

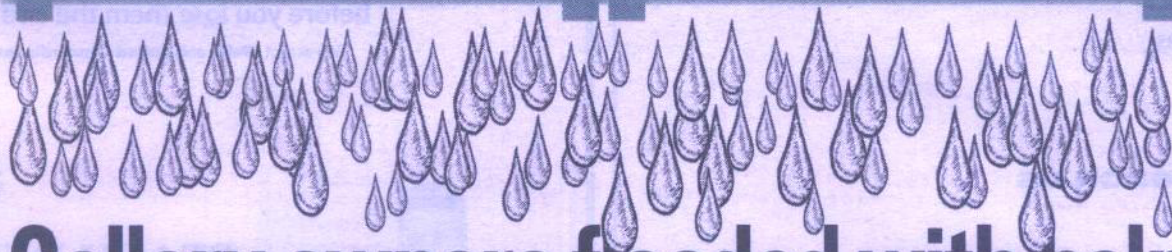
BEACON

BEACHCOMBING

City won't be buying the farm for new Kellam High site.

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WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE



Gallery owners flooded with help

By Irene Bowers
Correspondent

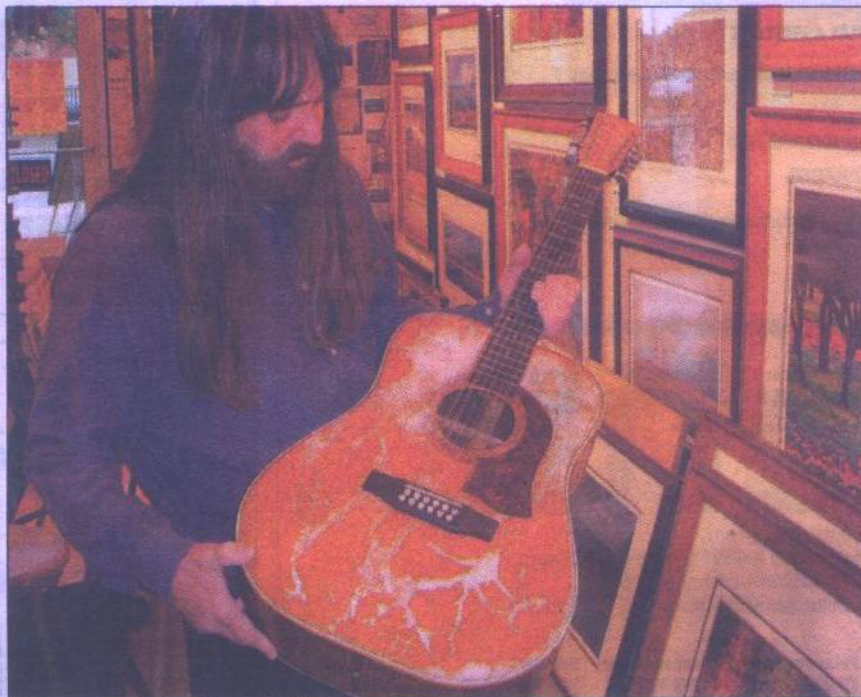
BAYSIDE

A few minutes past 6 p.m. on Oct. 23, Thalia Station 7 firefighter Hope Scott responded to an emergency call from Jones Art Gallery. A line break was spewing hundreds of gallons of water into the gallery on the ground floor of the Armada Hoffler building.

The station's crew jumped into action.

Until that moment, it had been a great week for the gallery. They were celebrating the international release of John Grisham's book "Ford County," featuring Louis Jones' cover page illustration — his third for the author — and the Spanish-language, worldwide release of "Conversations with God," four volumes of which bear Jones' cover art.

Artist Susan Jones, who is



IRENE BOWERS

Louis Jones holds his 1976 Mossman 12-string guitar, which was damaged in the flood from a water main break Oct. 23. The Jones Art Gallery suffered major losses, but Louis Jones said the family gained "faith in humanity."

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GALLERY

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married to Louis, was sitting at the desk beneath the gallery's exposed piping.

"A steel bolt shot past, and suddenly I was under water," she said. "The volume was so huge, it actually knocked the diamond out of my ear."

The deluge showed no signs of stopping.

"I come from a family of watermen, so it was, 'The ship is sinking, and I have to stop the water,'" said Louis Jones, who grabbed the gallery's 20-foot ladder. Balancing on top at the valve hand-wheel, he discovered that "turning the wheel made no difference, and I was standing in the equivalent of a fire hydrant, surrounded by electrical wires."

Susan Jones ran for help.

"All I knew was that we were losing our life's work," she said, referring to the paintings of three generations, from grandfather Herb Jones through to her and Louis' son Ryan Jones. Out on Virginia Beach Boulevard, she "screamed like a crazy woman," she said.

Ryan Jones went for the artwork.

The water's impact had knocked framed paintings to the floor, breaking the glass. Two of his grandfather's original watercolors, worth \$18,000 and \$28,000, were destroyed. Rust-colored liquid splattered the walls and paintings.

His father's attaché case, containing the contracts and original art for the Grisham book, was under water. Giclee prints, worth several hundred thousand dollars, were in the water's path. He loaded up



IRENE BOWERS

Susan and Louis Jones clean off the painting "Hope," which son Ryan Jones painted of family friend Hope Scott. Scott is a Thalia Station firefighter who responded to the call.

armfuls and sprinted for the door.

Then hope arrived.

Donna Herring of Red Coats housekeeping made a 911 call. Neighboring Men's Wearhouse manager Todd Ranieri and staff rushed over to help.

"It looked like a waterfall," Ranieri said. "We tried putting a trash can underneath, but it was useless."

An industrial bin from maintenance was rolled in and emptied every few minutes. Passersby also began to pour in — folks on their way to dinner, shows and shopping.

"They just kept coming and carrying paintings outside," Susan Jones said. "Everyone was soaked, but they wouldn't stop; it was incredible."

Thalia Station's fire engine pulled up, with firefighter Hope Scott at the wheel. Capt. Richard Grosse noted

that the scene "was pretty chaotic."

As the fire crew rushed into the gallery, somewhere in the swirl they passed a delicate watercolor of Scott, painted by Ryan Jones. The painting shows her image at the water's edge and is titled, "Hope."

"I've known Ryan and his family all my life," Scott said. "From the minute the call came in, I knew what we were going into — they've worked their entire lives for this gallery."

Susan Jones said, "I saw Hope come in, and tears just ran down my face."

According to Grosse, they shut off the electricity and assessed the break.

"There was probably 60 psi of pressure in the line, so it would be like a fire hydrant in strength," he said.

Firefighters held a wedge

in the pipe drain plug, while Grosse and Scott turned off the building's water main.

The gallery's inventory, valued in the millions, lined the sidewalk. Ranieri offered to house it in Men's Wearhouse for safekeeping. Staff and firefighters moved the paintings into his store.

"It's not like they could order a replacement inventory," Ranieri said. "We knew this was all they had."

Town Center's general manager Amy Cherry said the neighboring tenants at Men's Wearhouse and P.F. Chang's, as well as the maintenance department and management team, responded quickly when they learned of the flood.

"Everyone pitched in and pulled together to help the Joneses," she said. "It's a great example of the community spirit here."

Insurance estimates are not available, but Louis Jones said the list of lost items includes original artwork by all four artists, a 1976 hand-built Mossman guitar, their computer and Palm Pilots, art supplies and Susan's diamond earring. In spite of everything, what was gained, according to Louis Jones, was the family's "faith in humanity."

"The kindness of strangers who didn't give us a chance to thank them, the heroes in the fire department and the generosity of our neighbors," he explained.

"There are no words to express how grateful we are," added Susan Jones.

"We've tried to be the people's gallery here, open to everybody, and this reaffirms it," Louis Jones said. "They saved us."

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