

## Princeton Resident Landon Jones Receives Time Inc. 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award

Time Inc.'s 17th Annual Luce Awards will be celebrated tonight, April 15, at a dinner in New York City. Longtime Princeton resident and Princeton University alumnus Landon Jones will be spruced up and ready to receive The Lifetime Achievement Award.

"During the years I served as Time Inc.'s editor-in-chief, I relied on Lanny's professionalism and his good judgment. He made every magazine he touched better," said Norman Pearlstine, the company's executive vice president and chief content officer since October 2013, in his announcement of the award winners last month.

Time Inc.'s highest honors, the Luce Awards recognize editorial excellence in 19 print, digital, and multimedia categories in the media company's magazines People, Money, and InStyle, among others. Mr. Jones had an enormous influence over many of these publications. He is the former editor of both People and Money magazines.

Mr. Jones grew up in St. Louis and attended Princeton University, where he wrote for the Daily Princetonian. He joined Time Inc. After graduating in 1966, he wrote for Time until 1970, when he returned to Princeton to edit the Princeton Alumni Weekly. After working on the alumni publication for five years, he went back to Time Inc. as a writer for People magazine, where stayed until 1984 when he was named editor of Money.

During his five years as Money's editor, the magazine won three National Magazine awards, including one for General Excellence. Mr. Jones returned to People as its top editor in 1989, a position he held until 1997. While at People, he helped plan and launch three new magazines: Who Weekly for the Australian market, InStyle, and People en Español.

After leaving People, Mr. Jones served as Time Inc. vice president for strategic planning until he retired in 2000. He is the author of three books: *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (1980); *The Essential Lewis and Clark* (2000); and *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (2004).

Town Topics asked Mr. Jones to share some of the highlights of his long career.

*Linda Arntzenius (LA):* Do you remember your first day at People?

*Landon Jones (LJ):* My first day at People was in March 1974, when this audacious new magazine was just three weeks old. I had previously worked at both Life and Time, from 1966-69, so I knew some of the first editors at People. The tiny staff had worked about five straight all-nighters to close the first issue and were totally exhausted. But it was a weekly. It was as if someone finally realized, 'Do you mean we have to do this again?' So they brought me in during my spring publication break at the Princeton Alumni Weekly, where I was then the editor.

*LA:* What was your job and how did it come about?

*LJ:* I was hired as a temporary writer, what we called a 'green req' writer (so named for some Human Resources form). My first story was about a crusading TV newsmen in Houston, Texas named Marvin Zindler. In those days, People would do stories about just about anyone we thought was interesting. We thought we were starting a magazine about extraordinary people, no matter what field they were in. We did not think of it as a celebrity magazine.

*LA:* Where did you live when you were working at the magazine?

*LJ:* I had just moved with my wife Sarah and 2-year-old daughter Rebecca to 40 Morgan Place in Princeton. My wife still talks about all the late-night closes at People when I would get home at dawn and walk in and hand her the newspaper while she was fixing breakfast. This happened two or three times a week. At People we called those early years 'the Bataan Death March.'

*LA:* Who are some of the most interesting people you came into contact with over your long career? Any standouts?

*LJ:* I came into contact with some amazing people. I personally interviewed Presidents Reagan, Bush 41 [George Herbert Walker Bush], Bill Clinton, and Hillary Clinton several times, Elizabeth Taylor and Arlo Guthrie. One of the most remarkable people I met was Malcolm X, whom I interviewed as a Princeton student for The Daily Princetonian. He was killed a few months later. Others I met briefly were Raquel Welch, Barbra Streisand, and Fidel Castro.

Then there was Princess Diana. I flew to London to have tea with her to talk about People doing a fund-raising gala with her at the Field Museum in Chicago. It was a great kick to get into a London taxi and tell the driver, 'Kensington Palace, please.' He said, 'You mean Kensington Park, guv?' I said, 'No, I mean Kensington Palace.' We did do the event in Chicago, by the way, and she was wonderful and charming, very girlish. Her jewelry was probably worth more than the Field Museum.

The great thing about journalism, as you know, is that if you have an itch to find out something, or meet somebody, you probably can do it.

*LA:* Did you ever expect to be receiving a lifetime achievement award?

*LJ:* Not really. Awards like this usually go to well-known journalists with names like Isaacson, Deford, Loomis and Grunwald. But as an editor I was always looking for ways to do the unexpected, take chances, to expand what a magazine can do. So at Money I moved it from just covering personal finance to doing investigative stories on AIDS and the blood supply. At People I moved the magazine from black and white to all-color and did stories on teen pregnancy and racism in Hollywood.



THE WRITER WHEN YOUNG: Landon Jones in his first job at Time magazine in 1968. "Notice all the period details, the manual typewriter, the old Manhattan skyline, and the pencils stuck in the ceiling because I threw them there," said the award-winning editor and writer who receives Time Inc.'s 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award tonight, April 15, at a celebratory dinner in New York City. If the image prompts thoughts of "Mad Men," that may be because The Time-Life building served as the model for the interiors and exteriors in the AMC series. (Image Courtesy of Lanny Jones)

One morning when I read that thousands of Latinos had gone to the funeral of the singer named Selena whom I had never heard of, I wondered if we could start a magazine for Hispanic readers. It's now People en Espanol, a big success. We had the luxury to be able to take chances. And it worked! People's success made my baby boom book possible. I had met the demographer Charlie Westoff at Princeton University, who helped me see the relationship between population change and social change. I knew I wanted to write about it. And then People gave me a six-month leave to write my book. The magazine's success made that possible.

LA: How do you feel about the award?

LJ: Well, I am proud to be recognized for some of the innovations we did — taking People to all-color, assigning investigative pieces, looking for injustices. That is the job of journalism, and we showed that a so-called celebrity magazine could also practice first-rate journalism along with the best of them. We were lucky in one sense that we caught the wave of public interest in celebrities and really rode it well. But that's not the whole story. People became the most successful magazine in history because it spoke to the better angels of our nature. It's much tougher to do that now in the wild world of the internet.

LA What are you up to these days?

LJ: I do a lot of writing. Most recently op-ed pieces for the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and Time.com. I am from St. Louis, so after the situation erupted in Ferguson, Missouri, I wrote longer, personal pieces for The New Yorker.com and The Atlantic.com. I am not used to writing that personally, and to my surprise I liked it.

For more on Mr. Jones, visit: <http://lannyjones.com>.

Written by: [Linda Arntzenius](#)

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