

April 2013

meet the artist

Fred Jones, a man of many talents

by Gerri Young

Henry David Thoreau wrote at the end of "Walden Pond," —"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

Fred Jones and his wife, Linda, sought the life they dreamed of, one in which they could be self-sustaining. They met with success and enjoyed hours not easily described as common. Few people have as much adventuring spirit as they do.

They met in college in Illinois where they studied veterinary medicine. It was a serious love from the moment he saw her—"I willingly followed her everywhere her schooling or job took her. She is easily the more career oriented of the two of us and she's really smart," Jones said with a warm smile. Linda went on to put her degree to work and have four children. Jones, after a brief stint of working as a racehorse veterinarian, went on to be "Mr. Mom," before the term was fashionable. While Mr. Mom is a worthy pursuit on its own, there is much more to say about Jones than that.

In 1983, his wife was offered a job at Blacksburg's Virginia Tech and they both fell in love with the area. By 1990, they sold the land they had obtained in Blacksburg in favor of 130 acres without a house in Pilot, Va., where their search for independence reached new bounds and continues to this day.

Over the years, between home schooling the children and learning how to make cheesecake and baklava, Jones enabled his family to move out of the original trailer they lived in for 10 years, and into a solar-powered, southern-exposure, copper-roofed, energy-efficient, timber-framed wooden home he designed and built. A



photo: Gerri Young

Fred Jones is an artist of many talents. He stands in front of the timber frame supports he created for his home from trees he cut and milled. On the wall is a piece he literally grew and built. He created the frame from his own trees, grew and dried the gourds and brought it all together with coffee grounds in resin.

trip down the .7-mile, dirt drive to their as yet unfinished home takes you past a two-story wooden workshop, a large wood-drying kiln, a big wooden garage and around a curve to the main house—all built by Jones.

Here you find a pond, garden, blueberry bushes, root

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■ Upcoming

April 16–26

The 702 Exhibition

Miller off Main St. Galleries, Blacksburg
Opening Reception: April 20, 4–7 p.m.

Exhibit features six Radford University students' work: Jerry Frech, acrylics; Nathan Popp, watercolor; Jerome Sturm, photography; Karie Edwards, photography; Beth Argent, ceramics; and Aaron Forrester, photography.

April 27

5th Annual Blacksburg Fork and Cork
First and Main, Blacksburg

The festival features art, live music, culinary delights from local restaurants, cooking demonstrations, and wine tastings from Virginia's vineyards. For more information, visit www.blacksburgforkandcork.com.

June 7

First Friday Art Walks
Downtown Blacksburg
5–7 p.m.

Take a self-guided tour of all of the gallery spaces in Blacksburg any time you like, but on First Fridays participating galleries will remain open until 8 p.m. Gallery Guide and Art Walk brochures available in downtown stores, the Virginia Tech Visitor's Center and participating galleries.

July 19

Delight Exhibit Opening Reception
VTLS, Inc., Corporate Research Center
5–7 p.m.

Don't miss the reception for this joyful, BRAA-sponsored exhibit of 50 paintings representing artists' interpretations of delight. (See more information at Exhibit Opportunities on page 3.)

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cellar, beehives, a flock of guinea hens for eggs and the required cat. You can't help but expect a milk cow, but none is to be seen; nor the sheep they first raised for meat but mostly went to free-roaming dogs running in the remote area.

Jones proudly tells of designing and building the house, as well as the other structures, and building them with wood grown, cut, milled and dried on their land. He did his own milling. A recent day found him digging holes and setting



Fred Jones' oil paintings frequently feature portraits of Floyd, Va., residents or family. The young girl by the fountain is a sample of how large his paintings often are. (Photo: Gerri Young)

locust posts he cut to replace an aging fence. "See the row of bushes behind the fence?" he asked. "I'm trimming it into a dragon shape." Talking of the challenge of being self-sustaining, Jones gives his wife credit for being right there with him on many projects. "I think her favorite gift from me is her own personal chain saw! She just loves the chance to use it."

This story is supposed to be about Jones the oil and watercolor painter, and it is; but it is impossible to herd him into just one category. Surely he is an artist with all his buildings of wood. Last year, he took a break to spend two weeks at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina, where he built a beautiful guitar from scratch in a workshop with the much sought after Wayne Henderson. It's not just to look at either. Jones is an accomplished guitarist and banjo player.

While creating the homestead in Pilot, Jones always had a love of art—a love shown by the collection of his own art and that of others gracing the walls of his home. Born in Houston, Texas, Jones had a great uncle in Genevieve, Mo., who lived in an artist colony. He was eccentric and single and once opened a restaurant. "It wasn't very good," said Jones, "but it earned him the social security he needed."

Of the four Jones children, his daughters Tess and Molly both pursue art. Molly is a potter who lives in Colorado, while Tess still lives at home and is a potter with an interest in computers and organic farming. Daughter Ali lives in Vermont, is a brilliant student and a dietitian. Son Casey climbs and repairs cell towers, parachutes out of airplanes and is looking forward to the day he does his first wing suit flight; endeavors that cause his father a fair amount of concern.

Over the years, Jones was mostly in charge of the children. When asked if he home schooled them, he replies, "I let them learn. I never tested them. They were good kids with lots of desire to learn and they've all done well."

The two artistic daughters helped to rekindle his interest in creating art. "While I was good at math and science, art was really my favorite subject," said Jones. "I liked working with oil paints so I took classes with Karen Sewell in Floyd, was part of the Floyd

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■ Now Showing

April 15 – July 15, 2013

(except where indicated otherwise)

Denisse Bento, ICTAS, Virginia Tech Campus (until mid-May)

Jeanette Bowker, Real Life Dental Care, 202 South Main Street, Blacksburg

Charlotte Chan, Brown Insurance, 100 Hubbard Street, Blacksburg, and Community Arts Information Office, College Avenue, Blacksburg (April)

Frances Frederick, Center for Peace Studies, Norris Hall, Virginia Tech Campus (through May 9) and ICTAS, Virginia Tech Campus (until mid-May)

Susan Hensley, Virginia Tech Carilion Medical School, Roanoke (until May 15)

Danie Janov (through April), Holtzman Alumni Center, Virginia Tech

Delbert Jones, See Mark Optical, 2401 S. Main Street, Blacksburg

Fred Jones, StellarOne, Arbor Drive, Christiansburg

Diane Relf, Pita Vera, 235 N. Main Street, Blacksburg, and VTLS, Inc., 1701 Kraft Drive, Blacksburg

Gerri Young, Zeppoli's, 810 University City Blvd., Blacksburg

To be determined, Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea, 700 N. Main Street, Blacksburg

"How important are the visual arts to society? I feel strongly that the visual arts are of vast and incalculable importance. Of course, I could be prejudiced. I am a visual art."

~Kermit the Frog

■ Exhibit Opportunities

The **Alexander Black Museum** is planning art exhibits in the Old Town Hall over the next several months. Any artist interested in exhibiting should submit 3–5 samples of work to Lori Tolliver-Jones (at LJones@blacksburg.gov) who will present them to a committee that will determine show themes and timeframes.

Art at Selu

May 11–12

Selu Conservancy
3215 Dry Valley Road, Radford

This is a fundraising event for the Selu Conservancy. Booth fee is \$25 and there will be a 10% charge on sales. Show will be held inside and tables and chairs are provided. The deadline for entry is April 28. For information or consideration, submit one digital image representative of work to Anne Armistead at anne@ringyourneck.com.

Delight Art Exhibition

July 19 – October 14

VTLS, Inc. at the Corporate Research Center

This BRAA-sponsored exhibit invites works with an artistic theme of delight in any wall-hung or 3-D medium. Entry fee is \$5 per piece, with a limit of two entries. Cash prize will be awarded for Best of Theme based on voting at the opening reception. Entry deadline is June 15, but work will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis (50 piece maximum). Visit the BRAA website for more information: <http://www.blacksburgart.org/>

Art on the Market

July 20

Downtown Blacksburg

This annual event is sponsored by Downtown Blacksburg, Inc., and is offered in conjunction with Breakfast at the Farmers Market. Applications to exhibit are available at www.downtownblacksburg.com.

Steppin' Out 2013

August 2 – 3

Downtown Blacksburg

This street festival fills the downtown historic district with artists and craftspeople and three stages of music and

entertainment. 16' x 10' spaces are \$150. For more information, visit www.BlacksburgSteppinOut.com.

Heritage Day

August 24

Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center

Artists are invited to bring work to show and also work on site. The museum is also seeking donations of work for a silent auction. For more information, contact Sue Farrar at director@montgomerymuseum.org.

2013 New River Art

October 2 – November 7

Perspective Gallery, Squires Student Center, Virginia Tech

Entry for this biennial show opens on May 5. Several cash awards will be offered and jurors are Michael W. Haga, Robin Boucher, and Jeffrey Allison. The reception will be 5–9 p.m. on Oct. 18.

For more information, visit www.newriverart.org/.

Monthly lunch now includes art talks

Each month we now have a 15-minute presentation by one of our own members about some aspect of their art. The presentation will be from 12:15 to 12:30, following lunch and preceding the board meeting.

At our April meeting, Charlotte Chan generated some creative sparks by sharing the steps involved in her batik paintings as well as tips and sources for supplies. At the next meeting on **May 10**, Gerri Young will talk about how to make your own stamps. Come enjoy hearing our own artists and pick up some wonderful information.

The **May 10** luncheon will begin at 11:30 a.m., at **Famous Anthonys** at 1353 S. Main St., Blacksburg. Art talks begin at 12:15 and the board meeting will follow at 12:30 pm. Please send agenda items to Robi Sallee at robisallee@hotmail.com.

■ Member News

Betty Moore and **Charlotte Chan** were the jurors for an exhibit of works by Christiansburg High School art students that is now showing at the Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Art Center in Christiansburg. BRAA awarded checks to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. The display continues until April 26.

Workshops in the Works

Mark your calendar and email Nancy Norton (nancynorton@comcast.net) if you're interested in attending the following workshops.

July 20-21: (from VMFA) Marjorie Perrin's "Capturing The Mood and Light Effects in Landscape," watercolor or oils. Cost is \$50.

October 19: (from VMFA) Mary Holland's "What a Relief: How Prints are Made." Participative demo. Cost is \$10.

Also, a two-day watercolor still life class taught by Sidra Kaluszka is being considered. If you are interested, please email Nancy as soon as possible. The course will likely be offered in **May or June** with a maximum per person cost of \$65. Examples of Sidra's gorgeous work can be seen at www.facebook.com/SidraK.Art.

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Artists Association for some years and now belong to the Blacksburg Regional Art Association, as well as the Jacksonville Center in Floyd. Jones is known for his large-scale canvases featuring young children, animals or gnarly old men. He has a number of portraits done of models posing on Wednesdays in Floyd.

Jones recently took the leap to watercolor by taking a class with Robin Poteet from Roanoke and a week-long workshop with renowned watercolorist, Mary Whyte, from Charleston, S.C. "I had to go buy all the supplies for those classes because I didn't have anything but oil painting supplies. I was amazed at how much can be done with watercolor and fascinated by how the two different artists accomplished such beautiful works."

Jones really enjoys the creative process of being an artist. He has entered the Roanoke sidewalk show for the last two years, but finds the marketing of art difficult. At the Tuggles Gap art show along the Blue Ridge Parkway, he and his wife, Linda, mind their booth filled with Jones' art, his handmade wooden spoons (he has an endless supply of wood on his land), the honey they take from their hives and pottery from daughter, Molly.

This year, Jones may be manning those booths alone. That career-oriented wife of his is off on a career adventure on the Caribbean Island of St. Kitts teaching at the veterinary school. They communicate by email and Skype on his new Mac. "Now there is something I really don't enjoy," said Jones, the Renaissance man. "I just hate dealing with learning new software."

In the long list of things Jones is really good at, it's understandable that he didn't use too many computers while being Mr. Mom, homebuilder, land clearer, fence builder, beekeeper, musician, artist, gardener and cook.

But that's okay. He makes a mean chocolate cheesecake and trims bushes to look like dragons. ■

■ Upcoming (continued)

July 20

Art on the Market

Downtown Blacksburg, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

This event is sponsored by Downtown Blacksburg, Inc., and is in conjunction with the annual Breakfast at the Farmers Market.

August 24

Heritage Day

Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Art Center, Christiansburg, 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

This event includes antiques, activities, art, food, and live music. Admission is free.

■ Call for Art

The City of Galax Public Art Committee invites artisans to submit proposals for creative painting/decoration of nine six-foot, fiberglass casted bass fiddles. Deadline for proposals is May 15 and winning artists will be awarded \$1000 for time and materials.

For more information, contact chris@chestnutcreekarts.org.



The art featured in this month's nameplate is "SushiCU" (left, mixed media, 18" x 18") by Diane Relf. This and more of her work can be viewed at Pita Vera or VTLS.



BRAA Officers

- Robi Sallee**, president
- Nancy Norton**, co-vice president
- Danie Janov**, co-vice president
- Tom Barnhart**, membership
- Vikki King**, treasurer

<http://www.blacksburgart.org/>



www.facebook.com/BlacksburgArt

Send Facebook news postings to:

Gerri Young at

younggerri@googlemail.com

or **Nancy Norton**

at nancypnorton@comcast.net

Twitter @BlackburgArt1

Please send BRAA news, photos, comments, or suggestions to Lois Stephens (stephens1@pemt.net) by the last day of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

Thanks to **Mish Mish** for providing printed versions of this newsletter.

Please support your local art supply store!