

PARADOX BAY:

My Lake Placid Education with
Nettie Marie Jones

By Daniel C. Patchett

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Forward

This is the story of how the Lake Placid School of Art in upstate New York became the Lake Placid School of Ballet. It is my chronicle about the founding of the Lake Placid School of Art and Center for Music Drama & Art in 1972. It is about the people who worked together to make the new art center a unique place for the visual & performing arts. The story is assembled with published documents, private and business correspondence, my own personal remembrances, and the recorded accounts of artists, faculty, management and board members during the founding years and following decades. The Art Center was an especially creative community, a cultural crossroads that converged a diversity of artists who came to Lake Placid. The trials and tribulations of those involved in the art programs are recounted in this chronicle. Focusing on the art center's first twelve years (1972 to 1984), the story includes the founding and building of the arts complex known as the Center for Music, Drama & Art, the Lake Placid School of Art, and the eventual acquisition and construction of the Annex Studio Building and Fine Arts Library. All were financed through the beneficence of the incomparable Nettie Marie (Mrs. W. Alton) Jones.

Some of the renowned artists who performed and exhibited in the Art Center during the founding era are highlighted. Circumstances that led to the demise of the

LPSA after 1984 are also brought to light. This is my account of the LPSA, the performing arts facility, and the management and staff thereof, who worked enthusiastically to establish a year round visual & performing arts center while dealing with the politics and personal agendas of some Board members. Also revealed are the activities, bad behavior and arrogance of the Board of Directors during these early years. Describing the achievements and mistakes that were made as the Art Center set out to establish its place in the world of the arts, my story is an enduring lesson about dedicated artists who worked tirelessly to present quality works of art while seeking approval from an apathetic Board and from opportunistic managers whose bad decisions and greed brought about the lamentable decline of this utopia of the arts.

The Founding Years

In early summer of 2005, I returned to the Lake Placid School of Art at the Center for Music, Drama & Art (CMDA). My acrimonious departure from the facility occurred twenty-eight years previous and I was curious to see the place where I'd whole-heartedly given so much of my talent and energy. Driving down Saranac Avenue, my mind's eye became host to visions of the past, the colorful people: artists and staff who had worked at the LPSA, gallery and performing arts facility.

I noticed that the scenery along the way had changed. Sadly, the Mon Amor Motel that used to be a residence for the Syracuse Symphony and the Paul Taylor Dance Company as well as for art students, no longer existed. Totally gone, it was sobering to find this once wonderfully unobstructed vista of Paradox Bay on Lake Placid with the majesty of Whiteface Mountain in the background now hidden from view by a non-descript church complex. As the memory of the Mon Amor was still so vivid in my mind, it was hard to process much less accept this new unfamiliar scene.

As my partner John and I turned into the driveway of the former CMDA, I noticed many things had changed, the least of which was its new name, Lake Placid Center for the Arts. Adding to my cognitive dissonance was a new marquee, a new entrance drive to the art center and also

the Fawn Ridge development. Most obviously missing was the large annex art studio building with its state-of-the-art photography studios, expansive painting and drawing studios, video art lab and scene shop. Where the annex building once stood was a commercial strip mall building. Perplexed, all I could say to my partner John was: "Over there was a big building with art studios and a scene shop."



Lake Placid Center for the Arts 2013

After parking my car, I walked past an office where I momentarily stopped to speak with a casually dressed woman seated at a reception desk. Introducing myself, she told me her name was Nadine Duhaime. She had heard of me and also knew of Lesley Cadman who once worked at the former Lake Placid School of Art and that one of Lesley's sons had dated her daughter while in high school. I was taken aback by the idea that Lesley had two sons, one pre-college age. I told her that I was in town and

just wanted to take a look around to see what I had once helped to build. I thanked her and made my way down the hall. Climbing the stairs to the main level, I entered the art gallery where an exhibit of country landscapes was on display. Relieved and amazed, the gallery looked very much the way it looked the last time I saw it in the spring of 1978. Even the concert hall & theater lobby seemed unchanged from when it had opened on December 29, 1972.

However, as I walked through the studio wing I found that much had indeed changed. Astonishingly, the print-making studio with its magnificent etching and lithography printing presses, work tables, equipment and cabinets were gone, replaced by a wooden floored dance studio replete with large mirrors and hand rails along the walls. Aside one wall was a row of chairs in various states of disrepair. I instantly recognized a leather chair among them. Excitedly I called out to John: "Look at this old chair! It used to be in the art office." It was like seeing a tired and worn old friend, its rips and tears an uncomplaining testimony of faith to those once seated. I sat and placed my hands on the arms of the chair, my soul momentarily comforted. This was a little reunion with a small piece from my past. Strange how inanimate objects can evoke these emotions.

We next walked into the serigraph studio where more changes awaited. The silkscreen frames, arc light equipment and worktables missing, the studio now appeared to be a multi-purpose space with a built-in kitchen! I later learned that the kitchen was for art gallery receptions. Each

time I tried to point out a feature of an art studio it was gone and I could only say: “there used to be a...”.

Entering the ceramics studio, another big surprise was in store for me. The large gas kiln was gone, replaced by two small electric kilns. Apparently, the ceramics studio was operating on a more basic level. The clay-mixing machine was gone as boxes of pre-mixed clay for making pottery filled the shelves. The glaze-making room with its drawers and containers filled with glaze materials was also gone. Surprisingly, an enclosure had been built which housed the remnants of the old photography darkroom. The island for developers and stop baths was placed in the center of the room and a short wall of dividers for photo enlargers lined one wall, while shelves and cabinets lined other walls. This was a bittersweet sight to see again. Here were at least some components of what had been a large state-of-the-art photo studio in the old annex studio building. With so much photography being created digitally nowadays, why then are these throwbacks still taking up space? I wondered who wanted to keep the bygone equipment or perhaps someone still remembered the inspirational photo instructor Helmmo Kinderman and all the hard work he did and the good will he manifested. Regardless, it was good to reminisce in that surprising room. After almost thirty years I shouldn’t have been surprised to see changes, but seeing them all at once was a bit of a shock for me. What remained of the original complex was interesting to rediscover, but there was more that had changed and been removed to support a new cultural paradigm. I asked myself: “Why?

Why all the changes?" Disappointed and sad, I pondered the reasons for all I had seen.

Feeling immense loss, I returned to the art gallery. Pushing open the carved wooden entrance doors, I headed toward the parking area where people were setting up tents and stands for an open-air market. "What on God's green earth is this?" I asked myself. I couldn't help but feel nettled as I watched a farmers market unfold in the parking area. Perhaps it was a fund raising event or something for public relations. I discovered it was a weekly farmer's market and crafts show that brought numerous people and their children to the art center. Looking around at all the innocuous fruit, vegetables and silly crafts items everything began to make perfectly good sense. I needed to adjust my perceptions after thirty years.

I tugged at John's arm and we began walking up the steps of the art library. I told him how and why the library was built and about its collection of art books. Noticing that the letters that used to read "Fine Arts Library" had been removed, I braced for another shock. Opening the interior glass doors, we entered what had been the Nettie Marie Jones Fine Arts Library. Within, my eyes and mind could hardly process what I saw. Stunned, I stopped in my tracks and stared. My eyes filled with tears and a knot formed in my throat. "It's gone, it's all gone! What the hell happened to the books? The entire library has been stripped! Why?" It was unbelievable, like a bad dream. I found myself walking through a maze of mundane crafts displays, bird houses and feeders, quilts, woven coverlets, soaps and balsam pil-

lows, needlepoint, Adirondack furniture, lamps and framed country paintings.

On the north side of the building I rediscovered the conference room where the Board of Directors met. Ironically, that room was untouched. The large wooden table and upholstered chairs still sat as they did when the building was completed in 1975. It was hard to believe that this was the same room where the Board voted to terminate my position, along with so many other staff and faculty during those rocky uncertain years. I visualized the vapid faces of the Board members who once sat in those chairs at that conference table. I pondered what had happened and why the faculty and so many integral parts of the LPSA and art library were gone? My blood pressure began to spike. Angrily, I decided to uncover the reasons behind this irreparable loss.

March, 1962

It was the morning of March 1, 1962. A ticker-tape parade in New York City was about to rain its honor on astronaut John Glenn. Excitement was in the air as citizens from all over Manhattan and the surrounding boroughs arrived on Broadway for the celebrations on that bright, sunny Thursday morning. However, the festivities became noticeably stifled after 10:00 AM as word spread that a plane with 95 people on board had crashed into Jamaica Bay shortly after taking off from New York's Idlewild Airport.

The plane was American Airlines Flight 1, a Boeing 707 departing regularly at 9:00 AM from Queens to Los

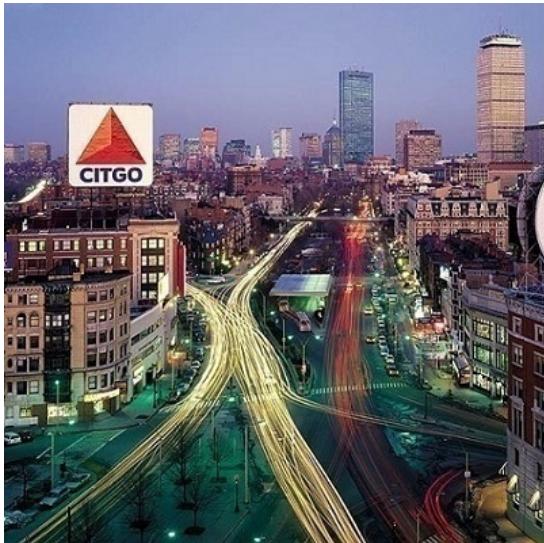
Angeles. At the time, the horrific crash claimed more lives than any single plane accident in the United States. Airborne for only two minutes, the jet lost power and nosedived into Jamaica Bay, according to eyewitnesses. At first, it was speculated that the plane hit a flock of geese. Photos of the scene showed wreckage strewn across the water. President Kennedy ordered an investigation and it was later determined that faulty maintenance on the part of American Airlines was to blame. A rudder power control had malfunctioned.

On board that day was William Alton Jones, President of Cities Service Company, soon to become known as CITGO. Jones, familiarly known as “Pete”, was a close friend of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and was en route to visit him for a fishing trip. Jones’s wife, Nettie Marie, was in residence at their winter home, Cedar Point Farms, just outside Easton, Maryland when she received word that her husband of forty-eight years had perished in the crash.

Pete Jones was the visionary genius that made Cities Service Company into a billion dollar oil corporation. He was an American patriot who headed the building of the vital “Big Inch” and “Little Inch” oil pipelines from Texas to East coast cities during World War II. Completing this strategic job in time for the D-Day invasion of Normandy, he earned the Presidential Certificate of Merit in 1948. He established the W. Alton Jones Foundation, which became a proponent of environmental causes, a supporter of National Public Radio and the arts and other cultural

institutions. He had a private aircraft with full-time pilots available to him for his business travel around the world. Yet, ironically, to silence some of the news media critics, he opted for a commercial flight on his visit to Ike. He should have ignored the press.

Jones was from Webb City, Missouri. He married his childhood sweetheart Nettie Marie Marvin on June 17, 1914. When they married, he was a night watchman and meter reader at a local electric company. Four years later, they moved to Brooklyn, New York where he was hired as a special assistant to an executive of a utility company. “As Jones worked his way up the corporate ladder of the utility company and later the oil business, Mrs. Jones was his staunch supporter,” said Sandy Edgerton Bissell, the Jones’ granddaughter. He went on to become Head of the Cities Service Oil Co., presently known as CITGO. Under Jones’s leadership the company cultivated a reputation as one of the most socially responsible corporations in the world. Cities Service Oil Corporation’s green triangle logo encircled with a shamrock style border, seen in the 1940s through the early 1960s, was later replaced with a bright red solid triangle and letters CITGO underneath.



Iconic CITGO sign in Kenmore Square Boston, MA

Following Pete's death, Nettie continued the philanthropic vision of her late husband, serving for decades on the board of the W. Alton Jones Foundation. Nettie Marie Jones was a determined woman of remarkable energy and stamina. As a high school student, her ambition became evident when she decided to attend college. Her high school advisor told her that she shouldn't bother applying because she wasn't smart enough to get in. This rejection upset her so much that her lips broke out in blisters. Despite that, she would not change her plans and continued to study and prepare for the college admissions test. She passed with flying colors. Nettie Marie Marvin went on to college and

graduated from Central College in Springfield, Missouri with a Masters in Latin. She taught at the high school in Webb City before marrying William Alton “Pete” Jones.

The Jones’ summered at Camp Littlebrook on the western shore of Lake Placid from 1933 until 1960. Later, they built a large “executive” style summer residence just off Victor Herbert Road on a high point overlooking the full length of Lake Placid and Whiteface Mountain.

In 1971, almost a full decade after Pete’s tragic death, Nettie Marie built another summer home that was designed more to her particular taste. In the spring of that year, she moved into the new place on Mirror Lake overlooking Lake Placid Village. Nettie Marie enjoyed her new seasonal abode as it housed her favorite things: a collection of portfolio size Audubon Prints, large Boehm Bird porcelains, Venetian glass, paintings, Persian rugs, French Porcelains, china, antiques and other collectibles from her travels. Nettie Marie was particularly pleased because she mixed comfortable down---filled furniture with antique furniture accent pieces. She would proudly point out her immense windows with the large rose print drapes by Schumacher that she had personally selected.

Nettie loved her new summer home as she felt it reflected her personality and interests. I was invited to a memorable party she gave that summer. Her home was filled with over a hundred guests, a cross section of family, friends and professionals. A gracious and thrilling hostess, Nettie served every guest a Mint Julep in Tiffany & Co. sterling silver tumblers engraved with the Jones monogram.

Nettie had first taken interest in my artwork when I began to exhibit paintings in local art shows during my grade school years. Attending Easton High School later on, I was disappointed that there were no art classes due to budget cuts a few years earlier. I did manage to paint a still life of a violin for Herbert Santucci, Vice Principal of our high school. His appreciation of it led to my persuading him to start an art program or art club. With his support, my fellow artists and I started the Art Club. We organized field day trips to the Philadelphia Art Museum and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., as well as designing an elective art class in the curriculum for students during free time periods following lunch. These art classes were casual; we all helped each other with drawing and painting when we met in the music room.

Meanwhile, my father's retail tire sales and repair business serviced the Cedar Point Farms owned by Mrs. Jones. Accompanying my father during repair calls to Cedar Point Farms and other locations Nettie owned in Talbot County, Maryland, I became friendly with her property manager, a Ms. Mary Straughn. Besides managing Nettie's farms, Ms. Straughn was Nettie's boon companion. Once while singing with the glee club at a concert for the Easton Women's Club I saw Ms. Mary in the audience. Seated next to her was a distinguished white-haired woman with eyeglasses and a warm friendly smile. Both women appeared to be having a really good time, as they were smiling and enthusiastically chatting with each other. Miss Mary pointed towards me and her distinguished lady-

friend likewise directed her smile at me. This was Nettie Marie Jones, the owner of Cedar Point Farms. Actually, she had been aware of me long before I knew her.

My father died the year after that on July 3rd, 1965, right on the heels of my sophomore year in high school. I had been making plans to attend college and study art, but his untimely death threw me into uncertainty. Later, during my senior year, Mr. Santucci spoke to Ms. Mary and recommended me for a scholarship to further my education. I would soon find out that college would be part of my future after all and it was because of the generosity of the lady with the big smile, Nettie Marie Jones and the W. Alton Jones Foundation. The scholarship provided for me the means to attend undergraduate school at the Maryland Institute College of Art in the fall of 1966 and then go on to graduate school at the University of Iowa where I received my Masters of Arts degree.

It was during my college days, that I began writing letters to Nettie. At first, I wrote a thank you letter to express my appreciation to her for my scholarship. I began writing to her on a regular basis to tell her how my studies were progressing. She always replied with words of encouragement and provided information about her various projects, current events and family tid-bits. It was through this exchange of personal letters and occasional phone conversations that Nettie and I established a friendship and bond that would last a lifetime.

I learned that Nettie's passions were multi-faceted; she supported many projects with her unflagging enthusiasm

as well as with her financial largesse. There was a great deal more to her than most people realized or would ever guess. Home from college during Christmas break of 1967, I met Nettie at her Cedar Point Farms home outside Easton, Maryland. She spoke of her love for animals as she showed me around the property. Her and Mary Straughn raised Hampshire swine (a breed of pig) in addition to farming her land around Talbot County. She was proud of the work she and Mary were doing; one of their Hampshires was a Blue Ribbon Award winner. Nettie chuckled with pleasure, “When people ask me what is it that I do, I say: I’m a pig farmer!” Following her funny comment Nettie enjoyed a good chuckle.



Nettie Marie Jones by Slayton Underhill

Inside her home, she showed me her magnificent collection of Steuben Glass “Artists Series” plates that were displayed and illuminated on the fireplace mantle of her office. Each crystal plate had an image of a famous artist: Da Vinci, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Goya, Van Dyck and others created by artisan Val St. Lambert.

In the summer of 1968, Nettie Marie invited me to Lake Placid for a visit. She urged me to attend the art school in the old Groat’s boathouse on Paradox Bay. This was the original Lake Placid Art School, originally managed by George and Sarah Joffee, later directed by Robert Whitney and as with the Chamber Music Festival, Nettie was the

principal funder. This art school on the water offered instruction in watercolor, drawing and oil painting during the summer months. Instructors included Robert Whitney, John Gallucci, Robert Plumb and Vaino Kola and the skill level and ages of the students varied widely. The art school at the boathouse was a wonderful experience and I enjoyed working with the artists and meeting other students.

The Groat's boathouse was a somewhat decrepit turn of the century structure that once housed interior boat slips and a restaurant with living accommodations on the upper level. It jutted out over the lake where it met the shore. Its location on Paradox Bay off Lake Placid was absolutely ideal for an art school. The boat slips had been boarded over and a sturdy wood floor now covered the water. Windows surrounding the three sides of this large studio space let in sparkling light reflections from the waves on the lake. Equipped with wooden easels, tables and bentwood chairs that had odd red and white pinstriped slipcovers on the backs, it was a wonderful space that soon found a lasting special place in my heart. There was also a small gallery in front with large plate glass windows facing Signal Hill and Victor Herbert Road. This was a grand space for art exhibitions and receptions, and there was a desk and brochures in the front corner. Unfortunately the floor of the gallery wasn't level, it was uneven with high and low spots like the waves on the lake. Adjacent to the gallery was an art supplies store and utility room with sinks for artists to clean up after classes and a refrigerator, table and chairs with two lavatories. The area around the

refrigerator became very social as some students gathered there to enjoy a snack and talk. Others went outside to relax in one of the Adirondack chairs on the porch that ran the full length of the boathouse. I remember diving off the end of the porch to swim and explore the lake bottom for artifacts and discovered an ironstone pottery pitcher and lots of broken dishes that had been tossed away years ago when the boathouse had been a restaurant.

One student, Kathie Wykoff, paddled her canoe from the other side of the bay to attend art classes. Sometimes we'd enjoy wonderful excursions around the lake in her canoe. We became friends in this special place and time.



Lake Placid Art School 1967 on Paradox Bay

I fell in love with Lake Placid and the Adirondacks and didn't want to go back to Maryland. I gladly accepted Nettie's offer to return the following summer. I immediately became active in the art school and attended some chamber music concerts as well as some shows at the Playhouse Theater. I remember how intimate the concert performances were there. The Signal Hill Concert Hall was

small with maybe 150 seats and the stage was just one step up. Imagine seeing cellist YoYo Ma, violinist Itzhak Perlman, pianist Lauran Hollander, cellists Carla & Daniel Dome and mezzo-soprano Joanna Simon with accompanist Samuel Sanders so close you could see the pupils of their eyes. It was a magical time to experience a unique cultural arts community in its infancy.

Former printmaking instructor Nancy Griebsch remembers the old Lake Placid Art School:

“My first involvement with [it] was when...I was hired by Julian and Sarah Joffee from Rainbow Lake in the summer of 1966...Sarah Joffee, Robert Plumb and Vaino Kola were the first art teachers that worked there.

Painter Julian Joffee and his Swedish family were housed in a lakeside camp next to the school. Plumb commuted from the Potsdam area to teach watercolor. I worked as the school’s receptionist, gallery attendant, LPAS registrar, guard, and the official floor sweeper in exchange for free art lessons. All those jobs were a small price to pay for an aspiring 16 year old girl who yearned to be an artist.



Nancy Griebsch Barrett etching instructor

The place was magical in every way. A wooden floor had been built over the boat slips and the huge space served as the studio. Paneled windows on three sides of the rustic room looked out onto the waters of Lake Placid. Everyday, we drew and painted to the lovely sounds of gentle waves sloshing beneath us. The land side of the building contained the entrance to the gallery and art store. At lunchtime, Robert Plumb and I, fishing poles in hand, would follow the dock that wrapped itself around two sides of the building to have a quiet meal before the afternoon classes. Most of the students were regional artists and or summer residents and guests. The area was in great need of an art school and people in general were enthusiastic about its existence.”



Lake Placid Art School Instructors: Whitney, Kola, Plumb & Galucci

Nettie had envisioned a visual and performing arts center in Lake Placid back in the mid-1960s when she filled the large void from the untimely death of her husband with various philanthropic activities. In the summer months while summering in Lake Placid she supported the Lake Placid Music Festival while serving on its board and was instrumental in expanding its offerings, which included an art school in Groat's boathouse. At first, she had drafted plans for a new facility on Signal Hill, but as she waited for the right conditions to begin her special project the location would eventually change to the edge of the village with ample room for expansion and parking.

She had been the principal supporter of Jose Echaniz, Director of the Lake Placid Chamber Music Festival that was housed in the old Stevens Coach House building on Signal Hill. Nettie and several affluent lady friends served as board members to support the summer chamber music festival. The board was made up of Hilda (Joseph) Taylor,

Gazine Stevens and Nettie who served as president. The women were known around the village as the “Chamber Music Ladies.” To successfully present quality classical and chamber pieces for the summer music festival, the “ladies” were guided by Echaniz, an Eastman School of Music faculty member and accomplished concert pianist. Nettie’s original inspiration for creating a Music & Art Center came as a result of her admiration for Echániz. He had also been pianist for the Lake Placid Trio.

Echániz was a highly esteemed professor at the Eastman School of Music. A Cuban-born child prodigy, he studied at the Falcon Conservatory in Havana, where he was awarded the title “professor of piano” at age 14. During the 1920s, he appeared at Carnegie Hall, toured many cities in the U.S., and appeared in Paris, The Hague, Amsterdam, and Madrid. In the next decade, he was a featured soloist with orchestras in Philadelphia, Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and New Orleans. He appeared under the batons of such distinguished conductors as Iturbi, Mitropoulos, Kleiber, Leinsdorf, and others. Echániz joined the Eastman School faculty in 1944. As a teacher, he believed in a solid grounding in the classical repertory. His students commonly undertook the entire Well-Tempered Clavier or, as a class, the twenty-seven concertos of Mozart.



Jose Echaniz 1966

Throughout his long teaching career, Echániz maintained an active career as a recitalist in Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean, as an orchestral soloist, and as a recording artist. He sponsored Cuban pianist Louis Rojas, helping the talented young man to establish his career. Louis Rojas performed piano concerts in Lake Placid both as soloist and later as guest pianist with Art Center Orchestra.

Echániz was on the faculty of Eastman School of Music for about twenty-five years and was honored by more than two hundred colleagues in November of 1969. Tragically though, he had suffered from cancer for several months and was forced to cancel what may have been his most active season in several years. He succumbed to the disease at his

home little more than a month after being toasted by his fellows.

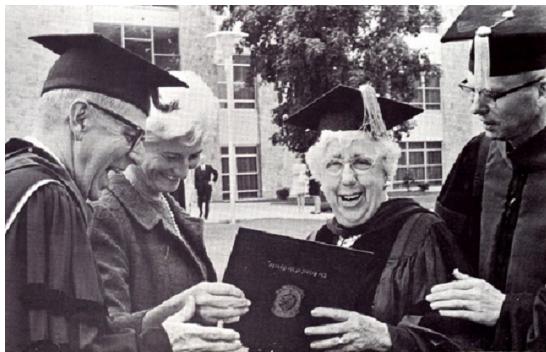
The death of Mr. Echaniz was a shock and setback for Nettie and the chamber music festival. Echaniz was indispensable and it seemed that the summer chamber music program could not survive without him. The Chamber Music Association faced the summer season of 1970 without its beloved director. Nettie and her good friends Hilda Taylor and Gazine Stevens were at a loss. Into this apparent nadir walked music producer Elliot Ritter who approached Nettie about presenting a music series in the Signal Hill Concert Hall. Ritter hoped to provide Nettie and her chamber music friends a solution and to fill the void left following Jose Echaniz death.



Louis Rojas concert pianist 1967

While I was a graduate student at the University of Iowa in 1971, Nettie invited me to a concert at the School of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, Missouri. She was the primary benefactor of a large theatre there with classrooms; it was aptly named The Nettie Marie Jones Learning Center. She had rescued a Wurlitzer bellows-driven theatre pipe organ from the old R.K.O. Keith's vaudevillian-styled movie theatre in New York City that was slated for demolition. She had it moved, restored, and installed in her learning center. While in transit the truck containing the Wurlitzer organ, pipes, bellows and all had a roll-over accident which resulted in a more extensive restoration. The dedication

and unveiling of this historic Wurlitzer organ took place the weekend of April 18, 1971. To my surprise, a friend and classmate from Easton, organist Mark Higgenbottom was performing. It was a fun weekend, the concert performances were wonderful, and Nettie enjoyed showing us around the campus that she helped build. Her tour included a stop at the W. Alton Jones Dairy Farm, which produced milk and other dairy products for the college. She loved the farm and cows, heartily exclaiming to her bovine friends: "Who couldn't love you beauties with your big brown eyes and long eye lashes!" The college was a bit unique in that part of the curriculum required students to learn about values and good work ethics. Students attending the School of the Ozarks didn't pay tuition; rather each student performed work on campus in the dining hall, laundry, dairy, library and other tasks on campus that paid for their tuition. The college had awarded Nettie an honorary degree in 1968.



Nettie Marie Jones receiveS honorary degree from President Graham Clark College of the Ozarks 1968

That early spring in 1970, I had a meeting with Nettie in her summer home. I waited in a study near the great room that looked out over Lake Placid while Nettie met with two men in dark suits. It was Elliot Ritter and an associate of his. The serious tone of the discussion indicated the gravity of the situation facing the 1970 summer season and the future of the music festival. Sternly, Nettie referenced Jose Echaniz several times. I'd never seen this side of her before, and I will never forget how professional she was with these two men. I was most impressed with her tenacity and how she handled Elliot Ritter. She was nobody's fool. Ritter proposed a series of concerts with various music ensembles. The Catalina Chamber Players would be the foundation of the musical series. Elliot's wife was the violinist in this chamber music ensemble. Nettie wasn't especially thrilled with the proposal. At one point she asked Mr. Ritter, "So what's in it for you?" Eventually the meeting concluded

and I watched the men leave.

Nettie entered the study and greeted me enthusiastically. Smiling, she shook my hand. I asked how the discussion was going and if everything was in order for the music festival? She replied, "I'm a bit cynical about people who make big promises and big plans." Nettie indicated progress was being made for the summer concert series, but it was obvious she was saddened and discouraged by the loss of Echaniz. Clearly, she was uncomfortable about sponsoring concerts with people she didn't personally know.

After follow-up negotiations with Mr. Ritter, Nettie decided to sponsor his summer concert series. Ritter was to rent the concert hall and pay for it with the proceeds from ticket sales. The Catalina Chamber Players were the main feature of the program. Mrs. Ritter, the violinist of the ensemble, demonstrated she was an accomplished musician and the Catalina Chamber Players were a fine group of musical artists who provided memorable performances that summer. However, the 1970 summer program wasn't to everyone's liking and Nettie was unhappy with Mr. Ritter's management or lack thereof. Disappointed, she considered closing the Concert Hall after the summer season ended. When town leaders found out about the possible closing of the concert hall, they contacted Nettie and pleaded with her to keep it open. They felt that the summer music festival was a big draw and enhanced Lake Placid's tourist appeal.

Joan Frank, whose theater-in-the-round was in the same building as the concert hall, called Nettie to discuss

the situation. Joan encouraged her to run the summer music festival in the concert hall and volunteered to help. There was no discussion of compensation, as Joan thought she could run a concert program alongside her summer theater. In a way, Joan was protecting her investment at Signal Hill as well as helping the Chamber Music Festival ladies. Nettie and her associates Hilda and Gazine agreed that Joan should be given the chance. Joan had good standing as she rented property from Nettie and was well known as a theater promoter. With the ladies' approval Nettie renewed her patronage and sponsored the 1971 summer music festival under Joan Frank's management. Joan put together an exciting season of concerts that summer and everyone involved appeared to be pleased with the results.

Joan had learned about the young and talented mezzo-soprano Joanna Simon and went to hear her perform at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center in 1970. Simon was one of the daughters of publisher Richard Simon of Simon & Schuster Publishing, her sisters none-other than Carly and Lucy Simon. Joan was so impressed with Joanna's performance that she booked her for the 1971 summer music festival along with YoYo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, the Gilbert & Sullivan a la Cart, and the Newport Jazz All Stars.

I will never forget the evening of Joanna Simon's first concert at the festival.



Mezzo Soprano Johanna Simon pianist Samuel Sanders Joan Frank and Daniel Patchett

Nettie arrived at the Signal Hill Concert Hall early, as was her custom. I walked over to greet her as she opened her car door. She had left home in such a rush that she hadn't buttoned her strap shoes and asked me for assistance. I graciously accommodated her. She stood and looked at me from head to toe and said, "Don't you look dapper tonight!" We then walked arm and arm into the concert hall. Within a few minutes, Joan pulled up in her green Mustang convertible with our mezzo-soprano of the hour in the passenger seat. I had hot tea and honey back stage waiting for Ms. Simon. I asked her if the tea was

acceptable and she politely replied that it was “very nice.” It was a very special moment for me. Accompanying Joanna that evening on piano was Samuel Sanders from Boston. The concert was absolutely heavenly. Joanna thrilled, hitting each note with precision, grace and beauty. Nettie always enjoyed arriving early at concerts to take her seat as it provided her opportunities to speak with friends and see who attended. She always took notice of the audience reaction to the concerts and discussed afterward what she observed. She preferred the back third of the concert hall, as this would give her optimum view and sonic clarity. Nettie thoroughly enjoyed each and every concert that summer of 1971.

Prior to that, I had expressed my enthusiasm to Nettie about the summer art school. I suggested possible enhancements to expand the art programs there. I also recommended several ideas to improve the summer program such as adding lithography printmaking and ceramics. Nettie asked me to make a proposal of how to improve the art school for her to consider. I put my ideas into a plan and set out to incorporate three faculty members from the Maryland Institute College of Art from the printmaking, ceramics and painting departments. The plan called for college students to attend the summer school and receive college credits for their study. The curriculum would include traditional art classes for the community and children, the college level classes, plus a variety of exhibitions, guest artists and public art lectures in the small art gallery outside the boathouse art school.



Maryland Institute College of Art Baltimore 1970s

A meeting was held in Baltimore between Eugene W. "Bud" Leake, President of the Maryland Institute College of Art, Nettie, and I to discuss and finalize the plan. It went very well; Nettie was thoroughly impressed by President Leake and the Maryland Institute. She came away feeling confident that our art school had a good plan and was in good hands with an important new affiliation. Walking back to the car, Nettie turned to me and said, "I'm impressed! I like the college very much, and President Leake. He's handsome!"



Maryland Institute College of Art President Eugene W. "Bud" Leake

I was cheered by her reaction. The following day she made a generous financial donation to the Maryland Institute College of Art. That sealed the deal and paved the way for a rich relationship made even more viable through the Maryland ICA's membership with the National Association of Colleges of Art.

I drafted a budget and further developed the plans and presented it to Nettie. She informed me that she was sacking the management of the art school. She asked me if I wanted to manage the school working under the auspices of the Music Festival & Art Association. After some further discussion I accepted her offer and set out to implement the plan. All this was being accomplished while I was working on my Master of Arts degree at the University of Iowa. Once the plan was put into motion, the needed equipment and supplies were ordered. The art school instructors were secured and student recruitment was underway. Housing

was located for the students and faculty near the art facilities. The name was changed to the Lake Placid Workshop. The summer art program opened in June 1971.

That first summer college students who attended came from Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York to study painting and drawing with James Hennessey and Vaino Kola. John Sparks taught printmaking using the Ponce de Leon Lithography press that was installed in the utility area where the worn flooring was a bit questionable. However, Mr. Sparks with the help of Phil Payette put the little studio in good order and ready. In a large garage to the side of the boathouse, the ceramics studio was established with turning wheels, two electric kilns, and tables for hand building in instructor Lois Hennessey's classes. Guest artist John R. Thompson taught kiln building and a gas fired kiln was built near the lake away from the building. Students and instructors spent the next eight weeks involved with their studies and projects. An exhibition was shown of selected work the last week of the summer session.

Both the art school program and concert programs were successful. Joan had put together a dazzling group of performing artists and attendance for the concerts increased dramatically. Receiving a \$2000 grant from the New York Council on the Arts, she put it towards the music program. Also, the art school was making strides and enrollment there spiked too. Adding ceramics and printmaking classes enhanced the curriculum and this was viewed very favorably.

Nettie called me early one morning that summer and

asked me to accompany her for a drive. I accepted and adjusted my schedule at the art school. She picked me and we drove across the village, passed the airport and the ski jump slopes whereupon she turned left onto River Road. As we drove, she spoke about the arts school and faculty members there she was impressed with. It was a very positive and stimulating conversation. She began to slow down for the curve in the road, but turned left onto to a dirt road and headed toward a huge barn in a large meadow. There was a winding river beyond the barn with trees along its grassy banks. Nettie's head groundskeeper Austin Preston was waiting for us. As she pulled up he waved to us, then proceeded to unlock the barn doors. Nettie turned to me, "Well, Dan... what do you think of the barn?" Then it dawned on me that this might be a new art school facility. Excited, I grasped for words. She said, "Get out and take a look around and tell me if you like the space."

We entered the barn. While she stood in the doorway talking with Preston, I walked down the entire length of the former dairy barn and then climbed up to the hayloft. The amazing old barn was certainly the St. Patrick's cathedral of all barns! Standing in the loft was indeed akin to being in a cathedral as the vaulted ceilings rise upward into a pointed arch. As I climbed back down, I began to play with ideas for what this thrilling space could be. Gallery space, printmaking studios, ceramics and sculpture could easily fit into the first floor space with offices and a cafeteria as well. The second floor was a natural artist loft for

painting, drawing and room for a lecture hall or even a theater. Walking up to Nettie she asked, "Well what are you thinking?" I told her my mind was racing with ideas and that I really liked the space. She replied, "Good!"

We walked out of the barn and around the corner where I noticed two silos towards the backside of the barn. Enthused, I said, "Wouldn't the silos make a great place for an art library? Shelves along the curved walls with spiral stairs in the center!" Nettie laughed out loud, quite amused with the off-the-cuff idea. She told me to draft plans and put my ideas on paper for her. She suggested that I come back to get measurements. As we drove back to Lake Placid we really explored the possibilities. Recalling our visit to the Maryland Institute, our tour given by Mr. Leake included the recently renovated B&O (Baltimore & Ohio) Railroad Station near Mt. Royal Avenue. Nettie admired how an older historic building could be successfully retrofitted for a new facility; in this case art school studios, a lecture hall, art library, conference rooms and a café. I couldn't help thinking that she was influenced by the wonderful old train station and thought something similar might be possible for her old barn. The barn once supplied dairy products for the Lake Placid Club when they used to own it.

The following day, Nettie arranged for me to meet with her grandson, Bradford Edgerton, to take measurements of the barn. Brad was studying architecture and about my age. We surveyed the barn and property. I kept marveling about its colossal size and envisioning studios with skylights on the north side. Brad was enthused too, and offered to help

me any time adding that “he’d even help sweep up the barn floors!” I enjoyed spending time with him that day. Later on, I put my ideas onto paper and gave them to Nettie to study. Nettie and her contractor Dan Belzer were finishing her new home on Mirror Lake, so it seemed likely that she would share the plans with him.

Following the 1971 concert season, Nettie said to Joan, “OK smarty pants, do it again! Only next time get Van Cliburn!” Joan got busy planning for next year’s summer concert series, which would indeed headline superstar pianist Harvey “Van” Cliburn.



Nettie Marie Jones, Van Cliburn, Joan Frank 1972 Piano Concert

She and I demonstrated our entrepreneurial skills as managers that summer. However, neither of us had any idea of what was to come later that year. Joan managed

the concert festival gratis while simultaneously operating her theater business at the Lake Placid Playhouse. I was provided a place to live in the old Bathgate house at 32 Saranac Avenue just around the corner from the boathouse art school and received a modest salary, enough to take care of my living expenses and give me spending money for graduate school for the next semester.

I had no follow up with Nettie about the River Road barn plans, so I was looking forward to the summer art school at the boathouse on Paradox Bay. I thoughts about ways to enhance the programs, attract guest artists, and boost student enrollment. It was all a very exciting period of time for Joan and me. Nettie realized she had a young and energetic team of two. She was delighted to be able to work with talented and inspiring people. The existing buildings that housed the concert hall and art school were old and needed repair and upgrades. The art school in the old Stevens boathouse was so old that it was literally settling into the lake. When the lithography press was installed that summer, it became obvious the old wooden floors and beams could not bear the weight of it. Nettie saw this as an opportunity for an improvement.