

HIST CENTENNIAL MEMORIES

PAUL RAYMOND JONES (1930-2019)

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Introduction

As promised in the HIST Centennial special issue of this journal, the *Bulletin* is running centennial features in each of its 2022 numbers (1). The next 2022 issue featured Aaron Ihde, Chair of the division in 1962-1964 (2) and included a reminiscence of George Kaufmann (3). This issue recalls Paul Raymond Jones, Chair of HIST in 1994 and Editor of this journal from 1995 through 2010. After his death in 2019, the award for the outstanding paper published in the *Bulletin* was named the Paul R. Jones Outstanding Paper Award.

After a brief review of Jones's career, this feature includes recollections from one of his graduate students and another HIST Chair (1995), Martin Saltzman (4), and reflections from his daughters, Amy Robinson (5) and Sarah Cummings (6) given at his memorial service in 2019.



Figure 1. Paul R. Jones (1930-2019). Courtesy of Sarah Cummings.

I add only that getting to know Paul during my early years of engagement in the division was a genuine pleasure, and that succeeding him as editor of this journal has been an honor and a privilege. —Ed.

Biographical (7)

Paul Raymond Jones was born on July 19, 1930, in Chicago to David Henry and Una Goodrich Jones. He grew up in nearby Park Ridge, Illinois. He received a B.A. in 1952 from Albion College in Albion, Michigan. He returned to Illinois for his doctoral work in chemistry, earning a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in 1956.

That year he began a nearly 40-year career as professor of organic chemistry at the University of New Hampshire. He was an accomplished researcher, publishing regularly over the next 25 years in such respected journals as the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* and *Journal of Organic Chemistry*. He was twice a Fulbright

scholar, and four different sabbatical leaves brought him to Germany: at the Max Planck Institute in Göttingen (1964), at the University of Freiburg (1973), and twice at the Deutsches Museum in Munich (1982 & 1991).

Teaching and connecting with students were important to Jones. Even in very large lecture classes, he knew all his students by name and always made himself available. The University of New Hampshire conferred its Distinguished Teaching Award on him in 1982. *The Journal of Chemical Education* published a series of cartoons by Jones and Brian Coppola in the late 1970s under the title “Animated Alchemy.” Figure 2 shows a drawing Coppola made of Jones at about that time.

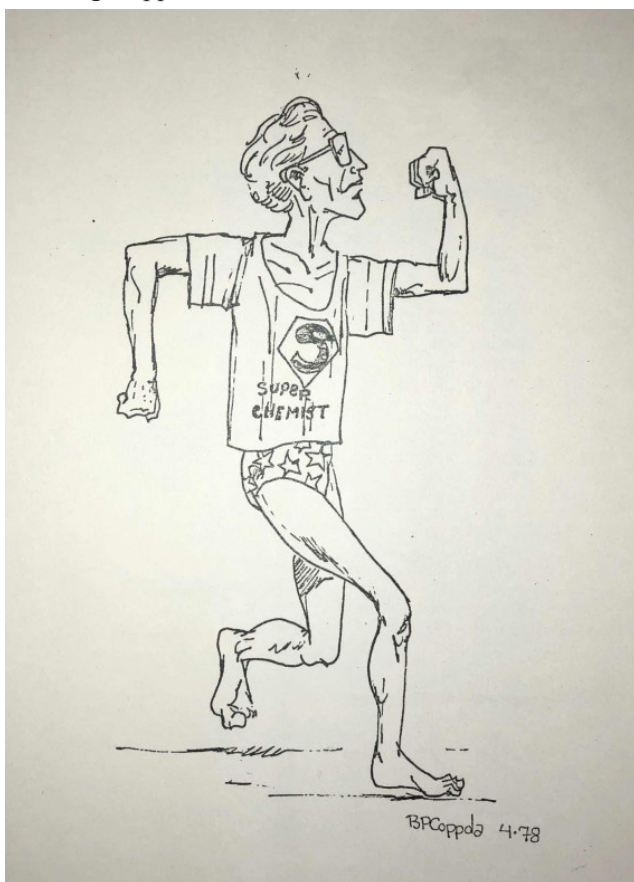


Figure 2. Paul Jones portrayed as Super Chemist by Brian Coppola, 1978..

History of chemistry was one of Jones’s scholarly interests from at least 1970 when he and Everett Southwick published a translation of a 1901 paper by Victor Grignard based on his dissertation (8). His first sabbatical at the Deutsches Museum led to a monograph published by the Museum on chemistry doctorates earned in nineteenth-century Germany by anglophone chemists (9).

In 1995, Jones retired from the University of New Hampshire and began another chapter of his academic

career, serving as the editor of the *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry* from 1995 to 2010.

Jones married Meredyth Manns in 1958. They moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, shortly after his retirement from the University of New Hampshire. In 2013 they moved to Ithaca, New York, to be closer to family. Jones died on January 3, 2019 after a period of declining health. The Joneses raised three children, Paul, Amy (now Robinson) and Sarah (now Cummings).

Recollections by Martin Saltzman (4)

Paul was a true gentleman and scholar who treated everyone with respect and dignity. He saw himself as an educator first and not a person who wanted to advance his career on the backs of his students and colleagues.

I think it is best to concentrate on what Paul did when he retired with respect to the History of Chemistry, on which we collaborated over many years.

Paul’s first major contribution occurred when he spent a sabbatical year at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, where he compiled an authoritative list of British and American chemists who obtained their doctoral degrees in Germany in the nineteenth century. This compilation was published in booklet form by the museum (8) and was used as a primary resource by many researchers interested in the influence of German education in the development of American and British graduate and post graduate education.

In doing this study Paul became interested in the connection between Justus Liebig and one of his early American students, Eben Horsford, who was one of the first German-trained chemists in the United States. Horsford was professor of chemistry at the Lawrence Scientific School associated with Harvard College (10).

Horsford is credited with the invention and commercialization of baking powder as an alternative to the use of yeast. He was instrumental in founding a commercial plant to produce baking powder. This plant was built in a section of East Providence, Rhode Island, known as Rumford, and the company took this name. The plant still stands, but the making of baking powder ceased many years ago, and the building was being redeveloped for other purposes. Paul and I wrote a proposal to designate the old Rumford baking powder plant as an American Chemical Society National Historic Chemical Landmark. A plaque now is attached to the entrance of the old administrative building denoting the significance

of the site (11).

I think Paul's major long-term achievement was when he took over as editor of the *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry*. This was the official publication of the division, and it had reached a point where its production had become erratic and the *Bulletin* may have ceased publication. Paul volunteered to take over, and because of his work put the *Bulletin*, which appeared twice a year, back on a sound standing. Paul was always willing to add his absolute mastery of the English language and grammar to those of us who were less adept in a kind and gentle fashion. Papers were reviewed in a timely manner and he always had words of encouragement to contributors for their efforts.

Family Remembrances



Figure 3. Paul Jones as a child.

[From Amy Robinson, daughter (5)]

My father's childhood had adults in it who could only be described as chaotic and dark for a sensitive boy, but the miracle of his life was that his gentle spirit and determination did not give into that legacy. And he embraced the light as if his very life depended on it.

He embraced the light of literature and was transported by Thomas Wolfe, Willa Cather, Ivan Doig, Charles Dickens, Wallace Stegner, and so many others. In fact he kept a log of books read since he retired in 1995 and I counted them: 461. He found joy and solace in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Mary Oliver and Shakespeare's sonnets, and he wrote many poems of his own. He had a genuine unaffected, intellectual curiosity.

He embraced the light of art and would make sure to find a museum in whichever city his chemistry conferences found him. He loved the impressionists, especially Pissarro, and adored Andrew Wyeth, making more than

one pilgrimage to Christina Olson's home in Cushing, Maine.

My father embraced the light described in Mary Oliver's poem "One or Two Things" as the "god of dirt" and never lost his excitement for a new season of growing vegetables, yes, but particularly flowers. Peonies were his favorite, and he was well known for sharing their perennial roots among friends and family, though he found it melancholy that their presence each year was so fleeting. Nasturtiums were his second favorite, especially since they persevered all through the summer and fall, and even last year he kept me updated every week about how his were doing on the stoop outside his apartment. "Isn't it amazing?" he would say every year, "that just a tiny dry seed produces something so gorgeous?"

He embraced the light of personal relationships and found great joy in hearing another's story, always with sincere interest and offering his undivided attention. If you were a guest in my parents' home, Dad would refill your water glass before you realized you were thirsty and nudge the butter dish closer if you took bread. My siblings and I have heard from scores of students who may not recall much organic chemistry but they remember his kindness, that he knew their name and details about their family even years later, and that he consoled them when they cried in his office, usually telling them to just get more sleep.

Dad embraced the light of progressive change—as long as it did not include the degradation of grammar, fewer men wearing collared shirts, the loss of the Palmer method of penmanship or any criticism of the British Royal Family. When the Supreme Court upheld gay marriage he was the first person I wanted to call and we cried tears of joy. Championing causes which furthered human rights, he read with interest and discussed many articles against bigotry, homophobia and hate—though if his beloved *New York Times* published an article which misused the Oxford Comma, he cut it out and put it in a file marked "The Oxford Comma."

He cherished the light of his family, both his ancestors and those of us still here. He took us on trips, treated us to dinner, and plumbed us for details of our lives with uncompromised attention. What did we think about politics? What were we working on? What were we reading and seeing in theaters? And what or whom did we love? Dad had a deep sense of history and never tired of his genealogy projects, not because he cared about prestige but because he cared about stories and connections. We spent a number of sabbatical years in Germany and he

treated us to plenty of schnitzel and almond cake with cream, but he also made sure we understood deeply and at a young age, the disastrous effects of National Socialism.

Dad embraced the light of his religious faith. His father was adamantly against the church, but Dad, as a nine-year-old boy, went to the local Lutheran church all by himself. The Community Church in Durham, the Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, and this one we are in now [First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, New York] were the center of his social and spiritual life, particularly the ministry of music through his beloved wife Meredyth.

...



Figure 4. Paul Jones celebrating his 50th wedding anniversary, wearing a paper hat made by his grandchild. Courtesy of Sarah Cummings.

[From Sarah Cummings, daughter (6), on music]

Paul Jones's life changed forever in 1952 when a close friend loaned him a record he thought my dad might like. This was around the time he started graduate school, and it was a pretty lonely time for him. All of his fraternity buddies from Albion College had gone off to law school at the University of Michigan but Paul headed to the University of Illinois to study chemistry, which was academically the better fit for him. Against that backdrop of loneliness came the gift of this record, which contained

the *Adagio for Strings* by Samuel Barber. In short, it blew him away. For this 22-year-old, extremely sensitive young man who felt things very deeply, this piece of music pierced his very soul. The only negative aspect of the listening experience was that he had to jump up quickly to lift the needle before the next piece came on—David Diamond's *Rounds* for strings, a thoroughly "modern" piece which in Dad's mind ruined the spell cast by the transcendent Barber. As time went on, Dad thought of his life in terms of before and after he had heard the Barber for the first time; it was clearly a real turning point for him. Dad spent the rest of his life trying to understand the piece, at least ostensibly. He was fascinated that it didn't end on the tonic note; the ending really filled him with wonder and awe. "I think it must be modal," he would insist, though what mode it was exactly was never clear to him. He was happy when a music theorist joined the family and could try and help him get to the bottom of what made the piece work...but no matter how it was explained to him, no answer really ever satisfied him. In retrospect, I actually think he didn't really want to unlock what made it so special; maybe the scientist in him wanted to know, but the human being wanted to keep the piece on a whole other intangible level.

Dad was one of those adults who always wished they had stuck with their childhood piano lessons, in his case, with Mrs. Breivogel, a nearby neighbor. Even though he stopped taking lessons for whatever reason, he could always bring out his one-handed renditions of *Sunshine Showers* and *March of the Wee Folk*, but he was consistently frustrated that he couldn't do more. While living in Ann Arbor, Dad wrote this about his struggle to express himself musically and his regret in quitting the piano: he wrote "I can experience with genuine pain what I wish I were able to produce in the form of soaring, or gentle, or moving musical beauty—yet hear it only, with idle, talentless fingers."

Singing soon began to fill that void. He sang in choirs in college and in graduate school and even sang under the great Leopold Stokowski while at the University of Illinois. He was an active choir member in the Presbyterian Church of Urbana throughout his graduate school years. When he got a job teaching chemistry at the University of New Hampshire in 1956, he soon found the Congregational Church in Durham and joined the choir right away.

And then he met Meredyth, who became his beloved wife of 60 years and everything changed. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that through Meredyth, his musical dreams were fulfilled. Mom was a musical

force of nature; in addition to conducting the Durham Community Church choir for 35 years, she started a big community chorus which put on large-scale productions every year and she also led a small select group of singers. This “small group” had initially been Dad’s suggestion: “let’s invite a few people over to sing madrigals,” he had said, and the next thing he knew, it had blossomed into Amare Cantare, a select 24-voice group that toured all over the state of New Hampshire. Dad was Meredyth’s most enthusiastic supporter and could not have been more proud of all that she did: he sang faithfully in each of her groups, which usually meant going out to evening rehearsals three or more times each week. He was also the ultimate wingman, doing whatever needed to be done behind the scenes without complaint: transporting the harpsichord, typing out programs, hanging posters all over town, hosting parties, learning Shaker dances and wearing tights at an Elizabethan Feast. In a collection of memories gathered for Dad’s 85th birthday, Mom wrote “You were always the best possible choir tenor; never harsh and always blending.” Though he belittled his own musical expertise, he had an innate sense for the creation of music versus just the production of notes. He had strong opinions and astute observations about conductors, especially choral conductors, and the only thing that mattered was how they shaped the phrase, showed the line, drew the music off of the page. Honestly, I think he was secretly always comparing other conductors to Mom as the ultimate musical conductor; showing music, and not beating notes. I think when all was said and done, she was his favorite conductor.

My father was many things: a curious scientist, compassionate teacher, devoted husband, patient father, but I really feel he had the soul of an artist. He loved and appreciated beauty in every form: art, literature, poetry, in his garden, the natural world, and yes, music. He loved Frank Sinatra, the Four Freshmen, Beethoven String Quartets, Vaughan Williams Symphonies, Leonard Bernstein’s Mass, the Fauré Requiem, Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, and choral music of all kinds. He was never snobbish about this interest, rather always genuinely curious to know more about composers, history, and biography and in recent years, when he had time to read the *New York Times* cover to cover each day, he would always save clippings for me on what was going on in the classical music world. Together with Meredyth, he was an ardent supporter of the arts in his community, wherever he lived and was an avid concert-goer. On one occasion, as a member of the concert committee at UNH he even had the opportunity to iron Itzhak Perlman’s pants at the last minute just before a performance!

I would invite you to take a moment to remember Paul by putting on a recording of the *Adagio for Strings* by Samuel Barber. Many of you might have associations between this piece and war, destruction, and mass devastation, due to its wide use in the movies and after 9/11. Whether you have heard the piece before in any of these contexts or are listening to it today for the first time, I invite you to listen to it through the lens of a wide-eyed 22-year-old young man setting out on the world, a man who felt “O World, I cannot hold thee close enough,” for whom art, literature, nature, faith and music cut to his very core. For Paul Jones, this is a piece about hope, beauty, the connection between human beings, and above all, wonder.

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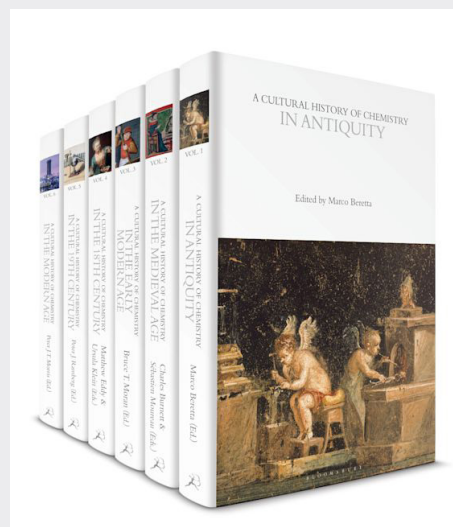
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