself in such a state? After a childhood in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Parsons became a 1920s New York chorus girl, a Depression-era nurse, the wife of a Dutch millionaire, an underground worker in the resistance, a prisoner of the Nazis, and an emaciated fugitive who walked across Nazi Germany in the dying months of World War II.

Canada has never done anything to recognize or honour this brave Canadian - the only Canadian female civilian to have been imprisoned by the Nazis. However, members of the Women of Wolfville and the Wolfville Historical Society have begun fundraising to erect a statue in Parsons’ memory.

Former Lieutenant-Governor Myra Freeman has said Parsons’ exploits comprise a “remarkable story of
which more Nova Scotians should be aware.” Acadia University history graduate Sarah Story (’12) says, “women like Mona Parsons, nationally and internationally, are not widely recognized because they did not hold political or economic power.”

Wolfville’s popular Gravely Ghost Walks ends at Parsons’ gravesite. Her tombstone is inadequate, listing her simply as a wife. Fortunately, the Nova Scotia department of Communities, Culture and Heritage has already contributed a third of the estimated $25,000 cost of a statue.

Parsons graduated from the Seminary in 1920, so Acadia alumni may want to add to a project that honours this war heroine, says Andria Hill-Lehr, who wrote Parsons’ biography. She can be contacted for further information by e-mailing: andriahill@yahoo.ca.