



North Carolina native **James Lee Barrett** was born on November 19, 1929, in Charlotte. After he attended both Anderson University and Furman University in South Carolina, he enlisted in the United States Marines, and that experience influenced the composition of many of his most celebrated works.

The black-and-white 1957 film *The D.I.*, based on the television screenplay *The Murder of a Sand Flea*, focuses on a drill instructor's responsibilities. Because he had been on Parris Island in South Carolina as a Marine recruit earlier, Barrett chose this training facility to be the film's setting.

His later screenplays encompassed various genres, such as police dramas, chase films, and even the 1965 biblical epic *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. He is also well-known for providing the screenplay for the comedy *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977). However, most of his nationally renowned films were set in either the West or in times of war. *Bandolero!* (1968), *The Cheyenne Social Club* (1970), and *Poker Alice* (1987) are just a few examples of his most noteworthy gunslinger films. The legendary actor John Wayne starred in at least two of Barrett's movies, the controversial war film *The Green Berets* (1968) and the acclaimed Western *The Undefeated* (1969). *The Green Berets* received mixed reviews because many critics opposed the United States' involvement in the ongoing Vietnam War, which the film tries to explain and support. *The Undefeated* acknowledges the struggles many Union and Confederate veterans faced while trying to rebuild their lives after the South surrendered in 1865.

Arguably, Barrett reached the pinnacle of his success in 1975 when he won the Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical with *Shenandoah*, another Civil War narrative, that he first wrote as a feature film in 1965. James Lee Barrett died of cancer in 1989 at the age of fifty-nine in Templeton, California. *Ruby Jean and Joe*, a television movie about an over-the-hill rodeo star, was produced posthumously in 1996.

-Sarah Marie Williamson

1998 Inductee
to the
South Carolina
Academy of Authors

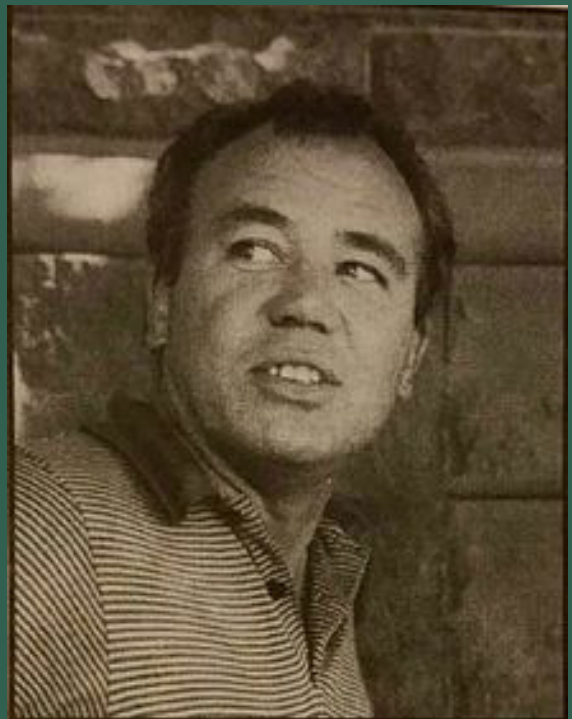


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James Lee Barrett