



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume VI, Number 4—July 2010

†Expert Testimony†

We have been encouraging people to go to mystery conferences when they can. You can learn a lot, meet a lot of interesting people, and have a lot of fun. For this column I thought I would summarize some of the interesting points from Mayhem in the Midlands, the mystery conference in Omaha in late May.

The guest of honor this year was Deborah Crombie. Toastmaster was Marcia Talley, incoming president of Sisters in Crime. There were about 140 attendees and almost 40 authors. Three parallel tracks for 2½ days covered a lot of topics. For a copy of the program go to www.omahapubliclibrary.net/events/mayhem.

The panelists on police procedurals said that they get a lot of ideas from actual cases, but then they change them so the cases are not recognizable. In contrast, true crime stories focus on the real details. Some things may be true, but not believable, so for credibility they have to be changed in the fiction.

For example, they mentioned the CSI syndrome, where people on juries have seen so much sophisticated forensic analysis on TV and in books that real, hard evidence sometimes is not credible enough to get a conviction. Answering a question the panelists suggested that there is really very little conflict between departments, but that it makes for a good story so you see it far more than it actually happens.

Another panel talked about story time (or series time) versus real time. Obviously, a story set in the 1970s could not use modern sophisticated forensics, such as DNA testing.

Similarly, a story set today could be dated by more sophisticated testing developed in the future. One author's answer was to minimize the use of forensics and solve the crimes using logic, interviewing, and old-fashioned detective work, which does not go out of date.

A perennial question is how much research to do and how much to include. We have all read stories where the author is determined to tell us all of the esoteric (and irrelevant) details he or she learned. One author's answer was to do all the research and include it all—in the first draft. He called it “dumping your notebook.” Then edit it out along with everything else that was not relevant or interesting.

An alternate strategy was to minimize the upfront research, do the first draft, and then do just enough research to answer the specific questions that came up. However, for some authors serendipity was a big benefit of their research. It took them in directions they would never have thought of otherwise.

A panel on breaking genre rules basically agreed—break them if it works. Most rules are really guidelines, not cast in stone. But it is useful to know the rule and why you are breaking it. What they agreed on were more general principles than rules.

There was also just fun time, including an auction. Interestingly almost half the auction revenue came from bids to have authors use your name in their next book.

You can see why we recommend mystery conventions. As a reminder, Left Coast Crime will be in Santa Fe in March 2011. And you won't even have to hassle with the airport. ♦

— Olin Bray, President

Don't Miss It!

Tuesday, July 27, at 7 p.m.

Our July speaker is Chris Eboch, the author of 12 books for young people, whose topic will be "What I Learned from Nancy Drew."

Chris's *Haunted* series, for ages 8-12, follows a brother and sister who travel with their parents' ghost hunter TV show. The kids try to help the ghosts, while keeping their activities secret from meddling grownups. *The Ghost on the Stairs* is set at a Colorado hotel haunted by a ghost bride from the 1880s. *The Riverboat Phantom* features a steamboat pilot still trying to prevent a long-ago disaster.

Chris's eight other books in print include *Nancy Drew #29: The Stolen Bones* (as ghostwriter), *The Well of Sacrifice*, a middle grade Mayan drama, and nonfiction for kids. Her writing articles have appeared in *Writer's Digest*, *Children's Writer*, and *Byline*. See her website at www.chriseboch.com or visit her "Write Like a Pro! A Free Online Writing Workshop" blog at <http://chriseboch.blogspot.com/>.

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.

August's speaker will be an expert on the history—and maybe even the mystery—of Los Alamos. See page 6 for more on our tie-in trip to the Atomic Museum.

AND: Remember that all members are invited to join the Croak & Dagger Yahoo group, an online gathering place for mystery writers. Join in! Log on to C&D's web page (www.croak-and-dagger.com) and click on the link to email group moderator Nancy Varian for instructions. Exchange news and information about mystery books, movies, and TV shows, as well as online courses.



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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The Line Up

President/Treasurer – Olin Bray –
ohbray@nmia.com

Secretary – Fred Aiken –
FAAiken@aol.com

Programs/Publicity – Rita Herther –
RMHerther@aol.com

Membership – Rob Kresge –
rkresge777@comcast.net

Website –
Susan Zates – smzates@yahoo.com

Library Liaison – Pari Noskin Taichert –
ptaichert@comcast.com

Nooseletter Editor – Linda Triegel –
newsette@earthlink.net

Ideas for Your Writing File

From time to time, chapter authors or would-be authors may toss out some nuggets from their “ideas bin,” items we collect without knowing how or when we might use them. Here are some recent examples. Other writers are free to use these as you see fit. Or for those of you who are avid readers (nearly all of us, I suppose), see how ideas like these from the media can be used in a variety of ways for major or minor characters or situations in novels or short stories. The next time you have the opportunity to ask a favorite author at a signing, “where do you get your ideas?” don’t believe them when they say they go to the website called “Ideas R Us.”

1. CNN reported from Miami that a former employee of the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line was arrested and charged with burglarizing the homes of 24 vacationers who were spending time at sea. This is a variation of a scheme crooks have long used of scanning obituaries for funeral notices, then breaking into the homes of the bereaved while the funerals and/or graveside ceremonies are taking place.

How would you use this nugget? Does this activity precipitate a murder? Is the burglar (a woman in this case) your villain? Your less-than-honest protagonist? Is she the battered wife/girlfriend of a criminal who forces her to do this? Where else can you go with this? Does she find a body in the burgled house and can’t report it? Does a cruise passenger return and find some political or economic document missing and put two and two together? Does the returned passenger become your villain? Your protagonist? See the possibilities that can grow from a tiny seed like this?

2. The Albuquerque *Journal* reported in a Sunday Living Section about the background and current duties of the New Mexico state viticulturist (expert on growing wine grapes). What, you say? How could that possibly be used in a mystery or a thriller?

The man (in this case, but it wouldn’t have to be) was born in Germany, travels to vineyards all over the state (as Michael McGarrity’s and Pari Noskin Taichert’s sleuths do), and has even gone to Afghanistan to help rehabilitate a silkworm-rearing facility. Here in New Mexico he has to contend with coyotes, javelinas, and elk when he helps wine growers. Could he find a body? Be attacked by an animal or criminals in the course of his duties? Is there a series protagonist in this or is it better for a stand-alone or a short story? That’s for you to decide.

3. Finally, the same Living section noted a new phenomenon, how modern-day Cyranos are working the Internet on behalf of clients who are too busy to look for first dates. These e-mailers, male and female, work primarily for male clients who may or may not have identified women (or even men) they’d be interested in dating, but are either too busy or lack confidence in the witty repartee of e-mails (or both) to try to arouse some interest in the other party.

There was a movie like this, titled something like *Girl Number 8*, about a phone sex operator who fielded calls with a sexy voice and some heavy breathing. This new twist is a potentially more wholesome job for a protagonist. What could be the crime? Is your client murdered? Does someone you wooed for your client become a murder or rape victim? Is this perhaps not your protagonist, but the love interest of a skeptical cop investigating the case? The sky’s the limit, isn’t it?

EDITOR’S NOTE: For more help—if the above hasn’t tweaked your imagination—the *Writer’s Digest* book club has several helpful offerings, such as *The Writer’s Idea Book* by Jack Heffron and *Story Spinner* by Bonnie Neubauer, which you can probably find in the library and not have to join the club to get. I found when I first started writing that the more I wrote, the more ideas I got (my backlog of novel ideas is so big now that I won’t live long enough to get to them all!).

Gerritsen on Christie – and on Gerritsen

In celebration of *Masterpiece Mystery's Six by Christie*, three best-selling female mystery writers—Sue Grafton, Faye Kellerman and Tess Gerritsen—sat down with interviewer Tina Vaz to discuss their own characters, their admiration for Christie, and their tricks of the crime trade. The following is excerpted from www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/christie/queens. Go to the site for the interviews with Grafton and Kellerman.

On Christie's wide appeal and staying power

Christie chose as her heroes and heroines quite ordinary people — underdogs, so to speak — whom we as readers often underestimate at first glance. These ordinary-seeming characters walk onto the stage and are quietly brilliant. It makes us all feel that we can be sleuths. We can't be James Bond, but we can be Miss Marple.

On keeping their characters fresh over time

Once your character is completely happy and satisfied, the series is over. Likewise, if your character stays the same over 20 books, she becomes cardboard. I always have a little bit of a crisis going on, something to keep my characters a little off balance to make sure they're still growing and evolving.

On the sensibility female writers bring to the mystery genre

Women writers pay more attention to their female characters' lives outside of police work. In *Vanish*, my main sleuth, Detective Jane Rizzoli, has just given birth and is having problems breastfeeding while she's investigating a murder. I don't think that's something Dashiell Hammett would have written about! You have a woman who's very competent as a policewoman and confident in her skills, but who feels totally inadequate as a mother. Thanks to female writers, the issues that women have to juggle in their professional and personal lives are now coming into the genre.

On the future of the mystery genre

I think we've overdone the gore and the gruesomeness. Too much blood has been splashed across the pages. I enjoy mysteries that are more literary and more historical. I think historical novels, in general, seem to be making something of a comeback.

On the creative process

The best ideas are the ones I feel on an emotional level — I call it the punch in the gut. When that happens, I just know it's going to be a book. I remember the exact moment that *Vanish* was born. I was reading an article in *The Boston Globe* about a young woman who was found dead in the bathtub, zipped into a body bag and sent to the morgue. A couple of hours later, she woke up.

When I read the story, I knew had to write about it. I did a search using the terms “mistaken for dead,” and to my horror and fascination I found case after case of it. So, I started off with the idea of “body wakes up in morgue.” I wasn't sure where to go with it, but my process is to keep writing and see what happens. Once I get an idea, it obsesses me until the story is written.

On the most unusual thing they've done in the name of research

Research is probably the most fun part of writing, because I get a chance to do things I normally wouldn't do. Recently I was invited by an Egyptologist to attend the CT scanning of a mummy. I helped them load the mummy from the museum into the van and to the hospital. We got some interesting looks as we wheeled him through the lobby on a patient gurney! It was fascinating to see on the CT scan the evidence of everything that was done to this person 2,000 years ago. I used it all in *The Keepsake*.

I Love a Mystery – *Little Grey Cells*

In honor of the new *Masterpiece Mystery* series featuring Hercule Poirot, here is a quiz about his creator, thanks to Maxine Hermann of the Delaware Valley chapter of SinC (these quizzes originally appeared in *Belles Lettres*, the newsletter of DVSinC).



1. What was the title of Agatha Christie's first book featuring Poirot (published in 1920)?
 - A. *A Labour of Hercules*
 - B. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*
 - C. *A Stylish Affair in Essex*

2. Poirot's last case was written during the early days of World War II, when London was being bombed and Christie was afraid she'd be killed. The manuscript was locked away in a heavy-duty safe for many years and was only published in 1975. In it, Poirot:
 - A. Gets married.
 - B. Returns to Belgium
 - C. Dies

3. What was the title of that book? _____

4. What was the title of Christie's last book (of 87)?
 - A. *The Sleeping Car Murders*
 - B. *Sleeping Murder*
 - C. *Death on the Nile*

5. Christie books often had different titles in England and the United States. What was the original title of *Murder on the Orient Express*?
 - A. *The Blue Train*
 - B. *Murder in the Calais Coach*
 - C. *The 4:50 from Paddington*

6. Poirot's Dr. Watson—his friend and chronicler—was named:
 - A. Georges
 - B. Bertram
 - C. Hastings

7. Officially retired, Poirot enlists the help of Mr. Goldby in (U.S. title given):
 - A. *Funerals Are Fatal*
 - B. *The Third Girl*
 - C. *Murder After Hours*

Sorry – no prizes (but the answers are on page 11)

Croak & Dagger is offering a guided tour of the new Atomic Museum on September 11, 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 upcoming issues—stay tuned!

Stallion Gate by Martin Cruz Smith, Ballantine Books 1987, 384 pp (PB)

Award-winning New Mexico author Martin Cruz Smith (*Nightwing*, *Gorky Park*), who will be honored at Left Coast Crime in Santa Fe in March 2011, penned his own take on the events leading up to the Trinity explosion in the desert near Tularosa in July 1945.

His protagonist, Pueblo Indian Sergeant Joe Pena, serves as Robert Oppenheimer's personal drive- and go-fer. Pena's superior, Captain Augustino, is convinced Oppenheimer is leaking nuclear information to the Russians and disbelieves what Pena tells him about the real spies, Harry Gold and Klaus Fuchs.

We get a gritty look at the struggling effort to build the bomb and join Joe at Indian ceremonies.

Joe is a complicated character and a perfect protagonist for the multi-layered story in this thriller. He went to war with the New Mexico National Guard, most of whom were rounded up the Philippines in early 1942 and sent on the Bataan death march. Carrying a load of guilt for having avoided capture, he returns to his pueblo and by 1944 joins the scientific community at Oppenheimer's former boys' ranch above Santa Fe.

A boxer and jazz musician, an Indian and an outsider to the Army, Joe wants to make one last big score in a fight on the eve of the Trinity experiment. His dreams are threatened by Augustino, the espionage surrounding the project, rivalry with Army military police, and falling in love with a German refugee mathematician who may be a spy herself.

This is a terrific read and the pages tick down relentlessly toward Trinity. I thought I knew how it would end, but I was wrong and

pleasantly surprised. You will be, too. I also learned a lot along the way. Think about reading this novel before our museum tour in September. ♦

—Rob Kresge (rkresge777@comcast.net)

Los Alamos, by Joseph Kanon. Broadway Books, 1997. 403 pages (HC)

It's April 1945. A Manhattan Project security officer is murdered near the secret New Mexico site where a team of elite scientists is racing to finish building an atomic bomb before the end of World War II. A civilian intelligence officer, Michael Connolly (yes, really) is called in, as a supposedly impartial outsider, to investigate the crime.

Kanon's thriller has a lot going for it, but thrilling isn't one of them. The dialogue is good, like eavesdropping on real conversations, and the setting and era are recreated in what reads like authentic detail.

On the other hand, the pace is slow, and it's hard to care about the murder victim, since Connolly doesn't seem to, being too enamored of the brilliant minds, particularly Robert Oppenheimer's, at work on "The Hill" developing some "gadget" that the German refugees among them seem to want to use to take revenge on the Nazis but are disappointed when the war in Europe ends too soon for them. But there's still Japan.

Connolly works with a local cop, "Doc" Holliday, who's more interesting, so I'd have liked to see more interaction between them in more intense pursuit of the murderer, particularly since Connolly seems remarkably untrained in police work and could use the help. The solution to who killed Karl Bruner is a bit of a let-down since it involves characters who were introduced hundreds of pages earlier, without distinguishing themselves, and frankly I'd forgotten all about them.

Of course, Holliday's jurisdiction doesn't extend to The Hill, where security is supposedly tight. That doesn't stop Connolly from indulging in a love affair with the English wife of one of the scientists. It's kind of hard to care

about this sideshow too, but at least they go hiking in Chaco Canyon at one point, which is nicely described.

Los Alamos is thoroughly drenched in its period and details the setting and historical characters well, so for that it's worth reading. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

Stealing Trinity by Ward Larsen. Oceanview Publishing 2008, 316 pp (HC).

A common novel plot in the post-WWII years was that key Nazi leaders escaped to South America at the end of the war and were going to try again. This book revisits that idea, but with a very different spin. What would they need? What about the Los Alamos files from their agent buried deep in the Manhattan project?

With Germany collapsing, Alexander Braun, an American-born, Harvard-educated German with no connection to any of their intelligence organizations, is selected to reestablish contact with their mole and get the data. He arrives in New Mexico in time to see the Trinity test from miles away. Very impressive. He knows he must have the data no matter what it takes.

Michael Thatcher, a British POW interrogator, stumbles on enough to know that something major is happening. However, the Americans won't tell him anything about their secret project and don't believe it is now at risk. While they actively try to stop Thatcher's investigation, Thatcher takes off and the chase is on. From Germany to Rhode Island, to New Mexico, and across the Pacific to where the first bombs are being assembled.

Bouncing between Braun (the German spy) and Thatcher (the British spychaser), *Stealing Trinity* is a fast-paced, interesting book. It is more of a thriller than a classic mystery story, but there are more than enough puzzles and red herrings to keep you interested and guessing. It also has a very strong Los Alamos and Manhattan project focus, whereas some of the books that have been reviewed just touch on Los Alamos and quickly move on to other things. I

would definitely recommend this book, even if you are not strongly interested in the Los Alamos connection.

This is Larsen's second book and a winner of the 2008 National Best Books Award. His first book, *The Perfect Assassin*, was a finalist for the 2006 award. ♦

—Olin Bray (ohbray@nmia.com)

Other mystery novels involving Los Alamos, available through the Bernalillo Library System, include *Stealing Thunder* by Peter Millar; *The Good German* by Joseph Kanon (yes, the one that was made into a movie with George Clooney); *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart* by Lydia Millet; *Slow Through Eden* by Gordon Glasco; and *Season of the Burning Souls* by Ken Hodgson. Check the NoveList link on the library's website for publication information, plot summaries, and reviews. For a nonfiction take on the subject, try *The Day the Sun Rose Twice* by the late UNM professor Ferenc Morton Szasz.

Rob's Random Shots

July Case File Number 1 & 1A

OK, its baseball season and I'm feeling generous. Here are a couple of double-headers this month, at the same ticket price as a regular pair of reviews.

Vanishing Point by Judith Van Gieson, Signet 2001 262 pp (PB) and ***Land of Burning Heat*** by Judith Van Gieson, Signet 2003, paperback, 260 pp (PB)

I've been catching up on books I've had in my own personal library for a while. I met Judith at one of the Tony Hillerman mystery conferences and have been impressed with both her Claire Reynier UNM library archivist series and her NM attorney Neil Hamel novels. Both of these are Claire Reynier novels and are based on true stories. I've learned a lot from them about how to adapt real events to my fiction. You should check these out, too.

Vanishing Point is the story of Jonathan Vail, a famous young J.D. Salinger-like writer who vanished into the Four Corners Wilderness in the early 70s. When a hiker brings Claire a journal he found in the slickrock canyons that may have been written by Vail, she seeks help to authenticate it and arranges to meet the hiker near where he found the journal. In a cave near the meeting site, Claire finds the hiker dead. Suspects abound, and the missing author's parents want to have the journal suppressed.

The solution took me completely by surprise. The premise was so good that I felt myself being carried through the novel in a rush. And it was fun to see Claire traipse through much of the Four Corners that I've traveled. Judith says she based this story on the disappearance of writer Everett Ruess, who vanished in those canyons and whose body was only found in the last ten years.

Burning Heat takes place much closer to Claire's home turf of the Albuquerque high desert. A young woman from Bernalillo brings Claire a small hollow cross with a quotation in it that may have come from a Jew killed during the Inquisition in Mexico in the late 1500s. When Claire goes to the young woman's home, she finds her murdered and the cross and quotation missing.

From this point, we're introduced to the whole range of "crypto-Jews," or *conversos*—those who converted to Catholicism during the Inquisition—and *marranos*—those who hid their true faith and came north to a tenuous freedom in New Mexico. Suspects include a neighborhood burglar and the young woman's family members, who may have varying motives for keeping her find and the status of the family secret.

Judith used the stories of a young *marrano* man whom she met after she moved here in the 1980s. Again, she saw how true stories could be used as a springboard for a great mystery.

What do you know or have learned from recent headlines or other reading that could inspire you or another writer? ♦

—Rob Kresge (rkresge777@comcast.net)

July Case File Number 2 & 2A

Hit Man by Lawrence Sanders, Harper Torch 2002, 342 pp (PB) and *Chasing the Dime* by Michael Connelly, Warner Books 2002, 413 pp

Both of these books represent departures by long-time bestselling authors from their usual tales of their series protagonists—Block's unlicensed NYC PI Matt Scudder and Connelly's LAPD Detective Harry Bosch. Since I read them one after the other, I thought a comparison and contrast to their better-known works might be in order.

The super-prolific Block has been "around the block" many times in his 50-year career, but has concentrated for more than a decade on the excellent Scudder books and on bookstore owner and part-time burglar Bernie Rhodenbarr. He branched out a decade ago with short stories about a freelance hit man named Keller, just to see if he could make such a person an interesting and sympathetic character. He succeeded so well that many Keller stories were grouped into this book, enough to form a novel, if you don't mind that the chapters are independent of one another and only toward the end can you see Keller's character begin to change and grow.

I had the good fortune to listen to a Keller audio novel, *Hit List*, during a recent trip and, while I liked *Hit List* better, I was glad I made the acquaintance of the earlier Keller and hope to continue reading this short series. See if you can get over your likely squeamishness and enjoy these books, too. Most of Keller's hits take place "off-screen," so the actual violence is far less than you'd expect. If you like Block, Scudder, and Bernie, you'll like Keller, too.

Chasing the Dime represents one of Connelly's frequent (every 2-3 years) stand-alones that don't feature Harry Bosch. Connelly (who, incidentally, if you haven't read the first Bosch, *The Black Echo*, is one of the few mystery masters who never—repeat never—disappoints) is unique among mystery authors in finding a way to bring stand-alone characters into later Bosch books. One of Bosch's former cases, the Dollmaker, is mentioned in this novel.

So I expect biocomputer entrepreneur Henry Pierce may reappear with Bosch at some point.

But judging this book on its own, I wouldn't have picked it up if it had been written by an unknown author. Pierce is about to patent a major innovation in bioelectric power for tiny computers. He gets a new cell phone number that apparently belonged to a call girl named Lilly and he begins to get all her calls. Concerned because of his experience with his sister's murder a decade before, he begins to poke into the adult entertainment Internet underworld, with increasingly dire results.

I don't think another author could have pulled off this premise as credibly as Connelly. While I don't think it ranks with his Bosch books (best so far? *A Darkness More Than Night*), it's worth reading. Even in a lesser work, Connelly never disappoints.♦

—Rob Kresge (rkresge777@comcast.net)

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, based on the novel by Stieg Larsson (in Swedish).

The movie version of Part I of Stieg Larsson's internationally best-selling Millennium trilogy floated in and out of the Guild last month, then in and out of the Century 14, but catch it when you can—preferably on a big screen. Even in flight, its butterfly wings turn into lethal weapons and it knocks you back against your seat.

Wow. What a movie. It's not that I'm fond of what the Washington Post reviewer labeled "obscenity, violence, grisly crime scene photos, nudity, sex, rape, and smoking, all in large quantities," as a general rule, but sometimes the movie containing all that (you've been warned) is so compelling that you come out of the theater smiling happily, having had a great time.

The story in its essence is a classic locked-room mystery, except that the room is an island, and the bridge to the mainland is nonfunctioning just at the time the murder of a 16-year-old girl takes place. However, the murder in question happened 40 years ago and couldn't be a colder case, even if we weren't in Sweden in the

winter. It only heats up when the wealthy head of the family that owns the island asks journalist Mikael Blomkvist of *Millennium* magazine to find out who killed his beloved niece.

Researcher Lisbeth Salander, the tattooed lady of the title, stumbles on Blomkvist's investigation (she's also a whiz of a computer hacker) and the odd couple find themselves partners in crime-solving. I won't attempt to describe Lisbeth, who is a unique character and marvelously played by Noomi Rapace, who will "show, not tell" you as much about Lisbeth as Lisbeth wants you to know, which ain't much.

I think the main thing that makes the movie work is the strong performance by the lead actors (the secondary ones are well cast too). Rapace makes Lisbeth truly weird, but it's not long before you get to like both the actress and the character. Nyqvist as Mikael Blomkvist is just my type—50ish, good-looking but not perfect like Hollywood heroes.

STOP PRESS: I've just finished reading *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, the second book in the trilogy, all 700+ compelling pages, and I've just learned that the movie version of this one is in town. 'Scuse me while I go indulge! ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

SHORT TAKES

Among the Mad by Jacqueline Winspear
(Maisie Dobbs series #6)

I love, love, love the Maisie Dobbs series. This 6th installment is as rewarding as the previous 5 books. Maisie is an independent woman with her own business, a rarity in post WWI England. The pacing is great, making it hard to put the book down. Maisie and her assistant Billy are very sympathetic characters.

Maisie has earned the respect of Scotland Yard due to her professionalism, and the undying love of her best friend Priscilla due to her humanity. Read this series in order! Maisie seems poised for a change in her life...

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

Noose News

Dirk Gibson, UNM teacher in the Journalism and Communications Department and former speaker to our Croak and Dagger Chapter, will sign copies of his new book *Serial Murder for Profit*, from 4 to 8 p.m. on Friday, July 30, at the Hastings in Fair Plaza, 6001 Lomas NE.

Shirley Raye Redmond, our speaker in June, writes that her new nonfiction book, *Cities of Gold* (part of Thomson Gale's "Mysterious Encounters" series) has been released. (HC, \$27). It examines all sorts of mysterious cities, from the Seven Cities of Cibola in New Mexico to the elusive Incan treasure city of Paititi. Contact Shirley at www.readshirleyraye.com.

Anne Hillerman and **Don Strel** will talk about *Tony Hillerman's Landscape and Gardens of Santa Fe* and sign copies on July 31 at 2 p.m. at Tome on the Range, 158 Bridge Street, Las Vegas, NM. For info, call (505) 454-9944.

Craig Johnson is currently on tour with the sixth book in his Walt Longmire series, *Junkyard Dogs*. A reviewer for the Tattered Cover bookstore noted that the novel "is filled with Johnson's signature blend of wisecracks, Western justice, and page-turning plot twists..." A television series based on Johnson's Wyoming sheriff is in development.

Christine Barber's newest book, *The Bone Fire*, released July 6 by Minotaur, reunites Detective Sergeant Gilbert Montoya and newspaper editor Lucy Newroe to solve a case. Barber's first novel, *The Replacement Child*, won the Tony Hillerman Prize in 2007.

Michael McGarrity reports good progress on his latest book in the making, *Hard Country*, a prequel in his Kevin Kerney series. Michael recently appeared at the annual Just Desserts benefit for the library at the University of Colorado in Boulder. His topic: "Why Fiction is Better than Fact."

David Morrell, will be in Alpine, Texas, on Saturday, July 31, for the Way Out West book festival. He writes, "Alpine is a picturesque small town that harkens back to the frontier. It's near Marfa, where mysterious lights have appeared most nights since 1889. In my latest novel, *The Shimmer*, I invented my own version of those lights and am looking forward to driving to Marfa and admiring them."

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 requests, a manuscript critique will also be offered. The conference will be held at the [Inn and Spa at Loretto](#), with rooms offered at a considerable discount. (See the May *Nooseletter* for capsule descriptions of the workshops; for more information and registration for the conference, go to www.wordharvest.com.)

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 blog:
www.murderati.com.

Sign up soon for the best rate—and watch this
space for the latest news!

Help Wanted – Croak & Dagger Needs YOU!

Chapter elections are held each November, when all positions are available to any member who wants to serve. Holding office is a great way to meet other mystery readers and writers and to gain access to valuable and interesting information. Below are brief descriptions of elected and appointed offices. If you're interested in any position, contact president Olin Bray at ohbray@nmia.com. There will be more details in the September *Nooseletter*.

Elected Positions

The **President** presides at all membership meetings and executive committee meetings, sets goals and assigns responsibilities, polls members on major decisions, keeps members informed, and serves as group spokesperson.

The **Vice President** conducts meetings in the President's absence and fills in or assists when needed for any other executive tasks.

The **Secretary** takes minutes at monthly board meetings, sends out notices of board meetings and directions when needed, prepares and distributes a board meeting agenda, and keeps members on track as to what matters have been decided.

The **Treasurer** maintains the chapter's checking account and, with the membership chairman, tracks incoming dues and outgoing expenses, investigating any proposed new equipment buys, etc.

Appointed Positions:

The **Programs/Publicity Chair** uses chapter resources to come up with speaker ideas, phones or emails speakers to ask if they'd be willing to speak on specific dates, and generally lines up speakers for two or three months at a time; also coordinates purchase of gift bookmarks and sends press releases.

The **Nooseletter Editor** collects material from members and the media, edits for length and mechanical accuracy, lays out the *Nooseletter* in standard format, and delivers it bimonthly to the membership chair for email distribution.

The **Membership** chairperson works with the treasurer to maintain a database of members, sends out meeting announcements once a month to the C&D mailing list and the *Nooseletter* bimonthly to members.

The **Webmaster/Webmistress** maintains the chapter's website, renews contracts with the site host, updates speaker announcements and other information when directed by the board, provides a *Nooseletter* online archive, expands the links page with links related to our genre.

The **Library Liaison** stays in contact with branches of the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County public library system, offering them information about C&D programs and helping set up displays relating to chapter events and writers, in cooperation with the librarians.



Sisters in Crime **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.

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.

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

Answers to quiz on page 5: 1-B, 2-C, 3-Curtains, 4-B, 5-B, 6-C, 7-A
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2010 MEETING DATES

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.
Tuesday, November 23, 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.

If the substation lot is full, additional parking is 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 Croak & Dagger, the Albuquerque chapter of Sisters in Crime (SinC). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and editors. ♦

†Nooseletter Submissions†

Croak & Dagger members and 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