

PRESENTATION #4- OPENING

Good afternoon fellow club members and friends. Today we hope to enlighten you in regards to two aspects of Nelson's and Jeanette's lives.

The first is in regard to clarifying that the love that existed between these two people was real. To accomplish this we will report actual private and sensitive quotations from both parties and you can draw your own conclusions as to the validity of their love. Most are not from their early romance days when they might be expected, but after their love had been ongoing for years. This was a life-long love between these two passionate human beings. The tragedy of living in an era of Victorian attitudes took a toll. It is a shame that in this age where their private life would be accepted as perfectly normal, there are those who still insist on judging it by Victorian morals and refute their love with salacious terms as "adulterous"! That term disappeared from our vocabulary back in the sixties! Their love was so powerful that they had to live two lives, public and private. We are going to take just a brief look at their private life and take a modern and tolerant position of what they had to overcome but not give up the love they had for one another. Any woman today would feel as Jeanette did if they could just experience a little of the love she received. And no doubt there are modern men today that would be overwhelmed to be as confident as Nelson was in the love he received from his Jeanette.

We must bear in mind that these extremely sensitive comments were never, ever, intended to be read by anyone except these two people as an expression of their love for one another. It was with great personal misgivings that these few examples, from among many, are reported, but I am weary of the love or hate gossip that still prevails after all these years. And in particular, the repeated use of the term, even in the public press, of 'adulterous affair'. The mission of our organization should be to enlighten the public about what these two people brought to the American music loving public. They achieved this with their glorious voices on the concert platform or in their delightful screen appearances. Theirs is a legacy to be

proud of! Nelson was personally responsible for bringing great classical music to the American public with his concert appearances. When he made those wonderful films with Jeanette, he brought the public into the concert venues when heretofore they had never set foot in those hallowed halls! After Nelson had trained and groomed his beloved Jeanette to being a fine Concert Artist, the affect on the audiences multiplied. Nelson and Jeanette were responsible for the recognition on the Concert Stage of the American Artist!

The second subject we have addressed is in regard to whether or not any real tangible proof exists that verifies the existence of their love life has been found. After significant research it appears that none of the highly touted sources that verbally insisted that their information was valid, but they essentially had no proof to back what were only their collective opinions. I had the great fortune of obtaining an artifact that is undeniable proof and I will share it with you today. I hope this Presentation will answer some questions you may have had.

Madeline Bayless

*PRESENTATION #4
DOES TANGIBLE PROOF EXIST?*

Today's Presentation is one dear to my heart and I am eager to share it with this audience of admirers of Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. As you heard in the Opening, I have had a difficult time dealing with what appears to be a campaign of negative treatment of these two wonderful people and they do not deserve it! This is not an indication that they were "perfect" no human is perfect and we are all flawed. But demeaning the love between Nelson and Jeanette should cease!

IMPACT OF RELIGION

It is imperative that we understand the part religion played in the Nelson-Jeanette relationship. Nelson commented that the two most important factors in his life were his religion and his love for Jeanette. Nelson became very dissatisfied that his religion (Protestant/Episcopal) had failed to allow his love for his Jeanette to be accepted. In other words, he seemed to believe that even God had abandoned him. He began to search alternative religions in the hope that there was one that would grant him the peace he was seeking and would allow their love to be accepted not only by God, but by the world. After much searching, he finally found one that seemed right. Its basic concept required that he put their relationship on a strictly spiritual plane. That appealed to him. He explained this to Jeanette and convinced her that it would be the answer to their quest to have their love approved by God and the world. Jeanette understood this and if this brought peace to her Nels, she would follow his acceptance of this different religion.

This began a period when he kept their love on strictly a spiritual plane. Jeanette accepted this concept but with certain misgivings. Nels remained the loving man he always was, but their physical union was omitted. Nelson had grown up in his church and once even contemplated making the church his life's work, but music called! It was not too long before Jam convinced him that when he

was ready, the final step, their physical union, would be beautiful and life fulfilling. Naturally, Nels had told Jam everything about how Ann had humiliated him when she demanded that he fill his conjugal duties on her wedding night. Nels was so repulsed by this woman it was impossible for him to respond to her. From then on, Ann took every opportunity to excoriate Nelson about his lack of manhood! Jeanette realized how badly he had been wounded. She even told Isabel that she knew she could break her Nels down in five minutes, but what she wanted to do was to bring him sweet memories of their love, not the bitter ones he had with Ann. When the time was right, Jeanette took the initiative and restored his faith in his manhood and their love remained vital, beautiful, and satisfying to both of them. Few people have ever understood this very personal side of Nelson and that he and Jeanette were devout in regard to their love of God. It was not long before Jeanette brought Nelson back to his roots, the Episcopal Church. Religion remained an important part of their Love Bond from the very beginning of their love for one another and kept it sacred to them for all the days they were with us.

PROOF OF LOVE

After considerable thought, I might have a way to prove that their love was true and that both went to the Other Side, believing they would be in God's Heaven together.

I have selected a few examples, among many, of their personal comments to each other and some of the replies it prompted. These comments demonstrate how they felt about each other. So, by reporting on a few quotations and the response invoked, you will immediately grasp how they felt and have an understanding of these two very special lovers. They are very powerful and meaningful and should permit us to have a deeper understanding of the love they had for one another.

It is important that we also understand the rule Jeanette had for dealing with Nelson. She immediately picked up on his disdain for

being pursued. She adopted the position that he had to come to her when and if he wanted to be with her. She would not be the one to pursue him. As time went on, and only if he was ill or suffering from emotional distress, usually caused by Ann, only then would she go to him. This was her role throughout their lives together. When we review their lives, we can also see that it was Nels who consistently was the one to take the first steps to healing a breach in their relationship. We also know that the breach was usually caused by something he had done! But, this arrangement worked for them.

To start at the beginning we have selected a quotation from Nelson about when he first met Jeanette. We have all read Isabel's first Memoir, but these are Nelson's comments. These words were never intended to be read by any of us. They were personal words and only meant to be read or heard by these two people. This was not an easy decision for me to expose just a few of their private feelings but I hope it might eradicate some of the false information that seems to still prevail.

With this presentation, I wanted to allow their faithful public to understand that the love between Jeanette and Nelson was REAL! The quotes used are their exact words with nothing added or deleted. This particular presentation required over 60 pages of text and that it could not be presented in just an oral forum. The 60 pages is merely a sampling of all of the quotations that could have been cited.

Let us begin:

FIRST MEETING

Here is the description by Nelson of His First Meeting with Jeanette as told to his mother sometime after it had occurred. This is followed by his description of a much later trip to Tahoe, after their marriage. Nelson had made friends with the Chief Ranger of Tahoe and he allowed Nelson to use the Lookout Cabin. Although it was extremely isolated, the view of the Lake and surrounding area was absolutely spectacular!

By Isabel:

“Last night after Nelson took Jeanette back to Gables and returned here (Mists), he could talk of nothing else. How she was all there was in life- the sunshine, the meaning – the other part of him without which he was desolate.

Nels:

He said “I think so much of the night I first met her – standing on the steps – so breathtakingly lovely – her gown was so beautiful and she was so different from all the other painted, over dressed creatures I had been meeting at every turn. This was how a well bred girl should look. I could think of only two words “elegant simplicity” and then, smiling tenderly, he said- “She was such a little icicle to me that night, men were too unimportant in her life and yet could I ever forget the warmth that suddenly covered her face as I took her little hand to say goodnight. I know now that at that moment I set to flame ever so slightly the fire in her being and brought faintly to life the gentle sweetness that now adores her body in all its glory. No man had found that inner fire and made that beautiful face come to life – give it the softness of an Angels breast – put dreams into those Larkspur eyes with overtones of green in their depths. Yes! This much I have given her but it is so little in return for all her gifts to me. My poor Darling has had so little of her “Sweetheart’s love.” And then he talked of her voice – the beauty and sweetness of it. He said “Her voice is everything to me – a million stars and running brooks whose waters kiss the Lilies as they pass. The high mountains dotted with Pines and the soft still shade where I can pray. The laughing winds, and often the moon catching the golden notes and sending them on silvery clouds – making all of me ablaze with joy, and yet it is the hymns, the lovely simple hymns that her voice can turn most into a world of eternal bliss. I think the Angels must stop and bow to her grace as truth given word is turned into such beauty and laid in humble reverence by this girl, before the Great White Throne.

To God she has brought me. And then in the garden I see the Lavenders, the Jasmine, the Roses, the white Honeysuckle, the Lilies, and through fragment of the imagination I see the Angels coming to touch the brow of this singer as they place their kiss upon her lips. In her presence a heavenly content comes to me. The blood runs cool in my veins and strangely all the future is clear before me. A man has found his soul.”

Nels Re Tahoe Trip:

“I am going to take her to the high mountains for as much time as I can spare. It is a beautiful wilderness above Tahoe and we will be camping in a Lookout cabin – really roughing it. But it is something I have wanted to do for her for a long time. She needs it so much. I don’t know how great will grow the longing to renew the dream of our lives or if I shall hold her again in my arms and awaken her soul with a kiss of love. But if so, the Morning Star shall rule the golden hours and the Evening Star shine through the night upon our sweet and wondrous joy – for Jam and I are one, and forever it can be no other way”.

His Mother asked him if she had now lost all her fear of losing him and Nels said:

NELS:

“Oh, Yes! She most certainly has. There is such a bond now between us that she knows and understands that only she is the heart of me though we were separated by all the worlds. She knows too, as I do, that it no longer matters that we cannot go to our love through any Church. We must suffer this through alone and only the two of us matter in our way of life. She knows that perhaps always our hopes must go unfilled – that we must shed many unavailing tears – but she knows too that the Cross is at the end and God awaits there. It is our great belief in the Holy Word that will keep us on the hill of fragrant flowers – gold and green branches, and I know that for all it’s odd vicissitudes, this love of

ours will lead us into our true destiny because it will grow more and more divine and thus more beautiful – more tender, as the years pass on. We can say goodbye to the glamour of the world much more easily than if we had been wed in any church.”

Later Nels said:

“Sometimes it is best for us not to see each other- you see, this bond is so delicate, so fragile, so very beautiful, that even the slightest interference from the world is a hurt that is not quickly or easily healed. My poor little darling, how wonderful she is. Did you know that I despise the man in me? It is the man who is so weak and full of human frailties and I shall never be worthy of that girl. But I will see her soon and start to bring back to her the sweet poignancy of our love – the God given blessing of our religion and she will gradually see and understand why I had to hurt her - poor little thing. She is sometimes overwhelmed by the whole thing and right now she is actually even just a little bit afraid of me again. But it will be all the more wonderful to bring her a beautiful and satisfying contentment again, but it will not be easy.”

A MISCARRIAGE

The next quote concerns a miscarriage Jam had. Nels had written a short but concise entry in his Diary for Jeanette to read. This was written immediately after her attempt to give Nels the baby they both longed for. I hope the listener /reader recognizes what Jam commented on so many times; the extraordinary “Tenderness” Nels always had for her. This is his exact entry in his diary:

Nels:

“How shall I tell you what these terrible yet beautiful days have meant to me my darling, except to remind you once again that marriage – as the shining and perfect thing we know it to be – is the greatest of all God’s sacraments, perhaps the most wonderful though of all, is its secret and mysterious promise of birth. I have so long been afraid that you could never be content unless a child could come from this great rapture – but my darling, now you must face the fact that this is not for us, isn’t to be. I have not really wanted this for many years. I am content with you alone and this comes from the knowledge that I am surrounded by my wife’s love. Can’t your husband’s love do as much for you? I have only to look in my mind’s eye and remember my wife on her wedding night and all other nights we have spent thus. She is so femininely lovely, so utterly desirable with her sweet shyness yet uncontrollable passion in my arms. Oh my darling, have you not counted this enough in the past? Can you not do so now when you must? I am very sure you can if you try. Believe me now there will be a strange sweet poignancy of a newly awakened love – take my words for it. We shall be closer than ever and without a beautiful baby. Oh yes darling! I know how deep the disappointment is for you and only a great woman could feel as you do. But, I love you so much, let my love heal the hurt and when you come to me again, be ready for it. I shall always be able to fill your whole being with rapture as we go forward in our life and love. Now darling, please try to understand why we are so lucky beyond most people. Our Spirits met first and the ancient wine kindles a fire that can never die. When once that wine is tasted the soul cannot exist without it and only when this is so long lasting. When we first met it was a love of the spirit only but darling, the physical has come in time to give us also a perfect relationship between a man and a woman.”

JAM'S LETTER TO ISABEL

Here is a beautiful excerpt that Jenny wrote to Nelson's mother that captures her feelings about this same episode in their lives.

JAM:

"Oh Mommie, how did you ever manage to give me such a lover – such a husband? These have been days of pain for me – yes, but the close companionship, the lovely inarticulate hours when his sweet silence alone is a song of love – sweeter than all else. No girl was ever so tenderly loved. I thought I knew every phase of his love – but never has he been like this. Now I know the gentle healing power of that love, know what it is to have him sing me to sleep – know what it is to have my tears kissed away. Oh he has done that before, yes, but never as now – like a mother he has tried to smooth the sorrow away.

Did you ever read Longfellow's poem, "Footsteps of the Angels"? He recited every verse to me last night sitting by my bed, and it was indeed the Footsteps of the Angels to my soul.

How I loved him the day he gave me my first food – a spoonful at a time – the glass of wine held to my lips – the smile – and Mommie the great tears were rolling down my cheeks because his baby was gone from me – and he wiped away each tear so tenderly but I knew he meant it when he said I must eat and drink. I think the wound is healing now for his dear sake. This morning he brought me a white daffodil – it smelled so grand – and we still have our holly and Christmas tree with us. Nels loved Christmas so much this year – even the party at Twin gables - he loved the gown I wore that evening – his gift to me this year – and his pink rose buds I wore at my waistline. Then I didn't know my baby would leave me so soon and I was so happy. I was going on tour, which I planned would be my last – my songs had all been planned by Nels – all rehearsed with him. Now my dream was over –over for all time – I know now that I can never have my baby- but I will have my darling boy, and a wise woman doesn't sit and wail. Soon

he will have his tour, and I must be happy again for him. My darling is going to sing this year Mommie – he is going to be a concert artist again – and a great one – I know it and I shall make him do it. We might even make a tour together soon, we talked about it last night.”

ISABEL:

All at once I (Isabel) saw a light – Nels is doing this to give her the assurance of a future with him – no matter what sort of a future- he is clearing her mind so that it will be with him. I wonder if Jam even knows how utterly his life is hers? He is bound forever – and believe me, I know what she means when she talks about his devotion to her. I saw the tenderness he gave her those first days – the first time he carried her out to the living room was a sight to remember. Like a small baby he held her on his lap – tucked in his arms before the fireplace. Mary coming in with our supper tried not to notice – she kept her eyes averted – but I knew she was surprised for never before has she seen Nels have Jam in quite such a spot. But he was utterly unconcerned, and I am sure that he would not have given up his darling at that minute if all of Los Angeles had walked in.

Those very first days I saw him feed her so gently, so carefully – allowing her to sit up for only few minutes at a time before taking her back to bed – never to leave her until morning. Once he came out to me as I was reading and said “Darling, you aren’t mad at me or anything if I seem to have forgotten that you are not well too – Mommie, I haven’t forgotten – only Jam tears my heart out so”. He was so cute saying this, and he said that Jam felt badly about it too because she wanted to be doing things for me this visit. My two poor babies – I sure could not do without them ever. After the first week he insisted she go up to his room where he could look after her better and where she wanted to be. I wanted to spend the nights with her – but Nels informed me that he was all Jam needed. I said I thought it might be better if she had a woman around but he gave me the cutest smile and said:

NELS:

"I have looked after you all my life when you were ill my Mommie, so now I guess I can do the same for my Sweetheart – and I am going to. Besides, I read to her when she is restless."

ISABEL:

Well, I only laughed and said nothing. After all I know he is right, she knows only happiness with him – and he is what it will take to bring the color back to her face and the strength back to her heart beats. He told me the other day that for awhile there he thought Jam would not snap out of it – she was so disappointed.

NELS:

"I had to talk very fast and let her know what would happen to me he said "Never have I seen so many tears – such a pitiful sight, I knew I had a job to do and suddenly I felt very strong – I had to give her enough love and fidelity to bring her out of this and I guess I did it. It was one of those hours – those supreme hours when love can conquer every other emotion. Here she had almost died for my sake and in her helplessness I found my great strength – what a joy when she put her weak little hand to my face and just said "I love thee" – and from that minute she tried to get well, and now I have my little girl safe again.

How can I ever repay her devotion? Yesterday I tried to talk of our future to give her assurance and she was so darling - she said "Just always love me and want me – my whole life is yours – I know there are women who prefer secrecy to honesty – but between you and me darling, there just can't be anything but honesty – and so I just say, want me always." "Mommie those were life giving words to me – this is the girl who can't ever go away from me – didn't I try to send her away? And look what happened – she got sick – my poor little darling – and I made myself sicker yet."

A LITTLE LATER

ISABEL:

I went to Jam before going to bed. Nelson had her tucked in and I must say she looked much better. Nelson had cocoa for both of us – and as I watched her sip her drink I realized that her health is going to need careful watching but her mind will need ever more careful care. She said she wanted to go on with the tour because in music she will lose herself for a little while and because Nels selected all her songs himself she loves them and she will be able to keep him close to her.

When I left them she kissed me – the dear little thing – such a sweetness she has now. When she is alone with us like this, love makes her exquisite beauty so tender, in fact the deep bond between them now makes them both conscious of sweet words and sweeter kisses. There are marks of pain still on her face from the loss of this baby- marks that are from the soul – but I'll swear to you that there is a loveliness far greater than ever since this pain – a sort of transfiguring of the soul. It has been a love experience from a divine source.

This reminds me of a few nights ago - Nelson was talking to Jam to comfort her and he said-

NELS:

“Darling to hope is to be alive – to despair is to believe there is no light – but you and I know that God is love as surely as we know that day follows night. So let us think like this “I will lift mine eyes unto the hills – from whence cometh my help”. Not for nothing has God suffered you to be in pain and taken from you the tiny rose bud of his heaven - but rather you have been shown the greatness of giving into heaven’s keeping our own little child – and we are now blessed by the greatest bond that God could give to us - the bond of parenthood – and the loss of that parenthood. So darling, you see now you are so very close to me” and here he

was the cutest thing – he cuddled his head in her shoulder and said”:

“Can’t I be enough for you to take care of? I still need my hand held – and I need my socks bought for me”. Even Jam laughed and said:

JAM:

“Yes, I bet you do need some shopping done since your Mommie hasn’t been able” and she held him more tightly in her arms.”

THE PARTING

The year 1946 took a dreadful toll on both Nelson and Jeanette. It began with Nelson contracting pneumonia and he came very close to dying but the newly discovered Penicillin saved him. Jam was overwrought with worry all during this episode. Only when he could return to Mists with her did he really regain his health.

This was the beginning with what was the result that their doctor, who looked after both of them, decided that Jeanette needed to separate from Nelson because of the strain the relationship put on her health.

Nelson nearly went crazy and was sending her records like “The Jasmine Door”. When they went on that weekend he found out that Jam had been holding out on him about the talk their Doctor had with her in England when Nelson sent him to her to look after her after still another miscarriage immediately after she arrived in London. Nelson had tried in vain to discourage her from making this tour because he knew she was not well but she had signed the contract and felt obligated to meet her commitment.

When the doctor got to England, he told Jam that she must break with Nels for the sake of her health. That it would simply not stand up under the strain of this sort of half marriage. That is when Jam broke down and told Nels she would not make the

break herself. She would rather stick a knife in her heart than tell him she would leave him but she knew it was best and she would go if he cut the tie himself and sent her away.

Nelson broke their tie on Christmas Night, 1946. It seemed it was the best thing he could do as he saw that only if Ann was to make a complete recovery and he was set free as the only hope they had left. He knew Ann had to help herself and nobody could do it for her. Jam had learned a lot about Ann in her few visits that Nelson could not see. Jam said Ann does not show how "off the beam" she is until after you are with her for a while. Her main trouble is fear of facing life alone. Ann has lost all confidence in herself and must keep somebody to lean on. Ann told Jam that she, (Jam) has his love and all of him otherwise, so she (Jam) should not mind if she keeps his protection. Jam says she acts like a small child who has not yet reached the age of reason. She believes Ann is in a rut which revolves around herself.

She said Nelson has been through real hell-fire this fall but there was nothing wrong at all between Jam and him after the first little spat about Massey. That was over in a hurry. Nelson did notice that Jam was not herself and he did not understand what was wrong. Jam insisted she understood about the film, and didn't mind Massey, and had forgiven him completely. But Jam avoided Nelson because neither could bear to see the other and Nelson was fighting a terrible battle with himself the whole of December and not talking to anybody. Jam got sick waiting to see what Nels would do.

It was thought that the reason she was sick was that the doctor told Jam he had laid the law down to Nels and she was pitying Nels so. Gene got in on this and he and Nels and the doctor decided between them that the break must be made. Meanwhile Nels continued his spiritual pursuit into his religion while Jam was talking to Isabel. His mother was so hurt to see Nels with Ann when she felt he should be with Jam. Jam just smiled the cutest little smile and said "Why darling, don't you know I would much rather have him where I know I have no competition?"

Meanwhile, Jam stayed with Isabel at Isabel's home in Palm Springs and was receiving good care. Jeanette was to start a new film in 2 weeks if she is well. Gene will be away in the east and Nelson is upset because he has to go east and Jam will not have Gene's protection. Nels had counted on Jam going east also. Jam wanted to be close to "Mists" and she will be able to do that while she works.

It was so like Nelson to select the day after the religious holiday, Christmas, to write his "Parting" letter to Jeanette. Here is his letter in its entirety:

"My Own –

Last night – our dearest , tenderest memory – hug it close to your heart. I have held you in my arms on many of these nights, my wife. My entire reason for living is our love. I have found the true fountain of life. When we are together we are equal and serene – asking no more than each can give with joy – and so willingly, because we never can give less than our all to each other. We are whole – in two parts. Some day these two halves will come together in either an earthly or heavenly union. This I know and this you must believe.

When you sent me "Non Mi Dir" and I heard your sweet angel voice I first began to know that I must send you from me. Perhaps without Doctor's help I might not have had the strength. How true those words . I must not take my darling wife again while her tears are "freshly flowing". I must not again persuade her until forever her "grief" can be "assuaged". But I can now say as she sings it to me that I know "kind heaven will smile on us someday and that I shall forever "constant be" to my "beloved one". Now I only "torture" my "treasure" with "sorrows that grieve her" and in that golden future God will let us duet Zerlina's love song and we shall know that "peace and joy shall bless us – no frowns shall ere distress us – united all our days".*

Now my hearts' love, it is parting time. My darling I must say this once more, "I love you. The sweet little girl – the vital passionate woman – the beautiful nights – the dear familiarity of the sweet long nights. A glorious love story: I shall always remember last night - your quiet hand – fingers tipped as a rose – rested on my arm. And as I watched your tears - sacred tears and my arms held you, the hush of heaven came to me. Your understanding words – I hear them yet."

JAM;

"I can hear it Nels – I will help you and not do anything to make you unhappy. Your love has a healing quality in its constant protection for me. It quiets the tumult in my soul. I know I have to learn not to want so much the part of you that can turn my strength to weakness – I have always been so selfish about you!!" I caught your smile then and you said "Yes, even many years ago when I first knew you I could never tolerate another woman save your mother near you. And if I felt a woman might hurt you in any moral way I promptly took steps to ease them out. So now you know how selfish I am about you"

Nels:

"Dear little girl – thank God for that – the woman does not live that can hurt me in any moral way and that I think you now know. Our marriage has been so perfect – but it cannot be because you see darling, without a day by day close companionship and a mutual binding of interests, a love marriage becomes a tortured thing. When the time is right God will let us have our love complete for we are touched by the timeless ages and there can be no parting – That is why our expressions have always been found in singing - Loving the trees and flowers – loving most of all the star dust that falls like gossamer from our fingers and this is why, my darling, you must try to follow me as we walk the straight path to good fortune.

This home is yours always. I promise not to come here when you are here. You have just told me that this room of mine will be a

heaven of memories and quiet prayer for you. I want you to use it when you are here for your sleeping hours and think of the boy who became the love of your life and then could not keep that love and remember, that love is not love until it has paid the price which you must now try to help me do.

Not for a moment shall I try to forget you. Every one of your gifts will be with me where ever I go, and in my heart I wear always the image of the golden girl whom the Angels let me have for a brief time that I might be brought back to prayer and the true meaning of God. I will never go astray, believe me. Rather your soul can find me kneeling some where in simple prayer before him who I know can alone give us the peace we want.”

**The aria “Non Mi Dir” (Tell Me Not) is sung by Donna Anna in the third and concluding Act of Mozart’s masterpiece, “Don Giovanni”.*

The role of Donna Anna is usually sung by a Lyrico Spinto” or Dramatic/lyric soprano rather than the heavier voiced dramatic soprano. The 1940 English lyric translation of the lyric matches with Nelson’s use of the lyric in his letter.

JEANETTE’S RESPONSE TO “THE PARTING”

Jeanette wrote this letter to Nelson the following day after receiving Nelson’s letter of the need to Part.

“My dearest –

My mind is wandering today as I sit here in my own lovely room. Outside the wind is talking to the birds and the old pine tree here by my window is warm and friendly. I am alone save for memories. Sometime I think they are your memories instead of mine. They are such beautiful ones – as old as these trees – as tireless as the clouds floating in the heavens. Your

lovely soul – so much a part of my own – and the beautiful story you tell me about all this, my darling. No woman has ever known such beauty in the delicate tenderness of a man's love given complete.

No, I know you did not want last night to be the night of magic and wonder it became for us. I can never forget you as you sat at my feet before the fire with your head in my lap like the darling little boy you sometimes are, and then with your hand, kind but firm holding mine, you told me you must bring about a parting. But with glorious beauty you talked to me – your eyes looking into mine were deep wells of mystery – bathed in heaven's own blue and filled with such goodness. The window of your soul – how I love them. And from them I can draw strange strength.

That hour was the most beautiful of my life – except the one which came later – kissing me goodnight for the last time you were nervous and anxious about me. Knowing you must let me go to my room alone – yet worried about my reaction to all this.

When I reached my room I quickly closed the door. I sat on the window seat and looked at the dark heavens. No moon this late Christmas night. Long ago it had gone and with it a girl's dreams. At last, safe in my bed, I gave up to the grief that I would not let you see. It had been so long since I had been held in your arms in the sweet night. Many months since I had tasted the priceless wine held to my lips by your own gentle hand. Now I knew I was giving this up forever - How could I ever go on? I looked around my room lovingly – the room you have made a fairy bower for me and I knew that my heart would forever live in this abode. For what seemed hours I tried to stifle the ache in my tortured heart and was only half asleep when I heard you come softly into the room - tenderly touch my cheek to see if there were tears. O Yes! There were tears still freshly flowing. Then I felt myself being gently lifted and held close to you and dimly I realized that I was being carried upstairs. I was trembling in every nerve, icy cold – almost hysterical, as you sat down with me in the big chair by the window and drew a white blanket close about me. To the last day

of my life I will remember your tender care this night. Not a word passed between us for there was no need of any. With your kiss then the flood gates were opened and I was sobbing wildly in your arms. While you held me close to you, – so close I could scarcely breathe. When the storm was over – still silently you washed my face, combed my hair, forced me to drink hot cocoa and eat the food I had refused earlier in the day. All so dearly, so sweetly, that it was all more priceless than all the jewels in the world to a weary sick girl. And at last, how sweet your comforting hands as they held my face. How dear your whispered words “Now my poor little sweetheart – you will stay here with me for the rest of this night. It was cruel of me to let you go in the first place.”

“And all the warm joy of heaven flooded my being and I hope you will always remember the girl of this night – no longer afraid to sleep once more in your arms, lost in the wonder of the reverence you give her at these times – thrilled at your touch as soft as a whispering breeze and yet making of the whole world a heaven of beauty and security. And now I will tell you a secret - the most priceless part of your love for me is the beautiful, tender wooing that last night, as never before, came only from the soul – a spiritual bond truly linked with the divine as I put aside all restrictions and accepted your warm kisses, you said “You see darling, true mates are born in the heavenly spheres and are indeed blessed if they so much as are allowed to come together in this world. True love never dies – in the world it may seem to wear thin – to be beaten but always it lives – greater than all else – and thus it becomes a miracle that can conquer death and live again in continual rebirth. For us this is ever so and the beautiful expression we have achieved of nature’s delicate symphony must be kept in perfect tune – always our own exquisite melody of love.”

“Yes! My darling, it is ever true and I know it well – we are heirs to the grace of God – you explained so many things to me last night and I know too that they are true – for your love awakened my sleeping soul and now life will forever be deathless and exalted. I know too that it is love that is strong enough to go unspoken – that should need no physical touch. So when I long for

your arms around me – need your kisses – I shall try to remember that we must suffer the great loneliness of time and that now I must specially dedicate myself to this mission. But please darling, try not to bury yourself so completely in this task that you no longer need me or love me.

I shall spend as much time as possible at Mists and I want you to go there too. Your Mommie will always know when I am to be there – your room will be kept locked except when you are there and no other hand but my own shall care for it, and flowers shall bloom there at all times, ready for you.”

It appears that as Nelson and Jeanette moved into 1947 that Nelson’s good intentions began to wilt in the face of the death of Jeanette’s mother and professional opportunities. And Jeanette took steps to try and convince Nelson to “Parting over time.” Jeanette’s attachment to Mists” was extremely strong and Nelson, himself, made the following comment to Isabel about it.

Nels:

“I guess no two people have a right, in this world, to the kind of happiness Jenny and I have known together. I wanted a home so much and she understands this aloneness in me, and when I have had her with me at “Mists”, she constantly does little things to make me feel complete – happy and warm inside. Like leaving her things around in my room – a lovely negligee in my closet – a flower on my desk. She sees to it that her shining spirit is everywhere. Is it any wonder that she is my world? The closeness of these things – they are very sweet.” But it was when she got Nelson back to Twin Gables when she asked for him at Anna’s death and he came immediately to be with her and she made the most of it as her mother’s death destroyed his well laid plans.

Jeanette took ill just before she was to leave for Detroit to join Gene at the opening of a play. She was staying with Isabel. Nelson came home unexpectedly. He found Isabel fixing a tray in the kitchen and demanded to know who it was for and before she

had time to answer, she said he suddenly gave her one frightened look – said “Jam” and rushed up the steps, three at a time, before she could do a thing to stop him. These were her own words:

Isabel:

“That wasn’t the worst of it. When I took the tray up a few minutes later there the big thing was, stretched out on the bed and Jam had him in her arms and she was trying to comfort him! It ended up with the three of us having dinner together in her room. I must say, this is one occasion when it didn’t take him long to forget how “spiritual” he is.” As they slowly came together again with Isabel acting as chaperone at night, but they proceeded to go some place else during the day!

MISTS EPISODE

“Gene was gone for four weeks. Jam, Mommie and her dearest friend were at “Mists” almost the entire time. Her friend said that the first two weeks, Nelson stayed away but the last two he just couldn’t take it any longer and was up there most of the nights with them. During the day he was in Hollywood. Every night when he would come home, Jam met him at the door and after his kiss would say “we missed you darling, we have dinner ready.” Exactly as though they were married and before many days Nelson was beginning to shine all over like a “head light” he was so happy. Seems Gene was off on a fishing trip with some men the second two weeks. Jam went back to Gables to help Gene get off on that (trip), and Nelson picked her up and brought her back to Mists that evening, Next morning Jam told Mommie on the way up he suddenly stopped the car – turned around and took her in his arms and said “I just want to kiss you, Mrs. E”. When she returned his kiss he said “Thank you darling” and started the car again and drove on. She told Mommie it was the very first

romance that had been between them in many weeks. But that night Nelson was so nervous and restless he couldn't sleep and Jam was so sensitive to all this that she couldn't stand it and went up to his room to see about him. She found him on his balcony with his head in his hands and here are Mommies own words – they are so beautiful.

ISABEL:

“When my little girl came into the kitchen for coffee that morning I noted the sad beauty in her eyes and taking her face in my hands, I said “Darling – you won't think I am just a curious old woman if I ask you a question will you?” Said Jam “Of course not, you can never be anything but our own “Mommie”, what is it?”

I said “You look like a Madonna this morning – your lips are trembling and yet your step is light and gay. Is there anything you need to tell your Mommie about?” With her arms around me, she said:

JAM:

“Oh darling, you are so precious. What would I ever do without you? Yes, I do want to talk to you. I didn't stay in my own room last night, Nels needed me. I love the child in him so and I simply answered his call. I found him on his balcony – head in hands. When he heard me, he jumped up and put me in his chair, - knelt at my feet, and buried his face on my breast. A dear little boy as I had never seen that boy before. Then his head was in the crook of my shoulder, his lips on mine – not a man's kiss – just a kiss of simple gratitude. Oh Mommie! I am so afraid for us. I can only pray for the strength to go on. So much, the pain is like a knife in my heart, and then comes a night like this and I am glad for the pain. It has been so long since he has turned to me for even a little boy's comfort. And last night as he held me in his arms and thanked me for the joy I had brought him, I almost didn't pass the

test. It was so hard to keep my emotions buried. But after a while, when he had me wrapped in a blanket, a scarf around my head, we sat and talked for hours. Then I seemed to become unconscious of all time. I was near him – his hand in mine – and as the soft summer moonlight cast its shadows around us it was as though the world had ceased to be and I felt only the peace of heaven. I only knew that in the wee small hours he tucked me tenderly into his big bed and then he went to sleep on the couch. He was still sleeping when I drew the shades and left him this morning.

ISABEL:

Now as I write this, several days later, they are walking through the evening dews, they were up at dawn, had a row on the lake, and they are forever singing. Jam has not again gone near his room, and though he is not completely happy except when he is with her, yet I think he is less nervous and restless than he was. There is an almost fierce loyalty between them, and a pathetic dependence on each other. Something impossible to describe except to say they are lost, each without the other, yet together they radiate fulfillment – completion. They seem never to have one difference of opinion as to what they want to do and the hours are never long enough. In the evenings Jam plays the organ and sings for us with Nelson usually standing behind her – gently touching her hair and finally joining her in song.

September 25, 1947 was the final summer program of Nelson's Kraft Music Hall for that year. His final song that evening was a magnificent rendition of "Heart of My Heart". Songs he sang himself on those thirteen programs were always directed to the woman he loved – Jeanette.

Jam's absorbing interest now was getting Nelson back on the concert stage where he belonged! She did and he had agreed before the "Parting" to go on tour in 1947 but that all fell through when her mother died. She did get him back on his tour in 1948.

It was a wonderful success and he continued to tour until he closed his career as a Concert Recitalist in 1952.

Pressure continued on both Nelson and Jeanette as to the wisdom of "The Parting". He decided to take Jam on a trip that he recorded for her in his diary. Nels told about the trip up to Tahoe. It was to a Rangers cabin, very rustic but modern enough to be comfortable. Nels said it belonged to the Captain of the Rangers and it was loaned to him for a few days. The trip was beautifully described – "getting colder and colder by the hour, as the car climbed higher into the mountains. Great Pines lined the road on either side – huge temples of greenness". They stopped to pick wild flowers and blueberries and Jam kept some of the flowers to press. He described the rocking chair in the cabin as so huge that Jam looked lost in it's depths – "Like a little girl just home from school."

NELS:

Then he said "I shall never forget when I joined you in that huge chair – the joyful way you tucked yourself into my arms and putting that little face close to mine, whispered "Thank you for loving me above all other women. Now I want to be kissed, and kissed, and kissed." Forgive me darling if I smile as I recall the girl I knew only a few short years ago – a granite counterpart of her laughing self this night. Regardless of what the future holds, no power on earth will keep me from you.

I wish I could put down every precious moment of this trip for you to remember always, my darling. Do you recall how you felt when I asked you to come with me? I saw first surprise then doubt – fear of the wisdom of this trip - and then a lovely smile crossed your face as I held you close and begged you not to refuse. No darling! I was not being weak – I have grown strong again. I know the pain will come again but it will be beautiful, glorious pain.

God does not intend us to shut ourselves up in a cloister as I planned a few months ago. We had a bad time of it for a while,

didn't we darling? All due to my stubbornness. But I thought I was right. Ever since I was a little boy and used to sit in Grandma's darling old kitchen and dream my boyhood dreams, I have been trying to find myself. Now I know that all the years of sorrow and suffering have been only as God intended so that we might come to understand fully the grace and beauty of his given love. We two were intended for each other, and now I can put aside the rebellion of the spirit against the needs of the flesh, for I know that there is no rebellion. That is for those whose love is of the flesh. All our love was born through a spirit and then made mortal and I know now that if I live at all, it must be in you and through you, the object of my world. Only in you can I find the deepest recesses of my soul.

Once a long time ago, you said to me "Nels, our love could be so rich. I think I understand this better than you do. It could be the infinity of the spaces." And I wondered how you could say such things for you see, darling, I didn't know of your virginity then and I could not understand how you could honestly feel that way when you had given yourself to another man. I didn't know my little girl very well, did I? There are no words to tell you of the joy that possessed me when I knew you had been true to your love for me. My dear – my own – loving you is the joy of a cool refreshing river – like living in a world of dancing stars. I know this – that I never knew you until the secrets of your heart had been revealed – until I understood your love life.

It stirred my soul to the very depth when our love had been consummated in marriage. My darling, how shall I explain the pure and the holy spirit that possesses me when I hold your body, more precious than any priceless jewel. There is only one way to explain this rapture, this ecstasy, this joyous mystery that surrounds our physical love. We are mates and this love will live forever in the misty ages from whence it came. This is why it is oh so deeply spiritual, and why only you and I can give to each other this love – this religion.

Our first meal was very “Rose Marie” like – beans fixed up with your special recipe and thick slices of ham. And afterwards when I wrapped a coat around you, and we walked out into the lovely night, it was such a beautiful sweetness. The pines were washed in moonlight, and I felt so peaceful – so near to heaven- for now I can look to a future again. I shall always see you as you lifted your eyes to heaven with your lips gently singing”–

JAM:

“Oh Nels! It is heaven itself this lovely night. We only need to stay close to God and he will keep us safe and teach us to obey his will – make our love a living vital thing, blessed on the altar of his holy grace.”

NELS:

Oh! My darling, I bow before you and hold you close. I turn to see the misty moon – the great stars glisten and shimmering drops of dew hang motionless on the huge out stretched arms of the pines. Once more I feel my hidden dreams come to life. What a strange and joyous feeling as I hold you under the stars for I know this is everlasting beauty and that God has blessed it as a fulfillment of his greatest commandment.”

LYRIC

*NON MI DIR
(Tell Me Not)*

*Donna Anna’s Aria
From Act II of
“Don Giovanni”*

*Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte*

*Tell me not my hearts de-vo-tion,
like the ocean, could ebb and flow,
firm, un-fleet-ing, remains its beat-ing,
faith-ful ev-er could'st thou know,
faith-ful still and ev-er so!*

*Calm, ah calm that air of sadness!
with thy griev-ing dies my glad-ness,
with thy griev-ing dies my glad-ness,
yes, dies my glad-ness!*

*Tell me not my heart's de-vo-tion,
like the ocean, could ebb and flow:
calm, ah, calm then, that look of sad-ness,
with thy tears must die my glad-ness,
must die, my glad-ness!*

*Hap-ly, hap-ly these brief clouds of sor-row but con-ceal,
but con-ceal a sum-mer day,
per-chance for us a kind-er mor-row
may a-rise with gold-en ray!
may a-rise with gold-en, gold-en ray,
light-ing up our fu-ture way,*

*Hap-ly, hap-ly these brief clouds of sor-row
but con-ceal a sum-mer day,
hope may rise with gold-en ray
with gold-en, gold-en ray!*

(Current translation used by Nelson.)

TOUR EPISODE

Jam and Isabel were staying at Mists together while Nelson was on his 1949 Tour. They had gone through an unpleasant time after Jam had worked very hard and finally convinced Producer Joe Pasternak, to make a film with the two of them. They had no more than started to make tests when Ann burst in on the set and made a horrible scene. Pasternak was furious and accused Nelson of not controlling this woman whom he was told was Nelson's wife. It was most unpleasant for everybody but Ann who, no doubt, reveled in what she had done. But for Nelson, that was it. He gave notice to Pasternak that he would not make the film and he did not. After all of Jam's hard work to get them back on the screen, it went for naught. She was broken hearted. Jam was living at Mists alone except when Isabel stayed with her. This particular episode occurred when the two of them were at Mists together. Nelson was to sing Carnegie Hall that night which was April 17, 1949.

Jam and Isabel had just finished eating their dinner before the fireplace when the telephone rang. Jam looked at her watch, it was 5:30 PM, (8:30 EST) and said:

JAM:

"It's Concert time" and picked up the phone. Ma wanted to leave but Jam pulled her down beside her to listen to Nels. At first she couldn't understand him except she said she knew he was just about keeping his voice steady and that was all.

Jam said just "Yes, Darling" as Nels went on talking. Ma said Jam's hand was trembling so she could hardly hold the receiver and the tears were falling over her face. Soon Ma heard Nels say:

"So darling, please come to me tonight. There is a full house out there and how can I ever sing without you? Something is going out of me and I can only get it back if I know you are not angry with me. Please come to me."

JAM:

Jam, wiping the tears with her hankie said:

“I need you here with me. Just sing for me tonight. I will follow every song and I will meet you in our own lovely room upstairs in a few minutes.”

Ma said she did just that and didn't come down till the “Concert” was over. Ma also said that Jam called him as soon as she knew he would be at the hotel and he said :

“Everything went fine and God keep you, my darling - Thank You.”

PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK VISIT

A description of the place Nelson took Jeanette for a weekend in February is as follows:

Nels had made reservations at a lovely old Colonial Inn in the famous and historical town of Plattsburgh. Their room had a huge old Colonial bedroom with a white canopied bed. It was all done in 17th century Colonial American furniture. It had a fireplace with huge logs burning; crystal candlesticks on a gate-leg table where all their meals were served; a garden outside still had spots of snow but a beautiful mountain scene in the distance. Nelson had purple and white Violets made up as a centerpiece for the table. While they were out for a walk at night he had a huge bowl of purple and white Lilacs delivered and placed on the night table by the bed. Jenny said all the covers were turned down and soft lights burning on either side of the bed. That it was just like something out of a dream. When they came in “the nostalgic old beauty of it all brought tears to my eyes and I couldn't tell him why when he put his arms round me and said “I give you a penny for those thoughts”. Somehow a sudden sadness overcame me and I didn't know myself just what it was. It was not until I was tucked softly in his arms in that beautiful old bed that complete

peace returned and I began to realize how very lucky I am. He had gone to so much trouble to arrange this meeting just to give me beautiful memories. I could hardly bear to leave the next day. I took all the Violets, a sprig of Lilacs and a dozen kisses from a man's eternal love."

Oh yes! And guess what their meal was that night?! Yes! The same old "Rose Marie" –baked beans and fried ham, a green salad and ice cream.

Nels had written a letter to Isabel about their trip to Plattsburgh. Isabel said that Nels met Jeanette in New York City and that they drove up the Hudson River in a Cadillac which he had borrowed from a friend. This was on Saturday because they were only there one night and they went to Church the next morning. Then a portion of Nels' letter is quoted word for word: He described the Inn just like Jenny did, but his reaction to Sunday morning was what Isabel loved the most.

Nels wrote: "For me Mommie, the highlight of the whole trip came Sunday morning. On our walk the night before, we came across a beautiful old Church. We had no idea what denomination it was and, in fact, had to light a match in order to read the sign on the front. It announced Holy Communion the next morning at 8 AM and Jenny said "Oh darling, let's come". I said "But this is an Episcopal Church. Do you want to take Holy Communion here?" She said, and she was holding my hand – "Oh Yes! Any Church is a house of God and I have never knelt beside you and taken a Holy Communion. What more perfect ending could we have for this trip? Where else could we feel more deeply the perfection of our love?"

Well! Mommie, it is always in these moods that Jenny touches me most deeply. The miracle of her love and my religion – they are the two most powerful forces in my life and I always feel as though I am in the presence of a Saint.

Well, how should I describe that next morning?! As Jenny and I walked side by side to that altar rail and knelt, the lovely morning light from the windows fell softly over the altar and settled on the tall Lilies. It was a beautiful Altar and I found myself listening to each word the Priest said. I heard specially "Drink this in remembrance and be thankful". I glanced quickly at Jenny and saw on her face a look of devout worship. And, Oh Mommie! as the Chalice was pressed to my lips I thanked God. Oh! how I thanked God for that kneeling girl beside me. Because of her this whole place was a mystic and beautiful thing and my soul knew a great and perfect place. Back at the Inn after we were packed and ready to leave, I held her in my arms for a long time and I remember saying to her a great many times "My darling – Thank you for this morning."

*DATA RELATIVE TO NELSON'S WEDDING RING
FOR JEANETTE.*

Back in 1936 when Nelson thought Jeanette would marry him, he purchased a beautiful wedding ring for her. However, when she decided that Nelson did not love her as she loved him, she changed her mind.

She did marry Gene in June of 1937 and Nelson was later blackmailed into marrying Ann Franklin in his effort to protect Jeanette from the possibility of Ann destroying her career.

Later, when Jeanette understood the circumstances of his forced wedding, they reconciled. He kept the ring and later he decided to put the ring into a locket so that she could wear it. But it was with the understanding that the ring in the locket meant she was his forever! She wore it on the platinum chain he gave her but when she could not, she pinned the locket inside her dress. She often wore the ring on her right hand when in public.

When Nelson left that evening she went to see Blossom. Blossom told Isabel that Jam was starry eyed and she said “when he laid it in my hand I felt only half conscious with joy and for a while I couldn’t say anything. He held me close and said: “It is yours only if you take it with my life’s love and devotion and with the understanding that it binds my heart as closely to yours as though you took the vows in any church.” Jeanette replied: “In my own heart and in the sight of God, I am your wife and it’s forever.”

Jeanette had to leave on an army camp tour the very next day which made it July 28th, 1942.

*NELSON’S LETTER TO JAM
WHILE HE WAS OVERSEAS
December 1943 to
to Mid February 1944*

*Letter he wrote to Jeanette describing
what seems to have been a dream he had.*

“I was utterly adrift without you when your letter came, then peace returned. I have been lonely during your absence – lonely but not lost- your lovely self is here. I can see your physically beautiful body – wondrous eyes – tender lips – but most of all, your soul – your mind and soul are with me. When you think of your boy think of long lonely walks – solitary meals, the inadequacy of people’s company. The rich serenity of your nature is here – a part of me – and with you I share a deep spiritual companionship.

Darling, my darling, I was able to be with you for about two hours last night. It was a glorious – highly spiritual experience – a dream – but not a dream. I found you asleep – my eyes swept over your tired face – how I yearned to comfort you. You awoke an

hour later- so like a child- stretching the lines of your body- not conscious of me at first. Your eyes held the absent looks of one who has been in distant pastures – wanting me to come to you. Desire gripped me intolerably –how I needed your recognition – how I wanted your love – my kiss! I know it surprised you because it was one that demanded. It drew you to me – the delicate subtle you – who knew I must once more claim its beauty. No darling, I know for you there will not be a memory but always for me, I will see your beautiful smile as you returned my kiss – whispering “My dear, this is why I was born.”

THE DAY BEFORE JEANETTE'S WEDDING

It was on this day before her wedding she explained to Isabel her feelings. “Mother dear, ...It has hurt me so very much that Nels didn't love me as I did him. We had so much to share- our great love of music – our complete understanding- our love of nature that was a source of endless delight to us. We love the great old pines – the giant redwoods, with the wind whispering through their branches- and the little wild flowers that grow in the spaces between the trees – we know them all. Always I will remember the night I picked a violet and put it in his coat lapel. He took my hand and then my other one and then his arms held me so closely, and there beneath the pines he spoke words of such tender beauty that I could never repeat them – not now – they would make me too sad too unhappy. After tonight I must bury all this and try never to let it be remembered. But my beautiful ring, that sweet symbol of the love I thought was mine – that I have put away with the other dear ring. They will go with me to my grave – dearly remembered - and I shall visit them often and see them always through a shining glory. I must be a happy bride tomorrow – I must go to Gene not with my heart's love for that is impossible, but with purity of spirit and a calm mind - a prayer in my heart...You see darling, it is just that Nels never had the deep

love for me that I had for him – it is best that he refuse to marry me for I am afraid his love would never have been very enduring.”

Isabel thought “My poor little pet, little did she know how enduring that love was to be when selfishness was washed away in bitter tears. Oh the nights I have seen him pace the floor, when his bed was never slept in – when long hours dragged by and only the comfort of her picture could make him even sit down – when he drank cups of black coffee to the extreme – and nothing mattered. I asked him again and again during the filming of the picture why he didn’t stop the marriage but always he said “No – he could not – Gene was his dearest friend, and how could he hurt that friend now?”

The picture was a lovely thing – but long before it was completed it amounted to almost a madness to the man who understood it’s passions all too well. He could only avoid the girl he worshiped and of course, she interpreted this as indifference on his part. Long after, when she read all this in his little diary she came to me and said “Oh mother darling, why didn’t you tell me how he felt then? I would have waited forever – I wouldn’t even have cared if there was never a marriage ceremony to bind us. I only wanted his love – everything could have been built on that.”

My son, of his own free will had given up the golden beauty and companionship of this girl, and there after he never knew a peaceful moment.

Perhaps this long quotation will clear up the inevitable question as to what happened.

NELSON’S “ROSE MARIE” MEMORIES

In Isabel’s Memoir Number Two she described their arrival at beautiful Lake Tahoe . Nelson’s account tells of events that happened after they had settled in and were at work on their film.

The first thing that occurred was that they really started to become acquainted on a personal level. Every night after work Nelson either went over to Jeanette's cabin or they went for rides or long walks through the forest. Sometimes they went on horse back but they fell into the habit of spending every evening together. Sometimes they went canoeing on the lake or dancing in the main lodge. Finally, one night when they went for a moonlight walk, Nels suddenly stopped and took Jenny by the shoulders and turned her around facing him. He said "Jeanette you are so like my mother. You understand me as no one else has ever done. I want to be your dearest friend always and it's lucky that I realize you are a career girl for I might want more than friendship and that would not be good for you for I would make the worst husband in the world."

Then they did "Indian Love Call" and Nels knew he was sunk. Recently he said to his mother "I felt sure she had more than a friendly feeling for me but she tried so hard to hide it. There were some nights when she wouldn't go out with me. At last I was determined to find out how she really felt so I made her go for our usual ride in the car. We stopped at the Emerald Bay Overlook and then just as twilight was fading into darkness, I took her in my arms for the first time away from the camera. She was so shy she could hardly look at me. I said "Jam dearest! I've fallen in love with you and I am not supposed to fall in love with a career girl. What are you going to do about it? When she finally said anything at all it was "Well! I never said I wouldn't fall in love with a baritone, so what are you going to do about that?" It was weeks before I could get her to say she loved me.

Sometime, a few years later, Jenny told Isabel "You know Mother if I could ever live any of my life with Nelson over again, I know when it would be. The time when I first really began to believe in his love – far off in those glorious mountains. He kept asking me to be his wife but somehow that little boy heart of his seemed to me strangely untouched. I loved him then far more than he loved me and I was so afraid of being hurt. I thought he was the most wonderful thing I had ever seen or known and it seemed too much

to expect that he should really love me. Then one night as we stood watching the giant trees as they stretched their fingers skyward, his manner suddenly changed to one of great softness and turning to take me in his arms and burying his lips in my hair, as sweetly and tenderly as the night was coming to meet us, he said:

“I will never love another woman, when will you believe that?”

There was something in his voice then that went deep and I knew that I was being given a part of him that no other woman would ever be given. I never forgot that night and have cherished those words as he will never know I have.”

Recently Nels told his Mother the time she finally admitted her love for him and here is what he said:

“It was a perfect night. The lake was shining like a jewel and the huge trees glowing in the moonlight. Before when I kissed her she had always just been tender and sweet but this night she really returned my kiss for the very first time. Not because she wanted to either, she just could no longer help it. Never shall I forget how timid she was and how little and submissive she seemed in my arms and how frightened I was at what was happening to me. That was the moment I knew it was something divine and something that would live through the ages. I felt that so strongly and it was so beautiful to me that I even had to give her up rather than take a chance on hurting it.”

When they did get back home, Jam practically lived at the Eddy’s until Nels left on tour. They were formally engaged in May and then broke it off in late June when they were unable to resolve Nelson’s demand that she give up her career. Nelson removed her engagement ring and laid the ring in the palm of her hand and said: “Keep it, my Baby, always, just as I want you to keep the memory of my love.”

PHYSICAL LOVE

Nels and Jam were parked in the car under some lovely old pine trees. Jam could barely look at Nels. Nels had her in his arms and said to her:

“My Baby, you are so sweet , so lovely and you thrill me beyond anything I have ever known. Thank you darling – It is going to be beautiful.

Jam was concerned that she might not be all that he thinks she is. It would break his heart if she ever disillusioned him and it would break hers.

Jam continued: “I keep thinking about how he feels about Ann and I wonder if I will ever show my feelings for him too much. I am not a stone you know.”

Jam told her sister, Blossom, the following story:

“Nels tried so hard to go on being strong, to keep his emotions buried, but I didn’t let him. Somehow I could not feel anything wrong about it, I simply loved him and I was breaking no vows. I have known for a long time that peace could never come to him until I had become his wife. I wanted to give him only sweet instead of bitter memories – and now he has them.

Jam told Blossom she was still very grateful that Nels had made her his wife because until then, much as she adored him, she had never known the beauty and depth of his nature - she said he had a tenderness that was beyond description and not until she saw his reaction to her did she fully realize what a horror Ann had been to him. Now she says all the hurt over that has completely vanished and she can feel nothing except a feeling of sorrow that it had to happen. This is why Ann doesn’t bother her. She feels nothing about it except pity. She said too, that Nels had spoiled her so for every other man in the world so that she even dislikes

being around them. Jam was never attracted to another man once Nelson became the center of her life.

NOTES

Nelson was a much more gregarious person than Jeanette and enjoyed assigning sobriquets to those he cared for. Whereas Jeanette was usually rather aloof when working on a film, Nelson seemed to enjoy chatting with all members of the crew.

Jeanette fell in love with her Nels early on in their relationship but with Nelson it had been "love at first sight!" Nelson soon learned that that his girl could be a very jealous woman when it came to her feelings. Jeanette had been around the stage and screen long enough to know what could transpire. That she would not tolerate. Nelson did not seem to be able to recognize his attraction to females, but Jeanette was very observant. She never missed women making a play for her Nelson. Often these women made little or no attempt to conceal their actions. At times, it was blatant. Even Van Dyke decided to test Nelson's maleness when he hired a certain woman to try and seduce him. However, they underestimated Nelson's mother and Jeanette. Some time later, Jeanette confessed to Nelson that it was she who phoned Isabel and told her what was going on and to get her son home! This resulted in Nelson's quick departure from the scene! It also confirmed Woody's satisfaction with Nelson as being a very normal man, and his virility was never questioned again.

From then on, if Jeanette just saw women starting to make a move on her Nelson, she took steps to freeze them out! She was very capable of protecting her man even when he did not recognize that it was happening. Even when Nelson took his co-star. Rise Stevens, over to Jenny's "Smilin' Thru" set to introduce her, Rise later remarked that she read Jenny's signal "Hands Off! He's Mine!" Sometimes Nelson was briefly taken in by a female even though the studio tried to teach their male stars to be extremely careful about situations that could be detrimental to their careers. But Nelson exuded male charm that most women found hard to

resist! If he so much as gave a female the time of day, they continued to pursue him in the hopes of gaining his attention. Nelson was often forced to work at keeping the woman he truly loved from being overly suspicious. When it became a choice between Jeanette and any other woman, Jeanette always won, hands down.

For the most part, Jeanette sensed and ultimately knew, she was the one woman Nels loved, but for her it remained a battle between this handsome man and the rest of the world's female population. Think about it, adored by the man you loved, but having to fight an endless battle to protect the delicacy of that love relationship, is not an easy task for man or woman regardless of their marital state. We must not forget that Nelson grieved all his life over his status with Ann and what he always called "the shadow on my life that cannot be put aside", or what their doctor told Nelson was "His Cross He Had to Bear".

THE BEGINNING

Back in the spring of 1934, Hunt Stromberg, a top MGM producer, was assigned to a new production to be titled "Naughty Marietta". It was an operetta by the famous Victor Herbert. The studio had two sopranos under contract that could sing the role of "Marietta" – Grace Moore and Jeanette MacDonald. Jeanette had set her heart on getting the role. The male lead, however, was a different situation. Nelson secretly felt the role would be very good for him but he was an unknown in films, and unlikely to be considered. If something did not happen soon, his contract would be up for renewal, and he was going to let it lapse and stay with his classical concert career. Fate intervened, and Stromberg decided that the baritone fit the part of Warrington better than the tenor that had been considered.

At first Jeanette was a bit put off with Nelson's lack of experience in the film business, but he did have other possibilities, mostly a stunning baritone voice. Woody Van Dyke was to be their director and he seemed a strange choice since he had no experience with "Musicals". In the beginning, Jeanette treated Nelson rather badly. But she was also intrigued with this kind, and considerate gentleman that treated her like a "lady!" She was responsive to his treatment of her and was astounded at his knowledge and interest in classical music. She had her personal aspirations, but so far, nothing had really happened except for a good career in films. She had only dreamed of concerts and opera whereas she knew that it was Nelson's career.

When "Naughty Marietta" was released on March 29th, 1935 it became a sensation. Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy instantly became America's Singing Sweethearts Team! The public was eager for another film. At first, Mayer wanted Nelson to make another operetta. "Rose Marie" by Rudolf Friml, with Grace Moore, the soprano from the Metropolitan Opera. What Mayer did not know was that Nelson and Jeanette had already begun a romantic relationship and were openly dating in public. Nelson felt it was "Love at first sight" and told Jeanette that. She, on the other hand, was a bit more reserved about her feelings. She soon changed her attitude towards Nelson and began to teach him about being a film actor. The change in Nelson was not wasted on Woody Van Dyke. He immediately picked up on their attraction to each other and used it while he made "Marietta"!

The extraordinary hit of "Naughty Marietta" caused the public to clamor for another film. Again, Hunt Stromberg was to be the Producer with Woody Van Dyke the Director. Mayer insisted that Nelson's leading lady should be Grace Moore. Nelson balked at the idea of this. Nelson approached his "Buddy", Clark Gable, who told him, "just be sick every time they try to get you to sign for the film." Nelson managed to stall long enough that Grace had to fulfill her duties to the Met and left for New York City. Jeanette was automatically the only candidate to make "Rose Marie". All of the outdoor sequences were to be shot on location at magnificent Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California in

September and October of 1935. While there, Jeanette accepted Nelson's beautiful engagement ring along with her promise to marry him.

The pot began to boil when fans of the two stars became embroiled in a dispute regarding the status of their relationship. There were those who believed that the reason that as a team they were so wonderful was that they projected on the screen a strong affinity for each other. Their love scenes seemed very real!

Another group, who were devoted to Nelson, thought Jeanette prevented Nelson from getting adequate screen time in their films.

A third group, were the fans that belonged to the powerful Jeanette MacDonald International Fan Club. The club was formed years before Nelson arrived on the scene, and were devoted to Jeanette's solo career. They wanted no part of Nelson and voiced their disapproval of him in no uncertain terms. It reached the point where they were not allowed to even mention his name at their famous Clan Clave meetings! Not all of the fans of this club thought that, but enough that they represented a considerable number. Anything that emanated from that club was, for the most part, pro Jeanette and anti Nelson.

However, it was the Studio, MGM, that was the most powerful force in this fight. The Studio executives wanted absolutely no hint of a romantic attachment between these two stars and absolutely no publicity was to indicate otherwise! Howard Strickling, Head of the Publicity department at MGM, adhered to Mayer's policy when Jeanette and Nelson's relationship was on display. Ever since, this has turned into a battle between the various factions. The studio version did prevail because the publicity department saw to it that it was the studio versions reported in the movie magazines, by movie reporters, gossip columnists, etc.

But what went on behind the scenes and on their sets left nothing to the imagination of their co-workers that Nelson and Jeanette were lovers. They learned very quickly to behave as the Studio reported when in public, but behind in their private life, they

continued their love affair, but always hidden from the public view. They were well aware that it would cost both of them their movie contracts if they did not adhere to the Studio's mandate.

We now know that they remained lovers for most of their lifetime together. In this day and age, people who still fondly recall them, believe that they were lovers and were married. Although they could not be married under church sanction because Nelson had been blackmailed into a marriage by a conniving socialite who wanted his money and his name, and she threatened to destroy Jeanette's reputation and career if he did not marry her. Nelson would never allow that to happen so he forfeited his own career in his effort to protect the woman he loved, Jeanette.

When they finally realized that this woman was never going to grant Nelson a divorce, they took matters into their own hands. On October 20th, 1943, they had their own solemn and personal wedding ceremony at Lake Tahoe. That wedding for them was real and whenever possible, they lived as husband and wife. Nelson considered Jeanette his "True Wife" and Jeanette believed Nelson was her "True Husband, regardless that each was legally married to a spouse "in name only."

For many years, until about 1980 or so, the MacDonald International Fan Club wielded the power and influence, and continued to disclaim any relationship between Jeanette and Nelson. At all of their meetings and postings they continued their assault on there being any romantic relationship between these two people. But over time, and mostly with the introduction of the fabulous Internet and e-Bay, information slowly came to light. Those that believed that they did love one another slowly eroded the long held position championed by certain fan clubs. With the enormous amount of data that has surfaced since their deaths, it is now accepted that these two people remained lovers for the rest of their lives. It also became apparent to their fans that the MGM Studio's attempt to hide this love affair had met with failure.

The destructive nature and vengeance of the woman Nelson had been blackmailed into marrying was such that he and Jeanette soon realized that she never intended to give Nelson a legal divorce so that he could marry her, the woman he loved. They

both soon knew that this dreadful marriage was to last until either her death or their deaths. But, Nelson and Jeanette, predeceased this vindictive woman by more than 20 years. However, this unreasonable woman had no impact on their love for one another – in fact – it probably helped in making it stronger and life lasting.

In pursuit of revealing their incredible life story together, people set about to uncover facts as best could be done after both of them were gone. But, we have been blessed with the development of an extraordinary amount of data from letters that surfaced and written by Nelson, Jeanette, Isabel, and close friends. Other material came from stored memories of people who have willingly contributed to this story. This extraordinary and beautiful story of a great romance has finally been brought to the public. It set off a firestorm among those people who still tried to retain their position that there was no relationship at all between Nelson and Jeanette. Truth, however, will always eventually come out, and it has.

*LAKE TAHOE WEDDING
WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 20th, 1943*

*This event began on Sunday, October 17th
to Saturday, October 23rd*

After Jeanette's concert in Portland, Oregon on Thursday, October 14th, 1943, she very likely took the train from Portland down to San Francisco where she planned to meet Nelson. They may have stayed in San Francisco over night and drove to Chambers Lodge at Lake Tahoe the next day.

On Wednesday, the 20th of October, they recited their own marriage vows to each other at beautiful Lake Tahoe at their own very special place. This magnificent lake always remained a sacred place to them and over the years they made many trips to it to relive the joy it always brought to them. On several occasions instead of staying at Chambers Lodge, Nelson had made friends with the Chief Ranger at Tahoe. He let Nelson use his special Lookout Cabin, with spectacular views of the lake and the surrounding area.

Their wedding culminated when Nelson gently removed her magnificent engagement ring and replaced it with an incredible but traditional diamond wedding ring. They always celebrated their wedding anniversary on October 20th. They only had time for a very brief honeymoon because Jeanette had a concert to sing in Seattle on Monday night, October 25th, before leaving for a concert in Winston-Salem, N.C. that was scheduled for Thursday evening, Oct. 28th. We are fortunate to have the Winston-Salem program and the owner has written on it : “RADIANT – PERSONALITY – GREAT BEAUTY”.

Without doubt, Jeanette was one gloriously happy young lady! Here is what Nelson wrote to Jeanette in his diary that he kept specifically for her, on Friday, Dec. 3rd, 1943. It was written by Nelson at MISTS. This is the complete letter.

*“My Little Diary and it’s secrets.
To My Wife
Dec. 3rd.”*

“My beautiful darling:

Three whole days and nights we had been together, satisfied with our kisses, happy just being in love but with our goodnight kisses, little sweetheart, did you know how desperately I was longing to keep you with me? Your bedroom became a symbol, and I knew that one night soon I must step across the threshold and reclaim

my wife – just once more, despite my vows, I must hold her as I did on that wedding night. But there was no hurry. I loved your delicacy, your sensitivity about it all - giving it no importance, content just to be with me. And then one evening I came in the projection room and found you looking at an album of stills – our work, and suddenly, you were facing me, speaking my name, so gently and sweetly, I almost wept. And it was at that moment that I knew I would never have the strength to leave you alone this night.

I asked you to go for a walk, remember? How beautiful our world has grown. Under the shortening sun we looked at the majestic trees, and the mountains and valleys grew more ageless, just as we knew our love would grow. On your delicate cheek was a color of palest pink. We walked back through the night and entered our darkened home. The night had grown cold and you shivered while I lit the fire. Soon you left to put on your night clothes and be comfortable for the evening and when you returned I had something hot for you and we ate beside the fire. My own darling, do you remember then how I pulled you down on my knees and pressed the sides of your face in my palms as I kissed the beautiful throbbing lips of my “wife”? Your body relaxed and my mind raced back to our wedding night. My dear one I knew our physical love would be just as enduring as the spiritual. Your returned kiss- I feel it yet, my dear wife. I dreamed it would be like this. But this night you were intoxicating beyond my fondest dreams – so wonderful – how I wanted to forever keep your lips to mine in a delicious lingering dalliance, that released all the fire that was in me. And then you said “Dear, your kisses are making me dizzy with emotion. A sweet torment, I admit, but please no more just now”. But dearest, that is just what I wanted you to say. And did you know I understand all your secrets so well? And I loved the hard way you were trying to keep repressed your rising emotions. We had been together three whole days and nights without allowing this to happen – it was all the sweeter for the waiting. I crossed with you to your bedroom door – do you remember? And suddenly I knew that I had to make you give me an invitation. Not by one word had you given me any sign that

you wanted me in that bedroom with you – no, your delicate lady like manner never would so that’s why I wanted to make you. I stooped to kiss you and found you powerless to utter a word - you were at the breaking point. And then I said goodnight, hoping, oh how I was hoping you wouldn’t disappoint me. I felt your numb little fingers cling to mine, and you whispered my name - said these words-

“I can’t endure your teasing me any longer. I want the finality- the ecstasy”. And with joy in my heart I lifted my darling in my arms and carried her to my own bedroom and gathered you in heaven’s own earthly bliss. And dearest, did you know you were a very intoxicated little girl? Cradled in my arms you forgot the world and the Silent Night Watches heard you whisper as my hand slipped about you. “Darling, being your wife is sapping all my strength, and I am losing consciousness”. I smiled then and breathlessly found the curve of your white little breast – and now I will tell you a secret. When first my hand came in contact with that intimate glorious part of you, I almost died of ecstasy, and I knew you did too. My darling, I had not one thought of your sweet little body – it was so lovely – like a melody from some distant shore - and into my soul came the first peace I had known in many years. And if my lips so quickly found yours that magic evening, it was to quiet the storm in my own heart. I remember telling you that you belonged to me – that I would never let you go. By then my darling was almost past all feeling but what a joy to know that fiercely beating little heart was trying so hard to keep me from seeing your real emotions – afraid to let yourself go – so, though it was all as much of a divine mystery to you as it was to me, I think the joy hurt you more.

This other morning I reminded you of this my little shy sweet maiden, now a wife, but always a maiden. Since first you came to me in Tahoe, your hair a sheen of russet sunset – fields of ripe yellow grain – and now a pretty dishevelment in my arms, what meaning life has held for me. Our stars, our moon, our trees, how dear they have become, and how much more real are YOU than anything in nature. Last night your fear of yourself was just as

great, and I hope that self fear will pass. You can't be anything but you in my arms, and I am going to always force you beyond the limits you have set for yourself, for that's the vanity in me, my darling.

Remember as I looked at you this morning, feeling the warmth of your body beside me, I playfully kissed the tip of your nose, and you said (the very idea) "I'm hungry!" I laughed. How like you my little pet, to bring me back to normal with that prosaic remark. But the drowsy contentment on your face belied your words.

Sweet lovely hours, married hours of bliss. I insisted on getting breakfast and when I called you, you were just finishing your bath, so when I told you to hurry, you came in your morning robe of pale blue dotted Swiss. So beautiful you were, and you asked me to excuse you for not dressing since breakfast would get cold. I watched your tiny fingers holding the coffee cup, the curve of your wrist as you poured my coffee. Oh my darling, what a mistress for a man's home. I closed my eyes and imagined you presiding at my table when we entertain our friends. How proud I shall be. In all the world there never will have been a man so proud."

JAM:

As soon as Jenny was home again, she went at once to see Isabel though she had already written to her all about her happiness at Tahoe. Isabel thought she had never seen her look so beautiful as now. She was radiant with a glow of great happiness, but a new shyness which only made her seem more adorable to this understanding Mother. As they were having lunch in Isabel's room, she said, "Now Mother, I must try to make Nels see what a wonderful thing he has done for me. I must make him see there shall be no regrets. I am a different person. We were close before, very close, but in giving myself to him there is now a nearness, such sweetness as I never knew could exist. Already deeply in love, our marriage brought us the gift of perfect beauty and deep happiness. For me it was the miraculous birth of a wonderful womanhood. Everything has changed for me - all painted in

romantic tenderness by that lovely night when I lay in his arms and learned the mystery of life. I think I have made him understand now – though it may be a long time before I can reconcile him to the fact that he must not grieve so about not being able to claim me before the world.”

ISABEL:

“Darling” answered Isabel, “You have found a great love, a great tenderness, and I am proud and happy to have you for my own little daughter. I am truly your Mother now and you must come to me with all of your problems. Together we will manage that boy of ours.”

JAM:

And softly Jenny said “I think I can help him be strong now. I hope I can make him see that he has built a beautiful paradise for me, and built it on a foundation of perfect love and trust. Mother, he made it all so gloriously wonderful for me. The end of the path, with promises fulfilled, the breath of life enduring, I now see something new – something misty – and I see it through a star studded veil. With his hand in mine, his arm encircling me, I found the shining perfect glory of woman’s destiny, and I love him so much more.

JAM:

It hurt me terribly when he told me in Kansas that he regretted Tahoe. It was like having him tell me he was sorry he had married me, but later on when we talked he understood and gathered me in his arms and tenderly wiped the tears away, and then he said a prayer for me. But he has taken a vow that the marriage night must not be repeated (until he was free) and I can do without the sweet cup of wine if it makes him so heartbroken to share it with me. After all, the physical has always been the least important for us – so perhaps I can be happy with the assurance that we have at least that one beautiful and perfect memory.”

Isabel smiled to herself and wondered if this time her son might not have overestimated his strength and stubborn power of will, but said nothing, content to leave this in the hands of the girl, who knew as no one did, how to keep him contented and happy.

COMMENTS

Today, the vast majority of people who remember this magnificent team, do believe in their love affair and even believe that they were married as Nelson and Jeanette believed themselves to be. Nothing would have made Nelson and Jeanette happier if they knew that their love for one another, which they wanted with all their hearts to tell their public, but could not, was finally accepted as the truth. Those few people who still refuse to accept the vast body of proof as to the truth of this beautiful love story, have almost all faded away. Exceptional amounts of definitive information has now surfaced to prove that their love for one another did exist.

Those that believed that they did love each other, slowly eroded the position of the non-believers until now, with the mountain of data that has surfaced since their deaths, confirmed that the love relationship had existed since 1934. Yes, they had their share of the usual ups and downs, but basically they remained lovers all their lives. Nowadays, people who still recall them, and there are many, believe they were lovers and were married. Although they could not be married under church sanction, their own personal wedding ceremony was sufficient for them to try, whenever possible, to live as husband and wife. Jeanette was devoted to being Nelson's "True Wife" and Nelson was devoted to being her "True Husband".

This leads us to wonder about whether any tangible evidence, including letters, of their beautiful love story might exist. Jeanette did a thorough job in bequeathing in her will most of her beloved

and beautiful jewelry given to her by Nelson, with a few exceptions such as her special rings, significant to her: Nelson's engagement and wedding rings that she usually had Nelson keep for her locked in his safe. Nelson also had a locked storage container in which he collected endless mementos of his life long love affair with Jeanette. He was determined that none of those precious items, that were meant only for him, should ever be exploited by anyone. Nelson cherished the content of his precious collection to the extent that he arranged for the destruction of everything in his container to be burned at his death. In a sense, he took these precious items to his grave with him. Sad, but true. The love bond between these two human beings was exceptional. Theirs was a love not often encountered in the usual course of life, but these were not two ordinary people either! To the contrary!

The love between Jeanette and Nelson began with Nelson's passionate pursuit of her every desire. As Ted Paxson noted very much later in Nelson's life, "Nelson had waited a very long time for his "Great Love" i.e. Jeanette." Jeanette was soon to learn that Nelson was a very unusual man. He was deeply rooted in his spiritual approach to their relationship. It not only motivated him, but he made her aware of how important their special attachment could be. She was sometimes a bit overwhelmed by his love for her, but she had never been so attracted and so loved as Nelson did in all of her life before she met him. Other men had just suited a purpose in her career. But Nelson was all about his love for her, and her alone. She was the center of his universe, then he soon became the same for Her's. Working in a profession that was less than stable, Nelson's intensity and passions were definitely exciting. He was obviously not interested in just a casual relationship; he desperately wanted to marry Jeanette and raise a fsamily.

Their letters that passed between them tell a magnificent story about the life long love that remained with them until death. Nelson could and did pour out his love for her in letters and in his diary that he kept for Jam to read. His ability to communicate his

most personal and private inner thoughts, that he shared only with Jeanette, were magnificently expressed by Nelson. He had a gift at being able to transmit his feelings to Jeanette in his letters. Nels, the name Jenny called Nelson, expressed his most private and passionate thoughts in his writing. They were not only extremely beautiful, but also very profound. His command of the beautiful words in the English language are proof of how he used it to express his love to the woman he loved. It expressed exactly how he spiritually, emotionally, and physically felt and it was beyond Jeanette's dreams. His love words were graphic and often explicit but he was describing his own intimate feelings to the woman he adored. He was an artist and his sensibility to express himself in his letters was far beyond what the vast majority of women would or could, ever even imagine. This remarkable man stood apart or as Jeanette referred to him, "Nels is different." Granted, she soon learned that her Nels was not only different from any man she had ever met, but he was also a very wonderful musical artist, a cultured man, socially refined, well educated, a remarkable teacher, extremely well read, and raised by his Atlanta born mother, to be the consummate Gentleman. And, that he was!

Nelson's writing and thoughts inspired Jeanette to also express her love for Nelson to him. They always had the need to converse, literally for hours at a time, but they both liked to write letters as well. In her letters she was equal to Nelson in her writing skills and that permitted her to let him know of her undying and unconditional love for him. Nelson virtually lived for her letters when they were separated. He kept everything she ever sent to him. In response to his letters she developed her own style in replying in kind to his passionate love letters. In many respects the era in which they lived there were only hand written letters or very expensive telephone calls by which people could communicate their feelings to each other. Jeanette often commented in jest about "keeping the Postman busy".

While Jam was in the UK in June & July of 1946, she arrived ill and Nelson had to send their doctor to London to take care of her

for several weeks. Nelson had done everything possible to stop her from going abroad, but she had made the commitment and took her obligations seriously. Nelson sensed she was not well and he was right. The doctor arrived to find her in the throes of still another miscarriage. She was briefly hospitalized and had to postpone the first week of her concerts by moving them to the end of her tour. She made public announcements about how happy she was, when in fact, she was miserable. It really upset her that it rained every day she was there. But, most of all, she was homesick for Nels and her Mists.

She did write Nels a letter that Isabel said was a small book. When she gave it to him he took it upstairs to his bedroom and sat out on his balcony to read it. Apparently she poured her heart out to him about her love for him. When she did get home she told Nels that they could still be “friends”. Nels only laughed at her and said “that’s not what you told me in my letter!” He added that letter to his precious storage container. She said she wrote it in bed one night to tell him to come to her because she was so homesick for him. Then she talked about their sweet long nights together and how she cherished the memory of them, but now he had made it so hard for her to be away from him, etc. Those who read it, Isabel, Blossom, etc. said it was “some letter” and little Jam would surprise you if you ever read it. It was no wonder, Isabel said that he looked like “a cat that had just finished a bowl of cream”. Jenny’s love for her Nels was absolutely constant and no other man but Nelson ever had her love.

THE BRACELET

Now I reach the delicate point in this incredible love affair as to whether or not there is any possibility of what I refer to as “Tangible Proof” that might exist that supports our belief in this love affair. In a word, the answer is YES! Tangible Proof does exist and today we intend to present at least one such PROOF.

It was 1938. Nelson and Jeanette were in production of their film "Sweethearts" which was the first film to be shot in Technicolor by MGM. It was when they began production that Nelson began giving serious thoughts to a special birthday gift for Jeanette. He decided to design a very unusual charm bracelet with special charms, the maximum that could be attached to the very delicate chain he selected. This was the era of charm bracelets and they were extremely popular. Each charm would be a symbol of her career and her personal life. To that end he began to sketch many charms he might want to use.

Each charm was to be made from 14K solid gold by the finest Goldsmith Nels could engage to sculpt the charms. Nels personally designed and sketched a number of charms from which he would ultimately make his selection. He turned all of his designs over to a highly skilled goldsmith whose initials were "NvK". Each charm carried that identification. I am not certain if he waited until the thirteenth charm was completed, but it was not attached when he gave the Bracelet to Jam. Nels would have waited to have the last charm attached only when the special of the birth of their child had happened. The bracelet that he gave to Jeanette on the set for her birthday does not have the 13th charm.

STORY OF BRACELET & PROVENANCE

This Bracelet designed by Nelson, was created for, owned, and worn by Jeanette MacDonald. Nelson Eddy presented it to her on June 18TH, 1938, seventy five years ago, as her birthday present. At that point, it was incomplete because the thirteenth solid gold charm had not been attached. There are only twelve charms on the Bracelet, each one sculpted from solid 14K gold. There was a thirteenth charm attached but it was not made from gold, but from cheap pot-metal and contained a photo of Elsie's granddaughter, Nanette. The consensus of opinion of appraising jewelers was that this charm had been attached after it came into possession of Jeanette's sister, Elsie Scheiter, along with other

jewelry Elsie received after the death of her sister, Jeanette MacDonald.

The reason the appraising jewelers determined that this charm had been added by Elsie was that there was a photo of Elsie's Granddaughter and a photo of Elsie's husband, Bernard Scheiter. Bernard's photo was loose in the charm. This particular charm has been detached from the Bracelet to restore it to what they believe to be its original configuration as ordered by Nelson for his Jeanette.

The Bracelet was large enough to hold 13 charms in its final version. I am not certain if he waited until the thirteenth charm was completed, but not attached, because he arranged to have the last charm attached only when their child was to be born in October.

The Bracelet that he gave to Jeanette on her set for her birthday does not have the 13th charm attached because that event was not due until October. But, Nelson did plan to give her the Bracelet without the last charm as her Birthday present. The bracelet I acquired had to be the last version he decided on and the provenance is proof that it came from Jeanette.

There is no way to determine what Nelson did with his 13th solid gold charm. We might guess that perhaps he just added it to his own personal collection of Jeanette memorabilia and he refrained from upsetting Jeanette by adding it to her Bracelet after the loss of their child.

A collection of mostly costume jewelry, both Jeanette's and Elsie's, was given as a gift to Mrs. Ida L. Arena. Mrs. Arena was in the employ of Elsie and her husband for many years. Even after Elsie's death, Mrs. Arena continued in the employ of Elsie's husband, Bernard, and his succeeding wife, a Margaret Hurley. Margaret Hurley gave the box of Elsie's jewelry as a memento (mostly costume but not all) to Mrs. Arena when she retired from their employ.

Mrs. Arena, with the assistance of her daughter, decided to dispose of some of the jewelry items. This charm bracelet was recognized as being the most valuable item and was offered for sale on Friday, August 13th, 1999.

Offer to sell the Bracelet:

When I read the offer I was taken with the description and it appeared to me to be genuine. In addition to having knowledge of Nelson and Jeanette's relationship for many years, we also knew Nelson was attracted to unusual gifts for Jeanette and this did fit the bill.

Here was the offer:

"My mother, Ida Arena, worked in the home of Jeanette MacDonald's older sister, Elsie, and her husband Bernard Scheiter for many years. After Elsie's death and the remarriage of Bernard Scheiter to Margaret Hurley, Mom continued in their employ until around 1991. At this time, Peggy (Margaret) gave Mom a jewelry box filled with mostly costume jewelry belonging to Elsie as a memento to Mrs. Arena when she retired from their employ."

"My Mom is now 82 years old (as of 1999) and is beginning to reduce the contents of her home. We are scheduling a garage/home sale of some items, but rather than selling the jewelry this way, we thought it would be nice to offer it first to Jeanette fans." Mrs. Arena passed away in 2008.

TEXT OF OFFER

"This item is probably the most valuable, as it is all 14K solid Gold except for the locket charm with a photo of Bernard inside. There is a charm with a photo of Jeanette on one side of the bracelet and a charm with a photo of Nelson Eddy on the other side. We feel that because of its age and the personalization of the 14K Gold charms, this particular bracelet would have the most significance of all the jewelry. Some of the other charms are a Musical Symbol, a Piano, a small Purse, a Movie Camera, a Ballerina, a clock, etc. There are 13 Charms in all."

I purchased this Bracelet on Monday, August 16th, 1999. Since joining the MacEddy Club in December of 1995 I was struck with the membership's interest and desire to understand this relationship, and if there really was such a love affair. The diversity of opinions and the animosity among various factions seemed to indicate a serious yearning among the membership regarding what was the truth and what evidence supported these factions. There were multiple opinions and each was vigorously touted as being the real story.

When examined more carefully, none of the various positions taken on this relationship really had much, if any, tangible proof to sustain their support especially when Nelson and Jeanette were deceased so long ago. Also, there was the powerful influence of the M.G.M Studio and Louis B. Mayer who refused to acknowledge any relationship between the two Stars, Nelson and Jeanette, including a myriad of Fan Clubs who each held independent ideas with each vigorously defending their positions. It resulted in there being a lack of any proof of this story and a number of frustrated fans. This was my motivation in trying to seek evidence of whether or not these two wonderful artists did really have a love affair.

I hasten to admit, that I did have personal knowledge of their relationship because of my father's work for Nelson from 1933 through 1941 when my Dad left MGM. Mr. Eddy, as my brother and I were told to call him, often came to our home and my Dad went to Nelson's home, including his place he called "Mists" which he leased in 1936. Sometimes I had the good fortune to go with him. My Father was employed at the MGM studio almost from the day the studio opened its doors in Culver City back in 1925.

By the time Nelson arrived in 1933 my Dad had been promoted to the studio's sound department and was actively developing the technological improvements in the recording of not only sound on film but also disc recording. For the disc recording Dad had built a dual turntable recording system for his use at home.

Nelson heard about my Dad and that he had made his own recording equipment. Nelson made contact with my Father at the studio. Dad invited Nelson to come to our home and see and listen

to the caliber of what my Dad had built on his own. At that first session with Mr. Eddy, he asked Dad if he could build the same equipment for him to use. On future visits by Nelson, he and Dad discussed exactly what Nelson's requirements were. After a few meetings, Mr. Eddy was eager to have my Father start to build him an equivalent unit. Nelson was about ready to start out on his 1934 concert tour so they had to negotiate a number of details before he was gone for three months. My memory is that Nelson gave dad sufficient cash to more than cover the next 3 months of work and then Nelson would be back home and available for consultation.

Nelson was eager for Dad to begin work and Dad started spending all of his own time, including weekends, working on Nelson's equipment. Meanwhile, Dad learned about who Nelson Eddy really was in the classical music world and quickly realized that along with the equipment he would have to instruct Nelson in the operation of it. Dad agreed to the terms. As work progressed, Nelson proved to be highly intelligent and a good man to work for. Nelson's prompt payments and generosity helped us through the trying days of the depression. Strangely enough, both Nelson and my father left the MGM studio about the same time. It was a fortuitous decision by my Dad, but not good for Nelson.

The Bracelet and its charms have been confirmed by reputable jewelers that each charm was hand made by the same Goldsmith Artist and the Jewelers initials "NvK" appear on each 14K gold charm. The small "v" may represent the prefix used in German and Austrian names for "von". We have since learned that "NvK" made and sold numerous charms as a business. His best ones were usually made in Sterling Silver and are still available. There are twelve solid Gold charms on Nelson's Bracelet and one that Elsie added which our jeweler removed because it was obviously not part of the original Bracelet.

Each charm had a meaning and some reflect Nelson's delightful sense of humor. The fact that Jeanette retained this piece of very personal jewelry all her life indicates that it must have held a special meaning for her.

If we study Nelson's charms from left to right as they are arranged on the delicate gold chain of the bracelet, we find them as follows: The comments are those of the writer, not Nelson!

The first charm is a lovely Gold Mesh Evening bag. This was Nelson teasing Jeanette about her well known penurious side when dealing with money! This delicate charm allows one to open and close the purse.

The second charm is a glass Ball with Nelson's photo on each side. His photo has to be looked at carefully because time and light have left it slightly faded. The photo that was used was Jeanette's favorite of Nelson taken when they made "Maytime".

The third charm is a Movie Camera to represent her Film Career. The handle on the camera can actually be turned.

The fourth charm is a Grand Piano to represent her love of Music and because she played the piano very well. Nelson often said that Jeanette played better than he did. This charm must be handled very carefully as the 3 piano legs are extremely fragile and the slightest handling might break them.

The fifth charm is a Treble Clef to represent her beautiful Lyric Soprano Voice.

The sixth charm appears to be of Nelson's face or perhaps he used it to represent her acting career.

The seventh charm is a Microphone and would represent her singing on film, radio, and recordings.

The eighth figure of the Dancer relates to Jeanette's early life on the musical comedy stage as a Professional Dancer and/or that Jeanette loved to ballroom dance with Nelson. It was well known that whenever he ended a date with her, they would always have their own private dance together.

The ninth charm is a piece of film inscribed with the name "Betty Philson". This was a mystery that required ten years of research (1999 to 2009) to determine the identity of this person and what role she played in the story. Briefly, she was a small girl protégé of Elsie's at her Dance School in Philadelphia. When Elsie came to Hollywood for Jenny's wedding to Gene, she brought along what

she felt was this talented little girl. Elsie worked as the girl's Agent to get her into pictures. She did accomplish that and the girl was put under contract at R.K.O. Since she got her contract with RKO we suspect Gene Raymond might have helped Elsie with that since he did work at that studio a number of times. Or, perhaps Jenny had used her influence to get the girl a contract and Nels was teasing about Jenny playing the role of an agent.

The tenth charm is another Glass Ball Charm but with Nelson's favorite Jeanette photo on each side. Her picture is very clear but identical to Nelson's picture Charm. No doubt, this picture of Jeanette was a favorite with Nelson.

The eleventh Charm is a Bathroom Scale, not a clock as described in the offer. It was a standing joke between Nelson and his Jeanette about their battle with waistlines. The charm indicates the scale at 200 pounds for Nelson. Jeanette always kept up her jests about his gaining weight while they worked on a film. In turn, Nelson was constantly trying to help Jeanette to gain weight because she would get thin while working or if she was upset. Nelson pokes fun at himself with the arrow on the scale pointing at 200 pounds!!

The twelfth and most clever and amusing charm is that of a man's Boxer Shorts (as worn by Nelson). Since Nelson and Jeanette had plans to marry at the finish of making "Sweethearts", he had the charm made with a very small padlock attached at the waist. This was Nels telling Jenny that he would be "faithful"!

This left room for only one more Charm. We do know that Nelson and Jeanette were expecting their Baby in October and I think it is safe to project that his final charm would have represented their expected Parenthood. Perhaps the charm was completed but Nelson, in deference to their sadness at the loss of their child, did not add it to the bracelet. We do know Nelson told Jenny that they had experienced "Parenthood" and were Parents. While Jenny was in the hospital following the premature birth of Daniel, that it was Nelson along with his bodyguard who transported the baby's coffin to its final resting place somewhere along the coast between Ventura and Santa Barbara. I often wondered what an ordeal it

must have been for him to take Jenny to that place where their baby is buried. The empty place on this bracelet should have been filled, but alas, hangs vacant forever.

In the film "Sweethearts", Jeanette can be seen wearing this Bracelet. When she sings the lovely Victor Herbert song, "Badinage" it is briefly visible. In another sequence when Nelson dashes in late for their radio show and Jeanette catches him, brushes his hair in place, straightens his tie, tucks his handkerchief into his breast pocket, etc. it is extremely visible as it dangles on her wrist.

Again, the very fact that Jeanette kept this lovely, but clever bracelet the rest of her life is an indication of what it meant to her. For her it represented not only great happiness, but dreadful sadness too that the last charm never had the opportunity to be added even though she continued to try and give Nelson the child they both longed for.

When I was notified that the Post Office was holding a box for me, I immediately went to pick it up. I said a prayer as I opened it that the photo was really Nelson! My prayer was answered. This piece of memorabilia is my most treasured possession because it is absolute tangible proof of the love between Nelson and Jeanette. So far, this Bracelet is the only piece of unique and valuable jewelry given by Nelson to Jeanette that may be in existence. But, that does not mean that somewhere another piece(s) may exist. I cherish this Bracelet for its Sentimental value which is far beyond mere dollars! For me, it will always remain an expression of their personal love for each other.

The reason for keeping this item hidden these past few years was that I personally considered it too valuable to share with others. Now, with what seems to be a rebirth of interest in Jeanette and Nelson, I felt it was time to share this wonderful piece with others who do accept their life long love of one another, and we do so today. I did arrange to have the bracelet professionally photographed so as to capture exactly as it was in its original condition but with Elsie's charm with a picture of her husband removed. I also prepared and wrote the complete provenance of

this extraordinary and lovely piece of jewelry. I consider it PRICELESS!

I hope you who are in attendance at this meeting of the Mac/Eddy Club, have the same reverent feeling I have for this Bracelet and what it stands for. Here is one piece of the TANGIBLE PROOF of this beautiful love story that we can actually see with our own eyes and is a testament to their love that did exist between these two remarkable individuals. They hated to hide their love from people who cared about them but in their day, it was their only recourse.

The Bracelet is on display for you to view, but it is carefully protected from being touched for obvious reasons. We offer you this opportunity to see the actual tangible proof of Nelson and Jeanette's life long love affair. Those of you who did believe in their love for each other now have absolute proof of their love for one another. This Bracelet was just one of many of Nelson's personal expressions of his love for Jeanette and no doubt, the reason she treasured it and did not dispose of it as she did with her extensive jewelry collection! This very delicate bracelet seems to match Jeanette's own fragile beauty. I hope you take much enjoyment and are thrilled to finally see proof that Nelson and Jeanette were truly, Life-Long Lovers.

And so we close with the touching quote from Nelson's singing partner for his club performances, Gale Sherwood. When she was questioned by reporters about Nelson and Jeanette she said:

"Nelson was never the same after the death of Jeanette, and I doubt he ever will be."

Gale, who acted as a go-between for Jenny and Nels when he was working, was well aware of the life long relationship and respected it. When Nelson was on the move for his club dates, Jenny would call Gale and Gale would deliver her message to Nelson. Both Jenny and Nels trusted Gale and she has kept that trust.

As Members of the Mac/Eddy Club it is my belief that when we join this club that we should never forget what I see as its fundamental mission. I believe that it is our obligation as well as

our duty to try and protect and honor the reputations of both, including their incredible and magnificent love that existed between Jeanette and Nelson. Few people have ever attained such a relationship, especially under the hardships they encountered. Take pride in the fact that their love was REAL and be proud of it. I remain firm that those who would disclaim their relationship do it with malice in their heart and they must be ignored. To be lured into a verbal contest with those who ridicule the relationship is unproductive. Nelson and Jeanette are worth our dedication and loyalty to them. Both were human beings, but let us enjoy the great beauty of their love and set aside those human frailties that we all encounter. Nelson taught his Jenny that their Divine Father sent them here to overcome their problems and not just to be happy!

Once again fate intervened and spoiled their plans to make a home together. The house in Scottsdale, Arizona was almost ready for them to take ownership when Jeanette passed and he lost Jeanette's loving presence. Jenny had always told Blossom that:

"I will probably pass before him, but if I do, he will not live long without me." Her dying words that she loved him were heart breaking when Nelson finally heard them. The publicity that she said her final loving words to Gene was false, but Gene played out his protection role to the end knowing that Jam's words were for the only man she had loved, her Nels.

My personal observation was that Nels made no effort to live after his stroke and only wanted to be with the woman he loved and willed himself to join her.

Both Nelson and Jeanette were sure that their Divine Father, God, had brought them together. They were extraordinary Spiritual Beings – and shared their love of their God with each other. They both firmly believed that when their time ended in this life their God or Divine Father would then allow them to be together through out eternity. This was Nelson's promise to the woman he loved. We hope and pray that they are together.

THE END

*This Presentation was written by Club Member
Madeline Bayless, May, 2013.*

*The Presentation was narrated by
Club Member Linda Tolman.
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