

Laine Cunningham Recipient of 11th Annual James Jones First Novel Fellowship

(October 10, 2003) -- The contest is administered by the University's Humanities Division and by the James Jones Literary Society.

The Humanities Division at Wilkes University and the James Jones Literary Society recently announced the winner of this year's James Jones First Novel Fellowship.

Laine Cunningham's manuscript, *The Message Stick*, was chosen out of 647 submissions to the contest. She will receive the \$6,000 first prize on October 11, 2003 at the Society's annual symposium at the University of Texas in Austin. The late James Jones is the author of *From Here to Eternity* (1951) and *The Thin Red Line* (1962).

Wilkes University's [Humanities Division](#) administers the contest which was established in 1992 to honor the spirit of unblinking honesty, determination, and insight into modern culture exemplified by James Jones.

Set in the Australian Outback, *The Message Stick* is both a murder story and a subtle examination of the contemporary clash of cultures that continues there.

"Ms. Cunningham's novel demonstrates a mastery of psychological introspection and an uncanny feel for the spirit of place," said [Dr. J. Michael Lennon](#), a manuscript judge and President of the Society.

Cunningham began pursuing her writing career in 1994. While publishing articles, short stories and poems, she also set up an editorial service to assist other authors and small presses. Cunningham has taught fiction and nonfiction writing to adults through a variety of arts

organizations including The Loft, the nation's largest independent literary center.

She has twice received writing fellowships from the Jerome Foundation and has attended residencies at the New York Mills Cultural Center and Cornucopia Arts Center. In 1999, her short story won an award from Writer's Digest magazine and her creative nonfiction manuscript won second place at the California Focus on Writers conference.

The judges for this year's contest were Kaylie Jones, the novelist daughter of James Jones and Wilkes University professors: Dr. Patricia Heaman, Professor Emeritus of English and Dr. J. Michael Lennon, Professor of English.

The James Jones First Novel Fellowship welcomes inquiries on the contest. Requests for guidelines should be sent with S.A.S.E. to James Jones First Novel Fellowship, c/o Humanities Department, Kirby Hall, Wilkes University, Wilkes Barre, PA 18766, or via email to english@wilkes.edu. Submission deadline is March 1st of each year.