



SISTERS in CRIME  
**CROAK & DAGGER**  
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



# THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume V, Number 4—July 2009

## †Expert Testimony†

### From the Prez

Welcome all you new Croak & Dagger members! Also, welcome back those who renewed their memberships. We've had some good turnouts at our meetings we'll continue to have interesting speakers each month. I hope we can all come away entertained, if not possessing a few new tidbits as writers and readers.

Our former president, Rob Kresge, will be returning from six months in Australia this month. I hope he brings "show and tell" about his experiences reading and writing in a foreign place. We've missed him.

I finally received my issue of *Nerve Cowboy* containing my first published poem. It's not much, but it feels good to have even a poem appreciated. And all I was doing when I decided to write it was enjoying my backyard watching the birds. We never know what we're capable of until we take the effort to put pen to paper!

Enjoy your summer—and keep writing and reading! ♦

—Cheri B. Stow

### Editor's Addendum:

Discover "what you're capable of"—or just what your fellow Croak & Dagger members are up to by joining our Yahoo discussion group. Share news and opinions about books, movies, and TV shows, as well as about any conferences and workshops having to do with the mystery genre. Post

questions about your reading and writing that members may have answers to.

This is a private group (to avoid a spam deluge), which means you can't just go to Yahoo and click on "Groups" and expect to find us. Membership is by invitation only, but it's easy to join. Just go to C&D's web page ([www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com)) and click on "Members." At the bottom of the page, click on the link to moderator Nancy Varian and email her that you'd like to join the Yahoo group. She'll take care of the rest.

Join the discussion!

### **Don't Miss It!**

**Tuesday, July 28, at 7 p.m.**

Our July speaker is Damon Fay, a 24-year veteran investigator and supervisor for the Albuquerque Police Department. He was a primary case agent for homicides, police officer-involved shootings, and major violent crimes cases for 14 of those years.

Damon is also a recognized expert in homicide investigations and pattern injury identification. During his extensive investigative career he has developed nationally accepted procedures for cold case homicide investigation and has become one of the leading circumstantial case specialists in the country.

Sergeant Fay lectures and teaches through out the United States and is the co-author of *Contact Weapons: Lethality and Defense*.

The Albuquerque Croak & Dagger chapter of Sisters in Crime welcomes mystery fans, readers, and writers who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship and sensational speakers.

Our August speaker will be Keith Pyeatt, author of paranormal thrillers. Keith became a mechanical engineer in 1980 and set off on his chosen career path. He designed power plants, upgraded industrial facilities, managed programs and departments, and ran a consulting business. His career path diverged when he moved into a simple log cabin he designed and built in rural northeastern Vermont and started writing horror novels.

Eight years later, he left Vermont and his engineering career behind and moved to Albuquerque to focus on writing and freelance editing. He has now been writing novels for 14 years.

*Dark Knowledge*, a paranormal psychological thriller, is scheduled for an October release as an eBook. *Struck*, a paranormal suspense/magic realism novel, was recently released and is available as a trade paperback.

Keith began outlining *Struck* after a hike through Rinconada Canyon on the western edge of Albuquerque. After seeing the petroglyphs, he considered incorporating some of New Mexico's Native American history into the novel. After a weekend in Chaco Canyon, the Anasazi ruins became integral to the novel.

Learn more at [www.keithpyeatt.com](http://www.keithpyeatt.com).

Meetings are held in the police briefing room of the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Substation, 12700 Montgomery NE (one block east of Tramway). Unless otherwise noted, programs are free and open to the public.



Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. *The mission of Sisters in Crime shall be* "to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry."

*Our vision is:* "Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers."

*And our motto is:* "SinC into a good mystery!"

**Check Out the Croak & Dagger Website for all your Croak & Dagger information needs.**

[www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com)

- Upcoming Programs
- 2008 Meeting Schedule
- Membership Form
- Speakers Bureau
- Links to Mystery Websites & Websites for Your Favorite Croak & Dagger Authors
- *The Nooseletter* Archive

### ***The Line Up***

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Nooseletter Editor – Linda Triegel –  
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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Sarah Schwartz's reprinting of S.S. van Dine's "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" in the May issue did a wonderful job of illuminating one of the more famous crime writers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He is now nearly forgotten, eclipsed by the more lasting names from the "Golden Age," Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Dashiell Hammett, and Raymond Chandler.

I hope that Van Dine's list, his rather pedantic attempt to use his considerable influence at the time to pigeonhole other writers into adopting his style and constraints, will encourage other letter writers to comment. To show how eclipsed Van Dine has been, do you know the name of his then-famous sleuth? (See page 9 for the answer.)

If readers will refer back to the May issue and consider his 20 rules, I'd like to take exception, not to all, but to certain ones that have been honored more in the breach than in the observance, and to great popular acclaim.

3. *There must be no love interest.* It's pretty easy to refute this. If there isn't a love interest for the sleuth in what you're reading right now, try to imagine *The Maltese Falcon* without Brigid O'Shaughnessy, or later Lord Peter Wimseys without Harriet Vane.

4. *The detective himself, or one of the official investigators, should never turn out to be the culprit.* Van Dine was obviously horrified by Mary Roberts Rinehart's popular (several movies and a play) *The Bat*, which violated this "rule." How many TV shows and movies, not to mention the first Brother Cadfael novel, make policemen suspects if not the actual perpetrator?

7. *There simply must be a corpse in the detective novel. No lesser crime than murder will suffice.* Generations of writers have followed this more often than not, but Ross McDonald, for one, used other crimes, like a missing person, to generate Lew Archer novels that later led to murder. The other MacDonald (John D.) started Travis McGee off on "salvage" missions that didn't always start from murder.

9. *There must be but one detective—that is, but one protagonist of detection.* What about Agatha Christie's Tommy and Tuppence? *Moonlighting*'s David and Maddy? My own Kate Shaw and Monday Malone? How many others can you name? The late Ed McBain's long-running *82<sup>nd</sup> Precinct* series featured a large stable of cops who alternated being principal investigators.

11. *A servant must not be chosen by the author as the culprit, who must be a decidedly worthwhile person.* Oh, please. I know "the butler did it" is hackneyed, but Van Dine would leave no room for a murder at a school for butlers. Who has servants these days, beyond part-time housekeepers? The new movie *Sunshine Cleaning Service* even uses housekeepers as detectives.

16. *A detective novel should contain no long descriptive passages, no literary dallying with side issues, no subtly worked out character analyses, no atmospheric preoccupations.* I know Elmore Leonard said to eschew "hoop-de-doodle," but can you imagine reading James Lee Burke, Raymond Chandler, Margaret Coel, or Tony Hillerman without their use of landscape and culture as almost another character?

17. *A professional criminal must never be shouldered with the guilt of a crime in a detective story.* What, no Hannibal Lecter? No Professor Moriarty? Come on.

18. *A crime in a detective novel must never turn out to be an accident or suicide.* Haven't you read, as I have, novels in which a panicked person covers up a suicide, thinking it must be murder? And aren't there mysteries in which the triggering event for an investigation was an accident, but the eventual culprit who went on to commit other crimes didn't know that?

20. No, I won't go through all of that list of ten more items. Suffice it to say Van Dine's admonition against "*the cipher, or code letter, which is eventually unraveled by the sleuth*" meant he disapproved of Sherlock Holmes solving "The Riddle of the Dancing Men."

—Rob Kresge ([rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net))

[Want more up-to-date rules? See next page!]

## 83 and Still Kicking

Elmore Leonard is the author of *Get Shorty*, *Fifty-Two Pickup*, *Killshot*, and other novels, many of which have been made into movies (his favorite, he claimed in a recent Charlie Rose interview, was *Out of Sight*). His numerous short stories include “3:10 to Yuma,” which was made into not one but two films, 50 years apart. His latest book is *Road Dogs*, but he is also the creator of 10 now famous (or infamous) rules for writers, which follow:

*These are rules I've picked up along the way to help me remain invisible when I'm writing a book, to help me show rather than tell what's taking place in the story. If you have a facility for language and imagery and the sound of your voice pleases you, invisibility is not what you are after, and you can skip the rules. Still, you might look them over.*

1. *Never open a book with weather.* If it's only to create atmosphere, and not a character's reaction to the weather, you don't want to go on too long. The reader is apt to leaf ahead looking for people. There are exceptions. If you happen to be Barry Lopez, who has more ways to describe ice and snow than an Eskimo, you can do all the weather reporting you want.

2. *Avoid prologues.* They can be annoying, especially a prologue following an introduction that comes after a foreword. But these are ordinarily found in nonfiction. A prologue in a novel is backstory, and you can drop it in anywhere you want.

There is a prologue in John Steinbeck's *Sweet Thursday*, but it's O.K. because a character in the book makes the point of what my rules are all about. He says: “I like a lot of talk in a book and I don't like to have nobody tell me what the guy that's talking looks like. I want to figure out what he looks like from the way he talks .... figure out what the guy's thinking from what he says. I like some description but not too much of that. ... Sometimes I want a book to break loose with a bunch of hooptedoodle ... Spin up some pretty words

maybe or sing a little song with language. That's nice. But I wish it was set aside so I don't have to read it. I don't want hooptedoodle to get mixed up with the story.”

3. *Never use a verb other than “said” to carry dialogue.* The line of dialogue belongs to the character; the verb is the writer sticking his nose in. But said is far less intrusive than grumbled, gasped, cautioned, lied. I once noticed Mary McCarthy ending a line of dialogue with “she asseverated,” and had to stop reading to get the dictionary.

4. *Never use an adverb to modify the verb “said”* ...he admonished gravely. To use an adverb this way (or almost any way) is a mortal sin. The writer is now exposing himself in earnest, using a word that distracts and can interrupt the rhythm of the exchange. I have a character in one of my books tell how she used to write historical romances “full of rape and adverbs.”

5. *Keep your exclamation points under control.* You are allowed no more than two or three per 100,000 words of prose. If you have the knack of playing with exclamers the way Tom Wolfe does, you can throw them in by the handful.

6. *Never use the words “suddenly” or “all hell broke loose.”* This rule doesn't require an explanation. I have noticed that writers who use “suddenly” tend to exercise less control in the application of exclamation points.

7. *Use regional dialect, patois, sparingly.* Once you start spelling words in dialogue phonetically and loading the page with apostrophes, you won't be able to stop. Notice the way Annie Proulx captures the flavor of Wyoming voices in her book of short stories “Close Range.”

8. *Avoid detailed descriptions of characters.* Which Steinbeck covered. In Ernest Hemingway's “Hills Like White Elephants” what do the “American and the girl with him” look like? “She had taken off her hat and put it on the table.” That's the only reference to a

physical description in the story, and yet we see the couple and know them by their tones of voice, with not one adverb in sight.

9. *Don't go into great detail describing places and things.* Unless you're Margaret Atwood and can paint scenes with language or write landscapes in the style of Jim Harrison. But even if you're good at it, you don't want descriptions that bring the action, the flow of the story, to a standstill.

And finally:

10. *Try to leave out the part that readers tend to skip.* A rule that came to mind in 1983. Think of what you skip reading a novel: thick paragraphs of prose you can see have too many words in them. What the writer is doing, he's writing, perpetrating hooptedoodle, perhaps taking another shot at the weather, or has gone into the character's head, and the reader either knows what the guy's thinking or doesn't care. I'll bet you don't skip dialogue.

My most important rule is one that sums up the 10: *If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it.* ♦

## NOOSE NEWS

### Workshops

**Anne Hillerman** and Jean Schaumberg announce two writing workshop in Santa Fe this summer.

On August 7, **Ellen Barone** will talk about how to use the web to jumpstart new sources of revenue or parlay your interests into creative new platforms during her Santa Fe workshop on Internet Marketing on August 7. Space is still available in this interactive class, co-sponsored by Santa Fe Community College. The workshop is intended for writers, photographers,



artists, entrepreneurs, and anyone curious about websites, internet marketing and other on-line promotional tools.

On August 8, award-winning author and writing teacher **Sandi Ault**, author of *Wild Inferno* and *Wild Sorrow*, will present “Six Degrees of Separation: From Creating Story Lines to Polishing Your Work - Important Skills A Writer Must Have.”

Sandi presents vital information writers need to stand out from the pack and succeed as published authors. She will help you sharpen your writing skills to develop a dynamic voice; create powerful images with your words; interweave and fine-tune themes; set your story line, and grab the reader.

Each workshop is \$130. For more information contact [www.wordharvest.com](http://www.wordharvest.com) (click on “News”)

Author and Editor **Kirt Hickman** will be conducting two workshops in July and August at the Southwest Writers (SWW) office, 3721 Morris Street, in Albuquerque.

The July workshop on creating your novel, “Write a Good Story,” runs July 6 to July 27. The August session, running August 3-24 and called “Write It Well,” covers revisions, editing, and generally polishing your prose.

Kirt Hickman is the author of the sci-fi mystery *Worlds Asunder* and an experienced teacher and speaker on self-editing. Workshops offer a “practical approach to self-editing that covers everything from planning your novel, to first draft, through revision, to final publication-quality manuscript. Each class will include a lecture, discussion, prepared exercises, and work on your own writing projects.”

Cost of each workshop is \$65 for SWW members, \$75 for non-members, with a \$15 materials fee (which you pay only once if you sign up for both programs). Each participant will receive a copy of Kirk's book, *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness*.

For more information or to sign up, contact the SWW office (265-9485) or enroll online at [www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com).

## Author News

**Craig Johnson**, past winner of the Tony Hillerman Short Story Contest, received the 2009 Spur Award for best western novel for *Another Man's Moccasins*. The Spur, given annually for distinguished writing about the American West, is among the oldest and most prestigious awards in American literature. Past winners include Larry McMurtry for *Lonesome Dove*, Michael Blake for *Dances With Wolves*, Glendon Swarthout for *The Shootist*, and Tony Hillerman for *Skinwalkers*. Johnson's newest, *The Dark Horse*, was released this spring.

**David Morrell** celebrates the 25th anniversary of his classic trilogy, *The Brotherhood of the Rose*, this year. Ballantine is re-releasing all three novels as trade paperbacks with new afterwords by Morrell explaining how the books evolved. David's newest book, *The Shimmer*, is set for release in July by Vanguard Press.

**Michael McGarrity** reports steady progress on his new book, a historical novel tentatively titled *Hard County*, a prequel to the Kerney novels. Set in the territorial period of New Mexico, the book weaves crimes and misdeeds into the plot. On August 5, McGarrity will speak at the Full Moon event at White Sands National Monument, east of Alamogordo, and on August 15 at the SouthWest Writers Conference in Albuquerque.

**Steve Havill**, faculty member at the Tony Hillerman Conference in 2007 and 2008, has a new book out, *The Fourth Time Is Murder*. This is his 15th novel set in fictional Posadas County, New Mexico. *Booklist* called it, "a satisfying, intelligent mystery."

**Pari Noskin Taichert** was in Washington, D.C. at Malice Domestic, where she served on the humor panel and the social issues panel.

**Susan Slater**'s newest book, *0 to 60*, which she calls an autobiographical novel, has a July 15 publication date from Bascom Hill Publishing Group. As part of the book launch, Susan has generously offered free critiques to other writers of fiction based on their own lives. Deadline for submissions is September 30th. The winner receives the *Novel in a Weekend* course with mystery writer Connie Shelton.

**Tony Hillerman's Landscape: On the Road with Chee and Leaphorn** will be released Oct. 27, 2009, by HarperCollins and celebrated at an event at the University of New Mexico on November 5 and in Santa Fe Sunday, November 8. If you'd like an invitation to these inaugural happenings, a benefit for the Hillerman-(Michael) McGarrity Scholarship for Creative Writing in Albuquerque and the Public Libraries in Santa Fe, just send an email.

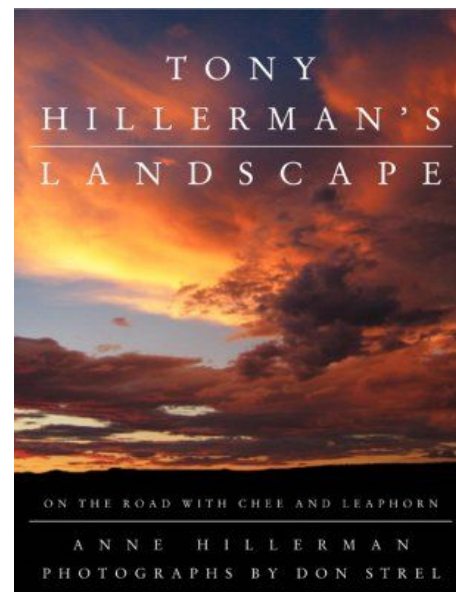
The book, written by Anne Hillerman with photos by Don Strel, uses Tony's descriptions of Indian country scenery from the Chee/Leaphorn books, Don's pictures and Anne's memories of her father and non-fiction commentary.

## SinC Deals

Lots of men are selling thrillers these days, but we haven't seen many sales by women mystery writers this month. The select few:

Kathleen Ernst's *Old World Murder*, about a Collections Curator, sold to Brian Farrey at Midnight Ink, in a nice deal, for publication in 2010, by Andrea Cascardi at Transatlantic Literary Agency

White House Chef mysteries author Julie Hyzy's new *Manor of Murder* trilogy sold to Natalee Rosenstein at Berkley in a nice deal, by Erin Niumata at Folio Literary Management.



*Newsweek* magazine recent compiled a list of “50 Books for Our Time,” chosen for the reasons delineated below. How many have you read?

## What to Read Now. And Why

We know it's insane. We know people will ask why on earth we think that an 1875 British satirical novel is the book you need to read right now—or, for that matter, why it even made the cut. The fact is, no one needs another best-of list telling you how great *The Great Gatsby* is. What we do need, in a world with precious little time to read (and think), is to know which books—new or old, fiction or nonfiction—open a window on the times we live in, whether they deal directly with the issues of today or simply help us see ourselves in new and surprising ways. Which is why we'd like you to sit down with Anthony Trollope, and these 49 other remarkably trenchant voices.

1. *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollope  
The title says it all. Trollope's satire of financial (and moral) crisis in Victorian England even has a Madoff-before-Madoff, a tragic swindler named Augustus Melmotte.
2. *The Looming Tower* by Lawrence Wright  
Perhaps no two questions are as important in the early 21st century as the ones Wright answers: how 9/11 happened, and why.
3. *Prisoner of the State* by Zhao Ziyang  
Chinese officials are confiscating copies of this memoir by the party chief who was ousted for opposing military force in Tiananmen Square. They have reason to be nervous.
4. *The Big Switch* by Nicholas Carr  
You've heard of "cloud computing," but let's be honest, you really don't know what it means. Or why it's going to change everything.
5. *The Bear* by William Faulkner  
A boy comes of age in the 1880s by learning the ways of the fast-disappearing Mississippi forests. The best environmental novel ever written.
6. *Winchell* by Neal Gabler  
Before there was Rush Limbaugh-or Us Weekly-there was Walter Winchell: gossip columnist, commentator, McCarthyite, radio celebrity, has-been.
7. *Random Family* by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc  
It took LeBlanc 10 years immersed in the lives of one Bronx family to produce this gripping, cinematic account of urban poverty and its causes. It will take you two days to read it.
8. *Night Draws Near* by Anthony Shadid  
While the book is about the run-up to the Iraq War and the immediate aftermath, its strength is its insight into how Iraqis really think, which is instructive as we head for the exits.
9. *Predictably Irrational* by Dan Ariely  
Overturns the notion that we weigh pros and cons logically. Read it to understand why we obey honor codes-and other irrational behaviors.
10. *God: A Biography* by Jack Miles  
Miles, a journalist and former Jesuit, treats the God of the Bible as a literary protagonist-and discovers infinitely human depths.

For the rest of the list (or to complain about *Newsweek's* choices), go to:  
<http://cts.vresp.com/c/?SistersinCrime/a8c555443f/09ef6e4915/7be79f6845>

## ROB'S RANDOM SHOTS

### July Case File Number One

*Tears of the Giraffe* by Alexander McCall Smith, Abacus, 2000, 217 pp (TP)

What both my July picks have in common is style. I shall try to write each review in the style of the author.

Alexander McCall Smith followed up his bestselling *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* with this most excellent sequel. Smith never uses contractions and always calls one character by his long name. So shall I.

Mma Precious Ramotswe is Botswana's (Google it) finest—and only—female detective. At the behest of his mother, she takes on the case of an American man missing for a decade on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. Hard to imagine a colder case. The mother used to live at the American Embassy in Gaborone (ask me some time how I was almost assigned there) and has exhausted every avenue of assistance over the years. Now that her husband has died, she has come back to Africa to try one more time.

This looks like a hopeless case. As a good mystery writer is supposed to do, Smith complicates her life by introducing three subplots. At the beginning of the book, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, owner of the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors repair service, asks Mma Ramotswe to marry him, and she accepts. This leads directly to two subplots—Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni is persuaded to adopt two orphans from the local “orphan farm,” a wheelchair-bound girl and the little brother whose life she saved.

His decision to marry outrages his lazy maid, who determines to get revenge on Mma (pronounced like it looks) Ramotswe by framing her on a charge of possessing a pistol. To further complicate matters, Mma Ramotswe's secretary, Mma Makutsi, wishes to become a detective and so is given a minor case to handle on her own.

Any of these subplots (and the main plot) could have been handled as short stories, but it is part of Alexander McCall Smith's

genius that he interweaves them in such a way that we care as much about their outcomes as we do the central case. Needless to say, all the threads of these subplots are pulled together in classic fashion and the 10-year-old disappearance is resolved last, with an unexpectedly touching scene at the end.

No one else writes such satisfying, nonviolent stories, filled with kindness rewarded, decency ennobled, and miscreants humbled. Become acquainted with the series. You will thank me. Now I can go back to using contractions. ♦

—Rob Kresge ([rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net))

### Key:

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

### July Case File Number Two

*Away With the Fairies* by Kerry Greenwood, Allen & Unwin, 2000, 274 pp (TP)

I had to review this book because I couldn't lay my hands on No. 2 in the Phryne Fisher 1920s Melbourne series, *Flying Too High*. As much as I enjoy owning the good books I review, books are terribly expensive here in Australia and my library didn't have *Flying*. So I settled for this one and I'm glad I did.

1. I love the title. It's Australian slang for daydreaming. Carried to an extreme, it can be a euphemism for crazy. I love Australian slang terms.

2. Location. Julie and I will be visiting Melbourne less than two weeks after I write this. Thanks to our efforts to find a centrally located hotel, I now know many of the streets and buildings described in this book.

3. Victim. Although Greenwood is careful to note that the murdered woman, a lonely hearts columnist/botanical artist/writer of fairy books is not drawn on May Gibbs, a 1920s children's author whose home is a sort of shrine here in Sydney, there are too many parallels. I



do not believe her disclaimer. Google “May Gibbs” and you’ll find her saccharine stories, notably *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepie*.

4. Parallels to another favorite novel. In Dorothy L. Sayers’ *Murder Must Advertise*, Lord Peter Wimsey goes to work at an advertising agency, one of whose writers has been murdered. Miss Fisher does the same with the *Women’s Choice* magazine.

Marcella Lavender was found dead of obvious poisoning (blue face) in her garden apartment, over-decorated with a variety of fairy statuettes, pictures, wallpaper, etc, etc. Suspects include her neighbors in the apartments and her co-workers at the magazine. In the course of whittling down nearly 20 suspects, Phryne sets the magazine to rights, finds lonely hearts letter writers whose lives were ruined by bad advice, and uncovers a major art smuggling scheme.

Complicating all this is a fascinating subplot: Her lover, Chinese entrepreneur Lin Chung, has been kidnapped by South China Sea pirates. Lin’s grandmother disapproves of Lin’s infatuation, but our intrepid heroine moves heaven and earth to find and rescue him.

5. This novel has two pages of bibliography, including two Fu Manchu novels. When was the last time you read a mystery with a bibliography?

Needless to say, I enjoyed this book, the character, and the series immensely. However, I would caution readers to read these books in order and not to skip around as I have. I missed the introduction of Lin Chung in Book Two and the introduction of Phryne’s two adopted daughters in subsequent books. Not all series work this way, but I’m sorry to have jumped ahead and will fill in the missing volumes as soon as I can.

Join me. This is a series too good to miss. Arizona publisher Poisoned Pen has been reprinting all Phryne’s adventures to solid sales returns. She’s easy to find, but hard to put down.♦

—Rob Kresge ([rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net))

Van Dine’s now-forgotten sleuth was Philo Vance. Even Charlie Chan is better remembered today.

## SHORT TAKES

*The Replacement Child* by Christine Barber, Thomas Dunne Books, 2008, 271 pp (HC)

It’s clear in just a few chapters why *The Replacement Child* by Christine Barber won the Tony Hillerman award. Besides being an enjoyable read, this book is an affectionate tribute to Northern New Mexico and its culture. I was unaware that *mi hito* is a Northern New Mexican phrase, but once I read the description, I realized I’ve heard it spoken by co-workers, on the phone to family members.

The protagonist is introduced to us as a shallow person, but as the story unfolds, her character develops, seemingly against her will. The EMT scenes have emotional impact and seem to be drawn from the author’s own experience. Plenty of red herrings and subplots enhance the mystery; all are nicely resolved by the end.

Although I could figure out some of the “perps” and motives, the big surprise at the end caught me off guard—I had made the same (false) assumption throughout the story as the major characters did. A key clue is based upon an urban legend, but it’s otherwise a worthwhile and entertaining read. I look forward to Christine’s next novel, *Zozobra* ♦

—Cheri Stow ([Cheri3@yahoo.com](mailto:Cheri3@yahoo.com))

*Death at Victoria Dock* by Kerry Greenwood, Poisoned Pen Press, 1992, 164 pp (HC)

In this fourth installment of the Phryne Fisher series, set in Melbourne in the 1920’s, our heroine is shot at on page 1, comforts a dying young man, then sets out to find who missed her and killed him. She also, while she’s about it, looks for a lost little girl, who proves just as independent-minded as Phryne herself.

The plot is fast-paced but true to the period, as Phryne deal with anarchists, spiritualists, and kidnappers. Phryne is a charming heroine, a liberated woman within her period, not an anachronism (they were called the Roaring Twenties for a reason), who barges in where

angels fear to tread, but always gets her man—in more ways than one. The author has also created a cast of secondary characters that grow on you in the course of the series, and the sense of setting and history are strong.

Start with the first book in the series if you like, but any of them will please. ♦

—Linda Triegel ([ljt23@earthlink.net](mailto:ljt23@earthlink.net))

NOTE: See the November 2008 *Nooseletter* for a previous review of *The Replacement Child*, and the May issue for another Phryne Fisher mystery. Both the above reviewers found their books in Albuquerque Public library branches.

***The Last Full Measure*** by Hal Glatzer, Perseverance Press, 2006, 289 pp (TP)

I sort of resented the author's purloining the famous phrase from Lincoln's Gettysburg address, generally used to refer to soldiers of both sides who fell in the Civil War, for his title but will concede that this third in the Katy Green series leads up to an equally important date in U.S. history—December 7, 1941.

Katy is a musician in an all-girl band of the time, who accepts a gig with some of her old pals on a Matson liner sailing to Hawaii, where they intend to look for a hidden treasure they hear about from a new band member, Hawaiian singer Rosalani Akau. Katy also meets Rosalani's brother Bill (they are both pure-blood Hawaiians), who is a bit of a shady character, and makes friends with a quartet of more charming men, California-educated Japanese returning to Hawaii on holiday. You have to feel sorry for them for what is to come.

Glatzer's writing style is pedestrian, but he does include a lot of interesting historical sidelights, if the period interests you. Katy is a lively but level-headed heroine, with a steadiness of character that her band-mates frequently lack. ♦

—Linda Triegel ([ljt23@earthlink.net](mailto:ljt23@earthlink.net))

NOTE: The above book was acquired from [www.half.com](http://www.half.com), an excellent source of out-of-print and mid-list books at reasonable prices.

***Taos Chill*** by Linda Lea Castle, Five Star Publishing 2009, 270 pp.

Hot-tempered NM romance author receives email & gifts from a secret admirer; then becomes chief murder suspect. New sheriff in town solves the crimes and overcomes the reluctance of main characters to divulge their pasts.

Once past the cliché-ridden start with stereotypical characters, *Taos Chill* is an enjoyable light read with a reasonable plot and heart-warming subplot. The story is set in Taos at wintertime and is sprinkled with tidbits of Northern New Mexico history and local color. Recipes for margaritas and flan are included, presumably for readers far from the Southwest?

The secret admirer is likely to reappear in the series. ♦

—Rita Herther ([RMHerther@aol.com](mailto:RMHerther@aol.com))

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## **Ready... Set...Fall and Winter Writers' Conferences to Go!\***

### **September 25-26**

**Midwest Mystery Fest**, "Anatomy of a Mystery," sponsored by the Greater St. Louis Chapter of Sisters in Crime. Keynote Speakers: Carolyn Hart and Kent Krueger. "Enjoy an intense and satisfying conference filled with practical advice on mystery writing for all levels. Pitch your novel in a one-on-one session with an agent, chat with a mystery author while eating lunch, and learn forensic details that will make your work speak Authenticity." Information: [www.sincstl.org](http://www.sincstl.org).

### **October 9-17**

10th annual **Litquake**, San Francisco's literary festival. "Join us at the historic Mechanic's Institute Library, where the legacy of supporting the literary arts is alive today." Information: [www.litquake.org](http://www.litquake.org)

### **October 15-18**

**40<sup>th</sup> Annual Bouchercon: Elementary, My Dear Indy!** Hyatt Regency, Indianapolis, Indiana. Guest of honor: Michael Connelly; toastmaster: S.J. Rozan. "Bouchercon is a convention for mystery lovers. Among the 1500 or so folks who attend Bouchercon (on average), you can expect to find about 400- 500 published writers (from the biggest names in the business to the just-published first novelist). Also attending are many librarians, booksellers, and publishing professionals (agents, editors, publicists. etc.), but the large majority of attendees are readers and fans. Though the program includes some professional development opportunities for writers (both published and aspiring), Bouchercon is, first and foremost, a fan conference, run by fans for fans. Information: [www.bouchercon2009.com](http://www.bouchercon2009.com)

### **October 30-November 1**

**The Great Manhattan Mystery Conclave**, Manhattan, KS. A celebration of "small town" mysteries. Guest of Honor: Earlene Fowler. Information: [www.manhattanmysteries.com](http://www.manhattanmysteries.com)

### **November 7**

**Bodies and Buckeyes**, Columbus, OH. Sponsored by the Columbus, Ohio, chapter of Sisters in Crime. Keynote speaker: Lee Lofland. Information: [www.siccowriters.org](http://www.siccowriters.org).

### **November 21**

**Men of Mystery**, Irvine, CA. Michael Connelly will be among the dozens of male mystery authors attending this year's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference. Information: [www.menofmystery.org](http://www.menofmystery.org).

### **November 13-15**

**New England Crime Bake**, Dedham, MA. Eighth annual mystery conference for writers and readers, co-sponsored by Scarlet Letters (New England Sisters in Crime) and the Mystery Writers of America New England Chapter. Guest of Honor: Sue Grafton. Information: [www.crimebake.org](http://www.crimebake.org).

### **March 11-14, 2010**

**Left Coast Crime—Booked in LA**, Los Angeles, CA. Guests of Honor: Jan Burke, Lee Child  
Toastmaster: Bill Fitzhugh. Information: [www.leftcoastcrime.org](http://www.leftcoastcrime.org) or check out Left Coast Crime 2010 on Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/15nk5g>.

\*[Information from *Mystery News*. Check out [www.blackravenpress.com](http://www.blackravenpress.com) for more news, reviews, and information on authors and publishers.]

## 2009 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, July 28, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, August 25, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, September 22, 7:00 p.m.  
*Mystery Dinner TBA*  
Tuesday, October 27, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, November 24, 7:00 p.m.  
*December meeting TBA*

### Meetings are free to the public.

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held every fourth Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., at the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation, 12700 Montgomery Blvd. NE, one block east of Tramway.

(If the substation lot is full, there is more parking available just below the substation, accessed via a driveway below the substation on the right.)

Check our Web site, [www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com), for schedule changes.

## †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, but short items are also welcome.

**Deadlines:** Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to publication: Feb 15, April 15, June 15, Aug 15, Oct 15, and Dec 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 e-mail to [newsette@earthlink.net](mailto:newsette@earthlink.net), with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

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

—Linda Triegel

## 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. ♦

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