

Georgeanna Seegar Jones (1912-2005) ^[1]

By: Ruffenach, Stephen C. Keywords: Biography ^[2] Fertilization ^[3] Reproductive assistance ^[4] Medicine ^[5]

[Georgeanna Seegar Jones](#) ^[6] was a reproductive endocrinologist who created one of America's most successful [infertility](#) ^[7] clinics and eventually, along with her husband Howard W. Jones, MD, performed the first [in vitro](#) ^[8] [fertilization](#) ^[9] in America, leading to the birth of Elizabeth Jordan Carr. Jones was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on 6 July 1912. Her father, Dr. [John King Beck Emory Seegar](#) ^[10], was a practicing physician at the time working in the field of obstetrics. Early in her childhood Jones had a broken bone that eventually became infected and caused a great deal of pain, inspiring her to go into the field of medicine.

Jones' education began at [Goucher College](#) ^[11] in Baltimore where she received her bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1932. After graduating, she traveled to Johns Hopkins Medical School and obtained her MD in 1936. Jones then continued research in the field of reproductive physiology at [Johns Hopkins University](#) ^[12] until she applied for and received a fellowship at the National Institute of Health, where she was able to continue her work until 1939. It was at this point that Jones took a position working at Johns Hopkins Medical School, serving in a number of different positions including the director of the reproductive physiology lab as well as the head gynecologist of the Gynecological Endocrine Clinic at Johns Hopkins. Jones continued working in both positions, eventually becoming a full-time professor of gynecology and obstetrics until her retirement in 1978.

During her time at Johns Hopkins, Jones conducted a great deal of research in the area of reproductive physiology leading to many important discoveries. The most significant was the recognition of the [pregnancy](#) ^[13] [hormone](#) ^[14] chorionic [gonadotropin](#) ^[15], which eventually led to the creation of the [home pregnancy test](#) ^[16]. It was also while working at Johns Hopkins that Georgeanna met and married her husband, Howard W. Jones, in 1940. From this point on, the two collaborated on their gynecological studies and their work eventually provided Johns Hopkins with a reputation as an important institution in the field of gynecological research.

In 1949 Jones and her husband began researching [infertility](#) ^[7] and focused on the luteal phase deficiency, an affliction that involves insufficient [progesterone](#) ^[17], a female [hormone](#) ^[14] important in [pregnancy](#) ^[13]. Jones cited this deficiency as a cause of [miscarriage](#) ^[18] and [infertility](#) ^[7] in women and her research provided the most thorough description of the process to date, offering a better understanding of [infertility](#) ^[7] and its causes. Her extensive research also inspired her to continue in the study of [infertility](#) ^[7].

After retiring from their positions at Johns Hopkins in 1978, [Eastern Virginia Medical School](#) ^[19] hired both Joneses as professors of Obstetrics and Gynecology. It was around this time that [Robert Edwards](#) ^[20] and [Patrick Steptoe](#) ^[21] delivered the world's first baby from [in vitro](#) ^[8] [fertilization](#) ^[9] in England. This event inspired the Joneses to recreate the methods of Steptoe and Edwards in America, while also improving upon them, in order to deliver the first [test-tube baby](#) ^[22] in the United States. In order to do this, they sought funding for the creation of the [Jones Institute for Reproductive Medicine](#)

[23], an [infertility](#) [7] clinic that would become very successful. The clinic had its grand opening on 1 March 1980.

The number of women desiring treatment from the clinic was overwhelming despite a great deal of media backlash regarding the clinic's goal of creating a child through [in vitro](#) [8] [fertilization](#) [9]. Georgeanna Jones and her husband would eventually succeed in this goal with the birth of [Jordan Elizabeth Carr](#) [24] on 28 December 1981. The methods used were similar to those employed by Steptoe and Edwards but also included a regime of fertility drugs that increased [egg](#) [25] production in the patients taking them. From this point, the clinic went on to help thousands of mothers with [infertility](#) [7] problems become pregnant through the use of [in vitro](#) [8] [fertilization](#) [9] as well as other techniques such as [artificial insemination](#) [26] and the use of fertility medications. By the time of Georgeanna's death from heart failure on 26 March 2005, the clinic had assisted in over 3,000 births, allowing Jones to leave a legacy of countless mothers that would not have had children without her help.

Sources

1. Gale, [Thomson](#) [27]. "Georgeanna Jones." The [Thomson](#) [27] Corporation. http://www.novelguide.com/a/discover/ewb_0002_0026_0/ewb_0002_0026_0_00090.html [28] (Accessed 23 April, 2008).
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Georgeanna Seegar Jones was a reproductive endocrinologist who created one of America's most successful infertility clinics in West Virginia and eventually, along with her husband Howard W. Jones MD, performed the first in vitro fertilization in America, leading to the birth of Elizabeth Jordan Carr. Jones was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on 6 July 1912. Her father, Dr. John King Beck Emory Seegar, was a practicing physician at the time working in the field of obstetrics. Early in her childhood Jones had a broken bone that eventually became infected and caused a great deal of pain, inspiring her to go into the field of medicine.

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