

The World War II Classic
NATIONAL BOOK AWARD WINNER

"One of the great books of our time!"

— *NEWSDAY*



FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

A novel by the bestselling author of *The Thin Red Line* and *Whistle*

JAMES JONES

FROM
HERE
TO
ETERNITY

James Jones



Delta
Trade Paperbacks

A Delta Book
Published by
Dell Publishing
a division of
Random House, Inc.
1540 Broadway
New York, New York 10036

This book is a work of fiction. The characters are imaginary, and any resemblance to actual persons is accidental. However, certain of the Stockade scenes did happen. They did not happen at the Schofield Barracks Post Stockade but at a post within the United States at which the author served, and they are true scenes of which the author had first-hand knowledge and personal experience.

Robinson, Illinois
February 27, 1950

Copyright © 1951 by James Jones
Copyright © renewed 1991 by Gloria Jones, James Anthony Phillipe Jones,
and Kaylie Anne Jones

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of the Publisher, except where permitted by law. For information address: Dell Publishing, New York, New York.

The trademark Delta® is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries.

ISBN: 0-385-33364-1

Reprinted by arrangement with Dell Publishing

Manufactured in the United States of America
Published simultaneously in Canada

November 1998

10 9 8 7 6 5 4

RRD

TO THE
UNITED STATES
ARMY

*"I have eaten your bread and salt.
I have drunk your water and wine.
The deaths ye died I have watched beside,
And the lives ye led were mine."*

—RUDYARD KIPLING

*Gentlemen-rankers out on a spree,
Damned from here to Eternity,
God ha' mercy on such as we,
Ba! Yah! Bah!*

—From *Gentlemen-Rankers, in Barrack-room Ballads*,
by RUDYARD KIPLING

"The Sphinx must solve her own riddle. If the whole of history is in one man, it is all to be explained from individual experience."

—EMERSON, *Essays: First Series, History*

CONTENTS

Book One
THE TRANSFER
3

Book Two
THE COMPANY
97

Book Three
THE WOMEN
219

Book Four
THE STOCKADE
401

Book Five
THE RE-ENLISTMENT BLUES
673

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Looking back, it seems to me now that the writing of this book was a collective enterprise. This is a rather startling development. If someone had suggested such a thought to me a couple of years ago when it was somewhat less than half completed, he would have been met with such a vehement attack of denial that he would have been forced to retire in embarrassment. Nevertheless, it is true.

Grateful acknowledgment is here tendered to the late Mr. Maxwell E. Perkins, for his help in even getting it started and his aid in keeping it going up to the time of his death; to Mr. John Hall Wheelock, for his periodic injections of encouragement and his help in editing it; to Mr. Burroughs Mitchell, for his sweating of it out over a period of almost three years without the slightest whimper and his fine work of editing; and to Mr. & Mrs. Harry E. Handy of Robinson, Illinois, without whose initial impetus I would never have started out to be a writer at all, and whose material and spiritual expenses over a period of seven years provided me with necessary nourishment.

Without all of these people this book would never have been written.

Book One

THE
TRANSFER

CHAPTER 1

When he finished packing, he walked out on to the third-floor porch of the barracks brushing the dust from his hands, a very neat and deceptively slim young man in the summer khakis that were still early morning fresh.

He leaned his elbows on the porch ledge and stood looking down through the screens at the familiar scene of the barracks square laid out below with the tiers of porches dark in the faces of the three-story concrete barracks fronting on the square. He was feeling a half-sheepish affection for his vantage point that he was leaving.

Below him under the blows of the February Hawaiian sun the quadrangle gasped defenselessly, like an exhausted fighter. Through the heat haze and the thin mid-morning film of the parched red dust came up a muted orchestra of sounds: the clankings of steel-wheeled carts bouncing over brick, the slappings of oiled leather slingstraps, the shuffling beat of scorched soles, the hoarse expletives of irritated non-coms.

Somewhere along the line, he thought, these things have become your heritage. You are multiplied by each sound that you hear. And you cannot deny them, without denying with them the purpose of your own existence. Yet now, he told himself, you are denying them, by renouncing the place that they have given you.

In the earthen square in the center of the quad a machine gun company went listlessly through the motions of its Loading Drill.

Behind him in the high-ceiling squadroom was the muffled curtain of sound that comes from men just waking and beginning to move around, testing cautiously the flooring of this world they had last night forsaken. He listened to it, hearing also the footsteps coming up behind him, but thinking of how good a thing it had been to sleep late every morning as a member of this Bugle Corps and wake up to the sounds of the line companies already outside at drill.

"You didnt pack my garrison shoes?" he asked the footsteps. "I meant to tell you. They scuff so easy."

"They're on the bed, both pair," the voice behind him said. "With the clean uniforms from your wall locker you didnt want to get mussed up. I pack your diddy box and extra hangers and your field shoes in the extra barracks bag."

"Then I guess thats everything," the young man said. He stood up then, sighing, not a sigh of emotion but the sigh that is the relaxing of a tension. "Lets eat," he said. "I got an hour yet before I have to report to G Company."

"I still think you're makin a bad mistake," the man behind him said.

"Yeah I know; you told me. Every day for two weeks now. You just dont understand it, Red."

"Maybe not," the other said. "I aint no tempermental genius. But I understand somethin else. I'm a good bugler and I know it. But I cant touch you on a bugle. You're the best bugler in this Regiment, bar none. Probly the best in Schofield Barricks."

The young man thoughtfully agreed. "Thats true."

"Well. Then why you want to quit and transfer?"

"I dont want to, Red."

"But you are."

"Oh no I'm not. You forget. I'm being transferred. Theres a difference."

"Now listen," Red said hotly.

"You listen, Red. Lets go over to Choy's and get some breakfast. Before this crowd gets over there and eats up all his stock." He jerked his head back at the awakening squadroom.

"You're actin like a kid," Red said. "You're not bein transferred, any more than I am. If you hadnt of gone and shot your mouth off to Houston none of this would ever happened."

"Thats right."

"Maybe Houston did make his young punk First Bugler over you. So what? Its only a formality. You still got your rating. All the brunser gets out of it is to play the Taps for funerals and sound Retreat for the shorttimer parades."

"Thats all."

"It aint as if Houston had had you busted, and give the kid your rating. Then I wouldnt blame you. But you still got your rating."

"No I aint. Not since Houston asked the Old Man to have me transferred."

"If you'd go see the Old Man like I tell you and say one word only, you'd have it back. Chief Bugler Houston or no Chief Bugler Houston."

"Thats right. And Houston's punk would still be First Bugler. Besides, the papers've gone through already. Signed; sealed; and delivered."

"Aw hell," Red said disgustedly. "Signed papers you can stick up you know where, for all they mean. You're on the inside, Prew, or at least you could be."

"Do you want to eat with me?" the young man said, "or dont you?"

"I'm broke," Red said.

"Did I ask you to pay? This is on me. I'm the one thats transferrin."

"You better save your money. They can feed us in the kitchen."

"I dont feel like eating that crap, not this morning."

"They had fried eggs this morning," Red corrected. "We can still get them hot. You'll need your money where you're goin."

"All right, for Chrisake," the young man admitted wearily. "Then this is just for the hell of it. Because I want to spend it. Because I'm leavin and I want to spend it. Now do you want to go? or dont you?"

"I'll go," Red said disgustedly.

They walked down the flights of steps and out the walk in front of A Company, where the Bugle Corps was quartered, crossed the street and walked along Headquarters building to the sallyport. The sun heat hit them, bearing down, as they left the porch and left them just as sharply as they stepped inside the tunnel through Hq building that was called the sallyport now, in honor of the old days of the forts. It was painted emphatically with the Regimental colors and housed the biggest of the Regiment's athletic trophies in their lacquered case.

"Its a bad thing," Red said tentatively. "You're gettin yourself a reputation as a bolshevik. You're settin yourself up for all kinds of trouble, Prew." Prew did not answer.

The restaurant was empty. Young Choy and his father, Old Choy, were chattering behind the counter. The white beard and black skull cap disappeared at once back into the kitchen and Young Choy, Young Sam Choy, waited on them.

"Herro, Prew," Young Choy said. "Me hear you move 'closs stleet some time soon I think so maybe, eh?"

"Thats right," Prew said. "Today."

"Today!" Young Choy grinned. "You no snowem? Tlansfe' today?"

"Thats her," he said grudgingly. "Today."

Young Choy, grinning, shook his head with sorrow. He looked at Red. "Clazy dogface. Do stlaight duty, 'stead of Bugle Corpse."

"Listen," Prew said. "How about bringin our goddam food?"

"Aw light," Young Choy grinned. "Bling light now."

He went behind the counter to the swinging kitchen door and Prew watched him. "Goddam gook," he said.

"Young Choy's all right," Red said.

"Sure. So's Old Choy all right."

"He only wants to help."

"Sure. Like everybody else."

Red shrugged, sheepishly, and they sat silent in the dim comparative coolness, listening to the laziness of the electric fan high up on one wall, until Young Choy brought out the eggs and ham and coffee. Through the sallyport screen door a weak breeze carried the sleepily regular belltones of the monotonously jerked bolt handles, Dog Company's Loading Drill, a ghostly prophecy that haunted Prew's enjoyment of that sense of loafing while the morning's work moves on around you.

"You one number one boy," Young Choy said, returning, grinning, as he shook his head in sorrow. "You leenlistment matelial."

Prew laughed. "You said it, Sam. I'm a Thirty-Year-Man."

Red was cutting up an egg. "Whats your wahine goin to say? when she finds out you took a bust to transfer?"

Prew shook his head and began to chew.

"Everything's against you," Red said, reasonably. "Even your wahine is against you."

"I wish she was against me, right up against me, right now," Prew grinned.

Red would not laugh. "Private pussies dont grow on no trees," he said. "Whores are all right; for the first year; for kids. But a good shackjob is hard to find. Too hard to take a chance on losin. You wont be able to make that trip to Haleiwa every night when you're pullin straight duty in a rifle company."

Prew stared down at his round ham bone before he picked it up and sucked the marrow out. "I reckon she'll have to make up her own mind, Red. Like every man has got to do, in the end. You know this thing's been comin for a long, long time. It aint just because Houston made his angelina First Bugler over me."

Red studied him; Chief Bugler Houston's tastes in young men were common knowledge and Red wondered if he could have made a pass at Prew. But it could not be that; Prewitt would have half-killed him, Chief Warrant Officer or no.

"Thats good," Red said bitterly, "made up her own mind. Where is her mind? In her head, or down between her legs?"

"Watch your goddam mouth. Since when is my private life your

business anyway? For your information, its between her legs and that's the way I like it, see?" You liar, he thought.

"Okay," Red said. "Dont blow your top. Whats it to me if you transfer? Its nothing in my young life." He took a piece of bread and washed his hands of all of it by wiping the yellow from his plate and swilling it down with coffee.

Prew lit a tailormade and turned to watch a group of company clerks who had just come in, sitting over coffee in the far corner when they were supposed to be upstairs in Personnel working. They all looked alike, tall thin boys with the fragile faces that gravitated naturally toward the mental superiority of paper work. He caught the words "Van Gogh" and "Gauguin." One tall boy talked a little while and the others waiting to get in their say, then in a pause for breath another tall boy took over and the first frowned and the others waiting impatiently again. Prew grinned.

It was queer, he thought, how a man was always being forced to decide these things. You decided one thing right, with much effort, and then you thought you'd coast a while. But tomorrow you had to decide another thing. And as long as you decided the way you knew was right you had to go right on deciding. Every Day a Millennium, he thought. And on the other hand was Red, and those kids over there, who because they decided wrong just once were free from any more deciding. Red placed his bet on Comfort out of Security by Conformity. As usual, Comfort won. Red could retire and enjoy his winnings. Red would not quit a soft deal like the Bugle Corps because his pride was hurt. Sometimes he got confused and could not quite remember what the reason was, the necessity that had been at the beginning of this endless chain of new decidings.

Red was trying logic on him. "You got a Pfc and a Fourth Class Specialist. You practice two hours a day and the rest of your time's your own. You got a good life.

"Every Regiment's got a Drum and Bugle Corps. Thats S. O. P. Its just like a craft on the Outside. We get the gravy because we got special ability."

"The crafts on the Outside aint been gettin gravy. They been lucky if they had jobs at all."

"That aint the point," Red said disgustedly. "Thats the Depression—why you think I'm in the goddam army?"

"I dont know. Why are you?"

"Because." Red paused triumphantly. "Same reason as you: Because I could live better on the Inside than I could on the Outside. I wasnt ready to starve yet."

"Thats logical," Prew grinned.

"Goddam right. I'm a logical guy. Its only common sense. Why you think I'm in this Bugle Corps?"

"Because its logical," Prew said. "Only, that aint the reason I'm in the army. And it aint the reason I'm in, *was* in, this Bugle Corps."

"I know," Red said disgustedly. "Now he's going to start that crap about the thirty year men."

"All right," Prew said. "But what else would I be? Where else would I go? Me! A man has got to have some place."

"Okay," Red said. "But if you're a thirty year man, and you love to bugle so, why are you quitting? That aint like no thirty year man."

"All right," Prew said. "Lets look at you: Since the Depression's gettin over, since they started makin stuff to send to England for this war, since they started this peacetime draft—you're on the Inside behind your common sense, like a man behind the bars. Your old job's waitin for you, and you cant even buy out now since the peacetime draft came in."

"I'm markin time," Red explained to him. "I dint starve while Prosperity was behind that stack of howitzers, and before *we* get in this goddam war my hitch will be up, and I'll be back home with a good safe job makin periscopes for tanks, while you thirty year men are getting your ass shot off."

As Prew listened the mobile face before him melted to a battle-blackened skull as though a flamethrower had passed over it, kissed it lightly, and moved on. The skull talked on to him about its health. And he remembered now the reason for this urgency of deciding right. It was like with a virgin, one wrong decision was enough to do it; after one you were not ever the same again. A man who ate too much got fat, and the only way to keep from getting fat was not to eat too much. There was no short cut in elastic trusses for ex-athletes, or in the patented rowing machines, or in synthetic diet; not if you ate too much. When you cut with life you had to use the house deck, not your own.

The reason was, he wanted to be a bugler. Red could play a bugle well because Red was not a bugler. 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.

Prew stood up, looking at his watch. "Its nine-fifteen," he said. "I got to be at G Company at nine-thirty for my interview." He grinned as he pulled the last word with his mouth, twisting it the way a badly silvered mirror subtly changes faces.