

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

By Shannon Williams

Janie Parker Pinney '80HS

Artist & Owner

Art by Janie Pinney

Caroline Pinney '12

Artist & Owner

Caroline Pinney Art



Like Mother Like Daughter?

Yes and no. Both women are Saint Mary's alumnae, and both are talented artists. *The Middle Way*, a recent showing of their paintings at Palatte Home, included individual works by each artist, as well as some collaborative pieces.

"It's been a lot of fun collaborating with my mom," Caroline says. "We're super close and completely different human beings in many aspects, and I learn a lot from working with her."

Working together allows this close mother/daughter pair to get to know each other better and come away with a new appreciation of their differences and similarities.

Two Saint Mary's Girls, Two Experiences

Janie Parker was born in Woodland, a tiny, eastern North Carolina town, about two hours from Raleigh. When she was 11, she and her family moved to Raleigh.

"I chose to board at Saint Mary's largely because my older sisters (Julie Parker Funkhouser '72HS '74C and Dell Parker Paschal '70HS '72C) had boarded, and I knew I wanted to be part of the round-the-clock life on campus," she explains. "I felt like I had the best of both worlds as a border from Raleigh. The boarding experience provided so many opportunities to feel a part of the Saint Mary's community both in and out of the classroom. It was an instant family of sisters who grew and learned together."

Janie also loved living in Smedes Hall and recalls how "everybody wanted to be in Smedes." In turn, her parents enjoyed providing a home away from home for her friends.

"Even though home was close by, I didn't go home nearly as often as I thought I would," she recalls. "But, that's the way it's supposed to be."

She also says the school provided a very nurturing environment for her to continue her study of art. "I always painted and drew as a child, so I took studio classes at Saint Mary's. I remember loving all the light in the studio."

Janie also recalls a strong belief in embracing Saint Mary's traditions. "When I was there, there was a healthy balance of tradition and academics. Such an open-minded and inclusive environment gave us the opportunity to develop real life skills that would transition with us to college, as well as support us for years to come."

The many extracurricular options available also provided great respite from the classroom rigor. As a student, Janie was a member of the Sea Saints and the Scottish Dancers – both were great ways to meet and build comradery with other girls.

"Aside from a quality education, Saint Mary's fostered a safe place where we could challenge ourselves and face adversity that came with those challenges. We learned to honor and respect our community and beyond, build invaluable friendships, and had so much FUN! And, we learned to appreciate life's imperfections and to face them with humor."

After graduating from Saint Mary's, Janie attended Salem College, majoring in Arts Management and graduating in 1984. She moved to Richmond, Virginia, worked at several advertising agencies, met her husband Lee, and got married in 1988. "Art took a back seat to mothering," she says, as she raised their three girls in Richmond in "full-time mom mode," and dabbling in art when she found time.

"As my girls grew more independent and left the nest, I signed up to take art lessons from a wonderful

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teacher in Richmond. The lessons re-kindled my love of oil painting and that interest eventually grew into taking more workshops and painting to sell my work."

Janie's daughter Caroline was the middle child in the family equation. "After my older sister went to boarding school, I decided I wanted to do the same," she says.

Caroline's interest led her to Saint Mary's, the same place where her mother, aunts, and cousins graduated. "With family in Raleigh, Saint Mary's was just what I had in mind, so I enrolled and followed in their footsteps. I was also able to take art classes."

Some of Caroline's favorite memories of Saint Mary's include times hanging out with friends "doing nothing" and talking, eating and connecting. "Those connections were the most special part of my time at Saint Mary's," she recalls. "Suzanne Narbona was one of my favorite teachers who never failed to challenge me."

Art as Inspiration

After Saint Mary's, Caroline went to the University of Alabama and initially studied the restaurant and hospitality industry. After her sophomore year, she realized she was forcing herself down a path she didn't really want, so Caroline worked with a career counselor to determine how to best use her creative inclinations instead.

"Following my heart, I graduated in 2016 from the University of Alabama as a Studio Art Major with an Emphasis in Painting and Printmaking," she says and smiles. "Then, I moved to Nashville, TN, where I lived for a couple of years with friends and worked for an estate sales company called, Everything But the House."

Last December, Caroline moved back to Richmond where she is now painting full-time. Her online store can be found at www.carolinepinney.com. She is also looking at jobs in the advertising and marketing fields, hiking, and re-discovering Richmond.

Still in Richmond herself, Janie owns also sells her work online through her website at www.artbyjaniepinney.com.

Caroline keeps in touch with her Saint Mary's friends, but hasn't yet been back on campus since she graduated. "With her ten-year reunion coming in less than three years, there's lots of time for us to work on getting her back here," says Julie Ricciardi, Director of Development for Saint Mary's. "Young alumnae like Caroline are doing great things, and we hope they'll keep coming back, supporting their alma mater, and helping us secure its future for more young women."

As alumnae, both Caroline and Janie believe Saint Mary's is as relevant today as it has been since 1842.

"Absolutely!" Janie says. "Saint Mary's provides an exceptional experience for girls to thrive and prosper in an atmosphere that celebrates and understands women in every way. The school has been able to capture an important niche for empowering girls to believe in their own capabilities, appreciate our world, and gain knowledge to make it a better place."

Caroline agrees. "It's super special to go to an all-girls' school, and I hope it never goes away. You don't realize while you are there that you can be more yourself and learn more about yourself without the distraction of boys."

They also have a lot of advice to offer today's students.

"I hope today's girls maintain faith in themselves and others through good and difficult times, and that they acknowledge and accept the ordinary while searching for the extraordinary in people," Janie shares. "Try to remain open to vulnerability and to fall into its uncertainty with grace. I hope each grows and finds joy."

Caroline says, "My advice is to be patient. I'm very stubborn, and I got a little stir-crazy, but I learned so much. Looking back, I wasn't totally aware of how great my experience was as I was living it. Learn as much as you can! The classes here are so interesting. Don't wish away your high school years! If you are in such a rush to finish and get to college, then you'll look back and wish you had soaked in more of this special time."

Saint Mary's alumnae like Janie and Caroline embody the creative and collaborative spirit that Saint Mary's strives to foster in all who come through her gates. Educated and resourceful, this alumnae duo has turned their creativity into beautiful and challenging works of art, enriching their lives and inspiring all who view their vision of the world.

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