

DONOR STORIES

JAMES W. AND JVONE E. MAXWELL “The James W. and Jvone E. Maxwell Memorial Scholarship Fund”

Jvone Maxwell, the only child of James Edward and Emma Josephine (Hanson) Lowrie, was born in 1914 in Lehigh, Iowa. In grade school, Jvone and her family moved to Waterloo because her parents felt that the change would offer her more opportunities and a stronger education. As a young child her musical interests and talents began to emerge and she began playing the piano at the age of 7.

Through her primary years, Jvone attended Sloane Wallace School and then graduated from Waterloo West High School in 1932. During her years at West High School Jvone was called upon many times to accompany choirs, play at graduations, receptions and special banquets. All who listened recognized her incredible talent and genuine love for music and it was this gift that blessed so many occasions.

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While at West High School Jvone developed a deep appreciation for educators due to her fond memories of a very special teacher. A special man also entered into Jvone’s life during her senior year of high school; the man who eventually stole her heart and became her husband, Jimmie Maxwell.

After Jvone left high school she was anxious to begin a life of music and performance which led her to enroll at the Iowa State Teacher’s College (ISTC- now the University of Northern Iowa). Her father passed away during her freshman year at college so during her four years of undergraduate education Jvone lived with her mother while working toward a degree in music and piano.

After graduating with her Bachelor’s Degree Jvone decided to follow her musical interests and talents to the grand city of Chicago where she lived for three years. There she spent two of those years working towards her Master’s Degree at the American Conservatory of Music. Her drive to succeed professionally resulted in opportunities to accompany numerous professional groups and individuals at impressive venues such as Orchestra Hall.

In the summer of 1939, Jvone was looking for a job and found a perfect fit; she was asked to accompany and help opera singer Janet Fairbank learn her music. For the entire summer Jvone lived with Ms. Fairbank at her summer home on Lake Geneva where Jvone quickly became like a member of the family, having dinner and lounging in the sun.



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After her ventures in Chicago, Jvone returned home to Waterloo to once again live with her mother. It was during this time that she and Jimmie got engaged.

Jimmie had graduated from high school the same year as Jvone and the two stayed in touch as good friends over the years. The summer after high school graduation Jimmie had to undergo surgery in Rochester, Minnesota to remove a brain tumor- a very trying time for such a young man. He made great progress and had a successful recovery from surgery. He went on to college for four years at Iowa State University in Ames where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Architectural Engineering.

On March 14, 1942 wedding bells were ringing as Jvone married the love of her life at the First United Methodist Church in Waterloo. The couple then honeymooned in Marshalltown, Iowa.

After they married, Jvone and Jimmie relocated to Des Moines where Jimmie worked for A.J. Brandt Engineering. Shortly after they arrived, Drake University called Jvone and offered her a teaching position at the college. The couple made Des Moines "home" for three years.

They then headed east as Jimmie was offered a position with U.S. Rubber as an engineer in Detroit, Michigan. While making their home in Detroit, Jvone became associated with the Conservatory of Music and accompanied various musical groups and entertainers.

Three years later the Maxwell's once again found themselves heading "home" to Cedar Falls and Jvone insists it was a higher power guiding them back to where they were meant to be. Jimmie invested his time and energy in a family business, Maxwell Specialty Company. Later, Jimmie became the Director of Development at Construction Machinery Company owned by the Holton family. After spending time at the company Jimmie went back to his first interest, architecture, and become involved with Thorson, Brom, Broshar, Snyder Architecture where he worked until he retired

Jvone also felt very fortunate because while still in Detroit, the State College of Iowa (once ISTC and now University of Northern Iowa), her alma mater, called to offer her a teaching position.

Jvone taught piano majors, gave lessons to students too numerous to count and also co-directed music theater. Her years with the college spanned across all of the school's name changes; from her undergraduate years at Iowa State Teacher's College to her years as an educator at the State College of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa.

The Maxwell home was always open to her students for gatherings and, most importantly, for building friendships. Jvone and Jimmie helped the students to do more than get an education- they helped them to develop as people; whether that was by serving as a mentor or by assisting them with serious financial need. Jvone once said, "I loved every one of them... I just loved teaching." To this day she receives letters in the mail from students reminding her of the impact she has made on their lives.

One of Jvone's fondest memories was of a Christmas party in their home for all of the students. The house was so full of happiness, friendship, love and, of course, music. Every student brought their music and they sang and played together for hours. The same excitement that Jvone had shown as a young child was alive and well in the hearts of her students.

When Jimmie retired in 1976 he did not stop working; instead he went into land development where he was still able to use his skills and expertise. Jvone retired two years later.

Both made contributions to the Cedar Valley community not only through their careers and their passion for students but also through their individual interests. Jimmie was a member of the Shriners and Jvone spent much of her time volunteering. She volunteered with the Waterloo Center for the Arts and also was instrumental after her retirement in establishing Cedar Valley Hospice.

Her involvement with Hospice started as a volunteer staff person in 1980, which eventually led to her being the Assistant Volunteer Coordinator in 1988. For ten years Jvone worked daily at the Cedar Valley Hospice office on a volunteer basis; in essence, she went back to work! Her commitment to this community was honored when she was named the recipient of the Mayor's Volunteer Award and also received the Cedar Valley Hospice Person of the Year Award.

On September 5, 1986 Jimmie died and Jvone continued to honor his caring spirit by remaining an active volunteer until she once again "retired" due to osteoporosis. Jvone died on February 8, 2005.

Throughout their lives the Maxwells were blessed with care, compassion, and a love for music that lifted their spirits and hearts every day. Jimmy and Jvone shared that same care, compassion, and music with all of their students and also with an entire community grateful for the joyous songs they shared with all of us.

*Historical vignette prepared by the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.