

Revise This - November 2009



[REVISE THIS ARCHIVES](#)

Contents:

[2009 James Jones First Novel Fellowship Winner Announced](#)
[Jim Warner joins Etruscan Press](#) | [Student Profile: Chris Bullard](#)
[Wilkes University Awards Scholarships](#) | [Faculty Notes](#) | [Student Notes](#)

2009 James Jones First Novel Fellowship Winner Announced



Tena Russ of Riverwoods, IL

Revise This!

[2017](#)

[2018](#)

[Revise This! -
November 2019](#)

[Revise This! Archives](#)

Wilkes-Barre, Penn. –Tena Russ, of Riverwoods, Ill., won first place for her novel *After Paradise* in the 18th Annual James Jones First Novel Fellowship, co-sponsored by the Graduate Creative Writing Department of Wilkes University and the James Jones Literary Society.

Russ was awarded \$10,000. This year's contest drew 674 submissions, and this was not the first time Russ had entered her manuscript in the competition.

"I actually entered the contest several times and never made it to the second level. I almost didn't even enter the contest this year," she said.

Russ was shocked to learn that her manuscript, which has undergone several revisions, finally won. She was notified that she won by novelist Nina Solomon, a judge for the competition and a faculty member of the creative writing program.

"It was like Ed McMahon just came to my door. When Nina called, I literally got goose bumps," Russ said.

Russ was not always heavily involved in writing. Following her studies at Northwestern University and the American Academy of Art, she worked as a portrait artist.

She started writing regularly after she joined a local writers group and took an additional writing workshop at Northwestern University. The professor brought in published authors at the end of the semester, and the experience encouraged Russ to become a writer.

"The challenge of learning to write has been so rewarding in many ways," Russ said. "I love every part of it. I do it every day now."

Prior to winning the James Jones competition, Russ's manuscript won first place in the Novel-in-Progress category of the William Faulkner-William Wisdom Writing Creative Writing Competition of 2008.

Her second novel will focus on Sam, a secondary character in *After Paradise* who is a Vietnam War veteran, suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The novel is in the prewriting stages. She is also still revising *After Paradise*.

Russ also volunteers in a literacy program for young children, The Canine Reading Buddies. Once a month, she and Cami, her German Shepherd, meet with children at a library where the children enjoy reading to Russ and her dog. The submission deadline for entries is

March 1 of each year.

The runner-up winners of the James Jones competition were Michael Schiavone, of Gloucester, Mass., for his manuscript *Call Me When You Land*, and Christine Wade, of New York, for her manuscript *Seven Locks*. They were each awarded \$750.

The James Jones Fellowship was established in 1992 to “honor the spirit of unblinking honesty, determination, and insight into modern culture as exemplified by (the writings of) James Jones.” Requests for guidelines should be sent, along with a stamped, self-address envelope, to James Jones First Novel Fellowship, c/o The Graduate Creative Writing Department, Wilkes University, 84 West South Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766, or via e-mail to jamesjonesfirstnovel@wilkes.edu

Jim Warner joins Etruscan Press



Jim Warner,
Assistant Director of
the Graduate
Creative Writing
Program at Wilkes

Jim Warner, Assistant Director of the Graduate Creative Writing Program of Wilkes University, has been named business manager and associate editor of Etruscan Press.

Warner, a published poet, said his duties with Etruscan will involve community outreach, managing finances, and organizing the office to ensure it runs more efficiently. The press is housed in the creative writing offices.

“I’ve always wanted to be involved in the publishing industry. It’s a new challenge and a new world to me. There’s so much untapped potential here,” Warner said.

Etruscan just signed a new three-year contract to remain on campus, and Warner hopes to strengthen the relationship between the university and the press through community outreach projects, including working with the downtown Wilkes-Barre Barnes & Noble to have book launches. The press will also eventually reach out to local high schools to start programs in the arts.

Warner made clear that his duties with the creative writing program will still be his top priority, and he described the work he now does with Etruscan as a “part-time job” done off-hours. However, the press is tied into the creative writing program in several ways. Its current graduate assistants are enrolled in the program, and some of Etruscan’s founders and directors also teach in the program, including poet Philip Brady and fiction writer Robert Mooney.

The press will continue to publish about eight manuscripts a year in the genres of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Etruscan will eventually consider publishing more manuscripts a year, according to Warner.

Warner's own writing has appeared in the poetry journals *Drunken Boat*, *Word Riot*, *Cause & Effect*, and other publications. His first collection of poems, *Too Bad It's Poetry*, was published in 2007 by Paper Kite Press, located in Kingston. His follow-up book, *Jim Warner's Second Book*, will be published by Paper Kite in December.

Student Profile: Chris Bullard

Some of the most well-known poets often balanced their writing with other professions. William Carlos Williams was a doctor. T.S. Elliott was a banker. Chris Bullard, one of the Wilkes University Graduate Creative Writing Program's most well-published poets, balances his writing with his duties as an administrative judge for the Social Security Administration in Vorhees, N.J.

Bullard, who resides in Collingswood, NJ, has had his poetry published by some of the most prominent literary journals in the country, including *Green Mountains Review*, *Nimrod*, and *Atlanta Review*. His work is also forthcoming in *Rattle*, and his chapbook, *You Must Not Know Too Much*, won the 2009 Plan B Press Chapbook Contest. As a result, Bullard was given a cash award and 50 printed copies of the book.

His interest in poetry predates his interest in law. He's been writing poetry since high school, when he served as the editor of the school's literary magazine. His influences early on included Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Frost, but his influences broadened when he attended the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia as an undergraduate.

Once he graduated, he knew he had to make a serious decision about his writing career. "At the end of college, I either had to go to writing school or do something else with my life," he said. "It was easier for me to ask my parents for money for a career in law than for a famous writers' school."

Bullard added that he also had no interest in becoming an academic, a career for many poets. The world of academia seemed too political to him.

But balancing poetry with his law career wasn't as easy as Bullard had hoped it would be. He stopped writing after law school until he was about 40. "I had reached a point with my poetry where I couldn't think of anything interesting to do. I also wasn't in contact with any poets," he said.

But he eventually started writing again, once his career situation changed and he had more time. He also hired private poetry tutors to strengthen his work.

Now, Bullard's career involves hearing claims of people who believe they are disabled and deserve Social Security funds. But his job has not influenced his work. "I have written I think only one poem about my work, though I have certainly seen the human condition. I pretty much have heard everyone's beefs with the world."

He became interested in the Wilkes program because he and his wife have a home in the area, and he was impressed by the quality of the faculty. He is now completing his M.F.A. and has expanded his own knowledge of contemporary poetry, due his work with the poetry faculty.

"I tend to reread people I like, but the program has definitely brought me up to date," Bullard said. "When I started working with Christine [Gelineau], she had me read all of these people I had not heard of but have been impressed with."

He recently completed two full-length collections of poems, which he's been submitting to presses and contests. One of the books is entitled *Back* and features all formal verse, and the other book, *Under Growth*, includes the poems from *You Must Not Know Too Much* and additional work.

Wilkes University Awards Scholarship to Taylor

Polites and Richard Fellingner

Wilkes University awarded the 2009-2010 Norris Church Mailer Scholarship to fiction writing major Taylor Polites, of Provincetown, Mass. , and the 2009-2010 Beverly Blakeslee Hiscox '58 Scholarship to fiction writing major Richard Fellingner, of Camp Hill, Pa.

The Norris Church Mailer Scholarship was established in 2004 by Mr. Norman Mailer, husband of the novelist Norris Church Mailer; other friends; and a gift from the estate of the late Gordon Smith. It is awarded annually to a graduate student in the creative writing program who has both artistic promise and financial need. Selection is made by a faculty committee appointed by the director of the creative writing program.

The Beverly Blakeslee Hiscox '58 Scholarship was established by her children with love and affection to honor their mother's dedicated service to Wilkes University as trustee from 1986 - 2003. First preference is given to a non-traditional student with family responsibilities.

Faculty/Staff Notes

Phil Brady's memoir, *By Heart: Reflections of a Rust Belt Bard*, was chosen by *Foreword Magazine* as Essay Book of the Year.

Program co-founder and director **Bonnie Culver's** play, "The Cell," and **Jean Klein's** play, "The Test," will run on Nov. 13 and Nov. 14 and Nov. 20 and Nov. 21 at The Venue at 35th in Norfolk, VA. For more info, visit <http://www.venue-35.com>.

Program co-founder and advisory board member **J. Michael Lennon's** interview with fellow advisory board member Lawrence Schiller was published in the third issue of *The Mailer Review* in October. The interview focuses on the origins of Norman Mailer's *Oswald's Tale*, including the successful effort to convince the Russian KGB to reveal their tapes of Lee Harvey Oswald in Minsk in the early 1960s.

Two of **Christine Gelineau's** poems, "Socanasett" and "Physical," will be published in the next issue of *Paterson Literary Review*, and her essay "Cops" will be published in the next issue of *Florida Review* as a finalist for their 2009 Editors' Award in Creative Nonfiction. Her next book of poems, *Appetite for the Divine*, is forthcoming in April from Ashland Poetry Press.

Advisory Board Member **Colum McCann's** novel, *Let the Great World Spin*, has been shortlisted for the fiction prize for this year's National Book Awards.

Nancy McKinley's story, "Yellow Tape," will appear in the 2010 *Main Street Rag Short Fiction Anthology: Coming Home Theme*, and her story, "Goat Meat," will appear in the 2010 *Main Street Rag Short Fiction Anthology: Commute Theme*.

David Poyer's novel, *The Crisis*, will be published on Nov. 8 by St. Martin's/Macmillan, and his novel, *The Weapon*, will be published as a soft cover edition on Dec. 1.

Neil Shepard has four poems forthcoming in literary journals. "Physician in the Dark" will be published in the *Harvard Review*, "Pleasant Weather in Cornwall" in *North American Review*, "If I have to Die, and I Have To" in *Notre Dame Review*, and "Iced Tea in Deer Isle" in *Chautauqua Literary Review*.

Little Theatre Players will present "Imagine," a short one-act and a trilogy of new mini-plays by playwright **Jan Quackenbush** at Broome Community College's Little Theatre, November 20, 21 at 7 p.m.

Student/Alumni Notes

M.F.A. student **Richard Fellingner's** story, "Flashbacks," has been

accepted for publication by *Audience Magazine*. It will be the eighth story published from his rust-belt themed collection.

M.A. student **Patricia Florio's** story, "My Coney Island Baby," was published by *Word Fountain*, a literary magazine run out of Ousterhout Free Library in Wilkes-Barre.

Alum **Andrea Janov**, M.A. student **Carol MacAllister**, and M.F.A. student **Brian Fanelli** have poems forthcoming in the December issue of *Chiron Review*.

Alum **Dawn Leas'** poetry chapbook, *I Know When to Keep Quiet*, was accepted for publication by Finishing Line Press.

M.A. student **Gale Martin** received a Pushcart Prize nomination from *The Greensilk Journal* for a short story published in spring of 2009 entitled "On Hens and Elephants and Being like Them."

M.A. student **Dara Morowa Yejide Madzimoyo's** story, "Agnes," was published in the September issue of *Adirondack Review*, and her poem, "Your Grave," will be published in the autumn/winter edition of Zócalo Press' "Age" chapbook series.

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