

The James Jones Literary Society Newsletter

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The Society newsletter is published quarterly in January, April, July and October of each year.

Submissions of essays, features, anecdotes, photographs, etc., that pertain to author James Jones may be sent to the co-editors for publication consideration. Every attempt will be made to return material, if requested upon submission. Material may be edited for length, clarity and accuracy. Send submissions to R.R. 2, Box 401, Urbana, IL 61802

Ray Elliott and Vanessa Faurie, Co-Editors

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Discussions Of Jones' War Works Highlight Symposium

James Jones was frequently enmeshed in controversy, both in his professional and personal life. So, in a way, it was fitting that a "curmudgeon extraordinaire" gave the keynote address at the seventh annual James Jones Literary Society symposium last November at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

The principal speaker was Dr. Paul Fussell, professor emeritus of English at the University of Pennsylvania, a former National Book Award winner and the author of 18 books, among them several notable studies of the two world wars (including his controversial essay, *Thank God for the Atomic Bomb*).

The symposium theme was "Modern War in Fact and Fiction." Fussell's topic was "James Jones and His Tradition(s)."

Controversy was at hand immediately.

"I have become a propagandist for the works of Jones," Fussell admitted.

Well, some of the works....

"I am especially fond of his 'war trilogy,'" Fussell continues, alluding to *From Here To Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line* and *Whistle*.

Just before the conference, though, Fussell told a Springfield newspaper reporter: "I find most of Jones' other books unreadable."

Back at the symposium, Fussell continued, "I'd recommend *The Thin Red Line* to anyone. It was Jones' secret autobiography. It was his best book. He would have been a superb military historian if he had not gone into fiction writing."

So, did Fussell feel that Jones was without peer when it came to telling war stories?

"Well, I think Jones' *Pistol* and *Viet Journal* and also his *WWII* (a nonfiction treatise) have not received sufficient recognition," he said.

"But I must admit that when I recently reread *Pistol* and *Whistle*, I was nowhere near as impressed with them as when I read each of them the first time."

Quickly rebuilding the aura of his subject, Fussell said Jones was on the same plateau as "a Middlewestern author of realistic fiction" as Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, James T. Farrell, Ring Lardner, Willa Cather and playwrights Eugene O'Neill and Clifford Odets.

He said Jones' strength as a writer was in "describing group dynamics," adding: "He was at his best as a memoirist, and he was a great reporter. Sometimes he was a little unstructured, but his fiction tended to fall off in quality when he tried to be a structuralist."

Fussell chose not to specifically condemn Jones' sometimes-maligned novel, *Some Came Running*, which many think was a thinly veiled tale of Robinson and some of its former citizens.

"How can I condemn or comment on it when I haven't read it; when I can't buy the novel anywhere in the entire city of Philadelphia?" he asked.

Fortunately, Fussell's wife, Harriett, was able to purchase a copy at the symposium. So, perhaps, the "curmudgeon" eventually will be able to embrace its literary qualities.

After all, he did conclude his address by observing Jones was "not some barefoot primitive but, rather, a subtle, imaginative author."

Another highlight of the symposium was a panel discussion on "James Jones' War in Fact, Fiction and Film." Panelists were Carl Becker and Robert Thobaben of Wright State University; Tom Wood, archivist at the University of Illinois at Springfield; and film scholar Tony Williams of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Wood discussed Jones' critique of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* in light of Jones' own combat experience. Becker and Thobaben dealt with the accuracy of Jones' description of the Pearl Harbor attack in light of military history. And Williams inspected Hollywood adaptations of Jones' war fiction in light of the author's contemptuous article on phony war films.

George Hendrick, an English professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Barbara Jones (no relation to the author) of the U. of I. Library's Rare Book Room, discussed the author's original manuscripts that were on display at the symposium.

Hendrick, a former president of the Society, and current board members Helen Howe and Don Sackrider are currently collaborating on a book about the Handy Writers' Colony in Marshall, which Jones established with his mentor, Lowney Handy, after World War II.

Also at the symposium, the first George Hendrick Research Award was presented to Steven R. Carter for his book about Jones entitled, *An American Literary Orientalist Master*. The book takes a new look at *Some Came Running* and "re-examines it as a quality work of fiction."

--Dave Nightingale, Reprinted from *The Robinson Argus*, Nov. 6, 1997

Latest Fellowship Recipient Signs With Literary Agency

The 1997 James Jones First Novel Fellowship was awarded to Leslie Schwartz of Los Angeles for her unpublished novel, "Jumping the Green."

More than 500 manuscripts were submitted for the sixth annual competition, which is administered by the Wilkes University English Department on behalf of the Society.

Schwartz graduated with honors from the University of California-Berkeley in 1985. She free-lances as a health reporter for several women's magazines such as *Shape*, *Self* and *Good Housekeeping*. In addition to writing features for the *Los*

Angeles Times, she is the writer of a health newsletter published by Clement Communications.

Her short fiction has been published in several literary magazines, including *Sonora Review*, *Yellow Silk* and *Jacaranda Review*. Schwartz also was awarded a residency at the Ucross Foundation in Clearmont, Wyo., where she will live for eight weeks in a converted train depot and work on completing her second novel.

As a result of winning the \$2,500 Jones Fellowship, Schwartz recently signed a contract with the Elaine Markson Literary Agency in New York, where she will be represented by Elizabeth Sheinkman.

As an update on the Society's 1995 co-winner Rick Bass, *The New Yorker* reported that his award-winning novel, *Where the Sea Used to Be*, will be published in 1998. Bass also had received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1997.

The deadline for the 1998 James Jones First Novel Fellowship is March 1, 1998. The competition is open to all writers who have not previously published a novel.

A Message From The President

On my ninth birthday in 1958, a Hollywood crew rolled into my hometown of Madison, Ind., for three weeks of filming for *Some Came Running*. We were also so excited and thrilled. Director Vincente Minelli brought with him a cast of 17, including Frank Sinatra, Shirley MacLaine, Dean Martin, Martha Hyer, Arthur Kennedy and Nancy Gates.

My mom and I spent one whole day watching the film crew stage the opening scene of the bus entering the town. Several times while the bus stopped, we stood on the curb and, almost touching the bus windows, we exchanged smiles and waves with Sinatra and MacLaine. Many people I knew managed, even if only for a split second, to be seen in the film.

When I watched the film in the local movie house the following year, I didn't understand most of it, but I was certain that the story was about Madison and the people who lived there. I believed several of my uncle could have easily been 'Bama or Dave Hirsh or patrons of Smitty's Bar.

Soon after moving to Robinson, Ill., in 1975 to teach at Lincoln Trail College (LTC), I finally made the connection with James Jones and his inspirations for writing *Some Came Running*. Meeting people who knew Jones and hearing the oral history from those who liked him and his literature, as well as from those who didn't like him nor

his literature, have provided me with a strange mixture of emotions each time I read the novel. To this day, when I think of characters in *Some Came Running*, I experience a confusing merging of imageries between the fiction and the nonfiction, among Robinson and Parkman and Madison, among Arkie and 'Bama and an uncle or two.

I spent two of the five years I worked at LTC in an office separated from Helen Howe only by a 5-foot moveable partition. Helen and her husband, Tinks, knew James Jones very well. Helen was there to read and discuss with Jones the galley proofs for *From Here To Eternity*. Tinks is mentioned in some of the letters included in George Hendrick's *To Reach Eternity: The Letters of James Jones*. How could one not become excited about James Jones and his literature after spending two years of being a teaching colleague arm's length from Helen Howe?

From those years of cultish fascination with *Some Came Running*, I went on to read, enjoy and be moved by Jones' other war novels and his nonfiction. *The Thin Red Line* validated and paralleled stories I had heard from veterans about the brutality, terror, fear, cruelty, grief and agony of war.

One veteran I knew had lied about his age to get into the Marine Corps. I was told by others that, as a combat foot soldier, this man had fought in some of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific. His de-evolution as a soldier took months. Regardless of the stories, I always perceived a dark side about him.

The stories portrayed this man as a vicious soldier who collected his share of booty, most of which he had traded for favors and whiskey while in combat. He did send home a few souvenirs, including gold teeth packed in a Bull Durham tobacco bag. When he finally returned to Madison from the war, he was no better off than any other veteran of combat.

Members of C for Charlie Company reached out of the pages of *The Thin Red Line*, grabbed me by the throat and slapped my sweaty face as their plight on Guadalcanal evolved. In one scene, Charlie Dale literally made me breathless when he filled his little Bull Durham tobacco bag with gold teeth. Since first reading, my ideas and images of war have been forever changed.

GOALS AS SOCIETY PRESIDENT

As president of The James Jones Literary Society, I view 1998 as a year of strengthening and stabilizing the Society. Our 1995 Strategic Planning Initiative clearly identified that the Society's top-ranked projects are to sponsor and fund the First Novel Fellowship Award and to host an annual symposium. Because of

significant cash gifts to the Society from Don Sackrider and the Charles Robb estate, 1998 will be a transition year for making our First Novel Fellowship Award financial self-sustaining. As soon as the endowment at Wilkes University can generate enough earnings to underwrite all the expenses involved in conducting and granting the First Novel Fellowship Award, our organization will take a major leap forward.

Because of our many projects, the general operating budget needs to be significantly augmented. Using proceeds from the Robb estate and with the assistance of the Lincoln Trail College Foundation, establishing a second endowment (with earnings deposited to the operating budget) will improve our ability to meet our financial obligations. However, earnings from the second endowment are not enough to drive the organization, as well as underwrite expenses incurred in conducting the annual symposia. Therefore, my goal is to work with the the Finance Committee to increase revenues and to establish long-term financial security for the Society.

Other personal goals I have include strengthening our connection with Lincoln Trail College, increasing membership in the Society, and supporting and encouraging our board members in their committee assignments. Along the way, I also hope to have a lot of fun, too.

--Jerry L. Bayne, President

Minutes Of The 1997 Annual Society Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of The James Jones Literary Society was held on Saturday, Nov. 1, 1997, in the Brookens Library Auditorium of the University of Illinois at Springfield.

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. by Society President Judy Everson. Approval of the minutes of the 1996 meeting, as read by Secretary Helen Howe, was moved by Michael Lennon and seconded by Dave Nightingale. The minutes were approved as read.

Treasurer Juanita Martin reported that the Society's treasury opened with a balance of \$9,957.44 on Jan. 5, 1997. To date, the Society has received \$103,351.65, \$50,000 of which was invested in the Fellowship Endowment through Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., and \$50,000 was invested in a Certificate of Deposit. Operating expenses totaled \$6,583.84, leaving a balance of \$5,125.25.

President Everson reported to the membership the bequest of \$150,000 from late Society member Charles Robb of Lincoln, Maine, explaining that half of the bequest will be invested through Wilkes University for financing the Society's First Novel

Fellowship annual award, and half will be invested in Robinson for the benefit of the Society's operating fund.

Finance Committee chairman Warren Mason reported that the Fellowship Endowment totaled \$79,646.88 as of Sept. 30, 1997, with an additional \$21,000 to be invested in the endowment in the near future, which will give the Fellowship Endowment assets of approximately \$100,000. Mason continued that the operating fund, referred to as the Society Endowment, which will total approximately \$70,000 will be invested short-term through Robinson AmBank and reviewed in two years, with a long-term investment plan to be determined at that time. The Society Board has adopted a policy that the principal of the Society Endowment will remain untouched.

Michael Lennon stated that \$25,000 had been donated to the Fellowship Endowment by Society member Don Sackrider, and added that the Society is grateful to both Mr. Sackrider and Mr. Robb for their generosity.

Dr. John Arabatgis moved that the Finance Committee report be accepted. Juanita Martin seconded the motion, which was approved by the membership.

President Everson reported that the Society Board has discussed the publication of a chap book featuring Mr. Robb's poetry, to be distributed to Society members. A committee consisting of Michael Lennon, Tom Wood and Jerry Bayne was named to explore the project.

Membership chair Margo Nightingale reported that current Society membership numbers 267, and that those who had not paid 1997 dues had been expunged from the membership list. Members paid through 1997 will be notified that 1998 dues are payable.

Michael Lennon, chair of the Nominating Committee, announced that the following slate for election to Society offices: Jerry Bayne, president; Ray Elliott, vice president; Margot Nightingale, secretary; Juanite Martin, treasurer; and Tom Wood, archivist. Lennon's motion to elect the slate was seconded by Carl Becker. The motion was approved.

President Everson moved that the following board members whose terms expire this year, be re-elected to the board: Carl Becker, Kevin Heisler, Helen Howe, Kathy Stillwell, Jon Shirota and Robert Thobaben. She proposed election of Claude-Marie Lane to fill a vacancy on the board. The motion was seconded by Janet Thobaben and passed by the membership.

Everson thanked retiring secretary Helen Howe for her years of dedicated service and welcomes the Society's new officers.

Lennon reported that 476 submissions to the First Novel Fellowship competition were received this year, a slight decrease from the previous year. The field was reduced to 32 semi-finalists, then eight finalists. With five readers sharing the reading of the 476 manuscripts, there were 1,500 readings before the winner was chosen. The \$15 entry fee provided \$7,146 for the Fellowship Fund, with \$6,606 left in the account after expenses, including \$1,830 paid to readers at a rate of \$3 per read and \$512 for advertising. Lennon said that most of each year's entry fees are sufficient to cover expenses for the following year's competition. An ad for the competition was placed in *Writers and Poets*, and notices were mailed to 150 creative writing programs and 150 literary magazines. Information on the competition is also carried on the Internet.

Everson announced that no short story award would be made this year. She appointed Jerry Bayne and Juanita Martin to explore ways to overcome the problems of limitation of eligibility and vagueness of criteria for judgment that hamper the success of the competition.

Lennon reported that the George Hendrick Research Award, established to honor the first president of The James Jones Literary Society, would be inaugurated at the 1997 symposium. The award recognizes scholarship devoted to James Jones' work and will be given annually if a work of merit appears in that year.

Warren Mason reported progress on the Society's proposal to the U.S. Postal Service that James Jones be featured on an upcoming postage stamp design. The Society has had strong support from Congressman Poshard of Illinois and Congressman Abercrombie of Hawaii, and the Postal Service's Advisory Committee has accepted the proposal for consideration. The committee is now making design decisions for stamps of the year 2000, and the Society has proposed the Jones stamp for the year 2001, the 50th anniversary of the publication of *From Here To Eternity* and the 80th anniversary of Jones' birth.

Everson announced that the 1998 symposium will take place in Robinson, tentatively on Nov. 7, and named Jerry Bayne, Ray Elliott, Helen Howe, Juanita Martin and Margot Nightingale to the symposium planning committee.

Lennon took over the podium to pay tribute to the two people stepping down from the Society leadership this year: Judity Everson and Helen Howe. Presenting each with a bouquet of flowers, he thanked them for their remarkable service to the Society and welcomes their continued presence on the board of directors.

Everson concluded the business meeting with a report on the filming of James Jones' *The Thin Red Line* and Kaylie Jones' *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries*.

--Margo Nightingale, Secretary

Eternity Gets A Nod In Novel

The 1994 collection of a novel and stories by Society member George Garrett called *The Old Army Game* includes a reprint of Garrett's 1961 novel, *Which Ones Are the Enemy?* In that novel, there is a scene in which two soldiers talk about *From Here To Eternity*:

All of us read all the books about the service. They were in cheap paperbacks and they sold them in the PXs. A paperback just exactly fits the back pocket of a pair of fatigue pants or field pants. You can button the pocket and it doesn't make too much of a bulge. I've read a lot of books that way. You spend so much time waiting around you might as well read as sit on your thumbs. Reading is as good a way to kill time as any. I've read a whole lot of them--Naked and the Dead, Caine Mutiny, Walk in the Sun--oh, a lot. Far and away the best of the bunch for my money was From Here To Eternity. It was the truest. Up to a point. I told Fishbein I didn't see how he could improve on that. I mean that pretty well said it about Army life. Funny thing, when I said that Fishbein's eyes lit up. I had got to him. Now we were talking about something he really liked and care about.

"Sure," he said. "That was a pretty good book. But that was quite a while ago."

"Things haven't changed that much. Soldiering is about the same."

"Well, maybe so," Fishbein said. "But there's one big difference. All those characters in the old prewar, peacetime Army were different in one way. None of them had been in a war. Almost all of you guys have been shot at. Some of you, like Ryder and Mooney and Loller, say, have been in two wars. That makes a hell of a difference."

"Okay, maybe we've all got more miles on our shoes."

"That's not all," Fishbein went on. "You guys have even read the books...."

"*Eternity* is a kind of benchmark for the military novel," Garrett writes. "And I'm proud to have made an early case for that in a military novel."

In the introduction to *The Old Army Game*, George Core writes of Garrett's credit to Jones and his most famous novel: "...(*Eternity*) has enabled writers like himself to

write about life in the military service without qualm or queasiness, to look at that experience anew and to seize its distinctive qualities as the stuff of fiction. James Jones, as our author tells us, opened up this territory for art. In so doing, he showed others how to write about military life, not merely about war."

Garrett is also the author of *James Jones: An Album Biography* (1984).

College Trustees To Learn More About JJLS

Society board members Helen Howe and Juanita Martin will be featured presenters at the February meeting of the Illinois Eastern Colleges Board of Trustees. Lincoln Trail College president and ex-officio board member of the Society John Arabatgis is hosting the meeting in Robinson and included the presentation on the agenda to inform the trustees about the strength and vitality of The James Jones Literary Society.

Playwright In Godard Film Imitated 'Bama Dillert

I recently observed a reference to James Jones in Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film, *Contempt*. This French film concerns an effort by a U.S. producer (Jack Palance) to make a screen version of Homer's *Odyssey* in Italy. The legendary German director Fritz Lang plays himself as the director of *Odyssey*.

Michel Piccoli portrays a playwright who is brought in to rewrite the screenplay of *Odyssey*. Brigitte Bardot plays Piccoli's wife. Palance's character falls for Bardot, which leads to a marital spat between Piccoli and Bardot's characters.

In the course of the spat, Piccoli sits in the bathtub, smoking a cigar and wearing his hat. When Bardot ridicules him, he says he is playing 'Bama Dillert in *Some Came Running*. Jones' novel was made into a movie in 1958 by Vincente Minnelli. The film starred Frank Sinatra, Shirley MacLaine and Dean Martin as 'Bama Dillert.

--Kim C. Cox

A Visit To The Set Of A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries

Years ago, I was in the Paris apartment of my old friend James Jones and his wife, Gloria. Their daughter, Kaylie, a shy blonde little girl, was brought out from her room to meet me. Jim wanted Kaylie to hear the story about her grandfather, who died long before she was born.

When I was her age and lived in Robinson, Ill., I told Kaylie, I had hid under the bed to avoid a trip to the dentist, her grandfather, Dr. Ray Jones. My father found me and when I was imprisoned in the chair, I told Dr. Jones, "I don't like you!"

He sighed and replied, "Well, I don't like you either. So let's get this over with."

Now that little girl is grown up and has three published novels of her own. The third one, *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries*, has just been made into a movie filmed in Paris and Wilmington, N.C. It is about a girl growing up in a Paris apartment located on an island in the Seine. Although they have different names, the parents and the brother are very similar to Jim and Gloria Jones and Jamie Jones.

I met the teen-aged Kaylie Jones, still shy, when James Jones brought the family back to America to live and learn about American life. Jim was going to teach creative writing at Florida International University in Miami. They rented a house in nearby Key Biscayne, where I had bought an apartment.

After a year of the tropics, the Jones moved on to the Hamptons on the east end of Long Island, and Jim died in 1977 at the relatively young age of 57. I finally got to know Kaylie as we worked together in the James Jones Literary Society.

Now the week before this past Christmas, I spent three days with Kaylie and her own new daughter, Eyrna (who hardly ever cries either) on the *Soldier's Daughter* location near Wilmington. Kaylie's husband, Kevin Heisler, joined us from their home in New York City.

We were all wearing smiles over the reality of the book becoming a movie at last. Merchant-Ivory had renewed its option on the book to movie for the last three years.

The day I arrived at the beach location south of Wilmington, the weather was perfect: Clear bright blue sky and calm ocean. The scene being filmed was about a recurring dream of the father's"

As a very young soldier on Guadalcanal in World War II and while making a nature call away from his company, he is attacked by a Japanese soldier with a bayonet. But his aim is deflected, and the American kills the Japanese. The father subsequently tells his son about the guilt he felt when he found the Japanese soldier's wallet with pictures of his wife and children.

In filming the scene, I noticed the crew using a tape measure to get the distance between camera and actors. I asked director Jim Ivory why. He said that even with all of the technology it was the only way to insure being "in focus" on close ups.

That afternoon, the filming included a cookout on the beach for the family and many of their friends, played by extras. Barbara Hershey, who plays the movie mother, was later filmed walking down the beach with her son telling him about the father's serious and probably fatal heart problems. Kris Kristofferson plays the movie father.

Kaylie introduced me to him during a break. She was very happy about how the actor's own natural manner of speaking caught the essence of Jim Jones' no-nonsense Midwestern accent, which he never lost--and made a point of not losing, I feel.

Kris Kristofferson grew up all over the world as his own father pursued his military career. Even though he spent two years at Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship, Kristofferson had not been influenced into speaking like the British and said this role was one he felt he had been preparing for all his life.

Originally, the movie father was to be played by Nick Nolte. Ironically, he was unavailable because he was still working on the movie being made in Australia from James Jones' novel, *The Thin Red Line*, about the Guadalcanal campaign in World War II. That movie also had a scene about a young American soldier being forced to kill an attacking Japanese in a situation reminiscent of the father's recurring dream in *Soldier's Daughter*.

That first day I was on the set was Barbara Hershey's last day of filming, and Ismail Merchant was cooking dinner that night for her and most of the regular company. Relaxing after the end of the day and the end of the movie for her, Hershey told me about her approach to playing her role. Although the mother was drawn from Gloria Jones, Hershey said, the movie and the book character had a different name. And because it was not exactly Gloria, it gave Hershey a chance to interpret the character in her own way. She said she would have made an effort to play it true to the real Gloria if the book and the script had been exact.

The next day's shooting was of a high school football game. The father is trying to introduce his daughter and son to American life, ala Friday night. Shooting was to start at sundown on location at a nearby local high school. Paid extras were placed within special areas of the crowd.

For that scene, Ismail Merchant, Kaylie and Kevin, a friend of theirs and I were extras. We sat in the crowd two rows about the movie family. Also near us as extras were Kristofferson's wife, Lisa, and their five children. They had flown in from their home in Hawaii to be there for Christmas.

Sunday was a day without filming. The producer and director planned for Monday's shoot at the family house in nearby Wrightsville Beach. That location, along with

Wilmington, was chosen because it was more like the Hamptons in Long Island 20 years ago. Also, Wilmington has become a movie production center, and the technicians and film people find the area a quality place to live and work. Production costs are lower there, too.

A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries is to be released in September 1998, joining a long list of Merchant-Ivory crafted films like *Howard's End*, *Remains of the Day*, and *A Room with a View*. The book itself is to be reprinted again in the United States and Europe.

--*Don Sackrider*

Read About Another WWII Combat Soldier's Experience

Good Morning: But The Nightmares Never End

by Charlie Dukes and edited by Society vice president Ray Elliott

This is a first-person nonfiction account of an infantryman on the front lines in the European Theater, of a POW in a German work camp and of a displaced, disillusioned veteran shortly after the war's end. Dukes was one of the last documented American POWs held by the Germans to cross the Elbe River--the East/West dividing line--to freedom and repatriation, arriving 20 days after the official end of the war there.

\$24.95

(includes shipping and handling)

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