

APPENDIX II

THE JAZZ PRINCESS
AND HER
STRAW PRINCE

Katie and I had a somewhat tangential albeit remote "connection" with Josephine Baker.

John and Robert Brady were the sons of John Brady. The father was a rough and tumble trucking company owner who built the Brady Motor-Frate Company into a successful national transportation concern. One of Brady's earliest employees was John Ruan, Jr. who ultimately became a titan of the trucking industry. John Brady, Jr. succeeded his father as President of Brady Motor-Frate, merging it with other companies but ultimately selling the firm.

Both sons became internationally known collectors and connoisseurs of art. John was a trustee and past president of the Des Moines Art Center and served on the board of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, a group that includes the foremost (and wealthiest) world art collectors. Robert was educated for a career in fine arts and studied at leading art educational institutions (see attached biographical material).

Ultimately, the focus for both of the Bradys' collections was the Robert Brady Museum in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The brothers purchased the Casa de la Torre in 1961, a sixteenth century monastery that housed the bishop of the Cathedral of Cuernavaca. They restored it, creating one of the most charming museum destinations in Mexico.

I first knew John when we both were members of Phil Brown's Interstate Assurance Company Board of Directors. John was charming and colorful, with a wardrobe that matched his personality. He was a delightful travel companion. Some Interstate board meetings were held in Europe. John, Katie and I added Morocco to our itinerary and stayed at Hotel Mamounia (Winston Churchill's favorite resort) and La Gazell D'or in Taroudant. For several weeks, we led an exotic life style, including the best that Europe offered; e.g. Bayer Les Crayers in Reims; Fredy Girardet's ("Pope of Swiss Cuisine") in Lausanne; the Plaza Athenee in Paris. After we arrived in Paris following our ocean voyage on the QE2, when asked what we might do next, my reply was, "I don't know about the rest of you, but my plan is to turn myself in to American Express." We often reflect on how much we miss John. Those trips, as well as several to Mexico, are some of our most memorable moments.

Robert could be charming too, but his charm was quite selective. He could arrive at a dinner party only to leave at once as he perceived (and might announce) that nobody there was "interesting." He had a sharp tongue described as one, which could "trim a hedge." His Cuernavaca home has become a destination museum but was once a sought-after social destination. His criteria for invitation and admittance was similar to that of the Stork Club with perhaps some emphasis on fame and good looks. His guest list, however, might include blacks, but only if they were, for example, Geoffrey Holder or Josephine Baker. Sometimes his snobbery would have unintended

consequences. Gregory Peck once told John Brady that he did not feel welcome there.

While I am not the best of critics, in my judgment, he did not become the artist he was called. My choice for his best work is the Josephine Baker print (see copy). But he was not without talent. He had superb taste and could have become, if so impelled, a world class (e.g. Billy Baldwin) interior decorator. As a connoisseur of art, his choices were distinguished and remarkable. For four figure amounts, he purchased works, some of which are now found in major museums and worth substantial eight figures.

The brothers' relationship in their later years was often contentious. But as Robert was met with a terminal illness, there was a reconciliation. John's will created the John Brady Foundaton whose sole purpose is to provide the major financial support of the Robert Brady Museum.

Following is a discussion of Robert's relationship with Josephine Baker, which is what prompted the inclusion of this appendix. I will not attempt to edit, add, or subtract from Phyllis Rose's story, one that will probably surprise even those who knew Robert.

JOHN J. BRADY

John J. Brady, 69, of 4004 Grand Ave. died of cancer Friday at home. Services will be at 11 a.m. Monday at St. Augustin's Church. Burial will be at a later date in Fort Dodge.



JOHN J.
BRADY

Mr. Brady was born in Fort Dodge. He retired as chairman and president of Brady Motor-Frate and served on the board of directors of Inter-State Assurance Compa-

ny. He was internationally known as an art connoisseur and had a well-known collection of European and American art and was establishing a private art museum in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

He served on the boards of Planned Parenthood of Central Iowa, Junior Achievement, International Council of the Museum of Modern Art and was a trustee and past president of Edmondson Art Foundation of the Des Moines Art Center.

He was also a trustee emeritus of the Blanden Charitable Foundation at Fort Dodge. He was a member of Des Moines and Wakonda clubs. He served with the F.B.I. and U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps during World War II.

Surviving is a sister, Louise Brady of Chicago, Ill.

Memorial contributions may be made to the John Brady Foundation for the benefit of the Robert Brady Museum in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Dunn's Funeral Home is handling arrangements.

JAZZ
CLEOPATRA
JOSEPHINE BAKER
IN HER TIME

BY
PHYLLIS ROSE

DOUBLEDAY

NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO

SYDNEY AUCKLAND

around that she had a bad heart, it would be even harder for her to find work; no producer wants to book a performer who is going to be stricken in the middle of a run. She, especially, depended on continuing to stun her audiences with her vitality and health. But in fact, from a medical point of view, she was a mess: not only did she have a bad heart, not only had she had a stroke, but there was also her stomach, a problem since the war. She was devoted to spaghetti, the one food that never upset it.

While she was still in the Copenhagen hospital in June 1973 recuperating from her heart attack, she got a call from a friend, Robert Brady, who wanted to cheer her up. She had met Brady, a wealthy American artist based in Cuernavaca, in 1967, when she was performing in Mexico City. The friendship between them developed at a distance over the years. Charming and good-looking—dark, lean, mustached—he moved in an international jet set and was a close friend of several extraordinary women: Peggy Guggenheim, the heiress and art collector; Eugenie Prendergast, the widow of the painter's brother; Dolores del Rio, the beautiful Mexican actress; and Helen Hayes. Known for the tapestries he designed and had executed in wool by local Mexican craftsmen, he had good business sense and an impeccable eye. He was used to escorting women to social functions and helping them with their business affairs.

Baker was sixty-seven, working desperately to support her family, and the sudden illness had been devastating. She had no one to lean on. Although she and Jo Bouillon were not officially divorced, they had been separated for over a decade and he was in Argentina. Out of nowhere, help came in the appealing form of a well-off and attractive man in his forties offering devotion. On the telephone, Brady suddenly told Baker that he loved her, and he followed the call with a gallant letter proposing that—in spirit—they be married to each other.

She was wild with delight and only worried that she had not understood correctly what he suggested. "Did I rightly understand . . . that you do want us to be married? If so I am so happy, because you are the only man I can trust with my ideas and life etc. but we will do it with the understanding that nothing changes your life, that it will be a pure marriage without sex etc. etc. because sex spoils

everything—that we stay free—that we be married by God and not by man.”

She was in love in the way a lonely person can be in love when someone abruptly turns up offering devotion: suddenly, totally, and gratefully. Perhaps she was all the more in love because there was no question of sexual involvement. “It makes me so happy, Bob, and stupidly young like a girl in love for the first time. I can’t stop thinking about you and see you in my dreams continuously.”

It did not matter that he was not physically with her. It did not matter how little they would be able to see each other. As they worked out the details of their platonic marriage in letters, the fact that they would *not* see each other often was all to the good. They were both nomads, free desert spirits who needed to be loose to wander. If they did not impinge on each other, the marriage would last. She made a point of saying that she did not want him to stop seeing Eugenie Prendergast. “You see I am so natural and africain inside that I think it is natural that a man has several wives—and he can love all of them in different ways.”

In September 1973, when she was feeling better, she went to Mexico to stay with him. One Sunday, in a church in Acapulco, they made their marriage vows without benefit of clergy. Brady was Catholic; Baker, since her marriage to Jo Bouillon, considered herself Catholic, too. Each in his or her eccentric way was devout. They took their private oath seriously. They were both too nervous to take communion and would both regret it afterward. She was scared about what they were doing but certain they were doing the right thing. They planned to tell no one about it because publicity would debase it. *Pour vivre heureux*, she quoted to him, *vivre caché*. But they were married nonetheless. “You are my husband, Bob dear. I am your wife before God.”

There is a lot to be said for an imaginary marriage. It has the same stabilizing effect as a real marriage, the comfort of thinking oneself part of a pair rather than alone, and none of the friction of actual contact. It is particularly appropriate for people who travel a lot and like to have someone they can write to. It helps establish the fixed point from which they are wandering. Josephine was on the move incessantly: Jerusalem one week, California the next, Barcelona, Ham-

burg, Copenhagen, Paris, New York. Relationships in those circumstances tend to *be* imaginary or symbolic, and it is easy enough to imagine why Josephine Baker would have welcomed this tie to Robert Brady.

As for Brady, on one level the alliance between the rich and the famous is so natural as to require little comment. A man who was known to some extent for the people he knew, Brady became much more noticeable with Josephine Baker on his arm. There were other advantages for him in this alliance, particularly in conservative Cuernavaca, where even in 1973 an unmarried man was a “bachelor” who did well to maintain his heterosexual credentials. And the somewhat repetitive nature of society in Cuernavaca—the same foreigners saw each other at one house or another all winter long—may have stirred the imaginative Robert Brady to some “enfant-terribism.” What better way to shock his neighbors than by bringing his black guest to swim in their pools?

He was not a man who loved easily; his disdain for most people was ill concealed. Once, he said to the woman seated next to him at dinner, “Nothing you could possibly say would have the slightest interest to me.” But he seems to have genuinely loved Josephine—in a circumscribed way, but genuinely. Her triumphant sweetness must have soothed his waspishness, and the distance between them—geographical and otherwise—perhaps allowed him to feel more warmly than usual. However, as they both had feared, being together did not prove to be good for their relationship.

The Casa del Torre, Brady’s Cuernavaca residence, housed a museum-quality collection of African and Pacific sculpture, Spanish colonial sculpture, furniture, textiles, and paintings. In the cool, thick-walled rooms whose walls and shelves were filled with beautiful objects, Baker could live for her brief stays a life of easeful luxury, with plenty of servants to care for her. At a time when poverty was making her life so little gracious, the Casa del Torre was a fairy-tale castle, and she had no desire to leave it, wanting only to stay home with Brady. But for him to shock the local gentry, Baker had to be willing to be seen. She had to swim in other people’s pools, not theirs. She had to participate in the nightly gathering at someone else’s house. On a visit

she made to Cuernavaca in January 1974, they disagreed violently about whether to stay home or go out.

He put it that her demands for love weighed too heavily, and she, deciding to leave the next day, stayed up all night to write a letter explaining how she felt in distracted Franglais. "*Je suis un pure sang. Pour moi*, to be or not to be. I who love freedom it is torture to me to be here where all eyes are on me judging my every moment or move. Why why can't I have a moment of freedom with you. I don't want anything else." She had always said she would not impinge on him, and now that he had accused her of impinging, she must leave. She returned his ring and chain. She left him with advice: "Don't drink too much. Sleep a lot. Work even over time. As I said, dear, work is our best friend." Later, when she was less upset, she would write a fairy tale about their romance. She already had the idea. "Now I have the title—*the straw prince*—remember I told you that I was clinging to you—you are my straw prince."

Despite this rupture, the two kept in touch for the rest of Baker's life—which would only be two more years. She continued to ask Robert Brady and his savvy brother John for advice. She continued, in four- and five-page single-spaced letters, to keep him apprised of her thoughts on world brotherhood or the racial situation in America. Shortly before Robert Brady died of cancer in 1986, he told his brother that he still considered himself to have been married to Josephine Baker.



45/50

"Josephine Baker, I"

Pauly 76.

MIDNITE SHOW

Sat. Sept. 30, 1939 **Billiken** 1200 Center Street
Advance Sale 41c

TICKETS ON SALE
COMMUNITY PHARMACY BILLIKEN NITE CLUB

George Kraska
presents

Left: Des Moines residents could hear some of the country's finest jazz, be-bop, and blues. Oftentimes nationally famous black musicians performed for a separate white audience first, then put on a late-night performance for black audiences at Center Street spots such as the Billiken Nite Club or the Sepia Supper Club.

Local musicians also filled the bill at the Billiken and the Sepia. Opposite, inset: Ernest "Speck" Redd, the freckled jazz pianist, was a renowned teacher, performer, and radio host. After Redd opted to forgo a national musical career and stay in Des Moines to raise his family, his band played often at the Billiken. Patten printed several posters that advertised his performances. Redd's most famous pupil was young Louis Wertz, who later became Roger Williams.

Rufus M. Spates played this gleaming tenor saxophone with his friends the Gray Brothers and Irene Miles (now spelled Myles).

MIDNIGHT SHOW
JOSEPHINE BAKER IN
"PRINCESS TAM TAM"
BILLIKEN
1200 CENTER STREET
Saturday, September 30, 1939
Also Show Subjects
Advance Sale 41c

MUSIC - LAUGHTER - THRILLS - HOT SENSUOUS RHYTHM THAT'S

"PRINCESS TAM TAM"
WITH
JOSEPHINE BAKER

When international blues singer and dancer Josephine Baker appeared in Des Moines for a 1939 showing of her movie *Princess Tam Tam*, Patten printed tickets and local appearance dates on these mass-produced advertisements. Born in St. Louis and later centered in Paris, Baker's colorful life also involved spying against the Nazis in occupied France, adopting 12 international orphans, and becoming a civil rights activist. But she is most remembered for her sensational, albeit controversial, dance performances.

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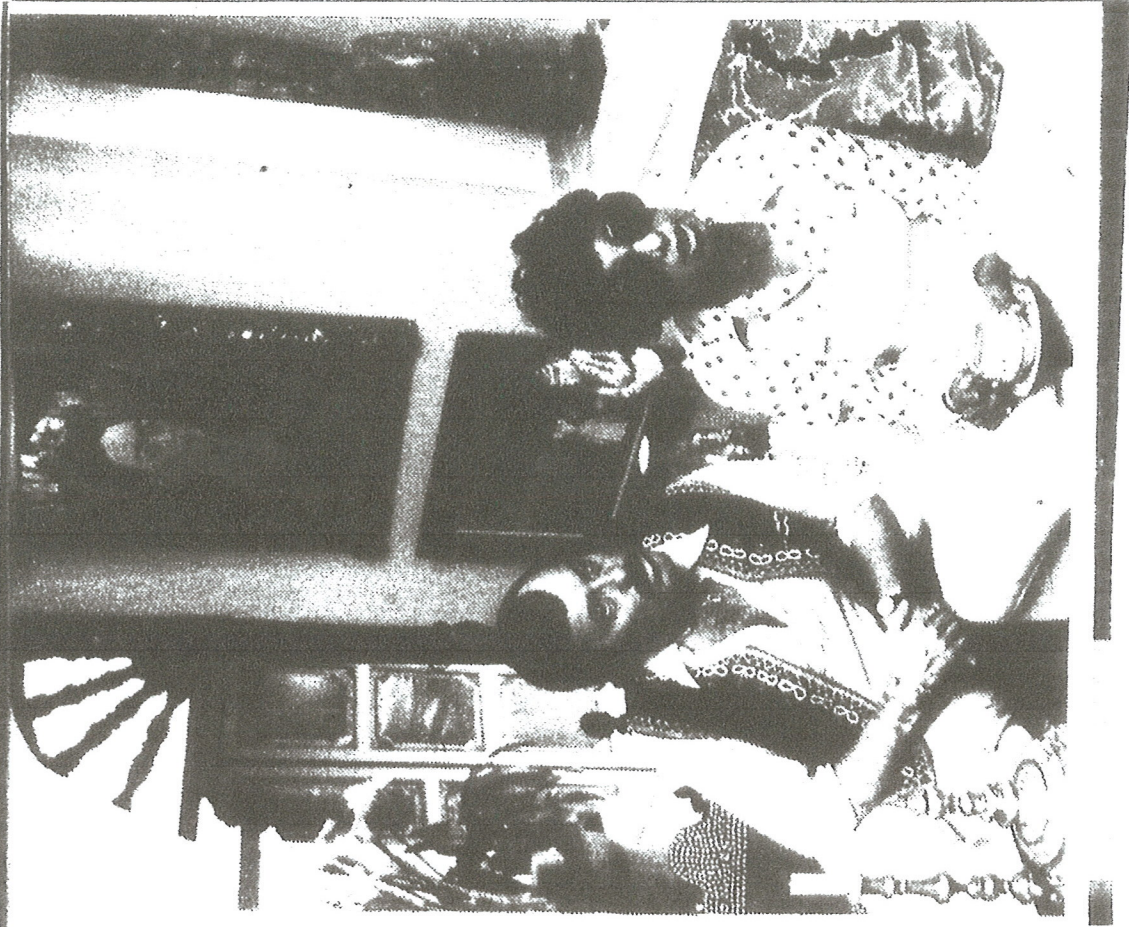
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With Robert Brady at his home in Cuernavaca, 1973. The painting of a man above them is a self-portrait by

Frida Kahlo.

Courtesy of Mr. John Brady, Jr.



A HOUSE - MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER THE ROBERT BRADY FOUNDATION

In the shadow of the Cathedral of Cuernavaca, the *Casa de la Torre* houses a unique collection of fine and decorative arts from all over the world. The visitor will enjoy a house-museum created in a portion of a massive XVI century Franciscan Convent.



The collections were assembled by Robert Brady (1928 - 1986). Born in Iowa, USA, with a career in the fine arts at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Tyler Arts Center of Temple University and the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania, he established residence in Venice for five years before settling here in Cuernavaca in 1962.

During his entire creative life he traveled extensively adding to the collections. To be seen are major works of art by Rufino Tamayo, Frida Kahlo, Miguel Covarrubias, Maurice Prendergast, Marsden Hartley, Milton Avery and Graham Sutherland.

This collection of more than 1,300 works also includes Mexican colonial furniture, prehispanic figures and tribal art from Africa, the Americas, Oceania, India and the Far East displayed in the fourteen rooms open to the public.

With an unflinching artist's eye, Brady, a painter and designer, assembled this rich mosaic of contrasting styles and epochs. The wildly colorful rooms are exactly as Brady left them. Also the visitor will enjoy the sculptures and tropical vegetation of the two patios.

