

## The Handy Writers' Colony

By Renee Davis, Ben Elliott, and Stacey Guthrie

The Handy Writer's Colony was founded in 1949 by Lowney Turner Handy. It was located in the southwest part of Marshall near what is now Cork Medical Center.

Students of Lowney occupied the Colony. James Jones was the most famous. His house that was built after the publishing of From Here to Eternity still stands today and is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Bill Schultz.

### THE HANDY WRITERS' COLONY

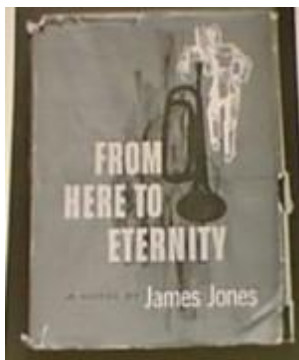
1949-1964

The Colony was started by Lowney Turner Handy. Financial support came from her husband, Sol Handy. Later, Jones would be the main financial supporter.

The reason for the Colony was to help young and amateur writers get a solid start in writing, discipline, and mutual respect. The Colony first got its start in a former cow pasture at the Handy family farm. It was located in the southwest part of Marshall, near what is now Cork Medical Center.

The students lived in tents that were placed in the pasture. They would write in the morning and work around the Colony in the afternoon.

By the end of the summer of 1949, Lowney's husband had moved a cabin from Robinson to the Colony. In the summer of 1950, James Jones and four other students occupied the Colony. In 1951, the Colony was incorporated or sponsored by a non-profit organization.



After Jones' first major success with his novel, From Here to Eternity, Jones received a good sum of money from the book and from the sale of film rights to Columbia Pictures. With this money Jones made a plan that would reconstruct the Colony. Five room barracks were built along with the "Ramada" or dining hall, a recreation center, and bathroom facilities. Donations were also received to help in the upkeep of the Colony.

Once the Colony began to operate under a permanent and regular schedule, the Colony was well on its way to producing fine works.

When a student was sufficient enough to fit Lowney's demands, they would be placed on a very watchful program. Schedule was important to Lowney. Her students would rise at 5:30 A.M. and begin writing. For the ones who had been in the Colony for a good amount of time would work on writing and preparing their books and manuscripts. The students would continue writing until noon and then a lunch break was taken. After lunch the students would do chores or some other

sort of physical labor. By 5:30 P.M. they had finished work for the day, had dinner, and were in bed by 8:00 P.M.

The students were also not allowed to leave the Colony. This was an exception to the once a month outing when Lowney would allow members of the Colony to visit Terre Haute.

No alcohol was allowed on the grounds of the Colony, except of course in Jones' trailer.

When the winter months came, Lowney would take some of her students with her to various locations with warmer climates. These students were close to completing their books or manuscripts. The students she did not take would either return home for the winter or return to school.

The turning point in the Colony occurred when Jones married Gloria Mosolino in February of 1957. The two were married in Haiti, but that summer they returned to Marshall. There at the Colony tension was evident between Lowney and Gloria. Such tension caused an extreme fight between the two causing Jones and Gloria to pack up and leave. After Jones' departure, the Colony began to struggle with finances. The end of the Colony was nearing.

Lowney continued to work with students until her death on June 27, 1964. Jones nor any other writer attended her funeral. Now only memories of the Colony remain.

### JAMES RAMON JONES



James Ramon Jones was born in Robinson, IL, on November 6, 1921, to Ramon and Ada Jones. His brother Jeff preceded him in birth, and his sister Mary Ann was born later.

Jones was said to have an unhappy childhood, and as the years went on they did not get any better. Jones' father ran a dentistry practice, but lost it due to his continuous drinking. Jones' grandfather lost all money he had in the Great Depression. After his father's failed practice and his grandfather's loss of wealth, a college education seemed almost impossible. After his graduation from Robinson High School in 1939, Jones enlisted in the United States Army. He was then stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. Another turn of events came when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Jones never believed something like that would happen. His emotional scars began to take a toll. Jones' mother had died earlier that year, and his father committed suicide in 1942.

Jones was sent to Guadalcanal in 1942 where he was wounded in action and received a Purple Heart. After being wounded, he was sent back to the states and returned to Robinson in 1943. At home Jones began to drink heavy and suffer from depression. His Aunt Sadie became worried and sent him to talk with Lowney Handy. Through persistence, Lowney was able to obtain a psychological discharge for Jones. Jones and Lowney's friendship grew through the love of literature. During the summer of 1944 Jones moved into the Handy home in Robinson with

Lowney and her husband. It was there that Jones worked on his first unpublished novel, They Shall Inherit the Laughter. This book was about a young veteran returning home from the war.



Jones later took a trip to New York in 1945 where he met with Maxwell Evarts Perkins, a famous editor. Perkins viewed his novel and decided that it was best to put aside the novel and begin working on his other novel, From Here to Eternity. Jones worked on his new novel for the next five years writing and revising it. Much of the work done on the novel was done in the Handy home. During the winter months, however, Lowney and Jones escaped to warmer climates to work. Lowney began to take on other students and the number began to grow. By the summer of 1949 the novel, From Here to Eternity, was nearly complete. Also during this summer Lowney's group of students grew to six members. They decided to set up tents in a former cow pasture on the Handy family farm in Marshall, IL, for the start of the Colony. Harry had a two room cabin brought onto the property and Jones brought in a trailer. On February 27, 1950 Jones finished his greatest novel. In February of 1951 his novel was published by Scribners'. In March, Jones sold film rights to Columbia Pictures and earned more than \$80,000. James Jones became a celebrity, and with his earnings he helped in the redevelopment of the Colony. He built a five room barracks building, a dining hall, recreation center, and bathroom facilities. Jones also began the construction of his new home, which would cost around \$85,000 dollars. It was a "bachelor's palace," containing a secret passage behind the bar. The house still stands in Marshall today.

### LOWNEY TURNER HANDY

Lowney Turner Handy was born in Richmond, Kentucky on April 16, 1904 to James and Fanny Turner. The family was not wealthy, yet Lowney was born in a mansion. Her parents were caretakers of a mansion called the White Hall owned by Senator Cassius Marcellus Clay.

In the year of 1913, the Turner family moved to Clark County, IL. Lowney's father became the sheriff of Clark County in 1922. The Turner's home was attached to the jailhouse, and it was Lowney mother's responsibility to care for the prisoners. Lowney learned a lot from being exposed to the people that came in and out of the jailhouse. She began to gain a respect for those that were different from her.

In 1926 Lowney married Sol Handy, the son of a state representative. Not long after being married, the two moved to Robinson, IL, where Harry worked for the Ohio Oil Company and refinery.

Lowney later began to hold instructional classes in her home for amateur writers. She loved to take in troubled young people and help them with their problems; this is how Lowney came to meet James Jones. This marked the beginning of the future of the Handy Writers' Colony that she would later finance.

Though the Colony ended abruptly with the departure of Jones and the death of Lowney, the Colony left behind writers well on their way. The Colony also left behind many famous works. The most famous work of the Colony was the novel, From Here to Eternity.

The Colony's impact on the community may have been small in 1949, but now it holds history and meaning. Some writings produced in the Colony were said to be somewhat radical and extreme; however, they held true art and individuality. The Handy Writers' Colony is a part of Marshall's history.