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### Community

Farewell, neighbor

# Jones thrived on community

By Lynda Clancy  
The Camden Herald Reporter

ROCKPORT (Aug 14): Marge Jones may have been small in size, but her strength of character and warm nature would cast her among the tallest of men in any gathering, no more evident than at feisty selectmen's meetings, when her calm order ultimately prevailed.

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This knack for maintaining an even keel came from a deep wellspring of compassion and serenity that she spread throughout the community for more than half a century, first as restaurateur, then as real estate agent, and through her 27-year tenure as selectman.

Nor did it end when her final term was over, for Jones continued to offer her guidance on the town's investment committee, and informally as wise counsel to the Rockport Town Office, where she would visit long into her years.

Jones died peacefully on June 30 in Scarborough at the age 87, and a memorial tribute to her will take place Saturday, Aug. 16, at 10:30 a.m. at the Rockport Opera House. The community is welcome to attend and a reception will follow.



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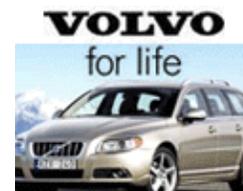
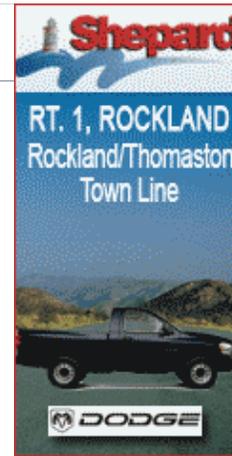
Marjorie "Marge" Jones, in a Chinese dress as a young woman.  
 (Image courtesy of Lani Jones)

In 1986, The Camden Herald interviewed Jones, just a week after she had been elected towns person of the year by the Camden-Rockport-Lincolnvilve Chamber of Commerce. At that point, Jones was running Jones Real Estate -- established in 1969 -- out of her Rockport Village home, serving as selectman, keeping an eye on the Red Sox, and sitting on numerous boards and committees that keep a community healthy.

She had raised three children by the mid-1980s, and was already enjoying the company of her granddaughters. But the town likewise occupied a good portion of her time.

"You give the town your best, and you love it while you're doing it," she said in 1986.

That hard work and commitment became the legacy that Jones left with Rockport, along with her aversion to special interests controlling town government.





Marge Jones in her younger years. (Image courtesy of Lani Jones)

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"Marge was a gentlewoman, and she could always see all sides of the issue," said Brenda Richardson, who was Rockport's town clerk for many years while Jones sat as selectman. "She loved the town of Rockport, the whole town."

That included the five neighborhoods -- Rockville, Simonton Corner, West Rockport, Glen Cove and Rockport Village. To Jones, a Rockport resident was a Rockport resident, and no special interests guided her.

In 1998, the town dedicated its annual report to Jones: "Over the years, Marge has guided our community through a sea of issues and not of few problems with patience, common sense and vision," the dedication reads. "Marge always quietly, but effectively, advocated the interests of those less fortunate."

Lloyd Snapp, who ran the Camden Area YMCA in the 1970s and who now lives in Castine, holds fond memories of working with Jones, who served the board.

"She was always dependable and trustworthy," he said, recalling how she organized dances and outings for the legions of area children who visited the YMCA.

Jones' steadfastness at the helm of any enterprise was cultivated early in life. The third child of 10 children born to her Cantonese immigrant parents, Arthur and Barbara Lee Hong, who settled in Southbridge, Mass., Jones understood the value of cooperation,

and of distinguishing the big issues from the petty.

While young, Jones helped in her father's Chinese laundry, and learned quickly of loss, with the death of her father and brother at Pearl Harbor.



Marge Jones worked tirelessly for local organizations, and was towns person of the year in 1986, as distinguished by the Camden-Rockport-Lincolville Chamber of Commerce. (Image courtesy of Lani Jones)

Jones served in the women's program during World War II, trained to fly missions. In 1952 she met and married Howard Jones of Rockport and moved to that town. There, in her Russell Avenue home, she kept out of mischief by starting her own restaurant, the House of Hong, and by 1958 was cooking Cantonese for Mainers, who left the dining room raving about her cuisine.

This was about the time that "Peyton Place" was being filmed in Camden, and locals and those from Hollywood alike would gather at Jones' place at the end of the day.

As the decades passed, Jones became more involved with the community, sitting on boards of organizations and then running for selectman in 1973, and was re-elected for eight more terms.

"She was dedicated to Rockport and she was a very good selectman," said Molly Sholes, who served on the same board during the 1990s. "She was very good about devoting her time to all five districts of the town."



Marge Jones, left, Dottie Morales and Andy Cavanaugh, all Rockport selectmen circa 2001.  
(Photo by Lynda Clancy )

If it ever got hard, Jones did not complain. Her children remember their mother's evolution as a town leader and integration into a New England community while being an Asian woman "from away."

"In essence, she acknowledged no barriers, and in her own case made light of her difference with humor," they wrote in her obituary. "When setting out to meet new clients for a real estate viewing, for example, she would tell them that she would be easy to recognize because she was the 'only Chinese woman in town.'"

Jones will take her final rest at Sea View Cemetery overlooking Penobscot Bay, in the town she loved since she first drove up the coast from Boston in 1949 with a group of friends, taking old Route 1 and passing through every town on the way to Bar Harbor.

It was the ocean, the hills and the blueness of the water that grabbed her, and left a feeling that never diminished.

"This is my town," she said in 1986. "All I want is here. I never want to leave."

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