



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume III, Number 3—May 2007

†Expert Testimony†

From the Prez

The Best of Times

In a recent edition of *The Writer*, Chief Editor Elfrieda Abbe described the current publishing industry as being in the midst of both “the best of times, and the worst of times.” Drawing from a well-known cliché, she explained that never in the history of publishing have there been so many opportunities for writers to become published, yet never has it been so difficult. How can these two conditions exist simultaneously?

First, let’s examine “the best of times.” There is indeed a plethora of opportunities for writers. The ever-expanding Internet and the growth of vanity presses alone are proof of this. The market for books and magazines is stronger than ever, which has resulted in a record-breaking number of first-time authors. “The worst of times” can be characterized by the huge number of writers who are pursuing publication. The sheer number of writers involved makes for intense competition.

There is a way, however, to significantly increase the chances of a writer being published. Write something that will sell. Gone are the days when writers can write their heart and soul and have a reasonable expectation that their literary talent will be noticed. I learned this while trying to sell my book, *A Hunt for Justice*. The main concern publishers had about my book was about “the market.” In other words, who was going to buy *A Hunt for Justice*?

To answer this question, I rewrote the marketing section of my book proposal a dozen times. Publishers didn’t seem interested in my platform, nor did they comment much on my writing. It didn’t really matter what my book was about; it just had to sell. Aside from the actual writing of the book, the

most difficult part was convincing publishers that there was a strong market for my book. Even so, one publisher told me that he thought his mother would buy my book, but he wouldn’t—this was rejection #22.

Since this experience, I’ve concluded that for writers who can produce a commercial product, it’s the best of times. Publishers are interested in nearly any topic as long as they think it will sell. The problem is, editors and publishers are highly subjective, and hitting the mark with just one of them is a challenge. Yet, we still write.

Shifting gears, I’m happy to report that for Croak and Dagger, it’s truly the best of times. We are enjoying a growing membership of mystery writers and readers. After a little more than two years, our group has gained the reputation of an energetic crowd that lives by its mission of enjoying felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship, and sensational speakers. Croak and Dagger is the now best place to be for every mystery fan outside of prison.

So, keep coming to our meetings and events, there is much more ahead. And if you have an idea for a speaker or event, please let a board member know. We’d love to hear from you. ✓

—Lucinda Schroeder

Don’t Miss It!

Tuesday, May 22, 7:00 p.m.

Jonathan Miller, our May speaker, is both a lawyer and a mystery book author. He is also a member of the Los Angeles chapter of Sisters in Crime.

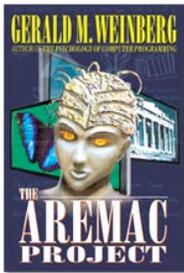
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Croak & Dagger Member's Murder Mystery Thriller: *The Aremac Project*

The Aremac Project, by Gerald M. Weinberg
Dorset House Publishers, ISBN: 978-0-932633-70-5
©2007, 368 pages

Can the Aremac Project save a bomb-shattered Chicago from terrorists bent on destruction and extortion?

To find out, read *The Aremac Project*, a new sci-fi techno-thriller by award-winning author Jerry Weinberg that pits technology against terrorism in a body-strewn race against time. Drawing on neuroscience and nanotechnology, grad students Roger Fixman and Tess Myers develop the software and machinery to take pictures of a person's memory. Unwittingly, these earnest researchers provide the U.S. government—and its enemies—with a new and deadly form of interrogation. The Aremac that Roger and Tess develop is just what FBI agents Don Capitol and Lucinda Duke need as they attempt to identify and pursue a terrorist group that is bombing landmarks in Chicago and attempting to extort millions from the city.

Desperate for clues, agents Capitol and Duke hire Roger and Tess to delve into a suspect's mind. But just as their prisoner's defenses start to crumble, a murderer puts an end to their progress. The Aremac holds the key to identifying the murderer, which makes the machine—and its developers, Roger and Tess—the next terrorist target. ✓

“A thrilling glimpse into the near future. Don't miss it!”
—Tony Hillerman

(If you'd like to review this novel for the Nooseletter, contact Dorset House Publishers at 800-342-6657 and ask for David McClintock.)

—TRUE CRIMES—

Selected biographies of your Croak & Dagger board members.

Lucinda Schroeder (President and Hospitality Chair) was born in the Philippines of military parents. Since then she has lived in Spain and in several states in the U.S. She's a graduate of the University of Maryland with a degree in criminology. Just weeks after graduating, she was issued a badge and a gun by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and worked with them for the next 30 years. She retired in 2004. During her tenure as a special agent, Lucinda investigated hundreds of crimes involving violations of federal conservation laws. She did a significant amount of undercover work and found that being female was a great asset in her business. Some of her cases took her to Germany, Spain, Mexico, Norway, and China. She still loves to travel.

Lucinda was the first woman in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to become a firearms instructor. She also taught other agents interviewing and interrogation techniques, clues to deception, and undercover work. Currently she teaches online classes in these subjects and one called “Inside the Criminal Mind.” She is a frequent speaker at book clubs and conferences, including Tony Hillerman's Focus on Mystery Conference. Her nonfiction book, *A Hunt for Justice*, was published in April 2004. This book chronicles an undercover operation she conducted in Alaska where she posed as a big game hunter in order to stop an international ring of poachers.



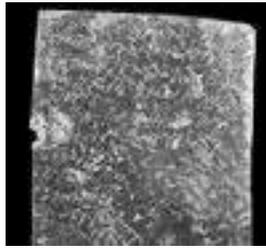
Besides writing, Lucinda's hobbies include hiking, scuba diving, and fabric design. She's a charter member of Croak & Dagger and has belonged to SWW for 12 years. ✓

The Cairn of Albertvs

Roman Curses and Other Scary Stuff

Maledictum Romanum . . .

An article in the current issue of *Archaeology* magazine on Roman curses is the impetus for this Cairn. Discovered in Leicester, England, an AD fourth-century curse tablet is inscribed on a thin sheet of lead and gives a thief eight days leeway before he is celestially vaporized:



To the [Celtic] god Maglus, I give the wrongdoer who stole the cloak of Servandus . . . that he destroy him before the ninth day, the person who stole the cloak of Servandus.

As a search of the Internet attests, the practice is alive and well in our day (1,020,000 sites on one Google listing), but for ancient times a comprehensive sourcebook is *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* by Daniel Ogden, Oxford University Press, 2002. Along with curses, Ogden's 14 chapters cover sorcery, witches, ghosts, necromancy, Voodoo dolls and magical images, amulets, legislation against magic, and a quite graphic erotic magic section.

Long before Edgar Bergen, ventriloquists (Gk. *engastromuthoi*) spoke, not through a tuxedo-wearing dummy, instead being believed to be persons whose stomachs were inhabited by a demon. Such an afflicted girl is exorcised by St. Paul in Acts 16:19–24. In my manuscript of *Unholy Sepulcher*, earlier verses, 6–12—the interplay between St. Paul, Cyprus's governor, and the magician Elymas—are expanded into a Roman street play as the governor challenges Paul to surpass the tricks of Elymas. After the drama ends an obese actor, the object of vulgar jesting, is found dead—a sobering page turner.

Ghosts were as scary in antiquity as now, but more categorized: (1) died before their time, (2) killed by violence (3) dead before marriage, (4) deceased, deprived of burial. Corpses of men slain in battle were mutilated to diminish their power to terrorize the living. Ghost evocation for various consultations could be achieved through magical incantations; one tongue twister overwhelms our *abracadabra* with ACHAIPHÔ THÔTHÔ AIÊ IA ÊIA AIÊ AIÔ THÔTHÔ PHIACHA.

Talking skull necromancy was a stage trick where a skull made of wax and gypsum was placed on a tripod, with the windpipe of a crane attached, through which an assistant spoke. After the séance, a glowing brazier beneath made the wax melt and the skull disappear.

Erotic charms could decrease or increase sexual desire. One way to avert a woman from sex: "Smear her loins with the blood of a tick from a wild black bull . . . and have her drink the urine of a billy goat mixed with nard to disguise the disgusting taste." OK, who volunteers? On the other hand, wearing an amulet that invoked Aphrodite's secret name and was inscribed "Make grace and success for her with all people and especially before the man whom she herself wishes" could lead to being carried, Sabine style, over the threshold of a new villa.

Research your time period and make readers gasp, "Gosh, I didn't know that!"

Valere . . . be in good health. ✓

—Albert Noyer, www.albertnoyer.com

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!

Email croakdagger@yahoo.com for further instructions.

Croak and Dagger

Coming Events

Tuesday, **June 26**, 7:00 p.m.: Ruth Jimenez Brown, Senora books publisher and author

Tuesday, **July 24**, 7:00 p.m.: Mary Kay McCullogh, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of New Mexico

Tuesday, **August 28**, 7:00 p.m.: Dr. Berry, OMI pathologist

August (date to be announced): Murder mystery dinner party

Tuesday, **September 25**, 7:00 p.m.: Lisa Polisar, Sisters in Crime mystery author

October (date to be announced): Ghost tour in Old Town field trip

Inspiration

Over the years, I have written then stopped, written then stopped, written then stopped. Sound familiar? In real-life romances this would be called a love-hate relationship. Well I love/need to write, but I hate rejections and failure.

Last spring I felt this passionate need overcome me again. I looked through the activities/meetings section of the *Albuquerque Journal* and found an announcement for a Sisters in Crime meeting. I became a member the night I attended my first meeting. After listening to the inspiring speakers, I went home, ready to become a writer again.

Within days I had started a novel, signed up for the Word Harvest Writers Conference and The Tony Hillerman Conference, and enrolled in the UNM Creative Writing degree program. Then in the fall, I took the intensive three-month-long APD Citizens Police Academy course.

In the past year now, I've done more reading and writing than ever—and loved it! I've also joined a critique group through Sisters in Crime. For those who procrastinate from writing because they say they don't have time, I have to mention that I also work 40 hours a week with Social Security, solving people's problems all day.

I want to say thank you to all those in Sisters in Crime, for their dedication and inspiration to others. Thanks for giving me back my passion. ✓

—Cheri Stow



ROB'S RANDOM SHOTS

May Case File Number One

Don't Murder Your Mystery by Chris Roerdon, Bella Rosa Books, Rock Hill, SC, 2006, trade paperback

Last year, I reviewed a couple of helpful mystery novel how-to books. *Don't Murder Your Mystery* is an Agatha nominee for best nonfiction (the Agathas will be awarded at Malice Domestic near Washington, D.C., on May 5). This advice book takes a lighter-hearted approach to writing, exemplified by the author's subtitle: "24 Fiction-Writing Techniques to Save Your Manuscript from Turning Up . . . D.O.A." Chris Roerdon is a retired editor who is still a member of both Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America. Even non-writers will be intrigued and amused by her efforts in this book to keep unpublished writers like me from committing any of the cardinal sins that she's seen doom so many manuscripts over her 40-year career.

Our local libraries will have copies of this book, alongside Noah Lukeman's less amusing *The First Five Pages*, and Hallie Ephron's *Writing and Selling Your Mystery*, which I reviewed last year. Between the two of them, Roerdon and Ephron deliver a one-two punch on revising manuscripts, the best collection of advice on that subject I've seen in nearly six years of searching.

Just a partial listing of Roerdon's chapter headings will give you an idea of how she injects humor into editorial life-saving "clues" for would-be authors: "Hobbled Hooks," "Perilous Prologues," "Bloody Backstory," "Fatal Flashbacks," "Dastardly Description," "Disappearing Bodies," "Unsettling Settings," and many, many more.

She starts from the beginning of a submitted manuscript and works her way forward. Many of her suggestions can be applied by doing global search and replace, but most, like those recommended by Hallie Ephron, require an author to make multiple manual read throughs of her manuscript on paper (not on the screen).

Roerdon finishes up with "Exhibits A through D," dispensing valuable advice for absolute beginners on standard manuscript format, other recommended books on mystery writing, popular Internet sites, and a bibliography of exemplary fiction she has cited through the book. In fact, Roerdon uses as positive examples the work of many best-selling authors we are familiar with. Susan Wittig Albert (our April speaker), Donna

(cont'd. on next page)

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."

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

Andrews (our February 2005 speaker), Nevada Barr, Dan Brown, James Lee Burke, Jan Burke, Lee Child, Harlan Coben, Michael Connelly, Patricia Cornwell, Jeffrey Deaver, and Daphne du Maurier, to name just a dozen.

This is another one of those how-to books that even non-writers will find amusing. I'll be back to reviewing just fiction in the next issue. I promise. Don't want to be D.O.A. on the *Nooseletter* editor's doorstep.

May Case File Number Two

Lucifer's Shadow by David Hewson, Bantam Dell/Delta Trade paperback edition, 2005, \$14.00

As you've probably figured out by now, my shots are no longer random, if indeed they ever were. I tend to review books by authors I especially admire; sometimes they are authors I've met. Last issue I reviewed *The Sacred Cut* by David Hewson, and this marks the first time I've reviewed the same author twice in a row. Hewson and I served on a panel at Left Coast Crime in Seattle in early February (more on LCC elsewhere in this issue), and I read books by other panelists to prepare. I haven't been so impressed by a first-time encounter with an author's works since I got a copy of Michael Connelly's *The Last Coyote* in our chapter book exchange box in 2005.

Lucifer's Shadow is set, like *Sacred Cut*, in Italy, but there the resemblance ends. While the latter is the third in a series of modern police procedurals that take place in Rome, *Shadow* is a stand-alone mystery *and* thriller set in Venice. As such, I want to state this clearly at the start: *Lucifer's Shadow* is about ten times better than Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*; if you liked the latter, you'll like this one more. And if you didn't like *Code*, you'll be blown away by this novel. Trust me.

It begins in modern-day Venice with a theft from a coffin of an unidentified object by a petty thief for a mysterious client. Then in chapter 2 we're taken to 1733 Venice. Subsequent chapters alternate between modern Venice, with newly arrived music student Daniel Forster as the protagonist (third person), and the 1733 story, with orphaned printer's assistant Lorenzo Scacchi as protagonist (first person). We quickly see how these two stories are related: the missing object dates from 250 years ago, and a previously unknown concerto, perhaps composed by Vivaldi himself, figures in both stories.

Readers are swept into the almost alien environment of 1733 in which Jews are isolated in a barred and gated ghetto (did you ever wonder why the word is Italian?) in enlightened Venice. We come to care for Lorenzo and his *enamored*, Jewish musician and composer Rebecca Levi. Obviously, something terrible is going to happen to this pair in order for the missing object and the concerto to reappear in modern Venice. That's the thriller part of the story.

The mystery in modern Venice starts with the theft of the object from the coffin of a teen-aged girl who was murdered about 10 years before the modern story opens. But we get thriller elements in the modern story too, wondering how Daniel and the women around him will survive the machinations of the Lucifer's shadow of the title, a rich Englishman who covets both the only copy of the concerto and the stolen object, which no one can locate. ✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

Classified Information

Would You Like to Be in a Book Reading Club?
 On a regular basis that doesn't conflict with monthly Sisters in Crime program meetings? Just announce it at the next program meeting or advertise for like-minded readers in the *Nooseletter* by e-mailing your suggestion to shirleycoe@comcast.net.

DON'T FORGET:
Tuesday, May 22, 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 26, 7:00 p.m.* Tuesday, July 24, 7:00 p.m.

Rejection



We've all experienced rejection in one form or another from our earliest days. Perhaps it began when you were in grammar school. You wanted so much to have a speaking role in the pageant. You tried out for the star, no, the sun, because it had a few speaking lines. You got stuck with the back-row role of lawn ornament. No lines.

Maybe you were in Little League and you wanted to pitch in the worst way. Instead you warmed the bench almost all season long. The coach said you ran too slowly, you hesitated at the mound, one excuse after another. Why were you so good in your backyard, I ask you?

Then in junior high you submitted a poem extolling the virtues of your cat, only to be told that you should try again. Your rhymes were perfect, but it was too long, or too short, or too sentimental.

In college I took a course in creative writing from a much-venerated old prof. One morning he returned my poem entitled "Dead Bird on Asphalt," and he'd written on the top the immortal words, "Get thee to a publisher," along with an A+. I was thrilled. The problem? His opinion was in the minority. I sent the poem off to literary editors, and they returned it rather quickly, along with the other poor little orphan poems that accompanied it. Who was right?

One of the college courses that I later taught was creative writing. As I worked with my students, I began to revive my love of words. Although I had little energy at night when I returned home, I began to play around with poetry again. By now I was a member of the computer age, though not a very apt pupil. I sent a few poems to the lit mag *Number One*, at Volunteer State College, trying for another reject. Three months later my assistant brought me a package mailed from Tennessee. When I opened it, there were four copies of *Number One*, with one of my poems featured. Halleluja, I was back in the game.

Nor did I forget what that experience meant. As my newly acquired wonderful husband and I moved to Maine, we sought literary friends, and when we started a lit mag, we found a congenial salon of folks even if they were almost all mail pals. Thousands of poems and stories arrived each month, and, because we were crazy as well as dedicated, we answered every one with a handwritten note. Sometimes, if asked, we'd make suggestions. As our reputations grew, we sometimes heard from writers who'd say,

"Your last reject was so great, here's another offering." Or "I've never received a nicer reject. Here, do it to me again." For a dozen years we accepted, rejected, and published thousands of writers, and it was a pleasure.

When we moved to New Mexico to research a mystery, we found wonderful writer friends and formed two different critique groups. It was during those years that we honed our skills. We read two or three mysteries a week, and it has been a hunger that was great fun to feed. We went from Marsh, Christie, Wentworth, and other old favorites to the likes of Archer Mayor, Stephen White, Hillerman, Taichert, Noyer, Leon, Laurie King, P. D. James, Winspear, and a host of others. This genre opened up a world of pleasure we'd not previously dipped into.

With great enthusiasm we began writing a series of Maine mysteries, garnering quirky characters from our old neighbors. Meanwhile our yellow file folder grew fatter. But writers, remember that every book you write will cause you to learn and grow. The rejects are little badges of honor that remind you of a pertinent fact: you are not a quitter!

Okay, here's the happy ending. A few months ago we received an e-mail containing the heart-stopping, joyous words, "We love your book." We were over the moon. We've done the rejection thing and will continue to try other books at other presses. However, we humbly submit to you this fact: acceptances are better. As teens say, *way better!*

—Carolyn Page, Stockton Springs, Maine



Classified Information

Are You Looking for a Critique Group?
Why not advertise for like-minded writers in the *Nooseletter*? Just email your announcement to shirleycoe@comast.net. Or if you prefer, bring up your suggestion at the next program meeting.



Why Go to a Mystery Conference?

Last issue carried an extensive list of the many annual mystery and other literary conferences held all across the United States this year, and some in 2008 and 2009. Why should you consider going to one of these? What would you get out of it? How much do they cost? This article will try to answer those questions.

As for cost, most conferences entail three expenses—transportation, lodging, and registration fee. The first two will vary. Conference registrations run from a low of about \$100 for the shorter ones to \$400 for the Tony Hillerman conference here in Albuquerque each November, to as much as \$1,000 or more for intensive writer-oriented conferences in Hawaii or Corte Madera, California. Most fees include one or more or all meals.

There are so many conferences, you need to look at the list and your personal calendar to see which you might attend. Will you be visiting relatives or friends or touring any of those cities around the time of the conference? In other words, will you already have absorbed the transportation cost? Are any of them close enough to Albuquerque to drive there, thus reducing the transportation cost? Do you have relatives or friends you could stay with that would defray lodging costs? Check conference Web sites; sometimes you can pay for a single day's entry rather than for the whole event. That's what two women tourists who sat next to me did at last year's Hillerman conference. I took photos of them standing with Tony Hillerman and actor Wes "Joe Leaphorn" Studi. What memories they got for \$100.

My three conferences this year will be Left Coast Crime (LCC) in Seattle in February, using a free Southwest Airlines ticket (I have a nephew in Tacoma, but the commute time would have been prohibitive so I stayed at the hotel), Malice Domestic in Washington, D.C., in May (to which we will drive on a three-week East Coast trip and then stay with friends), and the Hillerman conference here in November, for which any of us would pay only the registration fee, since we would have no lodging or transportation costs. My cost for those three conferences will be around \$1,200 total.

Here's a brief précis of what Left Coast Crime provided. Why detail that one? Because the next LCC will be held in Denver, March 6–9, 2008. Visit

the Web site (www.lcc2008.com) and check out the registration fee. Plan to carpool with me or with another of our Croak & Dagger SinC members who plan to attend or be conference volunteers. Do you have friends or relatives in the Denver area? Consider splitting hotel costs with one of your Albuquerque friends. Check the authors list closer to the registration deadline; how many of your favorites will be there?

Left Coast Crime is held in the spring of each year in a city somewhere west of the Mississippi. In 2005 it was held in El Paso, and in 2006 it was in Bristol, on the "left coast" of England.

Here's a partial lineup of the best-known mystery and thriller writers who attended the 2007 conference: Donna Anders, Donna Andrews (February 2005 C&D speaker), Claudia Bishop, Cara Black, Rhys Bowen, Steve Brewer (former Albuquerque resident), Jan Burke, Nancy Bush and sister Lisa Jackson, Aaron Elkins, Kate Flora (former SinC national president), Lauren Haney, David Hewson, Craig Johnson, Harley Jane Kozak, Dr. Doug Lyle, Gayle Lynds, Alex Matthews, Sharan Newman, Ann Parker, Lewis Perdue, Gillian Roberts, John Maddox Roberts (C&D 2005 speaker), S. J. Rozan, Maggie Sefton, David Skibbins, Susan Slater (C&D 2006 speaker), Dana Stabenow, and Pari Noskin Taichert (C&D 2005 speaker).

Panels dealt with supernatural mysteries, differences and similarities between mysteries and thrillers, taking a risk by reading a new series, amateur sleuths, focusing on crime victims, problems of writing a series versus stand-alones, the popularity of thrillers, the motivations of villains, real forensic science, politics in mysteries, the protagonist's private life, keeping law and courtroom scenes real, changes in detecting wrought by technology, "chick lit" versus hard-boiled female PIs, exotic settings, noir mysteries, heroes in thrillers, making settings work (place and era), the continuing appeal of whodunits, real places versus fictional, today's issues versus "the good old days," avoiding the "Jessica Fletcher syndrome," the Dorothy L list serve (chat room), audio books, true crime versus fictional, effects of technology on mystery fandom, and the legacy of Miss Marple.

Can you find authors and subjects at a conference that interest you? Give some thought to attending Left Coast Crime 11 months from now. And watch for sign-up sheets for transportation to Denver at some future meetings. ✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net



Book Review

Carved in Bone by Jefferson Bass
New York, Harper, 2006. 322 pp.,
Paper, \$7.99

If you're an *aficionada* of Patricia Cornwell's mysteries, you know about the Body Farm—the University of Tennessee's south 40, planted with various human remains for the purpose of feeding factual databases for the developing science of taphonomy (the study of the disintegration of animal remains—usually human). The “Bass” of author Jefferson Bass is Dr. Bill Bass, founder, proprietor, and (dare I say it) farmer-in-chief of UT's Body Farm. “Jefferson” is Jon Jefferson who, according to the end flap, is a veteran journalist, writer, and filmmaker who produced two documentaries about the Body Farm.

Forensic anthropology has lately become the *genre du jour* of forensic mysteries, especially since being popularized by Kathy Reichs in her novels and their derivative Fox television series *Bones*. (In the spirit of full disclosure, I was a technical source for two of her novels.) *Carved in Bone* is the initial foray into a new series of novels in this macabre genre. And yet, as proved by early Cornwells and Reichses, it's possible to overcome the “Ewwww, gross” reaction with a good plot, well-drawn characters, clever humor, and intelligent crafting. Jefferson Bass (henceforth “J-B”) manage all three challenges. (Full disclosure #2: Kathy Reichs informed me upon inquiry that she had no foreknowledge of the J-B initiative prior to receiving a review copy.)

Dr. Bill Brockton is the academic, widowed, slightly nerdy protagonist who is drawn into the mystery surrounding a mummified corpse discovered in a cave deep in the mountains of Appalachian Tennessee. Cocke County is barely disguised as “Cooke” County, and its county seat, Newport, as “Jonesport.” Nonetheless, J-B bring the topography and the residents of that world vividly to life. Those familiar with east Tennessee mountain lore might recall that snake-handling cults originated in the hamlets of Ooltewah Mountain, just a good chaw-spit south of the principal site of our book's initial crime scene. There are more as the story unfolds, and they retain a modicum of credibility.

Dr. Brockton's first venture out of the environment and social structure of academia and into the mountain hamlets teaches him the hazards of tobacco chewing and cockfighting, to his great distress. (Louisiana may be the only state left in

which cockfighting is legal, but it's not alone in the practice.) And Lord love the authors' ears for dialogue; for example:

“Doc, watch your step here—be sure you don't catch that war.”

“War? What war?”

“That war about a foot off the ground there, couple steps ahead.”

Carved in Bone takes us into areas of interpersonal relationships rarely observed outside the small hollows and villages on the country's back roads. Blood runs deep in the mountains, where loyalties can conspire to fog over the most heinous criminal acts done to protect the family name and preserve its integrity in the eyes of the community.

The people in the mountain towns of Tennessee are not too far removed from those in similar mountain towns of New Mexico. You'll recognize them by what they are, not who. Each is developed well enough that we recognize them, even though they are set in a locale two thousand miles away.

Carved in Bone meets my criterion for a good read: the first time for fun, the second to savor the authors' craft. I come away from a good one wishing that I had written it. I wish.✓

—Reviewed by Ira Rimson

The Mystery of the Lost Pronouns



Myself and some other persons were discussing this puzzle just the other day. Frankly, I think it's much ado about nothing. But George said he thought it was a *crime* that nobody used “object pronouns” (whatever those are) anymore. Then Marisol told Helen and I that hearing people misuse pronouns was like “fingernails on glass.”

Well, la-de-da. Between you and I, Marisol is a big pain in the patooty. I don't know who died and made she and George in charge of grammar. It would give Helen and I great pleasure to put those two in their place. If you'd like to join we ladies in this endeavor, we'd be glad to hear from you.✓

—Miss Guided

Rob's Top 10 Mystery Lists—Part One

My Top 10 lists are not meant to be authoritative; as one reader's view, they are meant to be thought provoking. Send responses to me personally or as letters to the *Nooseletter* editor for publication. This first set of three lists sets out my ideas on how-to books for mystery writers, true crime authors (i.e., nonfiction), and police procedural authors. Future lists will address current cozies, classics (written before WWII), historical mysteries, PI (private investigator) novels, noir (think James M. Cain and James Ellroy), religious/spiritual sleuths, "caper" novels, legal thrillers, mystery movies, and mystery TV shows. You don't have to wait to see my lists in coming issues; e-mail me (rkresge777@comcast.net) and you may have an influence on my next lists. If so, I'll credit you.

In most cases, I list only the top 10 authors in each field. In a few fields, like how-tos and classics, I may recommend titles, too. Position on the lists is not meant to indicate precedence of one writer or one work over any of the others on a list.



EFFICIENCY OF FEMALE POLICE IN WHAT IS VULGARLY CALLED A "JOLLY ROW."

How-To Books for Mystery Writers

1. *Writing and Selling Your Mystery* by Hallie Ephron
2. *Don't Murder Your Mystery: 24 Fiction-Writing Techniques to Save Your Manuscript from Turning Up . . . DOA* by Chris Roerdon
3. *How to Write Killer Fiction: The Funhouse of Mystery and the Rollercoaster of Suspense* by Carolyn Wheat
4. *Writing the Mystery* by G. Miki Hayden
5. *Writing Mysteries* by Sue Grafton (1st or 2nd edition)
6. *Speaking of Murder* (volumes I and II) edited by Ed Gorman and Martin Greenberg
7. *How to Write a Mystery* by Larry Beinhart
8. *The Weekend Novelist Writes a Mystery* by Robert J. Ray and Jack Remick
9. *Telling Lies for Fun and Profit* by Lawrence Block
10. *How to Write a Damn Good Mystery: A Practical Step-by-Step Guide from Inspiration to Finished Manuscript* by James N. Frey

True Crime Authors

1. Ann Rule
2. John Glatt
3. Gregg Olsen
4. Carlton Smith
5. Michael Fleeman
6. Max Allan Collins
7. Clifford Linedecker
8. Tom Henderson
9. Colin Wilson
10. Robert Graysmith

Police Procedural Authors

1. Ed McBain
2. Michael Connelly
3. Michael McGarrity
4. Colin Dexter
5. Elizabeth George
6. Martha Grimes
7. P. D. James
8. Ian Rankin
9. Archer Mayor
10. Joseph Wambaugh

(What!? No mention of Tony Hillerman? His name will appear on a future list under a different category.)

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

2007 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, January 23, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, February 27, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, March 27, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, April 17, 7:00 p.m. (*third Tuesday*)
Tuesday, May 22, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 26, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, July 24, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 28, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 23, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 27, 7:00 p.m.
December 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.

Check our Web site, 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.

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 Sarah Schwartz, membership chair, at croakdagger@yahoo.com.