

THE JAMES JONES LITERARY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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The James Jones Society newsletter is published quarterly to keep members and interested parties apprised of activities, projects and upcoming events of the Society; to promote public interest and academic research in the works of James Jones; and to celebrate his memory and legacy.

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 or tales@soltec.net .

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The James Jones Literary Society
<http://rking.vinu.edu/j.htm>

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WILLIE MORRIS REMEMBERED

Willie's great friend Dean Faulkner Wells, the niece of writer William Faulkner, told my husband Kevin and me as we were standing outside Jackson's old state capitol where Willie was lying in state, that Willie left life exactly the same way he left parties. Her voice breaking, a cigarette smouldering in her shaking hand, she reminded us of how, late in the evening, when a few last friends would be gathered around talking, Willie would simply sneak away, retire quietly, without saying goodbye to anyone. All of us remembered this habit of his, and we felt acutely the absence of a last opportunity to say goodbye. His death came as a complete shock. I felt a good deal of regret because I had so often promised to come visit, to bring the baby, and

Kevin and I kept putting it off, since we were so busy and with Willie, you always felt that there was time, and more time.

We decided never to put such things off again. So Kevin and I took our baby Eyrna and flew down to Jackson, Miss., to say goodbye to Willie. We thought it was important that his grand-goddaughter Eyrna, whom he'd never met in life, be there for him as well. The day, Aug. 5, was my birthday.

In the large, echoing state capitol, Eyrna played on the floor with Willie's 22-month-old step-grandson, while towering above their heads, illustrious persons including politicians and Hollywood producers, arrived from all over the country to pay their respects. Writers David Halberstam, William Styron, Pat Conroy, Richard Ford and Winston Groom were among those present. I got to see my old friend David Morris, Willie's son, whom I hadn't spent time with since my last visit to Mississippi in 1986.

The service took place in the First United Methodist Church of Yazoo City, Willie's hometown. Willie's wife, JoAnne, asked us to sit with the family, a great honor for Kevin and me. To keep 21-month-old Eyrna appropriately dignified and quiet, we gave her a bagful of pistachio nuts. She busily broke open the nuts and munched them loudly during the entire service.

Willie's coffin, covered with flowers, lay not five feet away, and although certain mourners glanced at us with mystified, perhaps even indignant, expressions, I felt sure that Willie would not have minded. He was probably looking down on James Jones' granddaughter right then and chuckling in a delighted way, for this was exactly the kind of situation that amused him greatly.

Eulogies were given by Willie's fifth grade teacher, Josephine Ayres Haxton, as well as his friends Bill Styron, David Halberstam, Mike Espy and the Reverend William F. Winter. All touched upon his brilliance, his kindness, his generosity of spirit and his jokester's sense of humor.

Which brought to my mind those first months when my family moved to Bridgehampton in 1975, when Willie would disguise his voice and pretend to be the dog catcher-he'd tell us he had our dogs but would give them back to us for a ransom; or he'd put on an accent and explain that he was the highway commissioner and the wrecking crew was on its way to put the new highway in through our kitchen. Once, the Soviet ambassador actually did call and invited my father to Russia, and my father said, "Fuck off, Willie, I'm writing!" and hung up on the poor man.

Styron, Halberstam, Espy and Winter all talked at length of Willie's involvement in the Civil Rights movement during the Sixties, when he put himself on the line to uphold his most profound desire for equality for Southern African-Americans. It was Willie, in fact, who brought to Hollywood the idea of a film on the murder of Medgar Evers, which became the critically acclaimed *Ghosts of Mississippi*.

In closing, the First United Methodist Choir sang "Abide With Me," his favorite hymn, a beautiful rendition that brought me to tears and led Eyrna to cry out in the ensuing silence, "More, please!"

A delta blues trio played at the grave site in the Yazoo cemetery, which Willie loved so much and wrote so passionately about in *North Toward Home* and *My Dog Skip*. The gravediggers, convicts in striped pants, stood leaning on their shovels and smoking, off in the distance. Winston Groom said a few kind parting words, and then the schoolboy buglers played taps. Willie had once been of their number, playing the taps echo at the funerals of soldiers fallen in the Korean War. While Eyrna in her bright pink dress romped and skipped among the gravestones, I was blinded by tears, remembering how Willie had gotten an Army bugler to come play taps for my father's service at the Bridgehampton community house.

Willie had been so kind and generous to me during the whole period of my father's illness and then after his death. He'd taken me to visit colleges because my father was too ill to go. As a favor to me, he took my fabulous 12th grade English teacher to the high school prom! He came to my graduation, and four years later, sent me a big check when I graduated from college. And he called, usually late at night, at first quite often, then less and less over the years. And I didn't call him much myself, worrying that I might disturb him, knowing how he didn't like phones all that much (except, of course, to play tricks).

He was a firm supporter of my work in the James Jones Literary Society and came to several symposiums, including an early one in Robinson. Kevin and I took him to the Jones family plot in the Robinson cemetery. Standing there in his old windbreaker, hands stuffed deep in his pockets, he looked out across the headstones at the enormous Marathon Oil refinery in the distance, and murmured that the factory certainly carried some heavy symbolic power, looming so large above all those headstones of people who had lived under its influence. He admitted to us that he had driven to Robinson before, just to see where my father had grown up, but he hadn't asked anyone for directions to the Jones home or to the cemetery plot. He'd just sort of quietly snooped around, as was his wont. He hadn't found the graves.

Standing now at his grave, how I wished I could have told him that I love him, how much he helped me, how good my life is, not in small part because of his kindness, and his strong moral anchor, which always held fast and helped to hold me steady in stormy seas.

We all gathered later that evening at JoAnne and Willie's house, which they very recently had remodeled to suit both their working needs. In the living room, his glasses and a few note cards he'd been writing, along with the week's TV guide turned to Aug. 2, lay on the ottoman before his favorite armchair that faced the television, as if he'd just gotten up for a moment, perhaps to get something to drink from the fridge. I felt his presence everywhere, yet I couldn't find him in the crowded house. I even went up to his study to look for him, as if he might have sneaked away from the party, but he wasn't there.

-- Kaylie Jones

MADISON, IND., CELEBRATED FILMING OF *SOME CAME RUNNING*

Turner Classic Movies is producing a mini documentary on the 40th anniversary of the filming of *Some Came Running* in Madison, Ind., and the TCM Network will soon feature the movie.

I never tire of watching that film. I am sure the fact that being present for some of the filming in Madison, my hometown, has contributed to my fascination with everything about that movie and James Jones' fiction on which it was based. Living for five years in Parkman or Robinson, Ill., certainly supercharged my interest, too.

During Labor Day weekend, the Madison Main Street Program presented a *Some Came Running* festival celebrating the 40th anniversary of the original release of the film. Friday evening began with a reception on the lawn of the J.F.D. Lanier Mansion, a state memorial located near the Ohio River. Wine was provided by the Madison Lanthier Winery and music from the post-war era was performed by the Rob Houze Quintet. A buffet meal followed.

Mayor Al Huntington said, during his brief talk after dinner, that the filming of *Some Came Running* in Madison was one of the five most significant events in the city's history.

After dinner we were driven in vintage vehicles through the downtown to the Ohio Theatre. The atmosphere at the movie house was that of a premiere, complete with red carpets and flood lights streaking through the twilight sky. A capacity crowd pushed its way into the lobby to view memorabilia from the three weeks of filming in 1958.

I met Diane Signore, who had traveled from San Diego for the festivities. She was the little girl picked up and kissed by Ginny (Shirley MacLaine) during the carnival scene. Others who were extras in the film shared their stories of the experience. They all thought the \$10 a day they were paid as extras seemed to be a handsome sum then.

I found a seat in the approximate location where I had first watched the film in 1959. The owners of the newly refurbished Ohio Theatre said they had managed to rent what they believed was one of only two copies of the film on 35mm. The other film in existence was the original.

Watching *Some Came Running* flawlessly projected in Cinemascope on the wide screen in that classic movie house stirred emotions in me I cannot ever remember feeling. I realized with certainty that the film loses a lot of its power when simply viewed on video. When the movie was over, I heard a lot of deep breathing, and no one seemed in much of a hurry to leave.

We eventually did move to the theater lobby where another reception was held. Small groups, reminiscing and discussing the film, spilled out onto the sidewalk in front of the theater. All the while Shawn Cameron and his crew were conducting on-camera interviews for the TCM documentary. I was asked questions about how the film differed from the novel. It was nearly midnight before the caterers started cleaning out the punch bowls.

Throughout Saturday and Sunday people met in front of the Ohio Theatre for a clever program called "Some Came Walking." Carolyn Clark, of Lady Carolyn's Guided Tours, led these small groups on a walking tour down Main Street, along Jefferson, then Second Street and up Mulberry to view locations where Vincente Minnelli had chosen to film various scenes. It is still all there, Frank Hirsh's Jewelry Store, Smitty's Bar, the bus station, the Parkman Hotel, the courthouse, etc. The French home, the cemetery, Bama's front porch and the college scenes are only a short drive from downtown.

Besides information about the filming in Madison and why the town had been chosen in the first place, Carolyn talked about the financial impact the filming had on Madison (\$250,000 was spent there by the film company alone). Carolyn added lots of interesting folklore about the actors involved, as well.

Frank Sinatra definitely considered Madison a hick town, she said, and he did his best to trash everywhere he stayed. Sinatra was paid \$400,000 for his part in the film while Shirley MacLaine was only paid \$40,000. MacLaine, however, earned one of the five Oscar nominations the film received.

I met Carolyn Lopez in my group. She has lived in Madison all her life but remembered the filming experience with fondness. She had been cast as Shirley MacLaine's stand-in and had many anecdotes to share. She pointed out the exact spot where she had to lie on Jefferson Street as the camera and lighting crews set up for Ginny's final scene at the carnival. With playful enthusiasm, she talked about how handsome she thought Dean Martin was, how much she enjoyed her time with Frank Sinatra's stand-in (who came from Hollywood), and what fun she had wearing the various costumes. She remembered with a chuckle Martin saying to her after one early morning of filming (not sure whether he was in or out of character) that he was going home to have some "fried scotch" for breakfast.

Martin, who was from Steubenville, Ohio, was not so put off with Madison. The locals really liked Dean Martin, and to them he seemed to always be having fun. Sinatra, on the other hand, generally had an attitude and seemed on edge. Martin's role in the film helped vault his career after his break-up from the comedy team with Jerry Lewis. Martin said in an interview for an Arts & Entertainment television documentary that he loved playing the part of Bama Dillard. That role was one of his all-time favorites. He said when his agent called and described the part for a guy who likes to drink, gamble and romance with the ladies (or something like that), he replied, "That part is perfect for me. I won't even have to act."

Madison residents take great pride in boasting that Martin, Sinatra and MacLaine were the stars in the movie which was long ago filmed there. Oral history of the event is being passed down now to the next generation. James Jones, through the film that was adapted from his novel, has forever changed Madison.

Various members of the Madison community have invited the James Jones Literary Society to hold a symposium there some day. Remember the classroom scene where Ginny confronts Gwen French about her love for Dave Hirsh? Director Minnelli chose to film that scene in Classic Hall on the Hanover College campus. That very classroom might be an interesting spot from which to launch a symposium, "Some Came Running-From Fiction to Film."

-- Jerry Bayne

SOCIETY ACHIEVES NOT-FOR-PROFIT STATUS

July 1, 1999, was a landmark day for the James Jones Literary Society. On that day the organization spread its wings and left the umbrella of the Lincoln Trail College Foundation. Since

our organization's inception in 1991, the LTC Foundation had assisted with financial accounting and bookkeeping.

The JJLS was recognized as an Illinois not-for-profit corporation in the fall of 1996. Then the Board voted in 1998 to seek its own charter. In late spring the Internal Revenue Service finally granted the JJLS a 501 C3 not-profit charitable organization status. Achieving the 501 C3 IRS status was absolutely essential for the organization to successfully operate autonomously.

During the drive this morning from Mt. Carmel to Robinson, I found myself thinking about James Jones and what he might have thought about the transactions that were to take place. Surely, I thought, he would have felt honored by the incredible growth of the organization. But merged with that idea, I began thinking about the character of Dave Hirsch rolling into Parkman in the novel *Some Came Running*.

He had been gone for 19 years. When he returned, his first gesture of contempt for his brother, Frank, was to have a \$5,500 bank draft deposited into the Second National Bank. Frank, a jewelry store owner and big wheel social climber at the country club, was a board member at the Cray County Bank. "You're a creature of many moods as you have dollars," believed the character, Dave Hirsch.

The business that July morning was to move JJLS operating money from the LTC Foundation and to open checking and savings accounts. As the newly elected treasurer, I was meeting Ray Elliott, Society president, and Juanita Martin, retiring treasurer, at the LTC Foundation office. Concerning other matters for the Society, I had visited the LTC Foundation office and knew it was located on the north side of the courthouse square, sandwiched between the two banks surely used for inspiration in the *Some Came Running* vignette mentioned above.

When we left the Foundation office we turned right and walked the short distance to the bank on the northwest corner of the square, the First Crawford State Bank. We opened our checking account with \$4,800 and our savings account with \$7,000. As we were signing all the documents I wondered, were we in the Frank Hirsch or the Dave Hirsch bank?

--Jerry Bayne, Treasurer

FRIEND FROM MARSHALL DAYS REMINISCES ABOUT JONES

While reading the proceedings of the James Jones Literary Society, I was intrigued by the call for personal experiences about James Jones. When spending the afternoon with my father on his 78th birthday, I asked him to reminisce his experiences with Jim Jones.

My father first met James Jones during a Golden Gloves boxing match in Terre Haute, Ind., circa 1937. My father had done some small-time boxing, but was recovering from a broken hand at the time and was serving as a ring-side manager at the tender age of 18. While in the dressing room, he met a young Golden Glove competitor by the name of Jim Jones. They talked briefly and as my father recalled, Jones won his bout that night.

A year later, their paths crossed again while my father and Jones were among a group of Illinois high school seniors who had skipped school and spent the day drinking beer in a tavern in Casey, Ill.

My dad did not see Jim Jones again until after World War II. Dad was in the submarine service and trained in New London, Conn. He married there and then was stationed for a significant part of the war in Hawaii. He recalls becoming re-acquainted with Jones briefly at his sister Lowney Turner Handy's house when the Writers Colony was just forming.

Over the next 10 years, my father and Jim Jones spent a great deal of time together. Dad was the chief electrician who wired Jones' house in Marshall, Ill., and met with him nearly on a daily basis, often ending the work day with a martini, Jones' favorite drink at the time. He liked his martinis very dry, my father recalls, and they would jokingly spray an atomizer of vermouth over the drinks and about the room as they were being prepared.

My father, my uncle Harold Turner and my uncle Robert Mott accompanied Jones to Robinson, Ill., one afternoon as they viewed *From Here to Eternity* for the first time on the big screen. Dad believes this is the first time Jones ever saw the movie in its entirety and certainly the first time he ever saw it in a movie theater. They stopped in a tavern in Robinson to celebrate and later had cocktails at Lowney and Harry Handy's house, everyone apparently pleased with what they had just seen. But no one discussed or anticipated an Academy Award.

Fame and fortune apparently did not go to Jim's head. Dad says that Jones never wanted to be recognized in a crowd and personally witnessed this by regrettably mentioning James Jones to an MC at a large dance hall. The patrons then required Jones to stand and receive their ovation, and an icy stare warned my father to never make that mistake again.

As their friendship grew over the years, Jim gave my father several mementos. In his possession, he has a silver bracelet with his name on the outside and "Jim" on the inside. Jones had an identical bracelet made for him with his name on the outside and "Andy" on the inside. Dad also was given and currently has No. 17 of the presentation edition of *From Here to Eternity*, personally autographed. My father recalls that as James Jones was preparing to move to New York from Marshall, he called him to his house and gave him his extensive liquor supply kept in his secret room on the second floor. Several cases of liquor were removed and several of these bottles are still in my father's possession. Again drawing on their friendship, my father was asked to serve as a pallbearer for Jim Jones' sister, Mary Ann, after she had died of complications of epilepsy while at the colony.

Curiously, after a close friendship for nearly 10 years, when Jim Jones left Marshall, never again did my father see him, speak to him or exchange correspondence. My dad had no prior news of his illness and shockingly read of his death in the *Chicago Tribune*.

-- Andy Turner and Dr. Jim Turner, Marshall, Ill.

WAS PREWITT JUSTIFIED IN KILLING JUDSON?

The character Pvt. Robert E. Lee Prewitt is one of my favorites from modern literature. I identify with Prewitt's struggle to be an individual within the ranks of a nameless and faceless Army. I admire his druthers to abstain from boxing because it's refreshing to encounter a character who has the valiancy to stand up for his chosen values, especially when it would be so much easier to become a "jock" and join the ruling class of his outfit.

When his commanding officer, Capt. Holmes gives him "the treatment" in retaliation for his refusal to box, one can't help but pay homage to Prewitt's stubborn determination to defy the status quo.

However, despite all these laudable traits, I, as a reader, was bothered when Prewitt killed S/Sgt. Judson, the feral stockade assistant. Of course, I can understand Prewitt's motivation. S/Sgt. Judson savagely beat Pvt. "Blues" Berry (Prewitt's friend) to death for an attempted subterfuge to get another prisoner out of the regular daily hard labor and into the prison hospital. Had this happened to a friend of mine, I too would have entertained thoughts of revenge, up to and including murder. But on the *surface* that does not justify murder.

Even Jack Malloy, the stockade philosopher and intellectual, told Prewitt, "If you want to kill something, kill the things that made Fatso what he is. He doesn't do what he does because it is right or wrong. He doesn't think about right or wrong. He just does what is there is to be done." (*From Here To Eternity*, p. 652) In short, Malloy is telling Prewitt that killing Judson will do no good.

Superficially, Malloy is correct. However, after some time puzzling over the killing of Judson, I realized there are two mitigating traits of Prewitt's psyche which do justify the murder of Judson, if not within the eyes of the law, then within the eyes of the reader. The first trait we have to consider is that Prewitt *always* supports the underdog. The second, Prewitt truly loves the Army.

As a consequence of refusing to "jockstrap" for Capt. Holmes, Prewitt finds himself in a rather wretched position: a straight-duty private, undergoing "the treatment" by most of the non-coms in his outfit. Worse still, is the knowledge that he has within his power the ability to end all the harassment by simply making a compromise of his chosen values and fight for the boxing squad. Essentially Prewitt is the epitome of the underdog. "But he had always believed in fighting for the underdog, against the top dog." (*From Here To Eternity*, p. 272) Once Prewitt finds himself consigned to the stockade as a direct result of his "treatment," he realizes that now he is the underdog, much more so than just being a straight-duty private.

During his stockade sojourn, Prewitt finds many other underdogs, one of them being Pvt. "Blues" Berry. When Berry is killed by Judson, Prewitt resolves to kill S/Sgt. Judson. Prewitt realizes he can do *nothing* but kill Judson, to do otherwise would be unfaithful to the philosophy of life which has animated Prewitt since his childhood. If Prewitt had not killed Judson, he would be tacitly admitting defeat by not only Judson, but Capt. Holmes and all the non-coms participating in "the treatment." In the final analysis, Prewitt is almost *condemned* to kill Judson.

Of the many things one can say about Robert E. Lee Prewitt, his love of the Army is foremost. Of course Prewitt also loves the bugle. It's when Prewitt is leaving the Bugle Corps to transfer

into Capt. Holmes' company that Prewitt realizes something about love. "It was really very simple, so simple that he was surprised he had not seen it standing there before. He had to leave the Bugle Corps because he was a bugler. Red did not have to leave it. But he had to leave because he wanted most of all to stay." (*From Here To Eternity*, p. 10)

Prewitt realizes that often we must leave the things we love because we can't stand to see them dishonored or sullied. This is exactly what Prewitt is doing by leaving the Bugle Corps after political maneuvering deprived him of the title "First Bugler," a distinction Prewitt truly deserves. Like the Bugle Corps, Prewitt realizes he can't stay in the Army. He can't remain in the Army *and* allow Judson to live because of Judson's affront to the "underdog." This affront has dishonored Prewitt's consummate love, the Army. Judson must therefore die because of this transgression, in Prewitt's mind.

While Prewitt's actions would not be justified in a court of law, they are within the realm of men struggling to remain individuals and cherish fading illusions of love and honor. Prewitt's actions are nothing short of self-defense.

-- James H. Cicman Jr., Eastern Pennsylvania

*Editor's Note: Cicman became interested in the works of James Jones after reading **Never So Few** by Tom T. Chamales, who listed Jones as a friend and inspiration. Cicman also has an interest in WWII and Civil War fiction.*

WILLIE MORRIS' BOOK ABOUT JONES TO BE RE-ISSUED IN 2000

Although it was advertised in "A Fall Spectrum" ad in the *New York Review of Books*, Richard Wentworth of the University of Illinois Press says Willie Morris' book, *James Jones A Friendship*, won't be reissued and available until January.

Months before his Aug. 2 death, Willie reached agreement with the press to re-issue the book, first written in the months after his friend's death in 1977, with a forward by Winston Groom.

"Both Willie and Jim," he wrote, "helped me with the book I was writing, a combat novel about Vietnam (*Better Times Than These*). Willie is probably the finest line editor in the world and Jim was wonderful, not just in grasping my failures in characterization and story but in suggesting how I might mend them.

"As his condition worsened, Jim became afraid he wouldn't finish his own novel, *Whistle*, the final volume of the World War II trilogy that includes *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line*. Once a week or so, we'd be invited over to Chateau Spud to hear Jim read from the manuscript pages he'd completed in the past few days.

"He was reading to all of us, of course, but you could tell he was really reading it to Willie, whose literary judgment he respected without reservation."

The Review of Books ad says the illustrated paper book is "a finely tuned, funny, and heartrendering elegy that will sell for \$17.95. The University of Illinois Press Web site is www.press.uillinois.edu and the phone number is 800-545-4703.

TESTIMONY OF A CONVERT

Years had passed, but the time came when I finally had to go there. Maybe it was coincidental, maybe not, that my visit to Robinson was during the weekend of the second symposium of the newly formed James Jones Literary Society.

Some 36 years prior to that, I was a young supply sergeant with the 1st Cavalry in Kumagaya, Japan. During lulls at my desk in the Heavy Mortar Co. supply room, I read James Jones' first book.

From the first three pages on, I was captivated. I was discovering truths and realities-about people, about life in general-I had never before stumbled upon. At once, I became aware of my own phony ways. So, somebody could see through this bag of survival tricks I had acquired growing up in rural redneck Mississippi in the 1940s? This had never occurred to me.

Here this writer was saying about one of his characters early in the first chapter: "Every day he placed his bet on Comfort out of Security by Conformity. And, as usual, Comfort won."

And this: "When you cut with life, you have to use the house deck, not your own."

"You believe my lies about me, and I'll believe yours about you."

Wow! By the time I finished the book, I had-to use a later description by James Jones himself of an awakened American society entering WWII-crossed a watershed. Like the apostle, Paul, when he was struck down on the Damascus Road and found himself face to face with God, I would, thereafter, be a different man. And, whether I lived truth or not, I would respect it.

James Jones was, of course, human. His stoic acceptance of that, almost tragically humorous, might have been his long suit. The reading of *From Here To Eternity* became an unforgettable experience for me. It was a lingering and nagging disappointment to me that all the books he wrote after that, except the one on WWII art, could scarcely hold my attention to the end.

Nonetheless, he had said enough in that first book to keep my respect forever. When the James Jones biographies started coming out, I read them-every one. I read with sustained interest about his early years in Robinson, where he was born, where he was raised by an alcoholic father and a dogmatically religious mother.

Just as the compelling narrative in his writings created a mystique about James Jones, it did likewise about the town that produced him. It took me 36 years to get there, but I finally made it to Robinson.

-- Gene H. Powell, Richland, Miss.

FIRST NOVEL FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS' BOOKS MAKE DEBUT

Leslie Schwartz's novel, *Jumping the Green*, has made its publishing debut to great reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus*.

"... an intriguing, subtle treatise on sex and death and the shadow companion of love. First-timer Schwartz is a talent to watch," the *Kirkus* review reported.

The 1997 recipient of the James Jones First Novel Fellowship Award included the Society in the book's acknowledgments. Schwartz also said the novel will be published in Israel, as well.

The Society does such a service to beginning writers," she said. "And your track record seems pretty good, considering all the winners who have and will be published."

Also recently released, *The Hindenburg Crashes Nightly* by 1996 fellowship winner Greg Herbek is available from Avon Books.

LAST COLONY MEMBER'S PLAY OPENS IN L.A.

Just as the readers for Southern Illinois Press were giving past Society president and retired University of Illinois English professor George Hendrick and board members Helen Howe and Don Sackrider's book on the Handy Colony a thumbs up, the last Colony member had a play opening in Los Angeles at the East West Players' new venue in Little Toyko.

Jon Shiota's play, *Leilani's Hibiscus*, opened at the theater on Sept. 22. He says the play is "a Polynesian love story that can take place only in romantic Hawaii. It involves a couple whose cross cultures lead to pain, frustratoin and hope. Every immigrant family in America, whether European or Asian, has a unique story to pass on to the next generation. This is one of them."

Shiota, who spent a few months in Marshall, Ill., in 1963 and finished his first novel, *Lucky Come Hawaii*, at the Colony, never met James Jones or former Colony member Sackrider. But like many other writers who passed through the Colony that James Jones helped found and Lowney Handy ran, Shiota keeps writing and credits much of his success to his days in the Colony.

"Lowney changed my life," he says, acknowledging the benefit of the colony to nearly 100 writers over more than a decade.

Shiota wrote a second novel, *Pineapple White*, before turning to plays. Since then, he has received many grants and awards for his work. The most notable was the John F. Kennedy Award for the adaptation of *Lucky Come Hawaii* that was produced at the Pan Asian Theatre in New York.

One play Shiota is particularly proud of is *Honor, Duty, Country*, about Hiroshi Hersey Miyamura, the only living Asian-American Medal of Honor recipient. Besides drawing huge

crowds at the Japan American Theatre for the performances, Shirota received a grant from the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department.

--Ray Elliott, President

CORRECTION

After reading an article from the last newsletter on the JJLS Web site titled, "Getting To Know James Jones" by Paul Clayton, James Cicman pointed out how the writer mentioned reading *From Here To Eternity* and that one of his favorite scenes is when Prewitt sets up the .50-caliber machine gun on the roof of the barracks to battle Zeroes.

"Yes, indeed, that scene is powerful," Cicman wrote, "but Prewitt was asleep during the whole Pearl Harbor attack, AWOL after killing Fatso Judson. I'm sure it was a simple oversight."

It was, and we apologize. Good catch.

Cicman recently joined the Society, and we invited him to write an article for the newsletter. "Was Prewitt Justified In Killing Judson?" appears on page 4.