Music Alum Goes Green Down Under

Herbert “Bud” Jones (BME ‘65, music and education) had always been interested in a career in music, but never dreamed it would take him halfway around the world. His life’s path has led him from North Denver High School on to DU and finally to New Zealand, where he has resided for more than 45 years.

Jones is not only a musician, he is an environmental activist. He recently was awarded the Queen Elizabeth ll Queen’s Service Medal in New Zealand, presented for outstanding achievements in arboretum and wetland creation, environmental protection and wildlife conservation, as well as service to professional music performance, secondary and tertiary music education.

He and his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Jones, own Pokai Parera Farms, where Jones has created wetland wildlife habitat that includes five large lakes and 21 smaller ponds spread widely over 214 acres. All the wetland areas have adjacent complementary tree planting where he has personally planted more than 30,000 native and exotic trees specifically for birdlife, beautification and enrichment of the countryside.

Jones was drawn to DU after studying with Frank Gagliardi, a musician and DU percussion lecturer at Lamont as well as the principal percussionist in the Denver Symphony, now Colorado Symphony. Gagliardi encouraged his students to attend DU, so when Jones graduated from North Denver High, he followed Gagliardi’s recommendation. (Jones was inducted into the North Denver High School Hall of Fame this past April.)

“On education, I wanted to be perhaps a teacher more than a player, having been inspired by great teachers throughout my teen years, but it worked out the other way around!” Jones said.

Jones recalls his most memorable experience at DU being the “greatest project at the time ever for the DU music department.” As a drummer in the DU jazz band in 1965, Jones and the band under the auspices of the U.S. State Department embarked on a three-month concert tour of the Far East, Australia and New Zealand.

After graduating and teaching high school in Denver for a year, Jones went to New Zealand in 1967 to teach high school music. Upon his arrival, he was asked to audition for the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. He later formed the New Zealand Jazz Orchestra, a part time professional band, and became music director for the New Zealand National Youth Jazz Orchestra and the New Zealand National High School Jazz Orchestra.

Jones went on to teach at the university level, and formed the Victoria University Big Band in 1992, which was the beginning of jazz being recognized at universities. Today, he still teaches one day a week at the New Zealand School of Music.

“My most rewarding work has been teaching and as a band leader,” Jones said. But he also enjoyed the 39 years as a sub-principal percussionist with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, especially the tours to
Europe, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia. “I had the great privilege to play under the world’s greatest conductors and played the world’s greatest music,” he added.

Growing up, Jones had a wide interest in the outdoors, which included many Colorado hiking, fishing and hunting trips. This passion led him and his wife to buy a home and build a wildlife community in the Wairarapa region of New Zealand (the southeast corner of the North Island), in 1982.

“I was able to realize my dream of wildlife habitat creation in this beautiful, easy hill country. It’s now a mature paradise habitat of lakes, ponds, forests, color and extensive wildlife – notably protected in perpetuity by a Queen Elizabeth II Open Space Covenant” he said.

Jones credits DU and the Lamont School of Music for being an integral part of his career path, especially since he never would have taught at the high school or university levels in New Zealand without his degree in music education, he said.

Photo: Jones (left) receiving the Queen’s Service Medal from Lt. Gen. The Right Honorable Sir Jerry Mateparae, Governor General of New Zealand