
Zora Pinney



Zora and Edward loved to sail and had a teak sailboat that was lovely, and lovingly kept. They once invited me to sail to Catalina Island for Thanksgiving. Zora had arranged for reservations in a local restaurant, and we enjoyed a perfect turkey dinner. It was the best Thanksgiving I've ever experienced.

A story she told about their ill-fated sailing trip to Hawaii was amazing. After an aborted first attempt, they decided for safety reasons to take along a strong young man in case they ran into trouble. So they found a former high school football player and off they started. The boat had a stairway that dropped down into the galley partly enclosed by a half door. Even before getting out of sight of land, the intrepid former athlete sat on this half-door, flopped over backward, and knocked himself out on the galley floor. Zora and Edward had to turn the boat around and get him to a hospital ASAP. She said that after that, they decided the Fates were trying to tell them something, and now they were ready to listen.

We were at a meeting at the Huntington in the late 70s and she and Edward offered to drive us all to dinner. Up drove this "thing" I had never seen before. It was a Checker Marathon, which had an enormous expanse in the back seat. Zora said, with a mischievous smile, they were so tired of lifting suitcases in and out of tiny trunks they purchased a classic New York City taxi cab design. All that space was for legs and luggage. And it drove like a Sherman Tank.

Zora and Edward invited me to dinner when I was just developing a taste for Scotch whisky. My knowledge of fine Scotch was almost zero, but I thought I knew a lot because I could describe the taste of Laphroaig, which I didn't like very much but knew it had snob appeal. After two hours of miserable driving in rush hour traffic, I arrived, seriously late. When Zora asked if I wanted a drink, I gasped "Yes, I need a glass of Laphroaig." Zora in her usual manner responded, "Oh! So you like single malt Scotches do you, try some of these," and opened up a cabinet showing half a dozen bottles; we tested three of them right off the bat. I was in the company of an expert!

Jim Druzik

For years Zora and I would meet in the bar of the hotel at the National Art Materials Trade Association International Trade Show, where we also had an ASTM International meeting, and we would sit and drink a martini or two (and smoke, when I smoked and smoking in bars was allowed) and schmooze with all the passersby and each other.

Zora knew everyone in the trade, and they knew and respected her. Then a big group of us would go out to dinner before the week's work began. I tell you, there was no better way to learn one's way around the art materials industry than to have Zora as a mentor. (The ASTM D01.57 Subcommittee is the one that has written so many standards for artists and manufacturers, and Zora was one of the leaders-behind-the-scenes.)

Mark Gottsegen

Zora would walk up to strangers who were in charge of a manufacturer's display at a NAMTA meeting and pick up an expensive item from the display and ask a question or two about it and then ask, but in a way, demand, to have it. The justification was that the item was for the art materials collection at the National Gallery. More times than not, they gave the item to her.

As much as she talked about art materials, she also took a keen interest in what you or your family were doing. She remembered what you had discussed in the past and always wanted an update to chart progress on what a family member was doing. She was as proud of what you accomplished as if you were a close relative of hers.

Michael Skalka

Zora was my book buddy, theater, and opera buddy and museum buddy. We planned an excursion to see the Manet painting on loan to the Getty, *The Bar at the Follies Bergere*. We sat on a bench and just looked at that one painting for an hour. We gave it our full attention, and then we left the museum. It was more inspiring than perusing any number of pavilions.

Linda Shaffer

What immediately comes to mind in remembering Zora were the numerous dinners in various cities around art material industry functions. Her sustenance seemed always to have been cigarettes, Bombay Safire martinis, and beef carpaccio. And her conversation was always challenging. So many of her questions started with, "Do you think....?"

But the foundation of all my memories about Zora is made of a tremendous gratitude for her support and mentoring. Most notable was how she made an introduction for me and my one person artist color company to the center of the art materials world: Manhattan.

One day in November of 1986 I got a call from her. My oil colors were already in her store on Bundy, and I was preparing to take them to the east coast for the first time. She had just returned from New York where she had been in the audience at an event for artists on materials. Steve Steinberg of New York Central was on the panel along with Wolf Kahn. Someone from

There are hundreds of people who respected and loved Zora, from all the various spheres of her life, who could have contributed to these reminiscences. These are only a few, chosen from our conservation community.

the audience asked about Gamblin colors, and as none of them had ever heard of the brand, Zora stood up and filled them in.

She tasked me with showing up soon in NYC, which I did, two days later. Within a month I was shipping more color to Manhattan than anywhere else. Both Steve and Wolf became great friends and strong supporters of the brand. And to this day, 20% of what our colorhouse produces goes to Manhattan.

This little story seems to be more about my company than Zora. But, really, it illustrates an important part of her legacy, how she made it possible through her support and council for many of us of the next generation to thrive.

Robert Gamblin

The business of living is in every memory I have of Zora. She saw wonder and beauty in everyday things and taught me how not to take things for granted, or too seriously.

In 2000 I had a sports car, and Zora tried driving it. The car had a manual transmission, and I don't think we ever made it to 3rd gear, but she was a natural champion behind the wheel.

She loved people. We went to an art opening last year at Bergamot Station, and everyone there knew Zora. It was like a reunion of old friends, and I saw the affection people had for her. It made me understand how important she was to the art community of Los Angeles and how connected she was to so many people.

Jini Rasmussen

I first met Zora at Zora's, their iconic art store in West Los Angeles. We talked about artists' materials and her fading tests. She showed me some of the samples, those exposed and those kept in the dark. The discussion progressed. She asked me if I would like to see the boxes that Edward had built so that they could evaluate the light fastness of the artists' materials that came through the store. Of course I was interested.

We exited the store to the alley behind and, to my surprise, Zora climbed up the fire escape to the roof of the store. Mind you, she was no spring chicken at the time, particularly in my eyes, just out of graduate school. I dutifully followed. There on the roof of Zora's were Zora's white exposure boxes – quite a number of them – some loaded with paint outs or colored pencil marks, others empty awaiting the next batch of samples, gleaming in the afternoon sun.

Zora was a founding member of WAAC, but pre-dating that she was also an active member of "The Group" which was a local conservation group, similar to the BAACG in San Francisco that ultimately coalesced into WAAC.

When I took on editing the *Newsletter*, Zora was always available to offer an opinion, give some background, and bounce ideas off of. (She would have loved the idea of ideas bouncing off of her like little rubber balls.) She was an avid reader and very good at the turn of a phrase. She helped me refine my writing style and make my articles clearer and cleverer.

Above and beyond that, those were the dark ages of desktop publishing. The first editors had to cope with typesetting and photo reduction to produce the *Newsletter*. When I became editor, I decided to make the change to a computer-based system. If you look at the first two *Newsletters* I produced, the first page was printed on a typewriter and the rest on a dot-matrix printer that looked pretty awful.

By this time, Zora and Edward had sold Zora's to Standard Brands, and Zora became a consultant for them. Because part of her consulting duties was to write guidelines and articles for their employees at The Art Store, they provided Zora with a computer, a copy of Aldus PageMaker, and a laser printer. Mind you, at the time, laser printers were horrifically expensive, and computers weren't that cheap either. So, for every issue, I would drive to Torrance to visit Zora, and we would import my edited copy from my computer (Unix using nroff, if anyone cares) into PageMaker and print a draft. Then we reviewed it and sent it off to the proofreader. Finally, when that was finished, I would return to Zora's, and we would edit and print out the final draft for the printers.

During our time working on the *Newsletter*, Zora contributed Zora's Column which ran for about three years. Of her articles, my favorite title was "Lead down the cedar path, the tale of the pencil." Many of the most interesting articles were about her research into artists brushes and brush makers. While she wrote a number of articles on brushes, it's our loss that she never got all the information put together for the book she was planning. She also was instrumental in producing both WAAC Resource Files.

Many people do not realize that before being an art materials specialist, before being an art materials seller, before being a gallerist, before being a conservator, before being a framer, even before being a Rosie the Riveter, Zora was a musician.

She studied music at Julliard, and it remained an important part of her life. She introduced our daughter Calandra to the violin and gave her first few lessons. And after hearing her play at an elementary school orchestra recital, Zora gave her violin to Calandra. Hearing that violin now is one of the many daily events in our lives that remind us how Zora's gifts continue.

Chris Stavroudis

