



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
 ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSELETTER

Volume II, Number 5—September 2006

†Expert Testimony†

From the Prez

Sisters in Crime has made amazing strides in its brief (twenty-year) history. Until I read the article by Lora Roberts in the most recent issue of *InSinC*, I had no idea of the obstacles our founding mothers had to overcome.

It's hard to believe that discrimination against women was so rampant in this country as recently as 1986. But at the very first conference on Women in Mystery, Sara Paretsky spoke out against the demeaning way women were being depicted in mysteries. An overwhelming response led to—among other things—reports of discrimination in other areas affecting women mystery authors. For example, up until then, they weren't even being *nominated* for awards by the prestigious Mystery Writers of America. Furthermore, women mystery writers were getting only a paltry percentage of reviews.

The momentum initiated by that first meeting catapulted Sisters in Crime into existence. At first, Sara Paretsky ran the organization out of her 8- by 10-foot office. Margaret Maron contributed the stamps, and others donated funds, time, and energy to the fledgling organization. Nancy Pickard recalls that it was not only exciting and fun, but also a little frightening, because they were being intimidated and attacked by the mystery press at every turn.

In reading Lora Roberts's intriguing article, I couldn't help thinking of the suffragette movement. I rarely give it a second thought when I exercise my right to vote. Sisters in Crime has made such great strides in the past twenty years that it's hard to remember—or even believe—the difficulties they faced.

We haven't completely “arrived,” but through continued involvement with the organization, we can make progress toward the day when women authors are granted the same respect as their male counterparts.

I hope all Croak and Dagger members also belong to the national organization. Besides enjoying our own chapter's *Nooseletter*, you'll have access to *InSinC*, the national newsletter. In addition to the eye-opening history I've mentioned above, you'll find a number of pertinent articles in each issue.

Happy reading!✓

—Margaret Tessler

—TRUE CRIMES—

Selected biographies of your Croak & Dagger board members.

Rob Kresge (program chair) was born in a little log cabin in downtown Chicago.

No, no, no.

Rob grew up in Washington, D.C., and worked thirty years for the CIA. During his career, he worked on South Vietnam, North Korea, gray market arms dealers, sanctions on the former Yugoslavia, and for ten years in the Counterterrorist Center, of which he was a founding member. On 9/11, he was the senior analyst responsible for warning of terrorist attacks on U.S. interests. He retired in October 2002 and moved to Albuquerque the following week. He also served thirty years in the Army Reserve, twenty-seven years in the Boy

(cont'd on next page)

Don't Miss It!

Saturday, September 23, 1:00 p.m.

Hear **David Morrell**, an award-winning thriller author—including his latest best-seller *Creepers*, coming out now in paperback—and author of *Lessons from a Lifetime of Writing: A Novelist Looks at His Craft*.

(True Crimes, Rob Kresge, cont'd.)

Scouts, ten years on the CIA's Native American Council, eight years on his church's Missions Committee, and two years as the chair of the 180-member CIA writers' group that he founded in 2000.

He is the author of four unpublished manuscripts (so far)—three historical mysteries and a Civil War spy novel based on a true story. He's written two short stories, and he had a profile and an interview with thriller author Gayle Lynds published this summer in *Mystery Scene* and *Crime Spree* magazines. He belongs to the national Sisters in Crime, Mystery Writers of America, the Historical Novel Society, and the International Thriller Writers organization. He has served as programs chair of the Croak & Dagger chapter for 2005 and 2006. ✓

Buried Treasure



Have you read something really good lately, but are reluctant to write an entire (450 words) review for the *Nooseletter*? Did you come across a really good book in the book exchange boxes at one of our meetings? How about telling us about it in a paragraph, like the following review? And there's no rule that says you have to return books to the exchange boxes. If you like it well enough, keep it. But don't keep an unexpected treasure entirely to yourself. Share the knowledge with the rest of us, who may want to seek out books by that author.

Found in the book exchange box:

The Body of David Hayes by Ridley Pearson. I stumbled across this one a few months ago, and it took me a while to get around to it. Glad I didn't wait any longer. I intend to look for more books by Pearson. He's an award-winning mystery and thriller author who's also written screenplays and children's books. This novel is set in Seattle and starts as a police procedural featuring his long-time series protagonist Lt. Lou Boldt. But the novel rapidly escalates into a chase for missing millions and involves Boldt's wife, who had an affair years before with the prime suspect, now missing; their children; Boldt's trusted colleagues; and an old friend who may be playing a dangerous game. Russian Mafiosi, Seattle police special ops, and the organized crime squad all figure in this, too. I admired Pearson's point of view into the heads of Boldt and his wife as the guilty secret comes out and during his desperate struggle to keep a video of the affair out of the media and off the Internet. The latest high tech equipment comes into play, and the surveillance scenes are innovatively and expertly handled. The finale features a multilayered deception straight out of *The Sting*. ✓

—Rob Kresge

DON'T FORGET:

Tuesday, September 23, 1:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 24, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, November 28, 7:00 p.m.

Croak & Dagger Lineup

Officers

President: Margaret Tessler
tale_spinner@earthlink.net
Vice President: Sarah Schwartz
schwartzse@comcast.net
Treasurer: Ira Rimson
irimson02@comcast.net
Secretary: Stephanie Hainsfurther
words13@osogrande.com

Committee Chairs

Programs: Rob Kresge
rkresge777@comcast.net
PR/Publicity: Stephanie Hainsfurther
words13@osogrande.com
Membership: Stephanie Hainsfurther
words13@osogrande.com
The *Nooseletter*: Shirley Coe
shirleycoe@comcast.net
Hospitality: Fred Aiken
FAAiken@aol.com
Web Site Coordinator: Nancy Varian
thule21@att.net

IN THE LOOP

If you haven't joined already, all members are invited to join the *Croak & Dagger* community group, an online gathering place. Exchange information about mystery books, movies, and TV shows; share news about local and national mystery events; and participate in occasional online classes. Join in!

Contact Nancy Varian, thule21@att.net, for further instructions.

The Cairn of Albertvs

Legant prius et postea despicant.

Let them read first and dislike afterward.

A writer's perennial complaint on getting a poor review. So did Romans have beach reading or were they always into serious stuff like Plato, Aristotle, and *The Consolation of Philosophy*? Despite a literacy rate of 5–15 percent, anyone from aristocrats to slaves might read. Popular literature ranged from bodice rippers, *An Ephesian Tale*, to comic novels, *Lucius, or the Ass*, to the Christian novella *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Historicals, stories of marvels, fables, and fortune telling are known. There was even a joke book: “One of twin brothers died. When a dimwit saw the survivor, he asked, ‘Was it you who died or your brother?’”

Manuscripts and bound volumes preserved in monasteries were rediscovered during the Renaissance. Ten of Shakespeare's plays are drawn from antiquity. Archeological digs spawned *The Last Days of Pompeii* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton—he of “the dark and stormy night.” The author still is spoofed in the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest for worst opening sentences.

“Detective Bart Lasiter was in his office studying the light from his one small window falling on his super burrito when the door swung open to reveal a woman whose body said you've had your last burrito for a while, whose face said angels did exist, and whose eyes said she could make you dig your own grave and lick the shovel clean.” (Jim Guigli, 2006 winner.)

Bulwer-Lytton consistently broke rules of current writing wisdom. Parenthetical author asides included: “I know its face, by Pollux,” cried Pansa. “It is an Ambracian kid. Ho!” (snapping his fingers, an usual sign to slaves). “We must prepare a new libation in honor of the newcomer.” And an author intrusion: The sun shone gaily into that beautiful chamber of Glaucus, which I have before said is now called “the Room of Leda.”

While territorial governor at Santa Fe, Lew Wallace wrote *Ben Hur*. Both men's novels became movies more easily grasped than turgid nineteenth-century prose. Would Wallace's opening-hook paragraph, a geography lesson, grab today's editors?

The Jebel es Zubleh is a mountain fifty miles and more in length, and so narrow that its tracery on the map gives it a likeness to a caterpillar crawling from north to south. Standing on its red-and-

white cliffs, and looking under the path of the rising sun, one sees only the Desert of Arabia, where the east winds, so hateful to the vine growers of Jericho, have kept their playgrounds from the beginning. Its feet are well covered by sands tossed from the Euphrates, there to lie; for the mountain is a wall to the pasturelands of Moab and Ammon on the west—lands that else had been of the desert a part.

Today's Greek and Roman novels are legion, grouped together on Amazon and Barnes and Noble sites. Irene Hahn, at www.romanhistory-booksandmore.freeservers.com, reviews classical works and contemporary novels, and also hosts a Wednesday chat room. Richard M. Heli's newsletter, *The Detective and the Toga*, www.histmyst.org/romys.html, lists Roman mysteries published in Europe, the UK, Canada, and the USA. Included are translations, brief author bios, and a link to Amazon.com.✓

—Albert Noyer

Killer Nashville

Killer Nashville is a two-day event that will be held in Nashville, Tennessee, on Friday, September 15, and Saturday, September 16, 2006.

Best-selling mystery and thriller authors, screenwriters, and playwrights will sign books, meet fans, and participate in panels.

Scheduled events include author receptions and book signings, a writer's conference with panel discussions on topics such as forensics, selling stories to film and TV, roundtables on supporting and navigating the bestseller, and general fiction and nonfiction panels.

Attendees include Carol Higgins Clark, many other award-winning authors, screenwriters, publicists, editors, literary agents, and entertainment and literary attorneys.

Sponsors include Mystery Writers of America, Southeast Mystery Writers of America, American Blackguard, Barnes & Noble Booksellers, First Tennessee Bank, and Landmark Booksellers. You can learn more about the entire event at www.KillerNashville.com.✓

Croak and Dagger Coming Events . . .

Morgue Tour!



As if October isn't creepy enough, Croak & Dagger has arranged for a return of last year's favorite field trip. A visit to the morgue is planned for 9 to 11 a.m. on October 28, the last Saturday before Halloween. The tour involves a look into the morgue and a film about

autopsy procedures. There are three limitations to your signing up for the tour:

1. The Office of the Medical Examiner only allows these tours on Saturdays, and attendance is limited to twenty persons.
2. There was great demand for the 2005 tour. If you attended in 2005, you may not attend this year's event. Don't worry if the experience affected your memory; Rob Kresge has a list and knows who you are.
3. Those who sign up in person get preference for this tour. Rob will have the signup sheet available on Saturday, September 23, at David Morrell's talk. Just in case we don't reach twenty, a message will be sent encouraging folks to email Rob for a place on the roster.

Sign up at the regular meeting on Saturday, September 23 (at 1:00 p.m.), or email Rob at rkresge777@comcast.net.

Important additional note: Rob will also sign up alternates on a waiting list and notify them if vacancies open up. Last year we had three on the waiting list make the tour. ✓

**Sisters
in
Crime**

Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. *The purpose of Sisters in Crime shall be "to combat discrimination against women in they mystery field, educate publishers and the general public as to the inequities in the treatment of female authors, raise the level of awareness of their contribution to the field, and promote the professional advancement of women who write mysteries."*

Membership Drive Event: A Halloween Wine-Tasting Bash

Scene: Members and their guests* (see qualification below) are invited to a Halloween wine-tasting party: a Croak & Dagger membership drive event

Date: Tuesday, October 24

Time: 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Place: St. Clair Winery, Rio Grande Blvd. in Old Town, on the side patio

Admission: \$10 per person *plus* one prospective member (*a non-spouse/non-spousing guest)

Occupancy: Limited to 60 people—first come, first served

Entry: Come and mingle with other Sisters in Crime and their guests

Prizes: There will be door prizes, and one free membership will be given away

Invitation: Invitations will be emailed to members. Sign up by phone or email with your name *and* the name of your guest*.

Refreshments: Nonalcoholic beverages will be available. Designated drivers are encouraged.

If You Dare: Costumes are encouraged, though not required

Contact: Stephanie at 298-2155 or words13@osogrande.com



A Hunchback, Three Cops, and a Muslim Walk into a Bar . . .

THREE SHORT REVIEWS



Dissolution by C. J. Sansom

London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003

P. D. James recommended this writer in a recent article on mysteries in the *Wall Street Journal*, so I decided to pick her up. Then I found out she's a he. Then I found out that *Dissolution* is an historical mystery, and I groaned out loud (sorry, Rob).

I don't have much interest in historical novels, having ditched Anne Perry after too many repetitive, s-l-o-o-o-w m-o-o-o-v-i-n-g Monk mysteries. I halfheartedly dug into this one, figuring I could always stop and put it in the free-book bin at the next program meeting.

Well, fellow Sister, I got so hooked that I went out and bought Sansom's second novel (*Dark Fire*) and read them back to back.

Most of the action in *Dissolution* takes place at an English monastery during the time of the Reformation in the reign of King Henry VIII. Yes, the one who had Anne Boleyn beheaded the year before so he could ally himself with Jane Seymour, who has recently died after childbirth. The king, having set himself up as head of the Church of England, has ordered all of the Roman Catholic monasteries and their property seized. His henchman, Lord Cromwell, has dispatched an attorney to oversee the dissolution of the monastery at Scarnsea, and the attorney has been beheaded in the kitchen (insert lawyer joke here).

Our reluctant reformer and hero, hunchback Matthew Shardlake, another lawyer, is sent by Cromwell to investigate the first one's death. During his investigation, Shardlake finds that a lot of things are up at Scarnsea, including child and elder abuse, homosexuality, poisoning, sexual harassment, and more swordplay. The protagonist's voice is true and finely written; we are with him all the way as Shardlake's taste for Reformation sours and he finds himself mired in physical and political jeopardy.

The mystery unravels nicely, with a true surprise at the end, but the real charm of this series lies in the details of daily life within the monastery and in London, where Shardlake lives. Within Sansom's books, you are transported to that time and place—mysterious, dangerous, and downright malodorous as it was.

The Night Gardener, by George Pelecanos

New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006

Watching *The Wire* on HBO, I confess I am stymied by the street slang, just as I was while trying to read George Pelecanos's police procedural series set in D.C. Pelecanos is a staff writer and story editor on *The Wire*. But when I opened *The Night Gardener*, a one-off also set in D.C., I knew there would be no problems with the straightforward language in this book.

My problems instead are with plot structure and characterization. This book reads more like an outline for a made-for-TV movie, and it wouldn't make a very good one.

The plot hinges on three murders of children committed in 1985 and a present-day murder that looks a lot like the previous ones. All of the victims were dumped in community-tended gardens around Washington. When a teenager is murdered in 2005 and found in yet another community garden, the cops think it must be linked to the previous three killings.

A detective sergeant who is still on the force, a drunken ex-cop, and the lead investigator on the original case, now retired, are all supposed to come together to solve this latest murder of fourteen-year-old Asa Johnson.

Doesn't happen.

The present-day body doesn't show up until page 99. The three cops don't actually get together until page 220. And their investigation is anything but cohesive, let alone successful. There is a subplot involving two really stupid criminals (real cops will tell you there is no other kind of criminal) that barely pretends to have anything to do with the main story. This book is such a big disappointment all around that it is definitely going in the swap bin at the next program meeting—not that any of you will read it after this review.

Actually, I did have a problem with the language in this novel, with one word in particular. The children who were murdered in 1985 all have names that are spelled the same way backward and forward—Otto, Ava, and Eve. Then there's Asa, twenty years later. Hence, the cops have dubbed these The Palindrome Murders. Oh, really? That seems about as likely as having a police force made up of former English majors.

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(Three Short Reviews, cont'd.)

Terrorist, by John Updike

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006

It is a stretch to call this book a crime novel, but since all of the action hurtles toward one big act of annihilation, I think you can allow me some space here. (And John Updike is my favorite writer, so shut up already.)

Ahmad is one of those kids that the other kids love to hate—and rightly so. At the age of eighteen, he is a self-righteous prig of a religious fanatic and, in keeping with the news and the timely title, the religion in question just happens to be Islam. Believe me, you have met Ahmad in other, non-Islamic versions.

His view of the world, thanks to the fundamentalist teachings of his imam at the mosque, is rigidly black and white. He has very little understanding of or empathy for the people around him, especially Joryleen Grant, a seductive girl at his high school. Ahmad can't even cut his mother much slack. She's a hippy-dippy single mom and artist who raised him because it was her responsibility to do so but who ended up loving him, too, along the way. Her resolute yet ignorant championing of his individuality and religious choice seems naïve to us, and absolutely American. His father is an Egyptian who abandoned his family when he returned to his own country.

Part of Ahmad's searching in this book seems to be for that elusive father. He clings to his religious teacher's strict beliefs, rejects the advice of the depressive Jewish guidance counselor, Jack Levy, and comes under the wing of his Lebanese employer's son, Charlie, who teaches him how to drive a truck. It is Ahmad's simple skill with the truck that becomes most ominous as we begin to realize what some of the older men in his life have in store for him.

In an extreme way, this book is about a young man's coming of age. It is a mystery in that we are suspicious of the characters' motives throughout, are certain that murder will occur, and are taken by surprising twists along the way. But most of all it is a nail-bitingly suspenseful, exquisitely realistic novel that evokes our personal and national vulnerabilities. ✓

—Stephanie Hainsfurther, words13@osogrande.com

ROB'S RANDOM SHOTS

September Case File Number One

Iron Ties by Ann Parker, Poisoned Pen Press, Phoenix, June 2006

Hallelujah! Feisty saloon owner Inez Stannert is back in another Ann Parker Silver Rush mystery. Just in time. It's summer 1880, and the railroad is coming to Leadville, the Silicon Valley—er, mountain—of the Colorado silver rush. But nothing is simple in the politics of that age. The railroads run rampant over the objections and property rights of individuals, and it's not exactly certain when the railroad will arrive or which of two competing lines will emerge victorious: the Denver and Rio Grande or the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe.

Against this backdrop of big money, political rivalry, and potential violence, violence is first out of the starting gate. A female photographer friend of Inez witnesses what looks like a double homicide and is nearly killed when an explosion immediately afterward destroys a section of Denver and Rio Grande track. Only Inez believes the injured woman's story. But when she investigates, there are no bodies to be found.

Readers who discovered the first book in this prize-winning series (the Willa Cather and the Colorado Gold awards), *Silver Lies*, published in 2003, will rejoice in the return of mysterious love interest Preacher (and former Union spy) Justice B. Sands, Inez's stalwart business partner Abe Jackson, and a host of supporting characters. New characters include suspects that range from suspicious actors, an ex-professor, railroad toughs among whom are former Confederate sharpshooters, and the wife of a missing miner.

All this intrigue occurs against the backdrop of the rumored visit to Leadville, on the first train, by former President Ulysses S. Grant. Bitterness from the war boils up periodically among Confederate war veterans who may hold a grudge against another Union general, now an officer of the Denver and Rio Grande.

Can Inez sort out her friend's story, determine whether two murders really occurred, and then prevent another murder that is literally barreling down the tracks? Complicating the issue for the missing men are indifference from the railroad, which is further angering Leadville residents by forcing out landowners in the right-of-way. Who's behind the thuggery to pressure them to sell out? And why is Reverend Sands of so little help? Is it just his apparent infatuation with the beautiful

(cont'd. on next page)

(Rob's Random Shots, cont'd.)

daughter of a railroad owner or is there something in his past that prevents him from helping Inez as he did in *Silver Lies*?

Readers can find out more about these books—and the author—at www.annparker.net. Ann promises more thrills and mystery in her next novel, to be published by Poisoned Pen next year, possibly including the return of her ne'er-do-well husband, Mark, missing since the beginning of *Silver Lies*. Don't miss it. I know I won't.

September Case File Number Two

Creepers by David Morrell, CDS Books, New York, 2005

By the time you read this, David Morrell's *Creepers* will be out in paperback, just in time for his talk to us on Saturday, September 23, at 1 p.m.

David Morrell is best known as the creator of Rambo in his first novel, *First Blood*. Since then, Morrell, called the "Father of the Modern Action Novel," has written twenty-seven best-selling novels that have sold eighteen million copies and been translated into twenty-six languages. *The Brotherhood of the Rose* was an NBC miniseries. Since his retirement as a professor at the University of Iowa's writing program, he has lived in Santa Fe. In 2004, he and spy novelist Gayle Lynds cofounded the International Thriller Writers organization, which held its first conference this July in Phoenix.

But why should you read *Creepers*? Well, it's a bestseller and an award-winner, too. It won this year's Bram Stoker Award for Horror Novel of the Year. Wait, wait. I can see the level of trepidation rising out there. Morrell hastens to point out that although he has written all kinds of horror novels and stories, there is nothing supernatural in *Creepers*. It certainly is, in many ways, one of a kind. Many of Morrell's novels have been groundbreaking, but no one has written a book quite like this one.

First, the subject matter: The title is a nickname for urban explorers, city archeologists who investigate abandoned buildings and uncover their dying secrets. Since what they do—breaking into private property—is illegal, these people must act in secret. They're a little like cavers, but with a twist: they have to avoid the police, so they always work at night.

The group that descends on the Paragon Hotel, a century-old building boarded up in the 1970s in the virtual ghost town of Asbury Park, New Jersey, is scheduled for the wrecker's ball in a few days. Long

held to be a hangout for gangsters in the Depression and built by a mysterious reclusive hemophiliac, the hotel attracts a motley band of adventurers—a professor, three of his former students, and a *New York Times* reporter intent on a story. But some of the party have hidden agendas, and as things begin to unravel, new revelations burst out in virtually every chapter.

Second: This book is also unique in that the action takes place in about eight hours. Not coincidentally, the book takes about eight hours to read. So the story unfolds in real time with every word and action of the characters.

I like to think I've read enough thrillers to anticipate plot departures, but every twist in this story caught me by surprise. This book has been so successful that Morrell's next novel will be a sequel to it. I'll be on the lookout for it; hope you will be, too. Want to know more? Visit www.davidmorrell.net and www.theparagonhotel.com. Hallie Ephron writes psychological mysteries, so she knows whereof she writes. Her sister Nora is a noted screenwriter (*When Harry Met Sally* and many others), so ink runs in her family's veins.

This volume, laid out logically, begins with 80 pages on **planning**, a step that ought to take at least as long as the actual writing. As Ephron and the *Weekend Novelist* authors point out, those who plan ahead face fewer writing blocks and go down fewer dead ends that force them to throw away dozens of pages (even a hundred) of draft and start over. Planning shows you how to proceed logically from a premise (idea) to sleuth, crime, victim, villain, innocent suspects, supporting cast, setting (I might have placed this higher, next to premise), plot organization, and title selection. It may seem weird to put title last, but it can occur to you at any point and may change.

In this section and the others, Ephron shows you how certain aspects of novels or scenes flow from each other and give you space for practical exercises, either from the book you're working on or just something you think up on the spot.

The final ten-page section is on selling your novel—targeting agents and publishers and putting together a query packet. There are entire books on these topics, but Ephron does an admirable job of condensing the best recommendations into a few pages. This is a great book for those of you just starting out, those who are well underway, or—as I found to my chagrin—those of us who wish they could back up the tape to five years ago. ✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

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Help Wanted: Croak & Dagger Needs You!

We have several executive committee positions opening up for 2007. If any of these opportunities appeal to you, or if you'd like to be on the nominating committee, please contact Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net, or Shirley Coe, shirleycoe@comcast.net.

The president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer are elected members of the executive committee, serving one-year terms. (Elections are at the general meeting in November.) They are expected to belong to the both the national Sisters in Crime organization and the local chapter.

Chairs of standing committees may volunteer for their positions; the president makes the final appointment. Committee chairs must belong to the local chapter.

The officers and committee chairs serve on the executive committee, which generally meets once a month.

Officer Vacancies

President. The president presides at all membership meetings and calls and presides at all executive committee meetings. The president sets goals and assigns responsibilities, serves as ad hoc member of committees, polls members on major decisions, keeps members informed, serves as group spokesperson, and performs such other duties as the executive committee may from time to time determine.

Vice President. The vice president assists or substitutes for the president as required.

Secretary. The secretary maintains a mailing list in Microsoft Outlook of all current board members. The secretary also takes minutes at monthly board meetings, keeping them and any attachments in a loose-leaf notebook, and distributes

the minutes to board members for approval within a reasonable time (before the next board meeting). The secretary sends out notices of board meetings when needed and directions, prepares and distributes a board meeting agenda when directed by the president, and keeps members on track as to what matters have been decided, so redundancies do not occur.

Treasurer. The treasurer receives chapter funds, deposits them in the chapter's bank account, and makes disbursements as authorized by the executive committee. The treasurer keeps financial accounts (currently in Microsoft Excel), maintains a checking account, and prepares and submits financial statements monthly to the executive committee and at the annual meeting.

Committee Chair Vacancies

Membership Chair.

- Maintains membership applications. Maintains a membership spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel to track current and renewal memberships. Each month, sends renewal notices twice: one month and then two weeks before a membership expiration date. Checks with the treasurer to see which members have renewed. In the case of nonrenewals, sends a survey notice to ask why the member has not renewed.
- Maintains a members' mailing list and a separate mailing list of nonmembers in Microsoft Outlook for members-only and for general announcements, such as program reminders and group news. Sends other appropriate mailings as determined by the executive committee, such as the *Nooseletter*.

- Responds to correspondence from members and nonmembers, and/or refers them to the proper committee chair or executive committee member.
- Plans and organizes membership-drive events to sign up new members, such as the upcoming Halloween wine tasting in October 2006 and Susan Wittig Albert's appearance in April 2007. Works with the program chair and a committee on these events.

Program Chair.

- Purchases bookmarks to give to our speakers as honoraria. Takes them to the trophy store on Central and Monte Vista, to be engraved with "SinC ABQ Croak&Dagger" on the back. Picks them up a week later. Turns in receipts to the treasurer for reimbursement.

(cont'd. on next page)

(Help Wanted, Program Chair, cont'd.)

- Uses chapter resources (member ideas, volunteers, and so on) to come up with speaker ideas.
- Phones or emails speakers to ask if they'd be willing to speak on specific dates; generally lines up speakers for two or three months at a time.
- After acceptances, sends email messages to the publicity chair, *Nooseletter* editor, and membership chair to inform members and the larger community of mystery readers in Albuquerque.
- Is prepared to introduce the speaker at the meeting if requested by the chapter president. Brings the gift bookmark to that meeting.
- Follows up in a week or two with a written thank-you note to the speaker.

Publicity Chair.

- Obtains program/speaker and/or other event information from the program chair at least three weeks prior to an event.
- Writes a press release, and sends the press release to a mailing list at least three weeks in advance of each event.
- Maintains a mailing list of publications, reporters, and editors.

Webmaster/Webmistress.

- Maintains the chapter's Web site, renewing contracts with the site host, homestead.com; uploading announcements when directed by the board, and expanding the links page with links related to our genre.
- Maintains the chapter's Yahoo group. (Known among members as "the Yahoo loop.")
- Is prepared to train a successor if training is necessary.

!SinC Member Book Signing!

Margaret Coel, author of the acclaimed Wind River series of mysteries on the modern Cheyenne/ Arapaho reservation in Wyoming, will be at Bookworks at 7 p.m. of Thursday, October 5, the eve of Balloon Fiesta. She will read from and sign her latest Father John O'Malley/Vicky Holden novel, *The Drowning Man*, which is about a stolen petroglyph.


Bad Opening Lines

Rejoice! The results are in for the 2006 Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. Contest entrants are challenged to submit bad opening sentences to imaginary novels. Bulwer-Lytton is best known for *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) and the phrase "the pen is mightier than the sword." He was also author of the immortal words, "It was a dark and stormy night," part of the opening line of his novel *Paul Clifford* (1830).

Here is the Grand Prize Winner for 2006:

Detective Bart Lasiter was in his office studying the light from his one small window falling on his super burrito when the door swung open to reveal a woman whose body said you've had your last burrito for a while, whose face said angels did exist, and whose eyes said she could make you dig your own grave and lick the shovel clean.

The winning author is Jim Guigli. ✓



BOOKMARKS

Have you seen them? Bright yellow, with bloodred markings? Do you have one? Do you have a handful?

The 2006 *Croak & Dagger* bookmarks are a great way to spread the word about our Sisters in Crime chapter. Hand out plenty, but keep one for yourself: they list all our meeting dates and times for 2006.

2006 Meeting Dates:
 January 24
 February 28
 March 22 (Sat)
 April 20
 May 23
 June 22 (Sat)
 July 26
 August 22
 September 22 (Sat)
 October 24
 November 28
 December 16 (Sat)

Times: 7:00pm - 9:00pm
 (Other times subject to availability)

100 pm

James Joseph Owen Memorial
 Public Substation
 1220 Main Street, NE, 1E
 (One block east of Frymoyer)

www.sicabq.org

2006 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, January 24, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, February 28, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 25, 1:00 p.m.
Tuesday, April 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, May 23, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, June 24, 1:00 p.m.
Tuesday, July 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 22, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, September 23, 1:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 24, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 28, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 16, 1:00 p.m.

Free to the public in the briefing room at the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation, 12700 Montgomery Blvd. NE, one block east of Tramway.

For more information, call Rob Kresge, program chair, at 797-1874.

†*Nooseletter* Submissions†

Croak & Dagger friends are encouraged to contribute articles, reviews, and essays on aspects of mystery writing *and* reading for publication consideration. Information on relevant conferences or events is also welcome. Especially let us know if you have published a new book or story, or have an upcoming local author event. (Unbridled enthusiasm for your own mystery book is encouraged here.)

Length: Articles should average 500 words.

Deadlines: Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to publication: February 15, April 15, June 15, August 15, October 15, and December 15.

The Living and the Dead: As a general policy, articles and information should focus on living authors rather than dead ones, but that's not set in concrete shoes. Articles about specific historical development of the crime-mystery writing genre, for example, would be welcome.

Submissions: Please submit via email to shirleycoe@comcast.net, with "*Nooseletter*" in the subject line.

The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically. ✓

—Shirley Coe

Summary of Findings

The *Nooseletter* is the internal organ of the Croak & Dagger chapter, Albuquerque, of Sisters in Crime (SinC). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and editors.



Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?

\$20/year brings mystery to your life! The Albuquerque *Croak & Dagger* chapter welcomes mystery fans who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship, and sensational speakers.

Benefits of membership in the *Croak & Dagger* chapter include a subscription to our *Nooseletter*, close contact with local mystery writers, and fun events with other mystery fans.

You do *not* have to be a member of the national organization to join us. Come hear our next program speaker and meet the gang. We promise to bring mayhem and murder into your life.

Contact Stephanie Hainsfurther, membership chair, at 505-298-2155 or words13@osogrande.com.