



Fly Trap, foundling, falling house, feathered birds ~ The fantastical F's in this Pacifican's life An interview-biography with Jane Tollini

Written by Jean Bartlett

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(A Pacifica Historical Society Project)

Jane Tollini picked up the phone. The caller identified himself, "John Blackstone from CBS News." "So, you want to talk about sex?" Jane asked. There was a horrible pause. "No," John Blackstone managed to sputter. "Is this the 'Jane Tollini' who lost her home on Esplanade?" "Ohhh! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Well it turns out that Jane, then the penguin keeper at the San Francisco Zoo, had good reason to ask such a question. At that time, she was famous all over the world for her yearly Valentine's Day Zoo Sex Tours, running the weekend before and after February 14, and all the days between, that focused on the sexual escapades of the residents of the Zoo. Created by the wickedly-funny animal lover, ticket prices ran from \$60 to \$75 per person over the many years Jane led the charge. Accompanied by her SF Zoo tour bus driver, Jane regaled her 21-and-over seated audience with blush-worthy facts that left no stone, or Zoo resident mating extravaganza, unturned. The Sex Ed tours, which also included chocolates and champagne, and other food items, kept Jane's name on the radio and in the news. People wanted to know more! But correspondent John Blackstone had other things on his mind – like Jane's home on Esplanade Avenue (in Pacifica) falling into the ocean following the El Niño event of February 1998.

The latter El Niño event, which created a bluff-erosion that quite literally pulled the land out from underneath Jane's back yard while she was sleeping—leaving her to immediately gather 28 friends to help haul all her stuff out of her home moments after she woke up, looked out her glass door and realized not only was her patio missing, but she was looking from her back doorway over nothing—was and has been another reason that Jane is never far from a headline, with her name in it. "It turns out sand cliffs go silently," the still-a-Pacifican informed. As recently as January of 2023, Jane's falling-house tale remains a media request; this time for another CBS journalist.

"I did not want to talk again about my house falling into the ocean," Jane stated. "It shows up forever on the Weather Channel. It shows up everywhere. And I get no residuals! But I love CBS Sunday Morning, it's a great way to have my coffee, and that's who called."

Jane met the show's producers on Esplanade, not where her house fell, but in a spot they chose across from the Pacific Manor Post Office. Her old address was just down the street. She was given a child's folding chair to sit in. It was placed inches from the edge of a cliff.

"I sit down in this chair, the interviewer sits across from me, and he starts asking me questions about how it was when my house fell into the ocean. As I am talking to him, I am moving my hands, because I can't talk otherwise. I'm Italian! As I am moving my hands, I can feel my chair sinking into the sand. I said to them, 'Is this chair and this location really necessary?'"

"We finish the interview and then they follow me down the block. I have brought with me the wooden plaque that has my old Esplanade address on it, 556, and I set it down where my house formerly stood. Pointing to the small span of land beyond the fence I said, 'Now there isn't even room for a toilet.'"



556 marks the spot of Jane's fallen Esplanade home.

"By the way," Jane noted, "if you went down now to the spot where I was seated for that 2023 interview, that spot has since fallen into the ocean."

Okay. The falling house and feathered birds (penguins) have been mentioned and will be mentioned again further along. But what about those other two F's, foundling and Fly Trap. Time to begin this story at Jane's beginning.

* * *

On October 6, 1947, at 2:59 a.m., the Captain of an English sailing vessel wrote in his log, "*Little girl born.*" Two weeks later, the little girl was abandoned at a pier in San Francisco and subsequently picked up by the San Francisco Port Authority and placed in a foundling home.

"Blonde-haired and blue-eyed, I was adopted three weeks later by a childless Italian couple. It was my lucky day! As far as my parents were concerned, the sun rose and set on me!"

Five years ago, when she was 72, Jane Eleanor Tollini learned a few more bullets to her birth story, but the date, the time, and being adopted by a childless Italian couple who loved her dearly, all remain on point.

"I was adopted by Mario and Nora (Beronio) Tollini."

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Mario John Tollini was born in San Francisco on December 18, 1908. His father, August Tollini, was born in Italy on August 28, 1879. His mother, Louisa (Besozzi) Tollini, was born in Italy on November 6, 1887. Louisa's father, Jane's great grandfather, Cesare Besozzi, came over to the United States not long after his wife, Annunciata, died giving birth to the couple's second child. Their baby died as well. It would take Jane's great grandfather 13 years to save up enough money to bring his daughter Louisa and her aunt over. Cesare never remarried and died in San Francisco at the age of 76 on April 1, 1937.

"My great grandfather owned a grain, hay, feed and coal yard in Cow Hollow. When the fire from San Francisco's 1906 earthquake reached my great grandfather's yard, everything just burned and burned. My grandmother's childhood home was on Green Street and they lost everything. She would tell me stories about how they stood in line for hours in the Presidio, just to find out it was a line to go to the bathroom, or it was a line to get bread. It was not the line they thought it was.

"Louisa and her family ended up going to the Carlo Rossi family home in Sonoma County, where they lived in a barn until they could come back to San Francisco. While they lost everything, they recovered. But I heard so many horror stories about the earthquake. Give me a severed limb, a plague of locusts, anything but an earthquake! Earthquakes terrify me, more than anything, and as those who know me know, I'm not afraid of much of anything because of the many things that have happened to me. My Grandmother Louisa never forgot that earthquake either. If I was just walking by her and accidentally bumped her chair, she'd say, 'Janey! It's the big one!'

"My father's parents, Louisa and August, married in San Francisco in 1907. They had a house on Vallejo, between Leavenworth and Hyde (San Francisco's Russian Hill neighborhood) which is where my father Mario was raised, and where I also lived many years later with my Nona Louisa. She and my grandfather only had one child, my father. Sometimes I wonder if they ever had sex again because she was terrified of childbirth, with good reason. Her mother died in childbirth."

It was Mario's mom's family, the Besozzis, who started San Francisco's famous Fly Trap Restaurant. It was opened in 1883, by Louis Besozzi, at Sutter and Market. He first called it Louie's on Market and then he renamed it, Louis' Fashion Restaurant.

"Back then, the cable cars were pulled by horses and the cars were turned around on Market, right in front of the restaurant. Of course, all the horses pooped there and that brought flies."



To control the fly population invading his restaurant, Louis placed flypaper on the ceiling and under the tables. Military officers stationed in San Francisco, who all loved the restaurant, nicknamed it The Fly Trap. Over the decades, the restaurant moved to several locations, and a number of owners bought it and ran it. But just like flypaper, its original nickname stuck. (Now located on Folsom in San Francisco's SoMa neighborhood, the Fly Trap has been owned by Chef Hoss Zaré since 2008. Chef Zaré began working there in 1988.)

"My grandmother's relative, Louis, opened the Fly Trap and my grandfather August worked there for years. I did go to the Fly Trap when I was little. I don't remember too much about it, though I do recall being astounded when I was there one evening because there were all these guys, friends of my

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grandfather's, who came over just after playing bocce ball. So, they were all saying hello and then some of the other customers, who were dressed to the nines, had just come from the opera and they all knew my grandfather as well. A lot of those women were wearing fox things that bit. Ha! Ha!" (Fox fur stoles.) "And they were also talking to my grandfather and mixing with the bocce ball players.

"I did get some of the Fly Trap recipes," Jane went on to say. "I can make the best risotto you've ever had. My Nona Louisa didn't actually sit down and teach me. But she was in the kitchen all the time cooking, so I was there with her and I learned."

Jane's mom, Nora Gertrude (Beronio) Tollini was born in San Francisco on July 14, 1911, and she was the daughter of Antone V. Beronio, born in 1884, and Eleanor (Mangan) Beronio, born in 1876. Nora and her husband, Mario Tollini, brought their daughter Jane home to their house on 26th Avenue between Lincoln and Irving. Located in San Francisco's Sunset District, it was half a block from Golden Gate Park. Jane's maternal grandfather died before she was born, but Grandma Beronio lived next door, Aunt Louise, her mom's sister, lived a few doors down on the corner of 26th, and Aunt Jo (Josephine), her grandmother Eleanor's sister, lived kitty-corner.

"For quite a while, I was the only bambino in the entire Italian family and I was spoiled rotten. It was heaven! Eventually, my Aunt Louise adopted my cousin Roland.

"My dad graduated from Santa Clara University with a degree in business. He had some sort of health issue that prevented him from serving in the Second World War, though I don't know what, so he was recruited into my mom's family business. They owned Beronio Lumber, which is still there, off of Cesar Chavez Street in San Francisco. He was quite literally made to go to work there because there weren't enough men around. After spending a year out in the yards learning the ropes and getting splinters, he went to work in the office, running the lumber business. He worked for my mom's father. He hated it and he never made the job bigger. He did it all his life and he was never happy with it. The only thing you can say is he never had to work overtime and it never interfered with his vacation plans or golf. He made good money. When my mom died, he was still stuck there."

"My mom Nora had bone cancer and breast cancer. How they let her adopt me is very strange to me, although maybe she was okay in the very beginning. But she got very sick not long after I came to live with them. She died on February 19, 1950. I have a very distinct memory of her. My father and I came to visit her at the hospital and 'Selfish Jane,' I wanted a present. Unbelievably, she pulled this present out from behind her back and it was this very cool doll. You flipped the skirt one way and it was one doll and you flipped the skirt the other way and it was another doll." (A Topsy-Turvy Flip Doll.) "I don't know where she got it. It looked homemade. But I remember this moment with her so clearly and I was just 2 and so many months. My mom was 38 when she passed.

"I spent a lot of time with my mom's mom, Grandma Eleanor, and my mom's sister and aunt. I absolutely loved them. Grandma Eleanor spoke a couple of languages. She played the piano. She was the first one to put on jeans and get dirty. She owned a property, 400 acres and a great house, between Watsonville and Gilroy. It was behind Mt. Madonna Park. The kids would all pick berries and she would make jam. She ended up having one leg amputated and the second one amputated from diabetes. Because she was Catholic, when she died, they buried each leg separately in her grave at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery in Colma. I couldn't believe that then and still can't!"

"I was raised Catholic. I went to the Convent of the Sacred Heart for nursery school, kindergarten and first grade. I was put in a taxi cab from the Sunset to Broadway, in Pacific Heights, and the nuns would come out every morning with a towel and a bag and I would vomit, because I would get car sick."

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"As a kid, I went to Playland at the Beach and to the San Francisco Zoo with my nona and papa. They also took me to the Aquarium, back then it was free. I went swimming at Fleishhacker Pool. It was 25 cents to rent those horrible wool bathing suits. Still, I had a grand time!" (Closed in 1971 and demolished in 2000, Fleishhacker Pool was a 1,000-foot long, 150-foot wide, public saltwater swimming pool located next to the San Francisco Zoo.)

"Up until I was 6, I had a fantastic childhood. I used to play 'Kick the Can' with the kids in the neighborhood, and 'One Foot off the Gutter,' which was a tag game. Since we were half a block from the Park, we'd go to Mallard Lake with stale French bread, from the Fly Trap, and feed the ducks."

But something happened when Jane was 6 that put a boulder in the jewel of her childhood. It began when her Aunt Louise Beronio, introduced her father to her friend from Dominican College, Marian Cosgrove. Marian, in turn, introduced her friend Jean Marie Carey, "Brooklyn Irish," to Jane's father. It was a blind date.

"When I was 6 years old, my father took me up to Mt. Tam (Mount Tamalpais in Marin) and we got out of the car and he told me we were having a picnic and that he was going to marry Jean. We had a Dodge and I locked myself in the car and I wouldn't open the door. Now my father was very happy with her but I wasn't. Jean's father had something important to do with the sewer systems in New York, so she came with her own tidy sum, and my father had that great paying job that he didn't like. They belonged to San Francisco's Olympic Club, which was then, homophobic, bigoted, anti-Semitic and anti-feminist, with a specified time slot which allowed white women to golf there once a week.



"Was she nice to me when I was a little girl? No! She wanted a little girl that wore patent leather shoes and liked to get dressed up. She did not get what she was looking for. I was a big disappointment and she tried to fix everything about me. I had so many doctors. I had an orthodontist. I had a dentist. I had a pediatrician. I had an ear, nose and throat doctor. I had tap dancing lessons, ballroom dancing lessons, baton lessons. I would have liked to have learned piano but my mother brought in someone who turned it into a torture session and she wouldn't give me a different teacher. I was taught by Mrs. Prescott and Mrs. Prescott used to take a pencil and poke it on my fingertips and say, 'You must play on your fingertips!' I wish I had stuck with it, but I didn't."

←Jane poses on the day of her First Communion, 1954.

Beginning in second grade, Jane went to St. Anne's Elementary in the Sunset. Jean would place Jane on the N Judah streetcar, and Jane took the streetcar by herself to the school. Jane was 6. "But you could do that back then."

On March 22, 1957, at 11:44 in the morning, a 5.7 magnitude earthquake centered along the San Andreas Fault, struck just off the San Francisco Peninsula. It was felt over an area of 12,000 square miles, causing \$1 million in damages in the western portion of Daly City and the Lake Merced area of San Francisco. Jane was at St. Anne's when the earthquake hit.

"The school had some damage, nothing horrible, but we were all evacuated. Everyone was standing outside with the nuns on the playground and every other mother, but mine, came and picked up their kid. My mother was golfing and didn't feel the earthquake at the Olympic Club. I just sat there holding onto a volleyball pole. Eventually I was put back on the N Judah."

Jane continued to go to the San Francisco Zoo and the Aquarium with her nona and papa, and even then began to think upon maybe someday, working at a job where she could care for animals.

"I do have a particularly memorable Aquarium tale. I had gone there with my Brownie troop and they had this swinging pendulum that knocked off the hours and there was this big gold ball that went through it." (The Foucault Pendulum.) "I dropped my purse in there and knocked over a couple of pegs. Oh, I got in so much trouble and was put in the Aquarium office and they called my mother and told her to come pick me up. What a lecture I got about how I should learn to hold onto things. I can still hear it!" Jane burst into laughter.

In the summer after fourth grade, Jane was sent to Camp Talawanda—the name means "Wind in the Pines"—an all-girls camp in Lake Tahoe. She went every summer for four years, through the summer of seventh grade, six weeks each time. "Anything so my mother didn't have to deal with me. But I ended up loving it. I learned to smoke and drink there!"

Among many other activities, there was swimming and horseback riding, putting on theater events and camping. They kept the kid population down to 62 girls at a time so their 18 to 22 employees—which included counselors, group leaders, a cook, maintenance and laundry workers, and a nurse— could keep things running smoothly.

"The Camp wasn't Catholic but I was and back then, 'No meat on Fridays!' Jimboy's Tacos was in Kings Beach. We Catholics would get those tacos and put them aside until midnight. The grease would congeal to God knows what, but we loved them!

"Following the first time I went to Camp Talawanda, my mother picked me up from the Greyhound bus. Instead of taking me home, she kept driving. 'Where are we going?' I asked her. 'To our new home.'

"We moved from the bosom of my family in San Francisco, to the Burlingame hills. There were no sidewalks, there were no children. This is Hillside Drive. My mother had thrown out everything in my room and redecorated my new room in her style. My parents moved us while I was in camp. They said nothing about it in advance and all my friends were in San Francisco. 'Surprise!'"

Fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade, Jane attended Notre Dame Elementary School in Belmont. To get there, she got up at 6 in the morning, walked from the top of Hillside Drive to about midway down where the bus picked her up, and after many stops, took her to her new elementary school. Jane was gone from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. "My mother wanted me gone."



For her freshman year of high school, Jane headed off with her friends from Notre Dame Elementary School to Notre Dame High School, also in Belmont.

← Jane with her mom Jean, dad Mario and the family dog, 1961.

"On Thanksgiving break, November of 1961, barely into my freshman year, the car is all packed with my things and we all drove to Santa Barbara. I am again clueless as to what is going on. We arrive at Marymount and go directly to the residence of the nuns. I am introduced to Reverend Mother Cecelia. She was tiny and as Irish as the day is long. She was also my mother's Mother Superior when my mother attended Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York. That's how they got me in without an entrance exam. The first thing Mother Superior said to me was, 'Now, if you

can just be half as good as your mother, you'll do well here.' Then I was left there. Sadly, for me, my father always just went along with my mother's program."

Unbeknownst to her parents, Jane discovered an immediate source of entertainment at Marymount.



"This gorgeous Franciscan priest showed up when I was at Marymount, to say mass and hear confession. He had one of those brown Franciscan robes, black curly hair, deep green eyes – and I was such a dump-looking child with a very fertile imagination. This led me to do something that I am sure will send me to the burning fires of hell. I would tell this gorgeous Franciscan, Father Lloyd, filthy confessions. They were all made up. But I knew the confessional was a sacred place and the listening priest can't tell anyone else. Then I would go to communion the next day and he would give me communion and I would be thrilled by this. Hell looms before me. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

← Jane's Catholic Confirmation event, circa 1962.

Jane came home for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Because she was constantly in trouble at Marymount, "for smoking and doing all the little naughty things," Jane spent her school weekends working for the nuns.

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"I was their slave on the weekends. I moved audio and visual equipment, stacked chairs, and did numerous other assignments. Here my parents were paying, I don't know, \$26,000 a year for my boarding school expenses, and the nuns were using me for free labor."

In November of Jane's senior year, she and one of her Marymount friends got into some serious trouble, not with the law, but with the nuns. Her friend's father was a widower, and he and his other daughter, an earlier graduate of Marymount, went to the school and battled, successfully, with the nuns to keep their daughter/sibling free from any repercussions. No one stood up for Jane.

"All the trouble came on me and when I heard that I was being 'campused' until the end of the year, and that I would not get the medals I had earned from being a good student, nor was I allowed at any of the senior functions, I secretly began packing my stuff. I was leaving. I would use the plane ticket I already had to fly home. I got a hold of my friend Lois—who I am still friends with and who was a year ahead of me at Marymount—and she was going to come pick me up in her car and take me away. But then, my classmate Margie Adam told on me." (Margie Adam is a singer-songwriter-pianist—"an incredible pianist, even then," Jane recalled—who became celebrity-famous early on as a feminist singer-songwriter.)

"Big trouble was waiting for me right in the Mother Superior's office. When I walked in, she dialed my mother and said, 'Mrs. Tollini, I just expelled your daughter. Let her explain.' And she handed me the phone. The next moment, the school's gardener is driving me to the airport."



"When the weekend ended, I was thrown into Mills High School in Millbrae. It was my first time ever in a co-ed school and it was horrible. As soon as I graduated, I was gone. I left my parents' home when I was 17 and moved into an apartment in Burlingame.

←Taken at her family's home in Burlingame, Jane is dressed for her 1965 graduation from Mills High School.

"Now, I've got to add here that when I was at Marymount I thought it was horrible, but looking back on it, there were so many pluses. I had an excellent education. I made lifelong friends. I really got to know women so well and there were also a number of nuns that I really did like when I was there. A few years later when I was married and living in Los Gatos, a couple of the nuns stopped by and we had a great visit, which included enjoying whiskey sours together. Also a few years later, sometimes several of the nuns

would babysit my son Jamey. How sweet is that? Now I wouldn't trade my time at Marymount for the world. But when I was there, I was in trouble all of the time and I had a mother who didn't pay any attention to me."

Jane did make a friend who lived on Hillside Drive. She met him when she was back with her parents, attending Mills High School. Born in Harrogate, England, John Huckle was living with the family next door to Jane's family, while he was attending community college.

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"John was staying with the Netherbys. The Netherbys had seven boys. Their dad worked for Levi Strauss and he always brought home clothing samples that his sons could really put to the test, by doing things like rolling in the dirt. John was a naturalized citizen and at that time, the U.S. was going to draft him. But it turns out he had albumin in his urine, so he was not drafted." (High albumin in urine can mean kidney damage.)

Out of high school, in her own apartment, in the summer of 1965, 17-year-old Jane was working for a bank in San Francisco.

"I was in the trust department but I couldn't figure out the bus schedule to get there on time so I was fired. Then I got a job at the world's largest A&W Root Beer, which was on 3rd Avenue in San Mateo. I was a car hop, and thankfully I left just before the car hops had to work on roller skates. I left because I moved to Isla Vista. John had transferred to Santa Barbara City College and moved to Isla Vista. While we were not then dating, we did like each other, and there was nothing to keep me in Burlingame. So I threw myself, my cats and everything I owned in my car—a \$60 DeSoto, compliments of my friend, DeeDee—and drove to Isla Vista and got an apartment."

Shortly after Jane moved to Isla Vista, she and John moved in together.

"Was my mother scandalized? Ha! Ha! Scandalized is probably on the mild side. My dad was a quiet man. He wouldn't condemn me or defend me. But I had better be home for the holidays!"

In September of 1966, Jane and John decided to get married. They were married in Idaho.

"I didn't go to Idaho because I loved potatoes, which I do. It was an age thing and not my age, John's age."

Until 1971, approximately 80% of the states had a general marriage age of 18 for women, while for men the general marriage age was 21.

"John was 20. A friend of mine from Marymount, Cheryl Wilson, found out that we could get married in Idaho."

On September 6, 1966, a month shy of her 19th birthday, Jane E. Tollini married John J. Huckle. They obtained their marriage certificate in Marsing, ID, and married in Murphy, ID, "in a little log cabin that wasn't cute!"

"We married on September 6, my birthday is October 6, and my grandmother's birthday was November 6. So, 6-6-6. Ha! Ha! There was nothing for hundreds of miles on the way to the courthouse in Marsing, except for a few road signs. One said, 'No inspection and no dipping.' Another said, 'Be careful of white horses during heavy snowdrifts.'"

"We pulled up to the courthouse, a very nice building with nothing around it, and there is one parking meter in front of it. Got a quarter? We were married by Faye Neel. When Mrs. Neel was not serving as justice of the peace, she drove the school bus and issued hunting licenses. In fact, in the middle of our very short ceremony, she issued a hunting license. The only picture I have of our wedding is of John and me standing next to a water pump."

Right after the couple married, they drove to Jane's parents' house to announce their wedding. They spent their honeymoon night in Jane's parents' hide-a-bed. Not long after Jane and John married, Jane discovered she was pregnant.

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"There was no store-bought pregnancy test back then. No peeing on a stick. I didn't know I was pregnant when John and I married. But my mother, she insisted, nearly until the day she died—because her thought was no one could like me—that I forced John into marrying me by telling him I was pregnant."

The couple's son Jamey was born on May 24, 1967.

"I was so young. I had never held a baby before. I did not have any siblings. None of my friends had babies. I had no idea what I was getting myself into, none! But the love was there, right from the start.

"We were living in a house split in two. A Russian family lived on the other side of us and the whole house smelled like borscht and cabbage. It would come through the vents. We had one bedroom and a walk-in closet, and we used that for Jamey's room. I decorated it and it was really cute. We ended up living in several little places in Santa Barbara."



John, Jane and Jamey, 1967.



New mom, Jane, and her son, Jamey, 1967.

Jane had several jobs. She worked at a flooring store until she got sick of being "chased around the linoleum" by the boss. Then she went to work for James Tri-County Laboratory, a soil testing company. It was the first of her "scarring" on the job stories.

"I have these little scars from when I accidentally got my fingers stuck in the sprocket of a piece of equipment. I left there and got a job in the cafeteria at Santa Barbara City College and then I got a job cleaning apartments."

Jane added more pets to the family.

"Over the many, many years, I have had cats, birds, bunnies and dogs. Back then it was a lot of cats and a St. Bernard named Harry who was enormous. My husband liked them all but he wasn't over-the-top crazy about them like me. I adored each and every one of them!"

In 1967, a cousin of Jane's left home and no one knew exactly where she was, so Jane went looking for her.

"I looked for her in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and found her. I also discovered, after all those years of Catholic school, that there was a whole new world out there that I knew nothing about.

In 1968, Jane's father gave her money to buy a house and she bought a home on Johnson Avenue in Los Gatos.



Jane and Jamey, and Harry at home in Los Gatos, 1969.

Jane and John's marriage did not last, for reasons Jane is very candid about.

"My husband was a good guy, but he was pretty straight-laced. I had spent all these years locked up in girls' schools and he was the first guy that had paid attention to me. I had myself convinced, because my mother was convinced, that no one was ever going to want me, no one was ever going to love me, and I managed to get him and he was a good looking guy who was going to school and wanted to be something. He had a plan. And I thought, well this is as good as I'm ever going to get. So I took him and that's where the problems started. Because right next door to me on Johnson Avenue in Los Gatos was Danny and he, as it turns out, was the love of my life. That was 30 years of loving him, on again and off again until his death. He was not good for me and I was not really good for him. But we just couldn't quit each other. Not surprisingly, this brought about the end of my marriage." (In 1971, Jane and John divorced.)

Jane became more of a free spirit. "I liked hippie music, I dressed like a hippie – I was a hippie!" She had a financially successful pot business – though her cocaine habit put a dent in those earnings. The majority of her clients were guys and her house was a safe, "cool" space for getting stoned and talking freely. She also owned and operated a plant shop, Earthworm. She loved this job. It was a dream of hers to own her own business and she did it. As to the men in her life that held her heart, there were only two: her son Jamey and the boy next door.

"When I was living as a hippie, I certainly still had my senses about me and I could tell, really everyone could tell by the early 1970s, that this 'counterculture' movement was going to end because too many people were getting freaked out and flipped out, and just getting strange from it all. It wasn't helping them; it was hurting them. So many of us were the children of all these *'I Like Ike'* parents."

In 1977, Jane's house went into foreclosure. She rented a house on Lawndale Road in Kenwood, in Sonoma County.

"Jamey was 10. I didn't tell my parents I was moving. I just took Jamey and my boatload of cats and off we went. Once again, someone told on me. So here I am, unpacking, and my mother and father showed up. My mother was enraged.

"The plan had been that Jamey was going to spend the summer with his dad, and his dad's new wife Chris, in San Jose. But once my mother got involved, she decided that Jamey was never coming back to me. She said to me, 'I know all your secrets. I know about all your pot. I am going to have you busted and everyone you know.' There was nothing in any way pleasant about that interaction. So, off Jamey went to live with his dad and go to school in San Jose. A few years later, when he was starting high school, he was not doing well in school, so my mother took him to her house in Burlingame and sent him to Burlingame High School."

While Jane was in Kenwood, she got to be friends with her neighbors, pianist Cris Williamson and bassist, cellist, engineer Jackie Robbins. A pioneering feminist singer-songwriter, recording artist and visible political lesbian activist, Cris lent her time and talent to Olivia Records, "the first woman-owned, woman-focused record company." Cris's music and her voice "became the soundtrack of a movement."

"I went to work for Cris as her assistant and I was working with Olivia Records. Olivia Records was a huge record company that was very successful; a women's record label formed by a women's collective, aimed at gay women. Cris had a huge, underground lesbian following and had gigs all over the place. She still has a huge following, though of course, she is no longer underground. I liked what I did though I never got paid the big bucks. However, I was still dealing pot. That's where I got the big bucks!

"Cris and Jackie were living in this outbuilding on Lawndale and the space wasn't working. As it happened, my nona had these flats in San Francisco. This is where she lived and where my dad was raised. Nona had her flat and she had rented the flat she owned above her to this woman for 40 or 50 years. The woman had recently passed and I said to Nona, 'I would like to live here with my friends Cris and Jackie.' So we ended up moving – pet menagerie, grand piano and all – into my grandmother's flat, right over my nona's head!"

During this time that Jane worked as Cris's assistant, Cris would recommend Jane to other musicians in need of an assistant, who were performing in San Francisco or nearby, musicians like John Denver.

"I was reliable and I was in San Francisco. If John was playing around here, I would make sure he had a place to stay and make sure that the piano where he was playing was tuned, and the microphones were all in good order, things like that."

Beginning in 1981, when Jane's grandmother was 94, Jane helped take care of her grandmother. "A privilege," she stated.

"My Nona Louisa, she was 'mom' to me. I loved her and she knew I loved her, but when I look back and see just how important she was to me, I appreciate her so much more now. That kind of wisdom comes with age.

"But it was 1981 and almost all of my nona's peers and friends were gone and that bothered her of course. Her body was failing. She had an Italian lady, Serena, who took care of her five days a week. The two days Serena had off; I would go downstairs and stay with her in her flat. If she fell down, I was strong enough to pick her up. I helped her in the bathroom. That also bothered her but I would tell her, 'You did this for me. It's my turn. I don't mind.' And I did not mind."

In 1981, Jane began volunteering at the San Francisco Zoo.

"I started volunteering at the Zoo one day a week, then two days a week, and then as much as I could. In 1982, I got a summer internship in the Children's Zoo. I was in charge of the nursery, the baby animals. I knew nothing about it before I started but I learned. My desire as a child to work with animals as a job, I had revisited when I was a hippie. But I figured I needed a biology degree and I didn't see college on my list of things to do. But here I was, working with animals and I absolutely loved it. In my opinion, hiring someone just because they have a biology degree or a zoology degree doesn't seem to do it. So much of it is common sense. You either know how to move around an animal or you don't. I don't think it can be taught. I was in heaven. I did a lot of public programs. I ended up teaching a class called, Farmhands.

"In my Farmhands class, fifth graders would come in, my favorite age, and we would split them up into groups. One group would clean the barns, another group would prepare the diets and deliver the diets, and the other group would rake the back corral. Then they all rotated around so everyone got a chance to do each job. Who shows up at one of my classes? This little girl who was the niece of my Marymount friend, Cheryl Wilson; and this little girl's mom was my 'school' little sister at Marymount. Cheryl was the one who found out that John and I could get married in Idaho. I love these connections! I also had two little kids, Irene and Amber, in my Farmhands class, who are now keepers at the San Francisco Zoo. Along with splitting the fifth graders into the group learning situations, they also were treated to a stock care presentation. I had a farrier come in and show them, without actually doing it, how to shoe a horse. Additionally, we would go to the Insect Zoo and talk about bees, and I would give the kids honey and fresh cornbread that I had baked that morning. It was wonderful. I'm still good friends with my boss Roger from back then. He was in charge of the Children's Zoo and he gave me my start in this animal care job I truly loved. I'm so thankful for Roger."

Summer internships didn't pay well, Jane made maybe \$1,000 for the summer, but it was definitely a coveted internship working in the Zoo's nursery. In Jane's case, the Zoo recognized her value and invented a yearlong internship. The animals in her care included baby leopards and baby monkeys.

"One of the first animals in my care was a little baby monkey, a Celebes macaque. Her name was Jenny. When she tried to eat a banana, she would smash it against her forehead instead of putting it in her mouth. I told the doctors, the scientists, the volunteers, 'There is something wrong with this monkey.' Everyone was not agreeing with me. 'There is nothing wrong with this monkey.' Well it turns out that Jenny had cerebral palsy and once she was diagnosed, she was sent to a veterinary school in Colorado where she got to live out the rest of her life and was well-cared for.

"One of the things I immediately realized about primates is that primates are much smarter than me and that it was probably best if I was not in charge of someone who could unlock their own cage, when I couldn't even find the key – but they could. Here's an example. John Alcaraz worked with the chimps and the oranges. 'Let me show you something,' he said. Then he handed Rita, the orang, his keys. There were like 30 keys on this ring. Rita took the keys, reached around and put the correct key in the lock and started to unlock it. I thought, 'This can't be right.' But then John pulled a Hostess cupcake out of his pocket, the kind with the squiggle on top, and gave it to Rita and she gave him back his keys. It was the only thing she'd trade for. She was smart, which is why I didn't want to work with primates. I did spend time learning about them and their care, but it was not where I wanted to end up.

"Sadly, primates can catch almost everything we can, and we can get almost everything they can. If a primate catches a cold from a human, they get twice as sick, and if we catch a cold from a primate, we get twice as sick.

"In the Children's Zoo we had Jack the Batangas pony. Jack was so good with children. One time I had a group of blind kids and I brought Jack out to stock care. I had them all touch Jack's mane, and I said to them, 'I want you to find the other spot where Jack has hair that feels like this.' This would be his tail hair. I knew I could trust Jack to let them do that. In the Children's Zoo we had maybe three or four species of goats. We had sheep, chicks, prairie dogs, coatis (it's like a raccoon), squirrel monkeys, swans and geese. Many of the animals wandered around together. It was a real education and I would have happily stayed there forever. But the Children's Zoo just didn't have a spot for me. It was too popular of a place to work."

In 1983, when Jane's son was getting ready to enter his junior year of high school, Jane's mom sent him to live with her.

"Apparently, she 'couldn't take it anymore.'" Jane grinned and rolled her eyes. "But the outcome of that was Jamey was again living with me. I was so happy. This was such a wonderful time. I was in a 7-room flat, on Russian Hill with a garage and a place on the roof where you could see the Golden Gate Bridge. By then I had a new roommate, Wanda, who had a little boy. Jamey was of course with me, but he also had his own space in this tiny little basement apartment at my nona's. He continued at Burlingame High School. He commuted. Funny, when my mother originally took Jamey in, she surreptitiously sent her gardener up to the roof of my nona's building, where, not surprisingly, her gardener discovered two pot plants. Upon hearing this, my mother informed John and me, that Jamey would never live with me. Next thing you know, I'm a fit mother!"

In 1985, Jane was qualified to become a keeper at the San Francisco Zoo. She took the "keeper" test, scored well and was given a regular, paid position.

"Back then, people infrequently left their keeper positions at the Zoo. In fact, you pretty much had to wait until somebody died to get a regular position! But I was hired, as a keeper. Not only was I now a Teamster and a civil servant, I worked for the City and County of San Francisco. At first, I was a floater. Whoever was calling in sick or planning on going on vacation, they would train me for three or four days before they went on leave. I learned how to move a rhino, for instance!

"I was willing to take on any animal. Many folks will remember Monkey Island from those Zoo days. It was a big concrete block in the middle of the Zoo with a big round circle. It was about 30 feet tall and there were spider monkeys on it. Oh, I don't know what the Zoo administration was thinking! You'd have to go into a tunnel and come up through the middle of it and there was a room for the keeper in there and night quarters for the monkeys. One of my first jobs as a keeper, because I was the low person on the totem pole, was to wash Monkey Island. You would go up there with this hose, with crappy pressure, and you'd drag it up there. You were on full view of both the monkeys and the visiting humans. The monkeys were all over the place. You had your scrub brush and Nolvasan disinfectant. You were spraying and scrubbing, and pulling on the hose, and the monkeys are on the other side of the island, pulling the hose in the opposite direction. The public is laughing and yelling at you. I mean – sheesh!

"But after a while it got to be kind of Zen, where you would hose and watch the fecal matter, just flow down into the moat. And I thought, 'The moat is their drinking water. Now it is full of shit!' It was awful.

"This was the old days, when leopards were in cages so you could see them. Zoos then didn't want to give animals any privacy. This was general zoo thinking back then. Thankfully, they have since done better."

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In July of 1985, Jane's nona died. She was 97. Jane still misses her and Jane's home is decorated with many of her grandmother's things, including a lovely, tiny red-glass pitcher that says, "Louisa, 1906." It made it through the 1906 earthquake and fire. In September of 1986, Jane's father Mario died. He was 77. Both are buried at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery in Colma.

←Passport photo of Louisa (Besozzi) Tollini and her son, Mario John Tollini, circa 1920.

In 1985, Jane, her son, her roommate Wanda, Wanda's son, and a passel of cats, birds, fish, a dog and a bunny, moved to Pacifica. "Given our size, we were not what someone would call a 'dream' rental! Also, I wanted to live closer to the Zoo, and Patty, a co-worker, rented us her Pacifica home. I loved living in Pacifica and this first residence was on Hamilton Court, not far from Skyline Boulevard and a quick drive to the Zoo."

In 1985, Jane received her next wounds on the job. She was working a leopard shift when she was mauled.

"I went in the morning for my leopard assignment. There was a night cage on the bottom and a sleeping den on the top. Then there was a door that went outside to their exhibit. I was checking on the Persian leopard, Farrah, who had her first cub. I went out there and I opened the wooden door, and with that wooden door came the grated door, which is never supposed to happen. That grated door keeps the keeper safe. So all of a sudden, Farrah and I are looking each other in the eye. Something's wrong here!

"Farrah leaned over and swatted me on the chin." Jane stops to point out the scar. "Then Farrah went out into the exhibit and then she came back to check on her kitten. Then I put my hand up so I could close the wooden door and when she saw my hand go up, she bit me. But then, she left me alone. If I had fallen backwards, I would have been covered in blood and would have looked like a great antelope. She could have eaten me. She wasn't trying to kill me."

Jane collected the fecal sample she was supposed to collect. Then she pulled up her Zoo coat to cover her chin and got into her car. She told no one.

"I drove home to Hamilton Court. I walked past my son and Wanda, walked into my bedroom and stripped off my clothes and said, 'I am going to live!' Though, I knew I would never wear my strapless evening gown again. Ha! Like I had one! Then I called the Zoo and told them what happened. I said, 'The animal is secure. You don't have to worry about her.'"

"Dear friend" Wanda and Jane drove to Saint Francis Memorial Hospital on Hyde Street. It was the hospital for all San Francisco city workers.

"The hospital paged a plastic surgeon and I heard them tell him, 'She's in here, Cato!' I thought, OMG, I am in a Peter Sellers movie!"

Actor Peter Sellers played the bumbling French Inspector Clouseau, whose manservant, martial-arts expert Cato, was trained to attack Clouseau, to keep the Inspector ever on his toes. But Cato always showed up at the most inconvenient time causing Clouseau to exasperatingly shout, "Not now, Cato!"

"All I heard, was, 'Not now, Cato! I'll get the phoon!' Then the plastic surgeon rushed in. A good plastic surgeon gets very few cracks at a leopard mauling!

"Why did I leave the Zoo instead of telling them what happened? Oh, I knew what would have happened had I told them. I would have gone to the office and they would have called 9-1-1. We'd have the media, we'd have the ambulance, and I'd be stripped buck naked in the service yard in front of everyone. Noooo! I didn't want to be on a platter like that. As for Farrah, she did just fine. There were no consequences as there shouldn't have been."

During her first year as a keeper, Jane took care of everything from tarantulas to elephants.

"The only animal that really should never be put in a zoo is an elephant. The chimps, the oranges, the gorillas, they all loved to watch TV. We used to bring our chimpanzee Tallulah, calendars. She would spend hours looking at the pictures. You could find stuff to stimulate them but not elephants. Once I landed my permanent keeper position, my office was in the elephant barn, so I was very close to our elephants Penny and Tinker (Tinkerbell). In fact, I saw Penny from the cradle to the grave because when I was at St. Anne's, they collected pennies from all the schoolchildren in San Francisco to bring Penny over from Cambodia as a baby. Once she was placed with our adult elephants, they never bonded with her. Just because you are the same species doesn't mean you like each other. They treated her horribly and she ended up getting very fat which caused many things to go wrong with her which couldn't be fixed. I said to her, 'You must have cursed me every day of your life because I was one of the kids with pennies who bought you.'



In 1986, the woman who was then the keeper of the penguins became an expectant mom and she couldn't stand the smell of fish. Jane, who had experience working with the penguins, was officially made the penguin keeper.

"Penguins poop all the time and it smells like herring-flavored guacamole – and there's no using a rake on it. It's a hosing process. It's definitely not for someone whose nose is operating for two.

←Jane on the job.

"Originally I wanted to work with cats or hoof stock. I wanted straight-forward zoo keeping. Anything but primates, or birds! I hated birds and I still hate birds! But here at my house, I've got three bleeping bird feeders and I've given two ravens, names. I'm like Snow White in the afternoon! I'm not allergic to birds and I'm not afraid of birds. But what I hate about birds is they bite you for no good reason. There isn't an animal in the world, outside of birds, that doesn't let you know in some way, either their hair goes up or bristles happen – well, something

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happens so that you know they are getting ready to bite you. With birds, they are just sitting there happily, and you are sitting there happily, and they bite you. And you go, 'What? I've done nothing!'

"So I was trained on penguins, the most picayune birds in the world, and I kind of fell in love with the little suckers, and loving them was essentially a promise I made to them from the cradle to the grave."

Like a proud mother, Jane shows all the old, now white scars going up and down her arms from the many penguin bites she received over the years.

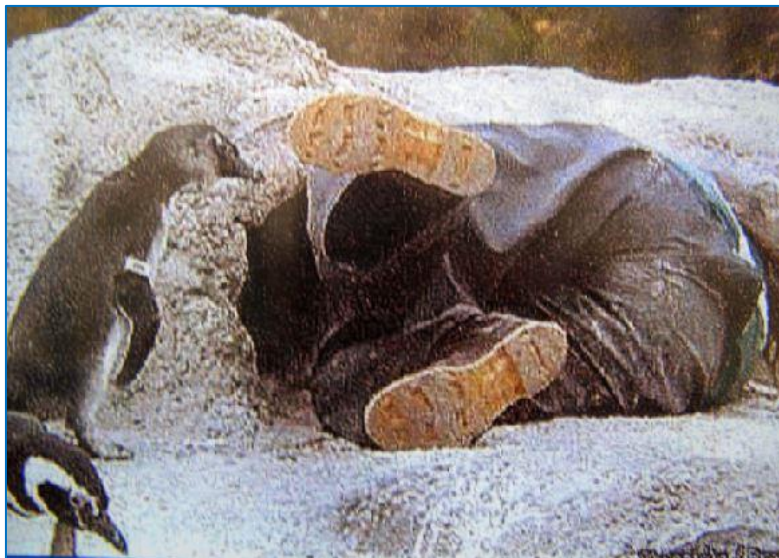
Jane's Zoo charges were Magellanic penguins. Their native habitat is the Falkland Islands and South America. Thawed herring and capelin were served daily on the menu. Jane generally had 60 penguins in her care. But the highest number of birds in her care was her original colony of 67 penguins. Every morning Jane arrived early with 60 plus pounds of fish. "I gave each penguin as much fish as I could stuff into them!"

"We had to put vitamins in all of the fish. Because there was no thiamin in the frozen fish, we supplemented that with a lot of B. If you didn't put vitamin B in the fish, they all had head tremors. If a penguin was sitting on eggs, they received room service. You had to sit in front of their burrow, and while I am trying to feed Mrs. P, her husband is biting me. He was telling me, 'Get the f*** out of my burrow!'"

The San Francisco Zoo's Magellanic penguins became the most successful breeding colony in the world. Under Jane's watch throughout the years, the captive penguins had 167 babies.

As is zoo tradition, a zoo gives each penguin an identifying number. Jane decided to give her charges names, which the San Francisco Zoo subsequently logged in their paperwork.

"I decided that 'Birdbrain' wasn't quite applicable!"



Jane, on a penguin-burrow assignment, was captured on a news camera, unbeknownst to her, as burrow residents contemplated whether action was needed on their part.

In the Italian section there was Olive Oil, Bluto, Sophia, Luca Brasi, Pomodoro and Faccia Bello.

"They all knew who I was and they all acknowledged their names. We had gulls from the beach that would come over and, if you weren't careful, steal the \$5 fluconazole pill that was in the fish that I was trying to give a bird that was sick. All of a sudden, whoosh. For instance, Jeanette and Nelson, a couple, might not be paying attention to me and Nelson needed his medicine. So I'd say, 'Nelson, pay attention,' and he would, because he knew his name. That way I could throw the right fish to Nelson."

Jane learned she could not just throw the fish to every penguin. Some had personal service demands.

"They are fussy little jerks. Pearl wanted to have a slow toss, tummy first, head to the right. Sophia you had to push the fish in just a little bit. And as far as every one of them was concerned, never give them a fish that was missing an eye or part of a lip. That is completely unacceptable. Each fish needed to be fish-perfect.

"The funny thing is, I don't really like fish. I don't eat it, well maybe a good tuna casserole now and then. This is a leftover from my no-meat-on-Fridays Catholic childhood. And when I worked with the penguins, I always smelled like fish. I'd be in a supermarket line and someone would tell the grocery clerk, they needed to clean their register area because it smelled like fish. No, that was me!

"When I was working with all that fish, and of course these little black and white penguins, I thought, I must be working off some really ugly Catholic karma. Back in my Marymount days, these nuns, dressed in black and white, made mystery fish on Friday – and on Saturday, we were all dreadfully ill from whatever that white fish was that was floating in something brown, or something clear, or something.

"Was I friends with any penguins? I loved Puppy. Puppy was number 93. I loved Pearl, she was number 5B. We had one really sweet penguin family, Durante and Mrs. Purse. Well, Mrs. Purse was an obnoxious bird. She drove me crazy. But her husband was wonderful and all their children were wonderful: Fig Newton, Baby Ruth and Puppy."

Jane named the obnoxious Mrs. Purse, "Mrs. Purse," because Jane was well aware that at that time, Argentina was making purses out of penguins. Then there was this "a-hole who became the wonderful Fig Newton's wife."

"I had a very rich friend in Santa Barbara and he had penguins on his estate, which is unbelievable in itself, and he ended up giving me his penguins, also unbelievable. He had one little bleep woman penguin, who was so mean, I couldn't even name her. I called her, 'Hey You.' I was hoping that sweet Fig Newton would rub off on her. But no! They ended up having children and they all had horrible personalities. I gave them names like Howard Stern and Up Yours. There were definitely personality traits that I would watch through generations, fortunately some nice ones as well. But you'd never dream of this with birds."

Jane could absolutely, individually identify each and every one of her penguins.

"I took money from the dads of small children who bet that I couldn't!"



In 1989, Jane got this "crazy" idea to do the "Valentine's Day Sex Tour," a sex education tour at her place of employment.

"The inspiration was a female pair of free flying Canada geese who took up residence at the Zoo. I named them, Alice and Gertrude, after Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein. They were lesbian geese and they really loved each other. A male Canada goose, I named him Henry Miller, would come over from his nearby home in Lake Merced and try to court them. But nothing came of that. Alice and Gertrude could have split up or joined a group of migratory geese. But they stayed together at the Zoo and they were the sweetest couple. I thought, animals are just like us. While they may do it a little differently, they do everything we do, which includes: monogamy, polygamy, homosexuality, heterosexuality and so much more. Essentially – birds do it, bees do it; we do it!"

With the Zoo's stamp of approval, Jane created the two-hour tour presentation, for patrons 21 on up—sense of humor required—which was followed by a "fabulous" meal. The tour guide delighted, scandalized and amused her audiences with *faire l'amour* facts from the gardens, such as: "bears have really boring sex – they have much more fun with themselves; rhinos carry on for up to an hour; orangutans can do it upside down, koalas mate for just 40 seconds, three times a year; and lions engage in sex up to 50 times in a 24-hour span.

"As to penguins, penguins do not have external genitalia. The only way we know it is a male is when a penguin mounts another. The boy is always on top. The male stimulates the female by doing what we call, the slender walk around her. It's this little sexy walk, at least to them, that penguins do. If she is interested, she'll lie down and then he climbs on her, with his toenails, and rakes at her back and he beats her with his bill and beats her with his wings – and this is supposed to get her all hot and bothered. If she is really interested, she will lift up her tail and you can imagine the rest!"

Jane's yearly Valentine tours, which were always sold out, were an undeniable hit placing Jane as one of the 10 names on *Via Magazine's* "San Francisco Star Attractions" list. Also included among Jane's fellow *Via* "stars" were: Michael Tilson Thomas, then Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony; and Barry Bonds, a left fielder with the San Francisco Giants and one of the greatest Major League Baseball players of all time.

Jane's San Francisco Zoo work, both as a penguin keeper and tour guide, landed her feature stories in *Time* magazine, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, *National Geographic for Kids*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Pacifica Tribune*, to name a few. Television interviews included: Animal Planet, Comedy Central, Evening Magazine and Good Morning America with hosts Diane Sawyer and Charles Gibson. Following the latter interview, Jane named two penguins after the newscasters.

Meanwhile, back in Pacifica, Jane had a good friend who had an "incredible" house on Esplanade. Jane told her, "If you ever decide to move, I want this house."

In 1991, Jane moved to 556 Esplanade. The beachside property was in the middle of that block of Esplanade, and it had the most back yard. Her yard was fenced in at 46 feet and beyond that there was another 10 feet. The views were magnificent and they included the travels of whales and their calves.

"The house was lovely," Jane told this *Pacifica Tribune* writer in 2010. "It was a great place for looking at the ocean and from the bedroom you could see the moon and pretend you were Gloria Swanson."

The owners along the block got along well. They had homeowners meetings. In February of 1998, they were all told it was going to be an El Niño year and the U.S. Government recommended they all get flood insurance – which they did.

"I had an El Niño party and everyone came wearing flotation devices," Jane noted in 2010. "It was the worst possible taste but we all chanted and prayed that we would be spared."

The party was on February 4. By February 22, Jane's home, now missing its back yard, was red-tagged.

Jane moved in with her former roommate, Wanda. Then from February 22 through May 5, the press stood watch as the land behind seven homes on Esplanade continued to slip into the ocean. For safety reasons, the City made the decision to demolish the homes. The demolition and cleanup was paid for by the City.

On May 6, right after her neighbor's home was demolished, the crane claws reached out to grab Jane's home, but her house tumbled into the ocean on its own. She watched the whole thing and let out an expletive, live on CNN. "My home jumped off the cliff rather than succumb to a wrecking crew," she noted. "It committed suicide. It went on its own terms."



Before the wrecking crews arrived, these Esplanade homes dangled on the edge. Jane's home is just outside the photo.

Following the demise of her home, the City found the labeled, wooden-boxed remains of several of Jane's pets on the beach. (Not everything got packed.) She could retrieve them from the City for \$60, which she declined. She, like the other homeowners, was denied any payout from flood insurance, as no water had entered her home while it was on the ground. She said the Peninsula Humane Society were knights in shining armor. They housed her cats for nine weeks, free of charge, until her life became more stabilized and she was able to bring them 'home.' The bank kept at her with late loan notices which she eventually squared with funds from FEMA.

"El Niño also brought in malaria and the penguins got it and were dropping like flies. It was a hard year." But Jane never once considered leaving Pacifica and eventually bought another home, much further from the ocean, in Sharp Park.

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In the 2000 short film "Me Jane"—directed and edited by Dan Hubp, produced by Nadine Porterfield and starring Jane—Jane commented on climate change.

"Mother Nature is always going to win and she has got a bone to pick with the human race, and I don't blame her."

The "not-a-documentary" film by Dan Hubp, was the recipient of a New York Indie "Best Sex Education" film award. If you dig in, you can find it online. Parents be advised, straightforward sex education language, these are San Francisco Zoo stories of course, and other colorful vernacular, highlight just a portion of Jane's remarkable life to date.

Jane continued to work at the Zoo until 2005. That was the year that a number of her beloved penguins, many original members of Jane's first colony, were diagnosed with chlamydia. It was believed the bacteria was transmitted to the birds by an infected seagull and spread through airborne saliva or other bodily fluids. The bacteria led to kidney failure and respiratory distress, and the aggressive medical treatment was really hard on the penguins. Following the death of a number of her friends, Jane had enough and quit.

Before Jane quit, she made it her goal to have the Mothers Building at the San Francisco Zoo, cleaned. And she got it done. Officially the The Delia Fleishhacker Memorial Building, the Mothers Building was a gift to the City, in 1925, by Herbert and Mortimer Fleishhacker in memory of their mother.

"The murals in there are incredible. The Noah's Ark mural, completed by artists Helen Forbes and Dorothy W. Pucinelli in 1938, just takes your breath away. The building was created as a place of rest for mothers and their children. When I was a baby, my mother, Nora (Beronio) Tollini, changed my diaper there, as, I like to think, we both admired the beauty and the calm of the building." (Since March of 2022, the Mothers Building has been on the path to City landmark status.) "May that happen," Jane affirmed.



"What did my mother, Jean Tollini, think of my San Francisco Zoo sex tour fame? It turns out, she liked it, because her friends liked it and read all the press I was given, and when they saw me on television they phoned her. I think, maybe not too deep down, she was kind of proud of me.

"She definitely loved my son and my grandson, and she found a great deal of joy, working as a volunteer for decades with the Peninsula Hospital Auxiliary. She and I definitely had a bumpy road, but we found our way."

←The Tollini family in 2004. Clockwise from top left: Jamey, Jane, Jamey's son Jeffrey, and Jean.

"My son Jamey has his own business, he's a general contractor," Jane noted, "and he loves cats! My grandson Jeffrey followed his passion and does dog training for a living, and he loves plants. My apples! They never fell far from the tree. I am so proud of them both."

So, what's this other "adoption" information hinted at on, on page 2?

"Five years ago my friend Lois, with my permission, put me on 23andMe." (Lois was the friend who was all set to rescue Jane from the trials of Jane's senior year at Marymount.) "The purpose was to find my birth mother."

"One of the things 23andMe told me was that I am 29% Jewish. I was raised Catholic with Catholic guilt and now I am supposed to add on 29% of Jewish guilt? Well, I have no guilt at all. I never have! Also included among the incidental facts, I am related to Marie Antoinette. I find this tidbit quite interesting because Marie Antoinette, who was horribly mistreated and misrepresented by the biased male historians of her time, has always fascinated me. I'm also related to famous Renaissance astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, whatever that might mean!"

Based in South San Francisco, 23andMe is a genomics (the study of all of a person's genes) and biotechnology company. They are a DNA relative finder which involves not only finding relatives in the here and now, but going back through family history lineage, including and beyond parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Clients are given a "home-based" saliva collection kit which is all that is needed to send your personal DNA to the 23andMe lab. The Company offers health and ancestry service. Through public online genealogical sites, 23andMe not only presents paternal and maternal family lineage but in some cases, a relative's DNA might lead to a DNA relative match in a cold case file. For instance, through a genetic match, cold case detectives were able to arrest notorious serial killer Joseph James DeAngelo. Thankfully, no serial killers have been found in Jane's lineage. "So far," she laughed.

"But of course, the big notice from 23andMe was this. 'We have found your birth mother.' But it was a man's name. I thought, 'Oh, my mother is transgender. I'm good with that.' But it turns out, I was chatting with my birth mother's boyfriend. He had talked her into joining 23andMe to see if they could find me.

"They decide they will come to Pacifica and stay at a hotel in Rockaway. I'm 72, my mother is 92. They come to my house and they can't figure out where my front door is, so they climb through all this foliage and I see them in my back yard.

"While I see them, before they see me, it gives me time to adjust to the fact that my birth mother's boyfriend is wearing a Phantom of the Opera mask, an exact replica of that mask. Apparently he lost part of his face in Vietnam. Still, I am excited to meet them. They come in and sit down.

"My birth mother never asked me if I was happy, how I turned out or what education I had – nothing! She told me all about her sex life – at 92, with this guy. They would rent a silver airstream trailer and would go out in the middle of the woods and do it under the stars.

"I did learn that my parents, who adopted me, did so through a 'foundling' agency and that my birthdate and time of birth are accurate. Because birth mother information was not easily accessible back then, my parents made up the part that I was born on a ship and abandoned, and subsequently saved at a San Francisco pier. My parents' story was my story for 72 years and I still like it best!

"Regarding my birth information, apparently my birth mother met the man who was my birth father when they were both in the military, in Long Beach, during the Second World War. My birth father was her first. He got her pregnant, but then the Navy transferred him to some place in the Midwest.

"While he was in the Midwest, he fell in love with someone else and married her. My birth mother was alone and pregnant and it was 1947, what's your choice? You give up the baby. But my birth mother

couldn't remember my birth father's name. It would have been very helpful to know, because there are a number of things that both my son and I inherited, and they are not from her.

"The next day, she and her boyfriend came over again so my son and grandson came to meet her. My birth mother then proceeds to tell them about her sex life. She never asked either of them if they are married, if they are happy, if they had an education – she asked them nothing.

"Following our meeting, she wrote me a very generic thank you note – 'Thank you for the hospitality' – and we have not had any communication since.

"I'm sure she is still going today, at 97. I mean at 92, she was having sex left and right, and she was boogie boarding and skiing. She brought pictures of all her children, my half siblings, and they all look like chubby Barbie dolls. They are all smiling and blond and tan. I thought, 'Oh, good lord! I will never fit into this group!'"

But as Jane has learned over the years, with all the friends she still has from her childhood and high school days and from all her years at the Zoo, she really does fit in.

"One time, some of the nuns from my very earliest school, Convent of the Sacred Heart, came to the Zoo and I gave them a tour. They all were in their habits, they all wore red tennis shoes, and they all laughed. It was just heaven!"

* * *

Along with talking about her life to date, Jane also wants to talk about a number of other lives that really matter to her. "Is it a sin to pitch a couple of nonprofits in my biography? Well, if it is, it won't be my first!

"There are four nonprofits: the Santa Rosa Bird Rescue, the Marine Mammal Center, the Peninsula Humane Society, and my top place to give money to is the Crazy Horse Memorial."

Privately funded, the Crazy Horse Memorial depicts Crazy Horse, the Oglala Lakota warrior, on his horse pointing over the horizon to Indian lands. Located in the Black Hills of South Dakota, the idea was conceived by Oglala Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear, who feared the "cultures and traditions of the North American Indian are in danger of being obliterated." He enlisted the skills and sympathies of Boston-born sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski, whose previous carving projects included Mount Rushmore. On June 3, 1948, the mountain memorial was dedicated to the Native American people, and Mr. Ziolkowski, "storyteller in stone," and designer and sculptor of the project, began construction. It is the world's largest sculptural undertaking, and when completed, the mountain monument of the Lakota warrior on his steed will be 563 feet in height and 641 feet long. Following the sculptor's death in 1982, his wife Ruth, their 10 children, and their descendants have honored the promise made by Korczak to Henry Standing Bear, and the Ziolkowski family will see it kept. (Jane's penguin, "Baby Ruth" was named after Ruth Ziolkowski.)

"I first learned about the Crazy Horse Memorial in 1969 and have been contributing what I can since. I've become friends with the Ziolkowski family. I so admire what they are doing. I feel so much guilt over what we did to Native Americans and to their history. Contributing to this is something I can do.

* * *

Fly Trap, foundling, falling house, feathered birds ~ The fantastical F's in this Pacifican's life

An interview-biography with Jane Tollini

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

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"Here's the deal. I've done all the big dreams in my life. I wanted to have my own business; I had my own business. I wanted to work in the music business and I did work in the music business. I wanted to work with animals and I did work with animals. And yes, I've definitely had my share of sorrows and real difficulties. But, as I get older, I have noticed that the time between a tragedy and a funny story about it, is getting shorter and shorter. If you can turn a tragedy into a humorous story kind of quickly, you do yourself a favor and everyone around you."



A favorite photo. Taken in 1990, Jane sits on the lawn behind the hospital at the San Francisco Zoo with "two of my babies, who were being weaned from their parents so they would accept being fed by me."



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author.

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