Arlene Swift Jones
January 3rd 1928 - December 31st 2013

Arlene Swift Jones, a poet and writer, died at home in Bloomfield, Connecticut, surrounded by her three daughters and granddaughter on the last day of 2013. She died of sepsis after a life of pain from rheumatoid arthritis and complications of late onset peripheral vascular disease.

Arlene was a courageous intellectual, who led an adventurous life. She was born in Grinnell, Iowa, and raised on a family farm in a Norwegian Quaker community. Passionate about poetry and literature from a young age, she was determined to explore the world. In 1949 she graduated from Cornell College in Iowa and earned a masters degree in English from Columbia University in 1951. She sailed to Norway in the summer of 1951 to attend the University of Oslo and discover her origins, and then bicycled through England, France and Germany. She found employment with the US Army in Salzburg, Austria, where she met and married Major Frank William Jones Jr. of New Hartford, Connecticut in 1952. With her husband, who first joined the OSS and then the CIA, she served in multiple countries raising three daughters in Germany, Poland, Cyprus, Norway, and Switzerland. During the hostilities in Cyprus in 1964, Arlene was evacuated with her daughters to Greece, Lebanon, and Israel.

As a teacher, lecturer, and educator, Arlene worked at the elementary, high school, and university levels at numerous institutions in many countries. From 1959 to 1962 she served as the Principal of the American School of Warsaw, Poland. In the late 1970’s she was the Assistant Academic Dean at the Ethel Walker School in Simsbury, CT. She earned a second masters degree from the Warren Wilson MFA Program in 1995. She is the winner of Fellowships from both the Ragdale Foundation (Frances Shaw Fellow) and the MacDowell Colony. She is published in literary publications: Prairie Schooner, Wind, Green Mountains Review, Kansas Quarterly, Tar River Poetry, Cimarron Review, Kestrel, Kalliope, and Commentary of the Hartford Courant. Her work is anthologized by Calyx in Women and Aging and in A Wider Giving. She received an Academy of American Poets Prize, and a Denny Prize.

She published three books of poems: The Insisting Thistle, Deenewood; A Sequence, and Pomegranate Wine. Her most recent publication, God, Put Out One of My Eyes; A Cyprus Diary 1962-1965, was awarded honorable mention by The Eric Hoffer Award for Books.

In 1975 Arlene and her husband retired from foreign service to live in the family home in New Hartford, CT. Arlene galvanized the creation of the new modern library facility that New Hartford residents enjoy today.

Arlene just completed her final book, No Stones in Heaven. The intergenerational saga weaves together history, fiction and autobiography, telling a story of love, hard work, and integrity of those who find and live the quintessential American dream. Until her last day, Arlene was an avid reader with a keen memory; a library of knowledge and inspiration. Her spirit is alive in her written works and in those she loved and taught; but her presence will be dearly missed.

Arlene is survived by three daughters: Jeanne R. Jones of Colebrook, CT, Robin M. Jones of Weston, MA, and Kristin A. Jones of New York and Rome, two grandchildren, Michaela and Jonathan Slavid, as well as many nephews, nieces and cousins.

The family is extremely grateful to all her physicians, nurses and caregivers at the The Duncaster and to Hospice (VNA HealthCare) whose excellent care aided her peaceful release.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to “The Beekley Library” where a fund will be created in Arlene’s memory: (http://www.beekleylibrary.org).