

## *Helen DeVitt Jones*

Helen DeVitt Jones, a great humanitarian and patroness of education and the fine arts, was born into one of the early ranching families of West Texas. Her father, David M. DeVitt, came to Texas in 1880 from New York; and in 1903 he purchased the Mallet Land and Cattle Company, which covered approximately 52,000 acres in West Texas.

This land is located principally in Hockley, Cochran, Yoakum and Terry counties, which are west of Lubbock, Texas.

In the 1930's, the Mallet Land and Cattle company became a corporation. Raising cattle was the main industry of the ranch, but oil and gas were discovered on the property in May of 1938. By the end of 1940, 101 wells had been drilled on the land. At the present time, there are over 1,000 pumping wells.

Helen's mother, Florence, who was reared in an orphanage near Waco, met Mr. DeVitt after he came to Texas. The couple had four children—two girls, Christine and Helen, and two boys, Harold and David, Jr. Harold died in a gun accident in 1901, and David, Jr. died in a car accident in 1930. Mr. DeVitt died in 1934, and Mrs. DeVitt died in 1945. Christine DeVitt lived to be 98 and died in 1983.

Mrs. Jones was born December 7, 1899, in Fort Worth, Texas. She lived on the ranch with her family until it was time for her to go to school. The family maintained a home in Fort Worth in order for her to attend school.

After completing high school, Helen enrolled at Texas Christian University for one year. She then continued her education at the University of California at Berkeley, where she graduated summa cum laude in 1921.

In 1925, she returned to Texas and married Lee S. "Bill" Secrest. The couple had one child, a daughter, Dorothy Gail, born in 1926. Later in life she married W. Tom Jones, who had been a friend of her father and who served as the farm manager until he died in 1955.

After the death of Mr. Jones, Helen traveled to the New York area for health reasons and in order to visit her daughter who was living in Woodstock, NY. She returned to Lubbock in 1966 where she remained until her death in 1997.

Mrs. Jones funded the Helen Jones Foundation in 1984. She was an avid supporter of the fine arts and organizations working with both public school and college students.

Helen DeVitt Jones devoted her later life to sharing her wealth as a patron of philanthropic causes. The Foundation continues to follow her philosophy as its guiding principle.

If you are interested in knowing more about Helen DeVitt Jones, the book entitled *Oil, Taxes and Cats* by David J. Murrah chronicles the life of the DeVitt family.

## ***Helen Jones Foundation, Inc. - Founder's Philosophy***

Helen DeVitt Jones had an intense desire to promote better education with her gifts to society. With this philosophy, she set up the Helen Jones Foundation to implement her desires during her lifetime and for an indefinite time after her death. She was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley with honors.

The term education covers a broad spectrum, but her primary efforts were in the field of school education. She was more interested in basic educational improvements rather than theory. She financed programs that lent support to talented individuals, especially if their skills were intended to lead to employment in a practical field. Other fields of education such as museums, music, and visual arts were contributed to as well as youth education, such as the Young Women Christian Association, Boy Scouts of America, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other youth oriented programs. Cultural events such as audio and visual events were supported along with limited contributions to health fields. She was one of the largest private contributors to Texas Tech University.

She entered into fields of education in the support of capital expenditures as well as their programming. She was not interested in supporting operating budgets or other endowments.

Mrs. Jones was not concerned with supporting social services other than through her gifts to the United Way of Lubbock. It was uncommon for her to give to problems of abuse or criminal correction programs. She did not give to religious groups other than for separate school development.

She primarily gave to entities in the Lubbock area, but did support some of her Jones Fellows in other states. She was a friend of Dr. Carl Menniger of Topeka, Kansas, and gave to his project called "The Villages." This has been on-going for years since one of the homes is named in her honor. She showed concern for the environment as is seen in some of her gifts. She had a habit of giving small gifts to organizations that struck her fancy.

It can be said that Mrs. Jones enjoyed sharing her wealth for the betterment of people in a process of education as prevention of problems rather than correction after the deed. To this, the Board of Trustees for the Helen Jones Foundation, Inc. should be mindful in selecting grants.

*Helen DeVitt Jones biography and founder's philosophy provided by the Helen Jones Foundation, Inc., 2006*