

Suzanne Lansé 1898 – 2002

By Grace Lee Billings

INTRODUCTION

When Suzanne Lansé died on January 16th, 2002 at a nursing home in Veyrier-du-Lac, France, more than 103 years of life quietly came to a close. Her death turned out the lights on an extraordinary century of living. The golden glow of those years shined in her memories especially when she spoke of Donald and Charlotte MacJannet. These giants came into her life after seventy very constrained years of living with her mother. The Macs were to Suzanne a source of new life and new hope, opening her world to international friendships and new markets for her paintings. Suzanne became one of the Foundation's most loyal supporters. With Suzanne's passing those enchanted decades are now over. However, like a halo emanating around a closed door, her stories brighten the darkness.

By her nineties, Suzanne's memories were distilled to the purest of recollections. She spoke in highlights. Sitting by the open window to the balcony in her turquoise living room, she recounted moments of that century in the precise, elegant French of her childhood, free of all slang or argot. Certain phrases – "au fur et a mesure," "du reste," "tel et tel" - accompanied by a flick of

her hand - always paced her stories. She spoke lovingly of when Savoie joined France in 1860 and of her great grandfather in the honor guard of Empress Eugenie. With uncomplicated adoration, she recalled her father. It was not the same when she spoke of her mother. And always, Suzanne found a way of mentioning the

lotte decided that suits were the only appropriate outfits for old age. She was proud to wear a handful of good outfits year in and year out. Her jewelry was a copper bracelet against arthritis and once she became legally blind, a watch that spoke the time. On her little finger she wore a pink gold signet ring



Prieuré, the Macs and of their friendship which changed her life.

In good Savoyard tradition, Suzanne was small of stature (and shrinking every year she lamented.) In her youth her hair was brown (chatain), and her skin was fine grained, nearly without a trace of aging, even in her last decade. She attributed this to using only soap and cold water and to avoiding all face powder. Suzanne's uniform was a suit. She and Char-

lotte decided that suits were the only appropriate outfits for old age. She was proud to wear a handful of good outfits year in and year out. Her jewelry was a copper bracelet against arthritis and once she became legally blind, a watch that spoke the time. On her little finger she wore a pink gold signet ring

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200 Linden Street # 200
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02482

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ments of the last years she still poked fun at herself. She was an Oblate of the Order of Les Soeur du Saint Esprit in Paris and wore on her lapel a small silver dove, with its wings spread out. When a stranger mistook the pin for an airline emblem, and asked, “Are you an aviatrix?” Suzanne answered, “Un peu, oui!” She never tired of life’s simplest pleasure, saying, “how good it felt to have these ‘éclats de rire.’ ”

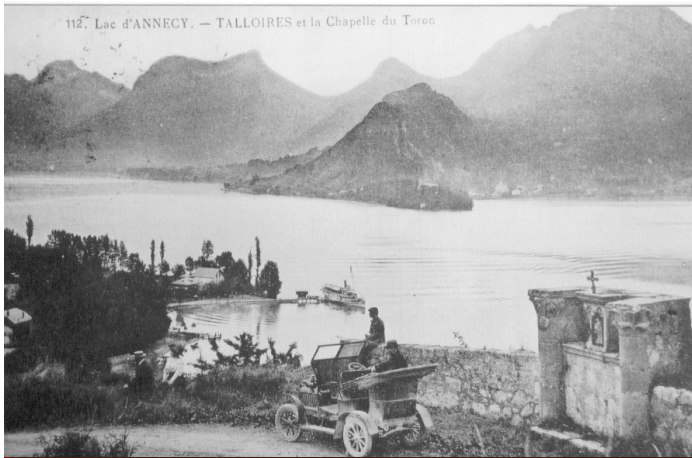
Suzanne expressiveness could be in a down turned mouth or eyes shut and a dusting motion of the hand. Her gestures escorted the imagination to her exact meaning. Sometimes she scowled at a distant, remembered event and as the French say, her scowl “ça dit tout.” Suzanne could cut down an obnoxious situation with unrelenting speed and accuracy. Rarely did anyone come back from Suzanne’s disdain. And it wasn’t just coquettes and self-important people. Under baked bread, rosé wine, cold soup, all pears (ils m’empoisonnent) had been so relegated. She was very decided on how life should be and certainly on how it should have been.

A REAL TALLOIRIENNE

Suzanne had encyclopedic memories of her century lived in her beloved Talloires. She was born in Annecy July 9th, 1898 and ten days later the family brought her to her mother’s ancestral home in Talloires. That little lapse of a week and a few days did not keep Suzanne from considering herself a real “Talloirienne.” At the turn of the last century, Talloires was isolated and the trip from Annecy to Talloires was by steamboat as the road along Veyrier-du-Lac

and Menthon was non-existent. There were four white boats - France, Ville d’Annecy, Mont-Blanc, Savoie - which criss-crossed the lake like a shoe lace: Annecy, Veyrier, Sevrier, Menthon, St. Jorioz, Duingt, Talloires, Dussard. The coming and going of these boats connected Talloires to the world.

The oldest part of the family home dated to the 15th Century. A small plaque, no bigger than a brick, with the date 1410 was imbedded in an outside wall dated from the original dwelling on this location. The front part -- dining room, petit-salon, salon, Suzanne’s bedroom and the tower room -- dated from 1910 and had been added to the back of a traditional Savoyard farm



Talloires at the time of Suzanne’s birth – 1898

house, with its hayloft in the attic and its écurie in the basement. The new addition had the first bathtub in Talloires, causing much talk. A high stone wall, with a double green gate that squealed on its hinges, surrounded the house. A gravel path through hydrangea bushes led to the house. A small brook ran beside the house, dividing the property into what had once been Suzanne’s large flower and vegetable gardens and the plot from which the house looked towards the lake. For one hundred years the house was her anchor, her prison, her international hotel, her heartache and always her true north.

John Steinbeck referred to the “elastic string of time,” and the house was filled with this pliant connection of

French history and French family life that stretched across centuries. The ancient écurie of the farm house was changed from animal stalls to a laundry room (buanderie), a wine keeping room (still with a few kegs), a wood shed (half filled with bundles of fagots), a root cellar and in more modern times a kitchen with its wood burning stove still in place. What appeared to be a well with stone cover outside the front door was in reality an ancient “refrigerator” where meat could be lowered into the thick hollowed-out stone tub and kept safely cool even on the hottest summer day. The hay loft had become over time the repository of unwanted furniture, travelling trunks with Second Empire military uniforms, oil presses from when the region had nut trees, farm tools (scythes, two handled saws, an adz) and leather harnesses for work horses which the family used to own. The house was full of beautiful and nearly beautiful things: 18th Century grandfather clocks were missing their works because they had been sent to Paris to be fixed in 1850 and never been retrieved; her great-grandfather’s dress sword hung by a nail in the stairwell, and her grandmother’s wooden cane, with a 3 inch carved locust handle, stood in the corner of the hall. From the days of her great, great, grandfather, Japanese silk prints decorated the walls - treasures of another time when the family business was in the silk trade of Lyon and Faverge. And in the back yellow bedroom resided the sleigh bed that the Emperor Napoleon III had slept in when he visited Annecy in 1860. Suzanne’s pride were four chests “de grande valeur.” One was commissioned by her grandmother from an itinerant cabinetmaker who carved the cabinet doors to have the Renaissance perspective of a vaulted Florentine Palazzo. In the sa-

lon were four armchairs covered in her mother’s beautiful yellow petit point with blue fleur-de-lis. Suzanne even referred to the lizards that sunned



The turquoise salon in the Lansé family home

themselves on the front steps as “descendents of descendents of anciens lézards depuis toujours.”

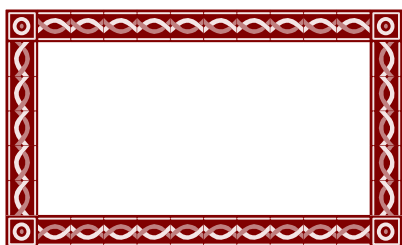
At the turn of the century, Annecy (population 13,611) was an unimportant town with a few paved, gas-lit streets. Talloires was insignificant. It was a tiny (population 750) farm community with its lakeside fields banded in vineyards instead of summer houses. Suzanne said the village in those days had no trees and was in her words, “Pas joli du tout.” Talloires had no electricity. In the evening, the villagers gathered in their

kitchens with just one lamp burning. During these Veillées, when family and neighbors might crack nuts to be later pressed into oil or whittle small objects to be sold, they often sang and told stories. (The Macs borrowed the Veillée for the evening gathering of the campers at Angon.) Suzanne said that in her youth oil for lamps was so precious that if someone left the gathering to fetch an item from another part of the house, they would take the lantern, leaving those at the Veillée in the dark. During La Grande Guerre, when Suzanne was a teenager, she walked home from tutoring lessons at the other end of the village in pitch black. The village streets were so dark that she could only see her way home by following the starlit night sky shining between the overhanging roofs.

Suzanne was, to the despair of her mother, close to the peasants of Talloires. She spoke their patois and was often asked into their homes for a glass of fiery “gnole,” a home brew of pure alcohol made each fall. On her early morning mountain climbs, Suzanne passed the farmers in their fields. When the 7:00 AM church bell rang the three opening notes of the Angelus, she’d stop with them to pray.

The Talloires church bell still rings the morning and evening Angelus, and even at the end of her life, Suzanne would follow its chimes in saying “The Angel(us) announced to Mary, blessed are you among women...” The French speak of the church and its bell tower surrounded by its village, as a hen surrounded by her chicks. Suzanne thought of her church, St. Maurice de Talloires, in just that way.

The villagers taught her endless practical skills: cutting wood, working the garden, making repairs. She regretted however, never learning to solder. These skills she would use all of her life. It was Suzanne who maintained



the family house right up until her last decades: painting shutters, grouting windows, fixing doors. After her father's death at the end of "La Grande Guerre" and her brother's work took him from Talloires, Suzanne became the "man of the house."

Her father, Leon Lansé, officier d'état-major and a colonel in the French army, was a career officer who had

been decorated by Czar Nicholas II with the Order of Saint Stanislas. He also received the Legion d'Honneur and the Croix de Guerre. He had been first in his class at St. Cyr (the French West Point) and, after graduation, was appointed to a post in Paris.

He turned it down, as his wife could not abide to be too far from Talloires. Therefore, he was assigned to Chambery and to Lyon where Suzanne and her older brother Georges spent much of their childhood. Suzanne described her father as tall, blond, with a friendly character, liked by his colleagues and loved by his soldiers. Madame Lansé reproached Suzanne for having this same friendly manner, saying that "la fille d'un officier" should be separate (à part) from ordinary people. Suzanne, however, identified completely with her father. She excused her three and four sneezes in a row, a habit her father had, as validating his claim that she was "frabrication Lansé." She grew up surrounded by the military and collected lead soldiers and her favorite bedside reading was "History of the Revolution and of the Empire." Suzanne always spoke with great emotion of being daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter of officers, men who had "spilt their blood for France."

She proudly walked "in step" with her father as he went to his office, knew all the drills and battle terms, and loved the regular gatherings of his young officers at their home. She mischievously told of her father's inability to

tolerate waste. And so, instead of throwing out the accumulated gifts of perfumed talcum powder from doting young soldiers to her mother, her father the Colonel sprinkled the talc inside his riding boots each day before his morning ride. Most of those young men, "the flower of a generation," died in World War I. So many men were killed that for decades after the war in France one saw only old people and

women in the villages. Suzanne said there was no one left to marry when she was in her twenties. In truth, she was briefly engaged to the son of the owners of the Prieuré, the people from whom years

later, the Macs would buy the property. She chose instead to become a painter and felt that one could not have a career and a family, a view unusual for its time, as a woman's career was to raise a family.

She never forgave Ancecy for misunderstanding her father's 1914 wound at the battle of Gerbevillier, which kept him from returning to battle for a year. Ancecy considered her father's long convalescence in Talloires as a means



The family crest carved on the mantle in the dining room

of evading the war. Suzanne said that the last of her grandfather Bernaz's red wine, laid down in 1870, helped him "repandre force et santé." He not only recovered from his head wounds but miraculously most of his sight came

back. He returned to the battlefield in April of 1915. He was named commander of the 1st Infantry Regiment and fought at Berry au Bac, Sapigneul, La Cote 108, Verdun. He died in 1918 from after effects of the wounds of 1914.

Her mother was Marie Louise Lansé, née Bernaz, and owned the vineyards that stretched from the Abbaye Hôtel to the Roc de Chère. Suzanne said that in 1890, at her parents' wedding reception at Père Bise, wine from the Bernaz vineyards was served. This would have been in 1890. Over the years, partly because of the wars and her father's premature death, the lands were sold off. Tracks of forests on the Roc du Chère were eventually taken over by the state to form a park. Suzanne later used her own earnings from painting to cobble together new holdings of land.

In the 1600's, during the Protestant reformation in Switzerland, the Catholic ancestors of her mother's family Bernaz sought refuge in France. The walnut mantle in the dining room was decorated with the family crest of a rampant bear on a chevron field. Suzanne suspected that the family name Bernaz was a corruption of Bern that has the bear on its eschuchion. Later, the Bernaz family was associated with the silk industry of Lyon and Faverges. On her mother's paternal side they were related to the Bernaz family that

was ennobled in 1757 by the royal family of Piedmont-Sardinia, when Savoie was part of that kingdom. Suzanne said her mother was particularly sensitive to this "petit brin de noblesse (small twig of nobility)."

When she was 7, Marie Louise's father died suddenly and tragically at the age of 30 in a fire in Ancecy. His limestone tomb, of a draped coffin at the base of a large cross, is at the

right side of the church in Talloires. Suzanne described her mother as someone "arrested", living in the past and emotionally frozen. Suzanne thought her mother's rigidity came from the trauma of losing her father so suddenly.



Suzanne (left) with her mother, her sister-in-law and her beloved nephew Bernard Lansé

Marie Louise had few friends and her style was a severe elegance that easily intimidated those around her. It made for a very difficult home life for Suzanne.

However, Marie Louise was gifted in the arts. She was an accomplished water colorist, and many of her still lifes decorated the family home. A large painting of white peonies in the style of Fantin-Latour was a particularly beautiful example of her work. Suzanne said her mother had “doigts de Fées” - fairy hands - in her ability to do all manner of embroidery, lace and tapestry work. She was equally a very talented pianist and at 90 could still play from memory Chopin’s Concerto #1. Suzanne said her own life-long love of music surely came from falling asleep each evening as a child to the sound of her mother’s mezzo soprano voice accompanying herself on the piano. Later, in the turquoise salon in Talloires, Suzanne and her mother often played piano four hands.

The house in Talloires was where Suzanne spent her childhood summers and the First World War. When her father left for La Grande Guerre, he commissioned Suzanne to care for her mother and grandmother until he returned. She was, as they say, “fidèle à son foyer” for the next 50 years. The “entre guerre” period meant summers with the long happy visits of her nephew Bernard and escaping the house to paint in the mountains.

For nearly the entire “Guerre de 39-40,” Suzanne lived with her mother and the housekeeper “la brave Joséphine” in Talloires. During the winters, most of the house was closed off except for the petit-salon and two little bedrooms in the back. The only heat was a stove in the petit-salon. It was Occupied France with Barbie not far off in Lyon, Jews being smuggled across to Switzer-

land (helped by Charlotte’s maid Mart Liaret Bouvier) and the beginning of the French Resistance on the Plateau des Glières. Suzanne stated simply the deprivations of the Second World War, “every one suffered. We were no different.” But she still bristled at the Germans garrisoned in the local hotels of Talloires. The soldiers came by daily to appropriate eggs from the Lansé chicken coop. For the civilians, as Pepita Aube said of life in Paris, war meant, “we were cold, hungry and scared.” The war years were the same in Talloires.

Suzanne was able to escape from the constant care of her mother for a brief time during the war. After much hard persuasion by the chief administrator of the Red Cross in Marseilles, Suzanne’s mother allowed her daughter (ma fille) to help with the war effort. La Chartreuse de Montrieux, in the department of Var, was a Car-

tusian monastery where herbs were grown for medicinal purposes and for the making of the famous chartreuse liquor. These dried herbs were sent to monks at La Grande Chartreuse near Grenoble, where only three monks knew the recipe for the liqueur sold throughout the world. Under the auspices of the Red Cross and with the help of the holy fathers, parts of the Chartreuse not being used by the monks were temporarily turned into a hospital for French African soldiers. The nurses were nuns from a medical mission of the Saint Esprit brought home from Africa to France at the beginning of the war. These Sisters were fluent in several African dialects and usually were able to speak with their patients. However, this did not prevent odd moments, as Suzanne loved to tell of when the first 30 wounded African soldiers arrived, burdened by their gas masks, helmets, guns, canteens. As they stood at attention in neat rows the Head Doctor, Soeur Gilbert, in sign language indicated to the exhausted soldiers to drop their equipment. Her elaborate hand gestures were obviously misunderstood, because when the





Oil Painting - La Tournette -
known as "Le Fauteuil de Bon Dieu"
(God's arm chair)

anne enjoyed the work and her artistic talent was also being used. She drew the cycle of tropical diseases, beginning with the germ or microbe which began the illness, then illustrating the effects and progress of the disease. These would later be used for instruction when the Sisters returned to their mission in Africa. This work, plus decorating a small room in the Chartreuse as a chapel with a "chemin de la croix" led to exhaustion. Malnutrition severely affected Suzanne's ability to see, and for an artist this was doubly painful. She had periods of "seeing white" -- that is, she could no longer distinguish

Suzanne had been sustained, for 50 years of being at her mother's beck and call, by her painting.

HER LIFE AS AN ARTIST

Suzanne Lansé was known as a mountain painter and for her study of light on snow and ice. At the time she was born, the mountains of her native Haute Savoie were mainly painted by artists working in the comfort of the studio. Then slowly, in the post-Impressionist era, the splendor of the Valley of Chamonix and the Alps became known through artists who climbed the mountains bringing their canvases with them. To paint the highest peaks, Suzanne recalled overcoming vertigo and of carrying painting gear strapped to her back. During the difficult ascents there was always risk from the quickly changing weather conditions. Sometimes she spent the night sleeping in the hay of a shepherd's hut. Then, at the first hint of morning, she made the final ascent to quickly capture on canvas the fast changing light on the peaks covered in heavy, voluptuous snow or the reflected sunlight glowing on the glaciers. This was the 1920's and 30's, long before the comfort and safety of modern equipment, reliable weather forecasts and portable communication.

Because of the arduous climb, her materials were at a minimum: folding easel, canvas, small aluminum case with

Soeur looked up from her paper work she was confronted by 30 naked ("hommes splendides du reste") soldiers but still wearing their dark red tarbooches "sur la tête comme il faut." Suzanne said it was a rare moment when she wanted a camera. Soeur Gilbert, with a tiny twinkle in her eye and more precise sign language, told them to put back on their undershorts.

Suzanne, under the tutelage of Soeur Gilbert, ran the pharmacy. She did not mix prescriptions, as most medications were already packaged, but she did have to be sure of quantity and strength. She recalled once fearing that a sleeping potion was too strong but gave it anyway. All night she worried that she had killed the soldier. The next morning, when she heard the soldier complain that he had barely slept all night, her reaction was Deo Gratias! Despite the privations of the war, Suz-

anne looked up from her paper work she was confronted by 30 naked ("hommes splendides du reste") soldiers but still wearing their dark red tarbooches "sur la tête comme il faut." Suzanne said it was a rare moment when she wanted a camera. Soeur Gilbert, with a tiny twinkle in her eye and more precise sign language, told them to put back on their undershorts.

colors. Later, when the hospital was converted to a teaching facility, she went home to Talloires and resumed the care of her mother. When Liberation finally came to the Haute Savoie, Suzanne rode her bike on its wheel rims to Annecy, just to feast on the French flag in its glory flying over the Préfecture. She said, "I knew in seeing the tri-color that the war was over."

After the Second World War, Suzanne and her mother spent the winters on the Côte d'Azur at St. Raphael. But summers were in Talloires, painting, tending her gardens, being the organist at the church for 40 years, and doing in the early 1960's the Tour du Mont Blanc, a week's hike with her friend Renee Partoes. Marie Louise Lansé lived till 1966, age 99.



Les vignes de Duignt in 1925
Oil painting – Suzanne Lansé

only essential tubes of paint, and a palette knife rather than carrying an array of brushes. She brought neither oil nor turpentine. It was necessary to work the paint straight from the tube, as using any thinner would have resulted in disaster to the painting in the descent where temperatures could vary greatly within a few steps from burning sun to the intense cold in the shade of a glacier. Suzanne said that at the time she first began to paint mountainscapes, the standard practice was to use Zinc White straight from the tube to capture the snow covered Alps. However, one day, when she was working in the snow, a pack of cigarette paper dropped from her pocket. As she bent to pick it up, she saw the white paper appeared gray against the snow. It was then that she began to see “that the white that burst from the snow was colored by a prism of sunlight released in the snow crystals.” Her painting technique changed, and her canvases began to sell in Paris.

When Suzanne was a child of 10 in Chambéry, her mother enlisted her in the Artist Union for her first drawing lessons. The teacher was an Italian who barely spoke French. He sat Suzanne in front of an easel with a board and paper. He pointed to a copy of Beethoven’s death mask that hung on the facing wall and indicated for her to copy it. Not one gesture of instruction was given. The sight of the lifeless features devastated Suzanne. Immobilized, she sat there until another student took pity on her and helped her with a few preliminary lines. When the teacher came back, he rubbed off all of her charcoal drawing and said, “Recommencez” his only French word. This was her first lesson, and instead of being disgusted with art, Suzanne said “the gift was in her” and she pursued it.

Later, in Talloires at the age of 14, a famous neighbor Albert Besnard, of the Academie des Beaux-Arts, discovered Suzanne’s artistic talent. Besnard spotted a drawing pad in Suzanne’s back



Oil Painting – Boat House
Of the Chateau of Duingt

pocket as they waited on the debarcadere next to Père Bise for war news which would come on the boat from Annecy. After looking at her work, he told her to keep drawing, and when he would return from Rome, where he was director of the Medici Villa, she must bring him her work. The next summer, as she sat in the garden with her mother, Besnard stopped by to check up on her winter’s work. He asked again to see her drawings and she showed him the best of her “petits croquis.” From then on, two or three times a year, he reviewed her drawings, critiqued them and encouraged her to keep working.

Another Talloires neighbor, the etcher André Jacques, also guided her work. Later she studied in Paris under Jacques Simon. Through all of this, her mother dismissed Suzanne’s talent and dreams. Eventually, Suzanne was forced to give up her training, as her mother wanted to leave Paris and return to Talloires. Suzanne felt her father’s career and hers had been ruined by her mother’s intractable need to be in Talloires.

Madame Lansé never understood her daughter’s talent. Suzanne had really wanted to be a portrait painter and did a celebrated study of the Countess de Saint-Exupery, mother of Antoine. She made fine charcoal drawings of the people of Talloires, but as soon as she settled down to begin a portrait, her mother would interrupt her to look after a delivery or complain of a dog barking in the alley. “Elle m’a mis le bâton dans les roues (She put her stick in my wheels.)” Eventually, the impossibility of working at home became so evident that Suzanne took refuge in the mountains and on her boat -- two places that her mother couldn’t interrupt her as she painted. And paint she did: the mountains of la Haute Savoie, the Côte d’Azur, the lake, orchards in flower,

a prie-dieu in the snow, les vignes de Duingt. She lived in a paradise and loved to record its every mood. Though failing eyesight halted her career at age 86, Suzanne finished over 700 paintings. These paintings, with their extraordinary blue (bleu Lansé), captured the luminescent air over the lac d’Annecy and the brilliant light in the frozen moisture of snow. Today, they can be found today in museums and private collections in over twenty countries. In a very clear way, Donald and Charlotte MacJannet were an integral part of her artistic success.

HER FRIENDSHIP WITH DONALD



July 4, 1998: Sally Pym dedicates the Suzanne Lansé room at le Prieuré

AND CHARLOTTE

Between the years 1927 and 1963, when the Macs ran the summer camp at Angon, Suzanne knew Charlotte and Donald in a formal, distant way. Once, Suzanne was caught in her boat in a storm on the lake and was blown to the camp at Angon. As it was evening, she left her boat there and walked home. The next day, she came back to retrieve it. Suzanne later teased Donald that he had been her safe harbor (havre de grâce) in a storm even though he didn't know it at the time. Sometimes Suzanne and her mother accepted invitations to the camp's Gymkana festivities at the end of summer. It was only after the Macs bought Le Prieuré in 1958 and began to restore it that they became neighbors and friends.

In 1967, to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of St. Francois de Sales, the patron saint of the Haute Savoie, an art show was organized. The art came from local private collections and was to be exhibited in Annecy. At the last minute, the hall for the exposition was no longer available. Instead of canceling the event, the

Macs offered their home, Le Prieuré, as a site for the show. The Macs' spontaneous generosity showed them as people who, when confronted with an obstacle, found solutions. The show was so successful that it was held over an extra week to accommodate all the visitors. But more importantly, the use of the Macs' home as a center for local and international causes had been born.

The next step was to find a point of common interest. A few years earlier, Vatican II had encouraged inter-denominational meetings between Protestants and Catholics, an idea close to the heart of both Charlotte and Suzanne. Soon the Prieuré was used as a center to promote these encounters. For the

next 24 years, Suzanne worked with Charlotte, Pasteur Rochedieu of Geneva and R.P Brix to foster these ecu-

As Suzanne said: "This (MacJannet) welcome was reassuring, comforting and created a sense of security that one truly was considered as an individual. It is this warm welcome which allows the other to come out of his silence. It dares one to feel that they are worth knowing." Perhaps that was the very heart of the MacJannet experience -- they helped us see our own value and gave us the courage to realize what we hoped we saw in ourselves- fragile and tentative as it might be.

menical Entretiens. The Entretiens were hosts to many different topics; the arts, world affairs, human needs. The meetings began and ended with prayer. Once, the closing "Our Father" was recited in six different languages com-

Hearing, the closing "Our Father" recited in six different languages, coming from many denominations, Suzanne said that was the moment she finally understood the word "ecumenism."

ing from a wide variety of denominations and Suzanne said in that moment she finally understood the word "ecumenism."

The Entretiens lasted three days, with invitations sent out to all of the Macs' friends in the Annecy region, plus to friends in Switzerland and other nearby countries. Suzanne brought posters of the events to all of the hotels in Talloires. The large audiences were a mix of friends and strangers. The villagers of Talloires came each day to the Prieuré to make sandwiches and butter mountains of pain d'épice for tea time. Suzanne denuded her own garden of flowers to decorate MacJannet hall so that the Prieuré garden stayed in its enchanting summer bloom.

Les Entretiens were a true community effort. Then on the appointed days, Charlotte and Suzanne stood side by side at the top of the beautiful Prieuré staircase greeting each guest. This welcome the accueil was for Suzanne the most important moment of the whole Entretiens week. In the accueil, two parts of Suzanne's life met, that of her father's and that of the Macs'. Suzanne knew her father as welcoming and saw that same quality shine doubly in Charlotte and Donald. She spoke of them as a couple who walked into a room and added a new tone of conviviality.

She saw them as interested in each person they met, and in return, those people felt valued in a new way from their encounter with the Macs. Suzanne interpreted their accueil this way: "It is our responsibility to receive another

with our whole person, open in our comportment and our person, putting joy in our eyes to better receive the joy of the invited, and in this regard, this look, to bear witness of our desire to know the other. This welcome is in our smile, our handshake, our simple words of introduction and welcome.” Suzanne said it was Charlotte and Donald’s endless small gestures of kindness which gave confidence to all those who came into their presence. As Suzanne said: “This welcome was reassuring, comforting and created a sense of security that one truly was considered as an individual. It was this warm welcome which allowed the other to come out of his silence. It dared one to feel that they were worth knowing.” Perhaps that was the very heart of the MacJanet experience. To know Charlotte and Donald was to encounter the possibility of one’s self. Whether at the schools in Paris, or the camps at Angon, or at the Entretiens, the Macs created an ambience as rich as that of a Petri dish. With them, one could grow into one’s purpose, fragile and tentative as that purpose first seemed to be.

Besides the Entretiens, Suzanne and the Macs lived on a wonderful plane of a daily friendship. Suzanne had never learned to cook, so Mr. Mac taught her to make soup and an omelet. Charlotte did not want a phone to disturb the peace of the Prieuré so Suzanne’s home became their “cabinet de téléphone.” Suzanne would run down the Roman Path beside her house to the rue de la Colombiere, then into the Prieuré to tell the Macs that so-and-so had called from New York, Paris, London, or Somerville. How far this world was from the insular years with her mother!

The Macs often invited Suzanne for stays at 12 rue Hôtel de Ville in Geneva. There they went to concerts, art shows, and lectures. Through the Macs came friends from all over the world: Jean Foster, Bridey Snyder, Julia Halsey, Howard Cook, Priscilla Barclay, Dagmar Munck af Rosenshöld and so many others. She met “anciens campers” like the two Sawada sons, whose father was the former Japanese Ambassador to France. When the sons visited



Charlotte and Suzanne having tea at
12 Rue Hôtel de Ville, Geneva – summer of 1996

the Macs at the Prieuré, one of the them had tears in his eyes. Suzanne remembered his words to the Macs: “The last time I was with you I cried because of the sadness of leaving the camp. Now I cry with joy for having found you again

after so many years.” Suzanne told this story not to recount the emotion of youth, but to show what it meant to have once known the Macs. And Suzanne never lost sight that the beauty of Talloires and the lake were complicit in

this self-understanding. The beauty of the setting became a point of reference, a yardstick, by which all other beauty would be measured. The setting and the welcome had the possibility in her words, “to transform the life of a solitary person into le bonheur.”

There were two simple but very generous acts which Donald and Charlotte did that showed unimagined kindness to Suzanne, a woman who had known great loneliness in her life. One act belonged to Donald and Suzanne never hid her immense pride in recounting the moment that he changed the friendship with the Macs into a family relationship. It was at the time of Donald’s 80th birthday. Suzanne would mimic Donald MacJannet saying to her, “SUZZZ-ann, our family is far away and so is yours. You are often alone. From now on we will be a family and I will be your big brother.” Later, when Suzanne saw Charlotte she said, “You are now my sister. Donald has said so.” Charlotte was delighted with Donald’s gesture, and from then on the three would often refer to this special relationship.

The other act, so small and fleeting, belonged to Charlotte. Suzanne recounted that she was in her seventies



Le déjeuner est servi chez “international hotel” Lansé

when she heard the first word of endearment ever directed at her. In her family, only her brother was called by an affectionate word or a diminutive. One day, Charlotte casually said, “Oh Suzanne, chérie, viens dîner chez nous.” The use of the word chérie was bouldersant. Suzanne said she turned away to hide her emotion. But this moment of unimagined kindness remained vivid thirty years later.

Suzanne reluctantly allowed that perhaps the Macs might have a few shortcomings. Because she always spoke of them in glowing terms, it was intriguing to hear Charlotte and Donald fleshed out more fully from time to time. Suzanne said Donald had no concept of time. Just as the three of them were ready to get in the car at 12 rue Hotel de Ville for the return trip to Talloires, Donald would suddenly leave on a minor mission (to buy three tacks) promising to be back in two minutes. Three hours later he’d return without the tacks but with bits and pieces for six other projects he was working on. As Suzanne paced the floor, Charlotte said she was the only woman in the world who could put up with Donald’s impracticality.

In the last years, Suzanne reproved Charlotte for taking naps throughout

the day. Suzanne was quite decided that napping caused forgetfulness and she attributed Charlotte’s late in life inability to remember things to sleeping

too much. The truth was, Suzanne was angry that age, in its relentless, cruel process, was stealing away her best friend. As Charlotte lost the ability to speak and to remember words, Suzanne railed more loudly. Once in a great while, on a hot summer afternoon after a lovely lunch in the garden, Suzanne would, as she said, “rest her eyes” for twenty minutes. But these “rests” were not to be considered naps. After any such “criticism” of Donald and Charlotte, Suzanne quickly said with admiration in her

voice, “They were the most handsome, dynamic couple. They changed everyone they met.”

Suzanne remained humbled in front of what she called God’s sense of humor, this oddity that we learn lessons despite ourselves. Suzanne spent years of her life despising the Germans, who had twice occupied her country and killed so many childhood friends. Yet in the end, her dearest friend, Charlotte, was a German, albeit from the Rhineland. As Suzanne would say, “Who would believe that one could love one’s enemy?” Here was the ultimate lesson of the Macs. Charlotte and Donald both knew intimately the atrocities of war yet hoped that if people of different cultures could but get to know each other then maybe “wars would never happen again.”

CONCLUSION

It is inevitable in living ten decades that one feels the loneliness of outliving friends and family. As the French say, aging is a process of living in an ever encroaching darkness. Suzanne found solace in the quiet of her garden. She never seemed alone there. Looking in the direction of the Charbon, that she could no longer see, she waited for annual visits from members of the MacJannet Foundation: “le Prophet” (Amos Booth), “Sin-tia” (Cynthia Raymond), “le grand Vill-



The President du Conseil General at Suzanne’s 100th anniversary retrospective art show Annecy, 1998



The petit salon in the Lansé home with one of the four chests that Suzanne prized

Veyrier-du-lac, she was uncomplaining, in the proud way of her father. The long days were broken by the “fidèle Méina (Madame Couragoud)” who came three times a week to care for her. Suzanne’s mind and memories remained clear. She revisited in her memory each spot that she had painted, still knew the curves in the road and where the view was the best. She knew the weather and its affect on the mountains, saying, “Les Dents must be silver at this time of day.” Although Suzanne left Talloires, Talloires never left her.

At her death, the church bell tolled the “glas” – announcing to the village that one of their own had departed. When her casket left the church, the bells pealed with joy “to welcome the soul into the heaven.” Her body was buried in the family crypt. And in the paradise of Talloires she is again surrounded by her beloved mountains whose names she recited as a litany – La Tournette, Le Charbon, La Belle Etoile, La Sambuy, Les Dents de Lanfont.

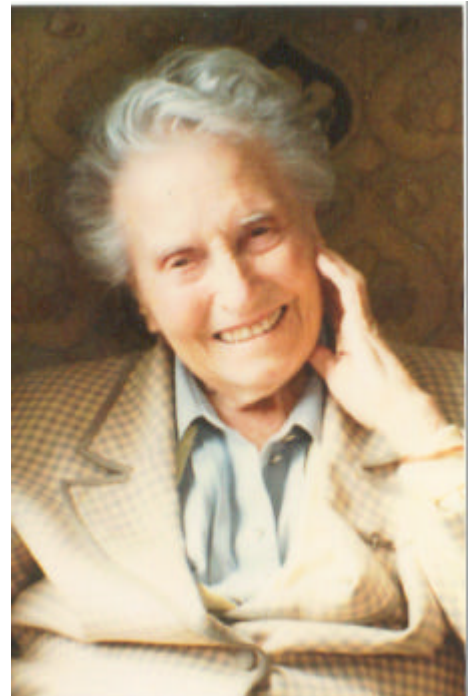
ard” (Willard Snyder), May-ree (Mary Harris), Sal-ee (Sally Pym) and so many others. She was equally surrounded by her beloved French friends who came each summer with great faithfulness. The lizards on the doorsteps also listened to Suzanne’s fiery complaints poured on the name Mitterand, the state of the world, and the French national debt. Suzanne’s radio kept her current with a world that seemed very remote from Talloires. Music, from tapes brought most often as gifts, filled the evening hours. The only void that really broke her heart was the absence of a cat, with its comforting “ronronnement,” nestled on her lap. That was “difficile a supporter.”

Then in 1999, lost sight, tight finances, family problems, and “le lourde poids des années” made keeping the house impossible. Her wish had always been to die in her bedroom looking out the window to the garden with the lake and mountains in the distance. It was not to be. In the diminished last two years at

This special edition of "Les Entretiens," the Newsletter of the MacJannet Foundation, is dedicated to the memory of Suzanne Lansé, a longtime friend of the MacJannets and of the MacJannet Foundation. Suzanne's death earlier this year represented a real loss for many members of the MacJannet Community, not just her family and fellow Talloiriennes. We celebrate in this newsletter her long life, and we honor her courage and accomplishments, most notably her prodigious output of high quality paintings of life and landscapes in the Lac d'Annecy region. A special room in the Tufts European Center at Talloires has been dedicated to her and is being used to display a number of her paintings which the Foundation has donated. The MacJannet Foundation is starting a special fund in honor of Suzanne Lansé, the proceeds of which will go to an endowment for the Charlotte MacJannet Artist-in-Residence program at Le Prieuré. We hope you will donate generously in Suzanne's memory in order to establish this program. Donations may be forwarded to:

Mr. George Halsey
Secretary/Executive Director
MacJannet Foundation
200 Linden Street, #200
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02482

We thank you for your consideration and generosity.
John H. King, *President*



Suzanne photograph – 1997
By TJ Snyder

MACJANNET FOUNDATION
NEWSLETTER

MacJannet Foundation, inc.
200 Linden Street # 200
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02482
Phone: 781 442-3154

A non-profit, charitable organization established in 1968 to promote international cooperation and understanding through the support of educational, cultural and scientific programs for the welfare of mankind

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www.macjannet.org



Above, Lansé home;
right, Lansé garden;
left, Suzanne's 98th
birthday party with
Charlotte MacJannet,
Germaine Peytavin,
Suzanne, and Mag Bon-
neanour at Le Cottage

