

Linda Busby Parker Recipient of 10th Annual James Jones First Novel Fellowship

Wilkes-Barre, PA, November 26, 2002 — The Humanities Division of Wilkes University and the James Jones Literary Society recently announced the winner of this year's James Jones First Novel Fellowship.

Linda Busby Parker of Mobile, Alabama, was awarded the \$5,000 first prize earlier this month. She will be formally recognized at the annual symposium of the Society in October at the University of Texas at Austin.

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

The novels of several previous winners have been published. Parker's manuscript, "The Sum of Augusts," was chosen out of 665 submissions to the contest.

Set in rural Alabama in a mythical community between Montgomery and Birmingham during the years 1954-1994, the novel traces the struggle of an African-American, Brewster McAtee, to build his own house and better himself. Caught in the crossfire of events in the deep South during the Civil Rights Movement, McAtee's situation illumines an important era in American history. According to one of the judges, J. Michael Lennon, Professor of English at Wilkes, "Parker's prose is lucid and lyrical and her story one of the most moving we have seen in the ten years of the Jones Fellowship."



Linda Busby Parker

A former university professor of communication at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Parker earned her B.A. at the University of the South, and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Michigan. She gave up her tenured position six years ago to devote herself full-time to writing. She attended summer writing programs at Indiana University, Bread Loaf Writers Conference in Vermont and also at Kenyon College in Ohio. Chapters of her novel resulted in the award of a Heartland Fellowship at Indiana University in 2000. She is currently a student in the MFA program at Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky. She is married with three daughters and is working on a second novel, also set in the South and dealing with the Civil Rights Movement.

The runner-up in this year's contest and given a \$250 prize is E. A. Bagby of Chicago, Illinois, for her novel titled *Rook*. The title character is the food critic for a big-city newspaper who has taken too many free meals and bribes and begins to disintegrate. The discovery of an unknown relative gives him the opportunity for revitalization. "*Rook* is fast-paced and full of surprise turns; Bagby's prose is as delicious as the food she describes," said Lennon.



E. A. Bagby

Bagby grew up in Las Cruces, New Mexico and studied film and comparative literature at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, where she graduated summa cum laude in 1998. Her essays appear in *Conversely* (www.conversely.com) and *The Writing Group Book* (ed. Lisa Rosenthal, Chicago Review Press, 2003). Her short story, "S," is slated for publication in the anthology *Choices: Short Stories*.

Bagby has acted in a number of local theatrical productions and she writes a column on acting for *Preview*, the subscriber journal of Chicago's American Theater Company. She is now working on a second novel, "The Crosses," set in her native Las Cruces. She is also working on both stage and screen plays.

The judges for this year's contest were Kaylie Jones, the daughter of James Jones and author of four novels; Kevin Heisler, a New York-based writer; Dr. Patricia Heaman, Professor Emeritus of English at Wilkes, and former English Department chair; and Dr. J. Michael Lennon, Professor of English and Emeritus Vice President for Academic Affairs at Wilkes.

The James Jones First Novel Fellowship welcomes inquiries on the contest. Requests for guidelines should be sent with a s.a.s.e. to the James Jones First Novel Fellowship, c/o English Department, Kirby Hall, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766, or via email to english@wilkes.edu. Submission deadline is March 1st.