



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume VI, Number 3—May 2010

†Expert Testimony†

There has been a lot of discussion about and increasing sales of e-books and e-book readers such as Kindle, Nook, and the Sony reader. (In the future, is a reader going to be a piece of hardware instead of a person? It has happened before. In the early days of Los Alamos a computer was the person who did calculations, not a piece of hardware.)

There has been some interesting discussion about a session on the topic at Left Coast Crime 2011, and I thought our members might be interested. For readers (people) there are the obvious benefits of lower costs (which may not be a benefit for authors if they get paid less), easier and faster distribution, and a lot less space taken up. Maybe we can stop buying more bookcases.

However, the key is still the story, even if it is told in a different medium. A good story is a good story whether it's on paper or in electronic form. A bad story is still a bad story and converting it to an e-book won't improve the plot or the characters.

The shift to e-books is not the first time publishing has changed. For a broader perspective, get away from labeling it an e-book issue and instead think about books in different forms. Books on tape was an earlier example of shifting away from print. It's not a perfect analogy since the audio version was in addition to the printed book, which still existed and continued to be the dominant form. Books on tape (now on CDs) targeted a different market, which included many of the same people who bought printed books.

I think part of the concern is based on the assumption that e-books will drive out or greatly reduce the sale of printed books. This may or may not be true depending on whether you are considering fiction or nonfiction.

In some ways this may be a generational issue. My generation likes paper books. I don't have to

worry about the battery charge or connectivity. Besides, am I ever going to get through the 1000+ books readers can store today, and the tens of thousands they will store soon? On the other hand, the younger generation (that makes me sound old, but I am going to my 50th high school reunion so maybe it's truth in advertising) seems to do everything electronically. Maybe e-books will seem so natural that we will reverse a trend and see more people reading more books. Authors would definitely like that.

There is another potential with e-books that is not really being discussed much today. Most, if not all, of what we see today is an e-book that is simply an electronic version of a printed book. Being electronic adds nothing except easier distribution, lower costs, and greater portability. Are e-books going to evolve beyond printed books using their new capabilities, for example into multipath, hypertext stories where different readers can go through the book in different paths? They may follow some story lines and ignore others.

What is the impact if the writer can't be sure the reader is going through the book in the same linear fashion the author intended? That would make an e-book something very different from just an electronic version of a conventional book. Some people might like it more and others might hate it—you mean I have to make a decision where to go next rather than just passively turn the page? As Harlan Campbell described it, "Imagine trying to write an essay where the reader is free to choose the order of your sentences."

If this topic seems interesting, talk to one of your Board members and we will try to set up a presentation at a future meeting. I am sure we will all continue to read mysteries in whatever form they are available. ♦

— Olin Bray, *President*

Don't Miss It!
Tuesday, May 25, at 7 p.m.

Our May speaker is Susan Slater, author of six published mysteries—four in the Ben Pecos Indian series, *Pumpkin Seed Massacre*, *Yellow Lies*, *Thunderbird*, and a novella, *A Way to the Manger*, as well as two stand-alone books, *Flash Flood* and *Five O'clock Shadow*.

Her novel, *0 to 60* (2009), is women's fiction and has been optioned for a feature film. *Eye for an Eye*, a paranormal short story is included in the Rod Serling *Twilight Zone* Anthology II (May 2010). *Rollover*, the second Dan Mahoney mystery will be out 2011.

Susan lives 30 miles west of Taos and writes full-time.

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.

June's speaker will be Shirley Raye Redmond, author of novels and nonfiction for young readers and adults, from her first, *Grampa and the Ghost*, to her recent historical mystery, *Rosemary's Glove*.

Shirley Raye knew she wanted to be a writer when she was only 12 years old. After reading Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, she made up her mind to be just like Jo March. She even tried eating apples while she was writing her stories...just like Jo!

In high school, she joined the journalism club and worked on the student newspaper. She went on to college and earned an M.A. in English from the University of Illinois-Springfield.

She wrote more than 400 magazine and newspaper articles before writing her first book for children, *Grampa and the Ghost*, about a ghost who wants to be a writer. Now Shirley Raye writes full-time.

Meetings are held in the police briefing room of the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Substation, 12700 Montgomery NE (1 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

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Report from the Malice Domestic 2010 Conference

Every year since 1988, fans of the traditional mystery, also called the “cozy,” have met in the Washington, D.C., area to honor authors who write stories that feature small casts of characters/suspects who generally know one another, have a minimum of gore, sex, or bad language, and usually showcase an amateur sleuth. More than 500 authors and fans packed this year’s convention to attend panels that ran from societal problems highlighted in mysteries and modern-day Sherlocks to unusual settings and time periods. The current rage in “woo-woo” (supernatural) mysteries was not overlooked either.

This year I sat in on panels on mysteries set in the great outdoors, brand-new cozy authors, mysteries for children and young adults, historical mysteries, supernatural stories, using red herrings, modern and historical investigative mysteries, and sleuthing from the 1500s through the 1800s, learning valuable insights all along the way.

This year’s Agatha Awards (a ceramic teapot complete with a tag bearing a skull and crossbones) went to (drum roll):

--**Best Novel:** Louise Penny, *The Brutal Telling*. She’s a three-time winner who this year beat out perennial Malice favorites Rhys Bowen and Donna Andrews (a speaker at C&D in February 2005)

--**Best First Novel:** Alan Bradley, *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*. The author lives in Malta.

--**Best Nonfiction:** Elena Santangelo, *Dame Agatha’s Shorts*, a commentary on Agatha Christie’s short stories. She beat out *Talking About Detective Fiction* by P.D. James.

--**Best Children’s/Young Adult Mystery:** Chris Grabenstein, *The Hanging Hill*.

--**Best Short Story:** Hank Phillippi Ryan, “On the House,” in an anthology called *Quarry*. Hidden note: A complimentary copy of this award-winning story will be available at the next Croak & Dagger meeting. First person to mention “short story” to me at that meeting wins the copy.

Mary Higgins Clark received a Lifetime Achievement Agatha teapot, the same award that was presented to Tony Hillerman in 2002. A copy of Ms. Clark’s latest novel, *The Shadow of Your Smile* will be available in the book exchange box at the next Croak & Dagger meeting.

Next year’s Malice Lifetime Achievement Agatha will be awarded Sue Grafton. See www.malicedomestic.org for information on how to register.

—Rob Kresge (rkresge777@comcast.net)

Every year, the Malice Domestic mystery conference gives away a bag of books and other goodies to every attendee. This year’s giveaway books will be in a Malice bag on a separate table at the May 25 C&D general meeting. This listing of titles will only be available to C&D members who receive this *Nooseletter* by email. Remember, first come, first served. And please, only one selection per person.

Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine, June 2010 issue

Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine, July 2010 issue

A Thief in the Theater by Sarah Masters Buckey

(an American Girl mystery)

Double Negative by David Carkeet

The Shadow of Your Smile by Mary Higgins Clark (hardback first edition)

Uneasy Relations by Aaron Elkins

The Puzzle Lady vs. the Sudoku Lady by Parnell Hall (hardback first edition)

The Rebel Princess by Judith Koll Healey (hardback first edition). Sleuth is

Alais Capet (remember her from *A Lion in Winter*?)

Death and the Lit Chick by previous Agatha winner G.M.Malliet

Deal With the Dead by Les Standiford, a John Deal novel

Ten Little Herrings by L.C. Tyler

How To Host a Killer Party by Penny Warner

Soho Press Crime Sampler, Fall/Winter 2011

Imaginary Murders, Real Sleuths

by Jordan Foster

[The following is excerpted from a May 3, 2010, article in Publisher's Weekly]

In order to tell a good lie, it's best to mix in some truth. The same often holds true for historical mysteries: to tell an authentic whodunit set in the past, try mixing in real-life figures. In several successful historical series, authors go further than just name-checking the contemporary president or alluding to an ongoing war. Instead, they use well-known historical figures, often fellow authors, as their crime-solving heroes.

Nicola Upson takes it one step further by using golden age mystery writer and playwright Josephine Tey as her heroine. In Upson's debut, *An Expert in Murder* (Harper, 2008), Tey travels from Scotland to London to see a production of her popular play, *Richard of Bordeaux*, but winds up investigating the murder of a young woman she had met on the train.

Australian author Joanna Challis features another writer-as-sleuth who has ties to the mystery genre in her new series. Young Daphne du Maurier, the author of the classic novel *Rebecca*, stumbles across a body in *Murder on the Cliffs* (Minotaur, Dec. 2009) while researching local history in Cornwall. Coincidentally, Challis's amateur sleuth is in the seaside region around the same time as Tey and Penrose are solving their crime in Angel.

Both Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes have been recast in new adventures. British author Gyles Brandreth, for instance, has paired Doyle with fellow author Oscar Wilde in three mysteries, the latest of which, *Oscar Wilde and the Dead Man's Smile* (Touchstone, Sept. 2009), is framed as a puzzle Wilde recounts to Doyle concerning suspicious deaths in a French acting group. Wilkie Collins—whose 1886 novel *The Moonstone* is considered among the first detective novels—gets a chance to solve crime alongside real-life friend and fellow author Charles Dickens in Dan Simmons's *Drood* (Little, Brown, Feb. 2009). Taking Dickens's last, unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, as inspiration, Simmons reimagines the last years of the author's life and his obsession with the murderous stranger of the title.

Of course, notable Americans not known for their detecting abilities can also get into the act. In his first book featuring Ernest Hemingway as reluctant detective, Michael Atkinson focuses on the author's last years, as Simmons did for Dickens, setting *Hemingway Deadlights* (Minotaur, Aug. 2009) in 1956, five years before Hemingway's suicide. But in the sequel, *Hemingway Cutthroats* (Minotaur, July), Atkinson rewinds to 1937, when Hemingway was living in war-torn Spain. Along with fellow writer John Dos Passos, Hemingway investigates the death of an alleged Marxist spy, running into Errol Flynn along the way.

While Las Vegas pit boss Eddie Gianelli, the narrator of Robert J. Randisi's Rat Pack mysteries, is fictional, he does favors for such real-life entertainers as Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and Sammy Davis Jr. In the fourth book in the series, *You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Kills You* (Minotaur, Sept. 2009), set in early 1962, Eddie helps out Marilyn Monroe, who's distraught that she may have hastened the demise of her co-star on the set of *The Misfits*, Clark Gable.

Finally, for those who miss Daniel M. Klein's series featuring a sleuthing Elvis Presley, last seen in *Such Vicious Minds* (Minotaur, 2004), Presley has been resurrected in two unrelated but Southern-set series: reincarnated as a basset hound in Peggy Webb's series featuring hairdresser Callie Valentine Jones—the third volume is *Elvis and the Memphis Mambo Murders* (Kensington, Oct.)—and as a dimwitted vampire in Charlaine Harris's Sookie Stackhouse books.

[Jordan Foster is a freelance writer in Portland, Oregon]

Croak & Dagger is offering a guided tour of the new Atomic Museum in September, and Los Alamos will feature as a location for novels and movies at Left Coast Crime in March 2011 in Santa Fe. The *Nooseletter* will feature reviews of some of those mysteries and thrillers in this and the July issue—stay tuned!

A Gathering of Spies, by John Altman. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000. 305 pages (HC).

Only two scenes in John Altman's debut novel take place in Los Alamos, but the McGuffin that everyone is after is a nuclear secret and besides, as the cover blurb claims with no exaggeration, this is a "zinger of a classic spy story."

Set in the middle of World War II, *A Gathering of Spies* revolves around Katarina Heinrich, a Nazi spy so deep under cover in the U.S. that she escapes the roundup of her fellow spies in the 1930s, marries an atomic scientist while pretending to be someone else, and lives with him until, in early 1943, she finds what she's looking for and sets off for Germany to deliver her treasure to her Nazi masters.

At the same time, in England, MI-5 is recruiting both Nazi spies and British civil servants to turn them into double agents. One of the latter, an overweight, unassuming man by the name of Harry Winterbotham, proves to have unexpected talents and grit when it comes to crunch time. He's bolstered by his need to get his wife out of a concentration camp in Poland before it's too late—despite the fragility of their marriage in easier times.

Winterbotham is a solid character, but he's outshone by the beautifully drawn Katarina, with whom Allen must have been fascinated, since he doesn't explore his nominal hero's psyche nearly as deeply as his villain's. She's well-trained, amoral, and ruthless (several scenes are quite violent, although brief), and there's no way you're going to sympathize with her. But she's compelling nonetheless, particularly near the end, when both hitherto unsuspected morals and "soft living" in the years she was under cover begin to interfere dangerously with her determination to do her

job. Her downfall is triggered by the treachery of a former lover and the elusiveness of her trainer, with whom she had been almost as desperate to reconnect as she was to deliver her secrets to the Wolf's Lair.

The plot of *A Gathering of Spies* is your classic chase, from New Mexico across country to New York and thence to the English countryside, when the pursuit literally gets down and dirty as MI-5 close in on the resourceful Katarina who, despite being seriously outnumbered, makes it to her destination—if not quite to her goal. There's plenty of action and dialogue, revealing and then concealing the cat-and-mouse tactics of the players in this spy game, and you'll zip through this fast-paced novel in no time, enjoying every step of the way ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

Dark Alchemy by Sarah Lovett, Simon & Schuster, 2003, 292 pp (HC)

This is one of a series of novels that take place in Los Alamos being reviewed for the *Nooseletter*. This one is sort of an odd duck, in that only a couple brief scenes are set in Los Alamos. The bulk of the novel takes place in Santa Fe (even at the Tesuque Village Market) and in London. And there is nothing atomic in this story. *Dark Alchemy* revolves around biological weapons—research into toxins and their antidotes. That said, the Los Alamos scenes are well-drawn and suspenseful, beginning with a poisoning that results in a fatal road accident.

Series protagonist Dr. Sylvia Strange, a psychologist, is under contract to profile the leading suspect in a series of poisonings, in the UK and New Mexico, the beautiful Dr. Christine Palmer, research biologist. Her usual partner, counterterrorist expert Edmond Sweetheart (yes, I know), leads her to London to interview persons with knowledge of an earlier poisoning. From there, suspects besides Dr. Palmer begin to converge on Los Alamos and the suspense increases.

Against this backdrop, Dr. Strange is planning her wedding to State Police official

Matt (last name unknown). This subplot, and several discussions with Dr. Strange's foster daughter, are likely of interest to devotees of this series, but the slipshod way they are written—no last name for her fiancé, seldom using the girl's name (Serena) and overusing "foster daughter" at every opportunity, is part of a pattern of mistakes that plague this work.

--In London, a man enters his hotel "suit," not suite.

--The author says law enforcement agencies are "honing in" on their suspect, when only Gen-Xers make that mistake, rather than use "homing in."

--Dr Strange's return from the UK is supposed to take her through Atlanta and on to Albuquerque, but a few lines later, she's changing planes in Houston.

Finally, the true villain is revealed near the end of the book and we've been prepped to expect the unexpected through a series of emails. If you're interested in books set in Los Alamos, pass this one up and opt for one of the other novels reviewed in this issue. ♦

Rob's Random Shots

May Case File Number One

Sea of Deception by Harlen Campbell, ABQ Press, Albuquerque, 2009, 387 pp (PB).

This novel, Campbell's third, is a thriller reminiscent of *The Sting*. If you liked that movie, or *Ocean's 11, 12, or 13*, you'll like this tale. Not a mystery nor exactly a psychological "whydunnit", we see the crime unfold and the story then becomes a "how can they achieve justice/get their money back?" story.

Opening chapters follow Nick Cowan, an employee of a private company that may or may not be a front for an unnamed intelligence organization, in the wake of an operation gone bad in Mazatlan, Mexico. Thugs shoot up his car, which goes off the road into a ravine. Cowan wakes up in a hospital with horrifying memories of his dead wife Janice hanging upside down in the car next to him. Officials of

his company, ManDeCor, arrange for his medical car, his wife's burial, and give him \$300,000 in severance pay/hush money.

Cut to the town of Bartleby, Texas, where a clever but complicated scam by red-headed Helen Daws is flim-flamming the residents into investing in nonexistent companies that are supposed to bring jobs in refurbishing retired airliners for Third World countries to the little town. After we see the scheme unfold, the residents wake up one morning to find their funds gone, along with Daws and her companion, "John Smith." A leading investor, Jeff Stafford, follows Daws to San Francisco in hopes of getting the town's money back. When he doesn't return, his wife thinks he may have fled with Daws and asks Jeff's sister, Paula, to find him.

Cut to San Francisco, where we find a recovered Nick Cowan nursing a drink in a bayside bar. He watches Paula Stafford board a boat at an adjacent marina with a gun in her hand. When she stumbles out vomiting moments later, he takes her under his wing. She'd found the body of her brother, butchered with a knife. When they find no one home in Daws' condo and another body from the scam turns up, Nick takes Paula back to Bartleby.

From Cowan's previous career with ManDeCor, he puts together pieces of the scam and offers to help the bilked town residents get some of their money back. He traces Daws to a yacht purchase in Florida, then tracks the renamed boat through the Panama Canal and up Mexico's west coast into the Sea of Cortez. With Paula in tow, and revenge upon the Mexican gang lord who killed his wife as much on his mind as justice for Bartleby, he heads for Mazatlan.

As the pair attempt to put their own scam into action, they run afoul of their targets. Cowan goes off to Daws' yacht, while Paula fends off the amorous intentions of John Smith, who may have been the man who cut up her brother. To see how all the threads of this story come together, you'll have to find this book. Or wait for the eventual TV movie or theatrical release. ♦

—Rob Kresge (rkresge777@comcast.net)

May Case File Number Two

Wild Penance by Sandi Ault, Berkley Prime Crime, 2010, 297 pp (HC) and *Wild Sorrow*, 2009, 293 pp (TP)

This arrangement is unprecedented in my six years of reviewing for *The Nooseletter*, but I bought these books at the same time and got them signed. For fans of this series, I thought I owed you two reviews for the price of one.

Although *Wild Penance* was the fourth published mystery featuring BLM agent Jamaica Wild, it is a prequel to Sandi Ault's award-winning series. In this novel, Jamaica is based in Taos and meets some of the characters we've come to love in subsequent books—Mama Anna, member of Taos' Tanoah Pueblo and Jamaica's spiritual mother, and Kerry Reed, a Forest Service ranger who eventually becomes her lover.

Jamaica is out for an early morning jog on the west side of the Taos Gorge Bridge when she sees a vehicle stop on the span and two men throw something that looks like a body on a cross over the 600-foot drop. I've walked that bridge, and this scene scared the daylight out of me. The duo flee, they and their van unidentified. When law enforcement officers investigate, they find the body of local priest Father Ignacio, who had been Jamaica's source for a book she was writing on the Penitentes sect, whose members have themselves ritualistically crucified to experience Christ's pain.

In short order Jamaica's horse throws her, leaving her battered and badly bruised. Comic relief comes when the black and blue Jamaica participates in a charity lingerie show in heavy makeup and a wig. But that leads to the first of three attempts on her life. At the end, mystery solved, Jamaica is given a wolf pup, who will grow into her companion, Mountain, featured in subsequent Wild novels.

Thus, *Wild Sorrow*, published third, takes its place as Book Four in this series. It centers on the century-old practice of taking unwilling Indian children off to boarding schools and the ensuing resentments this caused.

When Jamaica and Mountain stumble across the body of an old white woman in the ruins of a long-abandoned school, she stirs up buried memories among members of Tanoah Pueblo and finds a plethora of suspects who remember the woman's cruelty and the abuses fostered by the school.

Complications abound when Jamaica is nearly run off the road by unidentified assailants. Her friend, FBI Agent Diane Langstrom, battles a slumlord over repairs to her apartment, a situation that further endangers Jamaica. Finally, a bombing, then an attempted rape leave Jamaica shaken, but unbowed. She identifies the murderer, but can take scant pleasure in the solution when boyfriend Kerry Reed accepts an assignment in Washington, DC, that leaves Jamaica with an agonizing choice: accompany him and make uncertain arrangements for Mountain, or end the relationship.



There's been one literal cliff-hanger earlier in this book. Now we'll have to wait for the next installment to find out how Jamaica handles her relationship dilemma.♦

—Rob Kresge (rkresge777@comcast.net)

Fire and Ice, by J.A. Jance. HarperCollins, 2009. 338 pp (HC).

J.P. Beaumont is a Seattle detective. Joanna Brady is a Cochise County, Arizona, sheriff. The two have met before, in Jance's *Shoot/Don't Shoot* and, as they say, "sparks flew" (though not entirely the way you think).

Beaumont, now part of a special homicide investigation team (with an unfortunate acronym), is trying to solve a series of grisly murders of young women in the Northwest. A breakthrough in his case leads him to the Southwest, where Brady is investigating the death of the elderly caretaker of an ATV park, whose dog was the only witness. She and her deputies are also investigating elder abuse in a so-called "care" facility, a subplot set in motion when one of the residents wanders away off her

leash (does “Take me to the hospital; at least it will get me out of jail” sound familiar?).

I found the nursing home plot more interesting—and easier to follow—than where the ATV plot eventually leads, which has to do with drug trafficking and the death of an ex-prostitute in Washington whose story started in Arizona and is what brings Beaumont and Brady together again—if mainly by cell phone.

Jance’s J.P. Beaumont series is written in the first person and the Brady books in the third, and the frequent switches can get a little annoying, although I suppose it saves a lot of exposition. If you’ve been following either of these series, *Fire and Ice* is a good way to catch up with the lives of the characters, who (even the minor characters) are always well drawn, and as Jance divides her times between Tucson and Seattle, the settings are vivid too

Otherwise, I recommend the author’s newer series, featuring ex-newsperson Ali Reynolds (*Web of Evil, Edge of Evil, etc.*).♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

Skull Duggery by Aaron Elkins, Berkley Prime Crime, 2009, 281 pp (HC).

Give a dog a bone and he is perfectly happy. The same thing applies to Gideon Oliver, Aaron Elkins’ skeleton detective.

Gideon tags along on a vacation when his wife Julie goes to help out some friends running a dude ranch in rural Mexico. Gideon quickly becomes bored sitting around with nothing to do, so he jumps at the chance when Annie mentions that the local police chief wondered if he would like to examine the body recently found in the desert. The local doctor has already determined that it was murder. The man was shot.

As you would expect, Gideon’s conclusions are somewhat different. Since the body and especially a new and different report involves the Federal Preventive Police, which look down on and don’t get along with the local police forces, the local chief drafts Gideon to come along to answer any questions about his report.

Again as expected, the initial meeting with the Federal Preventive Police does not go smoothly. However, it turns out there is another set of bones from an older, unsolved case and would the famous skeleton detective care to look at them? This is turning into more working and less vacation. When some of the skeletons seem to have a link to the dude ranch, Gideon and Julie get more involved at a personal level.

There are strong cross currents and tensions in the family running the ranch, only some of which Julie understands and can explain to Gideon. Gideon manages to solve both the recent and the older cases, which has surprising repercussions for the family running the ranch.

Like the other Gideon Oliver books (there are 16 of them), this is a fun read with surprising twists and turns and red herrings. The plot is convoluted enough to satisfy most mystery fans and the characters seem real and believable. Set in Mexico, it even provides a flavor of how law enforcement works in a different culture. I would definitely recommend this book, or most of the others in the Gideon Oliver series. ♦

—Olin Bray (ohbray@nmia.com)

SHORT TAKES

Quick notes on some series openers by Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com).

State of the Onion by Julie Hyzy (White House Chef series #1)

Fascinating detail on what it’s like to work in the White House kitchen. Nice balance of character development vs. action. Light entertainment, hard to put down. I look forward to reading the next in the series.

Skinner’s Rules by Quintin Jardine (Skinner series #1)

Bob Skinner, head of Edinburgh CID, is a likable “hero” protagonist. Extensive use of forensics to solve serial murder case. Strong positive characters and relationships are introduced in this 1st-in-a-series.

Candy Apple Dead by Sammi Carter (Candy Shop series #1)

Very lightweight cozy that should have been proofread by an editor. I don't plan to read any more of the series.

The Pardon by James Grippando (Jack Swyteck series #1)

A great kickoff for a legal thriller series. Plenty of action scenes and red herrings. Likable protagonist whose personality develops throughout the story. I look forward to reading the next book in the series.

Dating Dead Men by Harley Jane Kozak (Wollie Shelley series #1)

I couldn't identify with the wacky characters. Their behavior was hard to believe. This was less humorous or entertaining than the first Stephanie Plum. The story is mostly visual; could be a TV movie for a teenage audience. I won't read any more in this series.

A Beautiful Blue Death by Charles Finch (Charles Lenox series #1)

A delightful read! Interesting and absorbing descriptions of life in Victorian England. Charles Lenox is eccentric for his day due to the close friendship and mutual respect he shares with his neighbor and his servant, qualities that make him a person you wish you could meet. Engaging characters with many-faceted personalities introduced throughout the story.

Bangkok 8 by John Burdett (Bangkok 8 series #1)

What a "walk on the wild side"! An exotic, seamy, violent, amoral story, with intriguing lessons on Thai culture and Buddhism, and humorous snipes at Western culture. Cross and double-cross abound in the twisty plot and its subplots. Entertaining escape thriller, but I do not plan to continue reading the series.

Final Jeopardy by Linda Fairstein (Alex Cooper series #1)

Interesting protagonist, good mix of forensic evidence and deduction, enjoyable change of setting from NYC to Martha's

Vineyard. Clues are well hidden, with plenty of red herrings. ADA Alex Cooper's lifestyle and friends reveal unexpected personality facets. Interesting colleagues in this first of the series provide a variety of avenues for future plots. At the beginning of the book the writing seems a bit melodramatic, but the style and pacing improves by the action scenes.

The Necropolis Railway by Andrew Martin (Jim Stringer series #1)

Young Jim Stringer from quiet Yorkshire jumps at the chance to work at his dream job on the "engine side" of a 1903 London railway. His attempts to learn and succeed on the job are thwarted by an intrigue that places him in mortal danger as he questions suspicious deaths. Fast pace and historic vernacular make this debut a treat to read.

Ode to Mystery*

by Elena Santangelo**

Take me out with an Uzi, Take me out with a Glock,
Hack me to bits with a butcher knife;
When I am dead, go and strangle your wife,
And the root, root, root for some toadstools,
Cook and serve to your kin;
Oh, it's one, two, three bowls, they're out
As the cops come in.

Take me out with curare, Take my life with a dart
Blown through a large plastic drinking straw;
No one will see that you're breaking the law,
And then wipe your prints from the plastic,
Hide the evidence well,
Or it's one, two, three years to life
In a prison cell.

*sung to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame"

***Elena Santangelo's* Dame Agatha's Shorts was awarded the Agatha for best nonfiction at this year's Malice Domestic conference.

Elena is a member of the Delaware Valley (Pennsylvania) chapter of Sisters in Crime.



Noose News

The Hillerman Conference is Back!

After a year's hiatus, WORDHARVEST has restructured the Tony Hillerman Writers Conference and moved it to Santa Fe. The program, November 12-13, 2010, includes a day focused on developing characters and creating dialogue under the guidance of Margaret Coel, a comprehensive session on the business of writing with Bill O'Hanlon, and an evening with author (and former CIA agent) Valerie Plame Wilson. In response to your requests, we've added a manuscript critique. Our host is the [Inn and Spa at Loretto](#), with rooms offered at a considerable discount. We hope you will join us...and help spread the word to your friends! Following are capsule descriptions of the workshops: Complete information and registration for the conference is available at www.wordharvest.com

Show Me the Energy! Find the Fuel to Start, Complete, and Sell Your Writing Projects

Leave your excuses at home and have some fun! Author and featured Oprah guest Bill O'Hanlon will show participants how to find the fuel to begin, persist, and complete writing projects; free more time in our busy lives to ensure that the writing gets done; unstick your creative impulses when you stall; energize yourself to do the platform building, marketing, and sales parts of your writing lives...and more!

Bill O'Hanlon is the author of 30 books, including *Write Is A Verb*. He wrote his first 10 books when he had four kids at home, a private practice in psychotherapy, and a speaking career on the side! Bill is known for his entertaining, life-changing presentation.

Create Compelling Characters and Dynamic Dialogue

Who are those people in your head? And what are they saying? Author Margaret Coel will help you get to know the characters in your imagination and transport them into your story.

You will learn how to give characters distinct personalities, viewpoints, and motivations that will make them come alive on the page. Coel will show how dialogue is a crucial device to transform characters into multi-dimensional people—and keep the story moving.

The *New York Times* best-selling author of the acclaimed Wind River mystery series, Margaret Coel sets her stories among the Arapahos on Wyoming's Wind River Reservation. Her novels have won many awards and been on numerous bestseller lists. Among her honors are five Colorado Book Awards and the Rocky Award for Best Mystery Novel set in the American West.

As requested: Manuscript Reviews

Author, publisher, and editor Judith Van Gieson has agreed to help aspiring authors refine their first chapters and improve their synopses. Judith will read a synopsis and up to 25 pages of the first chapter of the manuscripts and meet with writers privately during the conference to discuss their work, focusing on both strengths and areas that could use some improvement. The offer is open to writers of both fiction and non-fiction and includes a written critique, a half-hour private session with Judith and a two-hour class on writing first chapters. Critiques are available at a discount to those who register for at least one day of the conference.

June 1 Deadline for \$10,000 Hillerman Prize!

The Tony Hillerman Prize for best first mystery, created and co-sponsored by WORDHARVEST and St. Martin's Press, honors the memory of New Mexico author Tony Hillerman. The contest is open to previously unpublished book length manuscript (no less than 220 typewritten pages or approximately 60,000 words). The story must be set in the Southwestern United States and the author must be unpublished in the mystery genre. (Most self-published novels are allowed.). Entries must be postmarked no later than June 1, 2010. The complete guidelines and entry form are [here](#). Good luck.

I ♥ Rejections

Woopie! I just got another rejection from an agent!

Every year the unpublished Sisters in Crime chapter, Guppies, has a contest to see who can get the most rejections between January 1 and March 31. I am getting a bad reputation for being happy to see each rejection roll in. This one brings me up to 11, but there are still 18 submissions out there.

I don't know about the well-published writers, but taking rejection seems to be the hardest thing a not-yet-published writer has to do. How you take rejection can influence how often you send out your work. One person is so distressed by a few form letters that she gives up writing, or at least sending out her work altogether. Another sees each rejection slip as one less she has to get before she gets the "yes" she is waiting for.

Rejections come in several forms. First the form letter, usually something simple like "Your work isn't right for us, good luck." It's amazing how fast some of these can come back. They probably didn't even look at your manuscript before they put it in your SASE. I have a friend who e-mailed in a query and got a response within half an hour. One step up from that is a note handwritten across a form letter: "Not what we are looking for, but keep us in mind in the future." This one feels like getting a promotion.

Then you get the one that is written for you specifically. Sometimes they come with good advice, sometimes they are less than useful, and sometimes they are downright hurtful. I sent a short story in with a grant application and the reply was, "If you plan to write short stories, you should read a few." It sounds funny now, but it hurt at the time.

The joy of belonging to a group of fellow writers at the same stage in the process as you are is that everyone understands instantly and can help stem the flow of blood. "Be angry for a day and then move on" is the general advice.

No matter what you feel as the rejections come in, you will never get published without them. I don't think the answer is to get tougher skin. I think the answer is to reinterpret what you are getting. If I could trade each rejection slip for a chocolate bar, I might just keep sending them out. And someday that "yes" will come.

There are no failed writers, just ones who have given up.

—KB Inglee (*Delaware Valley SinC*)



Sisters in Crime **Guppies**

SinC guppies come from across the United States and Canada. They have different occupations and avocations, but they share a passion for writing mysteries and a common goal of getting published.

"Few professions offer as many opportunities for rejection as writing does. Only the strong survive the path to publication. The encouragement and support of other writers can be the difference... (SinC Guppies)

Guppies is an online writer's support group, Subgroups represent cozies, noir, psychological and romantic suspense, and thrillers. The Mystery Analysis Group is a book discussion group aimed at discussing the craft, and the AgentQuest group can help with writing queries and synopses.

Interested in joining this online writer's support group? Check them out at www.sinc-guppies.org.

March 24-27, 2011

Left Coast Crime—The Big Chile, La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, NM. Left Coast Crime comes to the City Different! Guests of Honor: Margaret Coel, Steve Havill; Toastmaster: Steve Brewer. Information: www.leftcoastcrime.org/2011 or coordinator Pari Noskin Taichert's bog, www.murderati.com. Sign up by March 14, 2010, for the best rate—and watch this space!

2010 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, May 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 22, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, July 27, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 24, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 28, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 26, 7:00 p.m.

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, for schedule changes.

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. ♦

†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, with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically. ♦ —Linda Triegel

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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 our membership chair, at contact@croak-and-dagger.com