

HARBORFEST

CAPTURING HUES OF THE HARBOR



VICKI CRONIS / The Virginian-Pilot

Susan Jones acts as easel for this year's Harborfest poster painted by her husband, Louis Jones.

**Norfolk artist
Louis Jones
shares scene
he's loved
from boyhood**

BY NANCY LEWIS
STAFF WRITER

HOW MANY watercolor hues can the setting sun wash the sky cradling Norfolk's harbor?

The myriad golds and pinks are uncountable as grains of sand on a beach, says Norfolk artist Louis Jones, whose sea-sky-boatscape appears on this year's Harborfest poster.

Jones should know. A dozen

times he set out to sea to study the way the prism of the sky fractures light and makes blue and blush. And more times than that he took up his brush and failed before he was satisfied he had captured the wind, the waves, the skiff and the city that had long ago painted themselves on his boyish heart.

"As a boy, I used to lie on the beach and watch the sky and water," Jones said. "I'd watch the

Please see Poster, Page E6

THE DAILY BREAK

E6

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT The Daily

Poster: Jones captures colors of harbor to benefit Harborfest

Continued from Page E1

sunset from my window."

Jones' poster has art critics and connoisseurs drooling:

The evening's scudding slate clouds and mercury-heavy water hint subtly at the ominous power of nature, yet the sailboat skims the pewter harbor boldly, jauntily catching the skimpy gold that is the day's dying light.

A string of tiny, staccato lights rings the diminutive waterfront, and the sharp-sailed boat, hero of the harbor, moves magically across the water.

"All the colors, you get in 15 minutes," says Jones, getting back to that sky.

The Harborfest poster is a project of pride — a labor of love for his native city, Jones says. It's a creation expected to net \$55,000 for the annual event.

"It was all about love, a spiritual payback to an area I love," Jones says. Planning for and completing the project consumed two months of his time. Jones and the poster's printer, Teagle & Little Inc. of Norfolk, all but donated their time and effort.

"See, the water has 14 layers," says the stocky, long-haired 44-year-old. "That's why it looks so deep."

Closer scrutiny reveals a minuscule Susan Jones, Louis' wife and also an artist, at the helm of the

swift sailboat. The couple own and operate the Louis Jones & Susan Jones Art Gallery at Dominion Tower on Norfolk's Waterfront.

Louis Jones says that if there were any competitiveness between Susan, whose work is primarily Impressionistic, and himself, it would have shown itself last year, when she sold more paintings than he did. He credits her with having helped him realize his dreams.

"Without her, I never would have been an artist," he says. "I wanted her to be proud of me. Our strength comes from working as a team."

Artistic talent runs in the Jones family.

Louis' father, well-known Norfolk artist Herb Jones, created the harbor paintings that decorated the waterfront festival's poster for three years running — from 1993 through 1995.

And Susan's and Louis' son Ryan, 19 and a sophomore art major at Virginia Wesleyan, also exhibits his work in his parents' gallery. His chiseled faces bespeak a stoic fatalism at the same time they exude unswerving spirituality.

Louis Jones recently sold a painting that graces the cover of the second book in Neale Donald Walsch's series, "Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue," published by G.P. Putnam's Sons. Jones said he broke his stricture against artistic collaboration after reading the first of Walsch's books

and finding the author's approach to life so positive. Artwork by Jones also decorates the cover of Walsch's first volume.

Other of Jones' works have received international recognition.

Earlier paintings are Wyeth-like in their representations of buildings. Drab browns seem to hasten the inevitable decay of edifices erected by man. But it's the souls who inhabited the buildings that mesmerize this painter.

And there! On the Harborfest poster. There's a lone pinprick of light on the sheer south side of Dominion Tower, about halfway up and near the eastern corner of the building.

"That's my friend, Wayne Smith, the building manager," explains the playful artist, smiling as impishly as a boy caught with a fistful of cookies from the cookie jar.

"It's got to have the magic," he explains.

Signed copies of Jones' poster will sell for \$35 at Harborfest, June 6-8. Unsigned versions go for \$25.

