



# THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume VII, Number 3 — May 2011

## †Expert Testimony†

Things are still rapidly changing with ebooks. Amazon announced that since April 1 it has sold 105 ebooks for every print book (hardcover and paperback), including books without electronic versions. In the past year, its sales of ebooks have jumped by a factor of three.

Of course, these are just Amazon's numbers, not for all books and ebooks. Those numbers, which I don't have, would probably be less dramatic, but would still probably show a significant growth.

Sisters in Crime has sent out several articles on how ebooks will change the way we read and deal with books. They mentioned a Denver Post article that identifies some issues for people who love and collect books and wonders about an electronic equivalent, if there will be one. How does an author autograph an ebook? What about used books and used bookstores?

For reading, an ebook does not really exist independent of a reader, but the reader is essentially a library, not a single book. And people rarely sell their libraries, only books. Even if you decided to sell your reader, you would want to delete your account on it and when you did all of the ebooks on it would disappear. So at this point it appears that you can only sell an empty used ebook reader, but not used ebooks. For the future, I guess that eliminates spending an afternoon prowling through used bookstores.

Today when a reader starts a book, he enters another world created by the author and tends to focus on that world for a long time. According to a Wall Street Journal article, ebooks will change that. A benefit for the reader is that ebooks make impulse buys easy from almost anywhere. You see a book review that sounds interesting and immediately you can order and download the book and start reading it

without a trip to the bookstore or library. The problem for the writer is that readers can have a short attention span and such impulse buying makes that span even shorter. Now when a book (not even necessarily an ebook) mentions another book, the reader can quickly and easily (perhaps too easily) download the mentioned book and start reading it. They may or may not ever get back to the original book they were reading.

Attention was always a rare commodity that authors tried to get and keep, but with ebooks it is even easier to lose. Also since ebooks are electronic, they are searchable, which allows readers to go through the ebook non-linearly, easily following anything of interest rather than the linear path carefully laid out by the author.

Another issue is that reading in the past has been a solitary activity. You may read a book and then talk about it with others, such as a book group. Whether you finished the book or not, you spent a lot of time reading and thinking about it. You spent a lot of time in the author's world rather than just taking a quick glance at it. Now with ebooks and immediate online access you can immediately comment and blog about what you are reading as you are reading it. In addition to your attention being easily diverted to other books, it can also be easily diverted to comments about the book.

This may bother some people, but not others. However, this may create the electronic version of people who in the past never got around to actually reading the book, but read several reviews of it and could then discuss it for hours. That may not be all bad, but it does change the way we can and probably will interact with books.

As the old Chinese curse goes, "May you live in interesting times." We definitely do and they will probably get even more interesting.

– Olin Bray, President

***Don't Miss It!***  
**Tuesday, May 24, at 7 p.m.**

Judith Van Gieson is the author of 13 mystery novels, the first 8 featuring female Albuquerque attorney/sleuth [Neil Hamel](#). Neil's work often involved environmental issues, including endangered species and wildfires. The series won the Spirit of Magnifico Literary Award.

Judith will talk about the honor of having two books (*Ditch Rider* and *The Wolf Path*) on the NM Best 100 list (see March *Nooseletter*). "Also I'm in the process of negotiating an option agreement with a First Nation filmmaker in Canada who wants to film my Neil Hamel book *Hotshots* for Canadian TV with a First Nation cast. Very exciting! Since he was a hotshot firefighter himself I'm thrilled that he thinks I got it right. The subject could be how books live on. *Hotshots* came out in 1997 and the producer came across it in a used bookstore in Edmonton."

Judith's most recent series features UNM researcher Claire Reynier and include *Land of Burning Heat* and *Confidence Woman*. Her short stories have appeared in several mystery anthologies.

June's speaker will be Albert Noyer, author and founding member of Croak & Dagger

Albert pursued an interest in art at Wayne State University and subsequently worked as a commercial artist before entering a Detroit Public Schools career teaching art. In 1986, he retired to New Mexico with his wife, Jennifer, and exhibits his art in local galleries and regional exhibitions.

In New Mexico, Albert began writing A.D. fifth century historical mystery novels in the Getorius and Arcadia Mystery series, published by Toby Press, and a yet-unpublished retelling of Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul, seen from the viewpoint of a Celtic youth caught up in the Romanization of the country.

Albert is a member of SouthWest Writers, Sisters in Crime, and the New Mexico Watercolor Society. *The Ghosts of Glorieta*, a Fr. Jake Mystery, published by Plain View Press, is his first contemporary mystery novel.

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.

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

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

***The Line Up***

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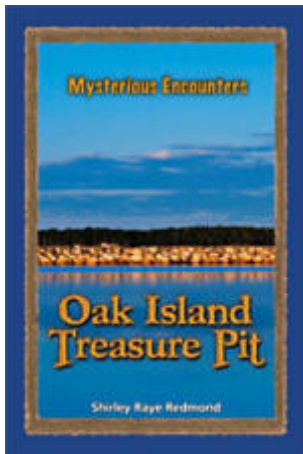
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## Noose News

**Albert Noyer**, our speaker at the upcoming June meeting, will be the “featured author” in the June issue of *abqARTS* magazine in the form of an interview by Wolf Schneider.

Albert reports, “How this came about is that I was spotted at the recent Bravo Awards by the husband of the publisher, Stephanie Hainsfurther—she also was on the C & D founding board. I gave him a postcard about my new novel; next thing you know I was contacted by the interviewer.”

Good News from **Shirley Raye Redmond**. Her latest title, *Oak Island Treasure Pit*, for Thomson Gale's popular “Mysterious Encounters” series from Kidhaven Press is now available “at all the usual places—Amazon, Borders, Barnes & Noble, etc.”



*It is Nova Scotia's most mysterious piece of real estate. Tales of long-lost pirate treasure lure many to the island. Tales of vengeful ghosts keep others away. For more than two centuries the pit and its unusual contents have intrigued the curious and tempted those with a lust for gold. For more, go to:*

<http://www.readshirleyraye.com/books.htm>

The 5th Annual **New Mexico Book Awards** is accepting entries. Until July 1, 2011, the entry fee is \$40 per category (there are over 35 categories). Any book may be entered in more than one category.

Any book by New Mexico authors or publishers is eligible as well as any book about New Mexico. The 2011 awards cover books published in 2010 or 2011. For more, go to: [www.NMBookAward.com](http://www.NMBookAward.com).

**Kirt Hickman** will be speaking on “That Darned First Draft: Getting it onto Paper and What to Do Next” at SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris NE, Suite A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris) on Saturday, June 4, from 10 a.m. to noon.

As simple as it sounds, writing the first draft is the most difficult step for many writers. They can't find the time; they read what they've just written and decide it needs work, so they go back to edit; or they don't know what to write next or how to write it. Kirt will provide tips to overcome writer's block and get that first draft onto paper within a matter of months. He'll also discuss ways to wrestle that frightening first-draft into a manageable manuscript.

Kirt Hickman is the author of the award-winning science-fiction thrillers *Worlds Asunder* and *Venus Rain* and the comprehensive and practical self-editing guide *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness*. He teaches self-editing classes through SouthWest Writers and the University of New Mexico.

**Lois Ruby** will be presenting an “Introduction to Writing Historical Fiction” at SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris NE, Suite A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris), on Wednesday evenings, June 8, 15, and 22 from 6 to 8 p.m. She will explore how to research and hone another era through fascinating characters who populate the past and invigorate the present. Attendees are welcome to bring something you've been working on, or start something during the weeks of the class. Open to novices and pros alike.

Lois Ruby is the author of 14 books for young people, including historical novels set in such diverse times and places as the 1607 Virginia Colony, the Underground Railroad in 1856 Kansas, the 1901 Galveston hurricane, and the 1953 red-scare McCarthy era. She ventured into an historical ghost story in her latest book, *The Secret of Laurel Oaks*.

## 2011 Conferences – Still Time to Sign Up!

Below are some of the writers' conference coming up between now and the end of 2011. For more information, click on the link to check them out online or e-mail the contacts noted.

### June 3-5

**Bloody Words**, the Canadian Mystery Conference, Victoria, BC. Guest of Honor: Michael Slade; International Guest of Honor: Tess Gerritsen. Go to: [www.bloodywords.com](http://www.bloodywords.com)

### June 17-19

**Crested Butte Writers Conference**, held at the Elevation Hotel, Crested Butte, Colorado. "A small conference designed to be friendly and cozy with the caliber of a large conference." Speakers include authors, agents, and editors. For more: [www.crestedbuttwriters.org/conf.php](http://www.crestedbuttwriters.org/conf.php).

### July 21-24

**Book Passage Mystery Writers Conference**, Corte Madera, CA. Authors, Agents, Editors, and "Panels of detectives, forensic experts, and other crime-fighting professionals who provide information that allows writers to put realism in their work." Contact: [www.bookpassage.com](http://www.bookpassage.com).

### August 26-28

**Killer Nashville**. "A conference for thriller, suspense, and mystery writers and lovers." Five event tracks, many extras. Go to: [www.killernashville.com](http://www.killernashville.com).

### September 9-11

Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers' **Colorado Gold Conference**, Denver. Keynote speakers: Bernard Cornwell & Allison Brennan. [www.rmfw.org](http://www.rmfw.org).

### September 15-18

**2011 Bouchercon – Spirits of St. Louis**: St. Louis, MO. Toast Master: Ridley Pearson; US Guests of honor: Robert Crais & Charlaine Harris; International Guests of Honor: Colin Cotterill & Val McDermid. Lifetime Achievement: Sara Peretsky. Contact: [www.bouchercon2011.com](http://www.bouchercon2011.com)



### October 28-30

17<sup>th</sup> annual **Magna cum Murder 2011** Crime Writing Festival, sponsored by Ball State University, at the Horizon Convention Center, Muncie, Indiana. Guests of honor: Parnell Hall. Banquet Keynote Speaker: Bob Brier. Contact: [www.magnacummurder.com](http://www.magnacummurder.com).

### November 10-12

**Tony Hillerman Writing Conference**, Hotel Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM. "The program will open with a pre-conference workshop with Willa award-winning author Sandi Ault on the craft of writing. Learn about plotting/planning your book with *New York Times* best-selling author Douglas Preston. Look the world of e-books and the business of writing with thriller king David Morrell. Non-fiction guru and Edgar nominee Hampton Sides will also join our faculty this year." Contact [www.wordharvest.com](http://www.wordharvest.com).

### November 11-13

**New England Crime Bake**, Dedham, MA. Tenth annual mystery conference for writers and readers, co-sponsored by Scarlet Letters (New England Sisters in Crime) and the Mystery Writers of America New England Chapter. Guests of Honor: Barry Eisler & Nancy Pickard. Information: [www.crimebake.org](http://www.crimebake.org).

The following two articles excerpted from *The New York Times*

## ***How Writers Build the Brand***

by Tony Perrottet

April 19, 2011

As every author knows, writing a book is the easy part these days. It's when the publication date looms that we have to roll up our sleeves and tackle the real literary labor: rabid self-promotion. For weeks beforehand, we are compelled to bombard every friend, relative and vague acquaintance with creative e-mails and Facebook alerts, polish up our Web sites with suspiciously youthful author photos, and, in an orgy of blogs, tweets and YouTube trailers, attempt to inform an already inundated world of our every reading, signing, review, interview and (well, one can dream!) TV appearance.

In this era when most writers are expected to do everything but run the printing presses, self-promotion is so accepted that we hardly give it a second thought. And yet, whenever I have a new book about to come out, I have to shake the unpleasant sensation that there is something unseemly about my own clamor for attention.

In such moments of doubt, I look to history for reassurance. It's always comforting to be reminded that literary whoring — I mean, self-marketing — has been practiced by the greats. The most revered of French novelists recognized the need for P.R. "For artists, the great problem to solve is how to get oneself noticed," Balzac observed in *Lost Illusions*, his classic novel about literary life in early 19th-century Paris. As another master, Stendhal, remarked in his autobiography, "Great success is not possible without a certain degree of shamelessness, and even of out-and-out charlatanism." Those words should be on the Authors Guild coat of arms.

Hemingway set the modern gold standard for inventive self-branding, burnishing his image with photo ops from safaris, fishing trips and war zones. But he also posed for beer ads [and] ads for Pan Am and Parker pens, selling his name with the abandon permitted to Jennifer Lopez or LeBron James today.

Even Vladimir Nabokov had an eye for self-marketing, subtly suggesting to photo editors that they feature him as a lepidopterist prancing about the forests in cap, shorts and long socks. Across the pond, the Bloomsbury set regularly posed for fashion shoots in *British Vogue* in the 1920s.

But the tradition of self-promotion predates the camera by millennia. In 440 B.C. or so, a first-time Greek author named Herodotus paid for his own book tour around the Aegean. His big break came during the Olympic Games, when he stood up in the temple of Zeus and declaimed his *Histories* to the wealthy, influential crowd. In the 12th century, the clergyman Gerald of Wales organized his own book party in Oxford, hoping to appeal to college audiences. According to *The Oxford Book of Oxford*, edited by Jan Morris, he invited scholars to his lodgings, where he plied them with good food and ale for three days, along with long recitations of his golden prose.

Such pioneering gestures pale, however, before the promotional stunts of the 19th century. The historian Paul Metzner notes that new technology led to an explosion in the number of newspapers in Paris, creating an array of publicity options. Balzac observes that it was standard practice in Paris to bribe editors and critics with cash and lavish dinners to secure review space, while the city was plastered with loud posters advertising new releases. In 1887, Guy de Maupassant sent up a hot-air balloon over the Seine with the name of his latest short story painted on its side. In 1932, Colette created her own line of cosmetics sold through a Paris store. (This first venture into literary name-licensing was, tragically, a flop).

American authors did try to keep up. Walt Whitman notoriously wrote his own anonymous reviews, which would not be out of place today on Amazon. "An American bard at last!" he raved in 1855.

Perhaps the most astonishing P.R. stunt — one that must inspire awe among authors today — was plotted in Paris in 1927 by Georges Simenon, the Belgian-born author of the Inspector Maigret novels. For 100,000 francs, the wildly prolific Simenon agreed to write an entire novel while suspended in a glass cage outside the Moulin Rouge nightclub for 72 hours. Members of the public would be invited to choose the novel’s characters, subject matter and title, while Simenon hammered out the pages on a typewriter. A newspaper advertisement promised the result would be “a record novel: record speed, record endurance and, dare we add, record talent!” It was a marketing coup.

What lessons can we draw from all this? Probably none, except that even the most egregious act of self-promotion will be forgiven in time. So writers today should take heart. We could dress like Lady Gaga and hang from a cage at a Yankees game — if any of us looked as good near-naked, that is.

## ***Aspiring Authors Get Help Online***

by Julie Bosman  
April 26, 2011

In the old days of publishing, getting your manuscript into the hands of an editor often meant mailing the unsolicited finished product to the offices of literary agents or editors, where it would receive a cursory look from an editorial assistant — or none at all.

A modern version of the slush pile is the online “writing community,” a Web site where aspiring novelists can post their ideas, writing samples or manuscripts and open them to comments and reviews from strangers.

On Tuesday Penguin Group USA, the publisher of Tom Clancy, Kathryn Stockett and Nora Roberts, will unveil its own venture, [Book Country](#), a Web site for writers of genre fiction. In its initial phase Book Country will allow writers to post their own work — whether it’s an opening chapter or a full manuscript — and receive critiques from other users, who can comment on points like character development, pacing and dialogue. Later this summer the site will generate revenue by allowing users to self-publish their books for a fee by ordering printed copies. The site will also explain the business of finding an agent, marketing and promoting a book, using social media and handling digital and subsidiary rights.

Penguin hopes the site will attract agents, editors and publishers scouting for new talent, and allow writers to produce work with more polish and direction than they could otherwise. The project has been spearheaded by Molly Barton, the director of business development for Penguin and the president of Book Country.

“One of the things I remember really clearly from my early editorial experiences was this feeling of guilt,” Ms. Barton said in an interview. “I would read submissions and not be able to help the writer because we couldn’t find a place for them on the list that I was acquiring for. And I kept feeling that there was something we could do on the Internet to really help writers help each other.”

Book Country users are invited to submit work in certain genres: romance, fantasy, science fiction, thriller and mystery. Those categories are broken down into subgenres like military science fiction, space opera and alternate history.

To discourage plagiarism, administrators have disabled the copy-and-paste and print mechanisms on the site.

Countless writers’ Web sites have popped up in recent years, including [Writers Cafe](#), [Protagonize](#) and [Mibba](#), but executives at Penguin said other sites did not provide so comprehensive an experience as the site they wanted to create.

“It’s connecting disparate pieces that writers had to go to three or four different sites to find,” Ms. Barton said.

## Reviews

*Ice Cold* by Tess Gerritsen, Ballantine Books, 2010, 322 pages (HC)

In her eighth Rizzoli & Isles suspense novel—look for a new one in July—Gerritsen sends friends Detective Jane Rizzoli and Dr. Maura Isles out of their familiar Boston milieu into the wilderness. Literally.

Maura attends a medical conference in Jackson, Wyoming, where she runs into an old friend from her medical school days. Doug is a charmer, relentlessly upbeat, and a relief from Maura's very fraught relationship with priest Daniel Brophy back home. She succumbs to Doug's invitation to join him, his daughter, and another couple on a weekend trip to a ski resort, but things quickly go wrong when Doug's sunny attitude proves no match for Wyoming winters, a GPS that sends them on exactly the wrong route through the mountains, and the mysteriously abandoned village they stumble on when their SUV lands in a ditch and they need shelter fast.

The falling snow hides a multitude of sins that aren't uncovered until it's almost too late for Maura. The foursome find rows of weirdly identical houses in the village, apparently abruptly abandoned by their inhabitants, leaving uneaten meals on tables, cars in garages, and windows still open to the warm spell that preceded the blizzard. What's happened here?

While the group is stranded, Maura's friends back home begin to worry when they haven't heard from her. Then Jane gets the devastating news that Maura's body has been found in a burnt-out SUV that apparently went off the highway, killing the occupants. Being Jane, she doesn't believe it and immediately heads west with her husband and Daniel—only to run into a wall of resistance to outside interference from local law enforcement.

TNT launched a TV series based on Gerritsen's characters a couple of seasons ago, and no wonder. The plots are not unfamiliar,

but are given some unique twists, and the suspense is intense. At the end, you remember a few loose ends and bodies unaccounted for. Who was that in the SUV? Who burned up in the fire that leveled Kingdom Come? Okay, maybe I skipped a chapter or something in my rush to get to the end. A thoroughly exciting read. ♦

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

## Rob's Random Shots

### May Case File Number 1

*The Nostradamus Secret* by Joseph Badal, iPicturebooks, 2011, 356 pp (TP)

Joe Badal has done it again: Created a suspenseful, detailed, well-drawn and characterized story of a terrorist threat, as he did in his previous work *Terror Cell*. That novel was published on the eve of the Athens Olympics and chronicled the takedown of the barely disguised 17 November terrorist group that had targeted Americans and others for nearly 20 years. Now *The Nostradamus Secret* goes only a little further into the future of counterterrorism but once again rips stories from tomorrow's headlines.

Badal begins with a gripping prologue that sets the seeds of his 21st century plot more than 400 years ago, with the theft of missing quatrains from Nostradamus' book of prophecies that are still studied today. They are taken to Iran (Persia at that time), where they become the patrimony of a family that gains wealth and power with them over the centuries.

Flash forward to the near future in America to the family of spies we met and enjoyed in *Terror Cell* a few years on. This time, patriarch Bob Danforth is retired from the CIA and welcoming a new grandson. His son Michael is an Army Delta Force officer in Fort Bragg. Through a series of short chapters, we see how the modern benefactor of the lost quatrains, Ali Reza Naimzadeh, sets in motion an all-too-plausible wave of assassinations of prominent

American citizens and other steps intended to bring the United States to its knees and him to the pinnacle of the predicted Islamic rule of the world.

Naimzadeh can aspire to such a goal because he has carefully bribed high-ranking US Government officials and placed Islamic “sleepers” throughout America to carefully orchestrate a rising campaign of crises.

While this novel becomes a real treat for thriller readers tired of waiting for the next Clancy or Ludlum to come along, it may also lead to a few nights of short sleep. Badal has mastered the art of short chapters (averaging about three pages) that set up situations, then change point of view in the next chapter. The result is that readers keep telling themselves “just one more chapter, just one more.” But like an inexhaustible bowl of jelly beans, one more is never enough, and the pages and chapters just fly by, a nifty trick few authors have mastered.

*Nostradamus* is a work of speculative fiction, but Badal has had the necessary experience, patience, and creativity to get all the details right—from the organization and cooperation of US counterterrorist, police, and intelligence agencies. He has an uncanny ear for dialogue when the men and women of these organizations meet and in White House meetings where the impacts of diabolical events are discussed and counter-strategies decided.♦

## May Case File Number 2

*The Pot Thief Who Studied Escoffier* by J. Michael Orenduff, Oak Tree Press, 2011, 217 pp (TP)

Mike Orenduff’s Pot Thief series is back for a fourth installment, fresh off an important victory. The third in the series, *The Pot Thief Who Studied Einstein*, won the Lefty for funniest mystery of the year at Left Coast Crime 2011 in Santa Fe in March.

The novels have always kept potter protagonist Hubert Schuze close to his shop in Albuquerque’s Old Town Plaza, but this latest caper takes him to Santa Fe for at least half the

book. Hubie’s been hired to create unique chargers for the upcoming opening of Santa Fe’s first Austrian restaurant and has been told to make them on the scene.

Grumbling, Hubie complies. Orenduff has been known for a menagerie of quirky characters, but he outdoes himself in *Escoffier*. We get to learn a lot of German names for dishes (thankfully for Hubie and us, with translations), meet all the restaurant staff, and learn French terms for everyone’s kitchen duties. As if this isn’t multicultural enough, after the requisite murder (in the parking garage of the venerable La Fonda Hotel, which I used a lot at LCC in March), the restaurant almost folds after poor first-night reviews and Hubie has to come up with recipes to turn the place into the first Austrian-New Mexican fusion eatery.

Hubie is a murder suspect in every one of these amusing adventures and this is no exception. The body is found in the back of Hubie’s unlocked Bronco in the parking garage. With an admonition not to leave the state, Hubie does get to return to Albuquerque a couple of times, so series favorites Father Groas, nephew Tristan, and Hubie’s perennial sidekick and drinking buddy Susannah all get opportunities to speak in this outing.

Needless to say, Hubie’s recipes save the day, the restaurant, and the jobs of almost all the staff. The revelation of the killer, the motive, and the murder weapon all took me by surprise, a humbling experience, since I usually have at least a chance at guessing some of them.

If you’ve enjoyed the series up to this point, you’ll like this one, too. Mike’s Hubert Schuze stories do a great job of popularizing New Mexico to the other 49 states. I don’t think he’s finished doing that, so we can expect the Pot Thief cast to return for many more enjoyable adventures and more awards.♦

—Rob Kresge ([www.robertkresge.com](http://www.robertkresge.com))

### Key:

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover



***Rolling Thunder*** by Chris Grabenstein, Pegasus Books, 2010, 294 pages (HC)

A nominee for the “best sidekick” award at Left Coast Crime, this could just as well have been in the “best humorous mystery” category, because it’s a hoot. Grabenstein’s John Ceepak series takes place on the Jersey Shore, which will give you a clue, but the humor isn’t the broad kind you’d expect from the setting and is derived from the characters, which usually works better anyway, as much as the setting.

The unusual sidekick angle is that the sidekick, Danny Boyle, narrates in the first person, although the protagonist is Danny’s partner in the Sea Haven police department. Ceepak is an upright (not to say uptight), dedicated, no-nonsense lawman who’s also ex-military and as smart as a whip. Which is why he’d make a terrible narrator but also why Danny constantly feels both inferior and admiring and occasionally even protective of the partner he knows could rescue *him* from just about any tight spot.

The plot of *Rolling Thunder* has to do (partly) with the murder of a bad girl—who, this being Jersey, everyone liked—following closely on the mysterious death of the wife of the owner of an amusement park that is the home of the roller coaster of the title. When she dies on the inaugural run of the coaster, it’s assumed, by all but Danny, that she had a heart attack. The road to connecting all the dots and revealing all the shenanigans perpetrated by the woman’s wildly dysfunctional family is a winding one, but the twists and turns on the way are a lot of fun.♦

***Blue-Eyed Devil*** by Robert B. Parker, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2010, 276 pages (HC)

The estate of Robert B. Parker has asked two writers to continue two of Parker’s series. The bestselling Spenser novels will be written by Ace Atkins; the Jesse Stone series will be continued by Michael Brandman.

I guess that means no one’s taking on Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch, the heroes of Parker’s *Appaloosa*, which was made into a nifty movie,

and the subsequent *Resolution* and *Brimstone*. But then, every character in the novels who thinks taking on the dynamic duo is a walk in the park soon learns better too.

In *Blue-Eyed Devil*, Virgil and Hitch return to Appaloosa to see what’s gone on since they left. Turns out the town’s grown and prospered—or at least some folks, notably the new sheriff, have prospered. An ambitious and confident giant of a man, Amos Callico has his eye on the governorship—and beyond—and figures he can start by cleaning up Appaloosa—which by his definition means cleaning up *in* Appaloosa.

As usual, Virgil takes his measure quickly and waits for the big man to show the true colors behind the glad hand and forced smile. Once again, there’s a rich but less than ethical landowner in the background, and once again, Virgil is backed up not only by Hitch but the gunslingers and colorful individualists he seems to attract, including the ever-sort-of-faithful Allie and, for a while anyway, a wounded bird named Laurel whom Allie has taken under her awkward wing.

*Blue-Eyed Devil* is fast reading and fun. I’m going to miss Parker. ♦

***Dark Voyage*** by Alan Furst, Random House, 2004, 256 pages (HC)

I was unable to find Furst’s much-praised *The Polish Officer* in the library, so settled on this earlier novel, which is sort of a cross between Alistair Maclean’s and John Lawton’s WWII stories, with some of the virtues of both but a less compelling read than either.

*Dark Voyage* takes place on the Dutch freighter *Noordendam* in 1941; its captain, Eric DeHaan, is the nominal protagonist, but it’s really the ship you end up rooting for. Recruited by the British to deliver weapons and other goods to a clandestine operation, she suffers the indignity of losing her identity, becoming (with a coat of green paint and an antique flag) the Spanish freighter *Santa Rosa* (Spain was supposedly neutral at the time).

*Noordendam* sails from Tangier to Lisbon to the Baltic, carrying an assortment of refugee

passengers and fighting her way out of, or narrowly escaping, perilous adventures along the way. Her valiant Dutch crew is abetted, and sometimes sabotaged, by stowaways, Nazis who take no prisoners, a mysterious Polish engineer, and an assortment of others who, like the ship itself and its crew, can never go home again.

Worth reading if you're interested in the historical period and the unusual setting. ♦

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

*India Black*, a Madam of Espionage Mystery by Carol K. Carr, Berkley Prime Crime, 295 pp (TP)

**This is not a recommendation.** I bought this historical novel on a whim because of the cover and the premise. **Do not buy this book. I will be putting it in the book box for the May 24 meeting.**

Despite a good opening sentence and back cover, this is no mystery, not even a good spy novel. It's just a standard historical romance. Lots of antipathy between heroine and hero, stretched credibility, and too much internal monologue and not enough plot/action.

Add to that horrible writing: The author uses the current 20-something airhead phrase "honing in on" something. First, "honing" means sharpening; the younger generation confuses it with "homing." In 1876, when this book is set, nothing homed in on anything, except pigeons to their home lofts. It is an anachronism to use it at all, but especially egregious to garble it when it is misused.

Far worse is the author's attempt to be clever by having a character ask, "Carrion wheeling over the embassy tonight?" I didn't think anyone living could confuse carrion—dead meat on the ground—with the vultures or other birds that circle overhead.

Finally, the book is lots of angst with no payoff. No scenes in the advertised bordello, no sex, no kissing, and finally a garbled, stretched-out denouement involving a long carriage ride from London to Greenwich through deep snow, many reverses of fortune, implausible intervention by a stowaway, many guns

changing hands or being conveniently found, and no resolution of the McGuffin that is supposed to propel the story.

I don't normally review books I don't like, but since the author, through the narrator, promises at the end that she went off to have more adventures with Mr. French, the male protagonist, you are hereby warned: Take your chances with this book in the C&D book exchange, but don't spend any money on this or any sequel. ♦

—Rob Kresge ([www.robertkresge.com](http://www.robertkresge.com))

## Short Takes

*H.M.S Ulysses* by Alistair MacLean.

When I saw this on the book table at one of our meetings, I remembered it as my favorite from a period years ago when I was on an Alistair MacLean kick. It still holds up.

The *Ulysses* is an escort ship to convoys in the North Atlantic during WWII and seemingly a cursed ship, though she holds up to winter gales and German submarines courageously—it's her crew that do her in. While there's a lot of naval jargon that was completely foreign to me, the pace and characters are such that you know what's going on even when you don't.

Don't read this in the dead of winter, but it'll cool you off in the summer. LT

*Snow Angels* by James Thompson

*Snow Angels* is the first book of a series featuring Inspector Kari Vaara in modern-day Finland, 100 miles north of the Arctic Circle. The story takes place at Kaamos, the bleakest time of year in Lapland. The book is told in first person, with very direct and immediate impact.

Inspector Vaara is married to Kate, an American woman who manages a nearby ski resort. As Vaara considers their different backgrounds and expectations, his thoughts share details of Finnish character and culture.

The first victim is a beautiful Somali immigrant. Her brutal murder may have been motivated by racial intolerance. Vaara and his partner Valtteri pursue the most likely suspect, a

man who lives with Vaara's ex-wife. As the investigation continues, more clues, suspects and plausible scenarios emerge. Each suspect has something illegal to hide. The detectives are challenged throughout by the intense cold, at times 40 degrees below zero. The case is solved in a violent suspenseful scene on the ice.

James Thompson's debut novel was a finalist for the 2011 Edgar Award for Best First Novel. I look forward to reading the second book in the series, *Lucifer's Tears*. SZ

***The Ninth Daughter*** by Barbara Hamilton

This is the first in a new mystery series set in revolutionary Boston. Protagonist Abigail Adams is the intelligent and independent wife of John Adams, patriot and member of the Sons of Liberty. In the winter of 1773, a gory murder is committed in the home of Abigail's friend Rebecca. Abigail uses all her skill to identify the murderer and find her missing friend, up to and including sharing information with a redcoat officer.

Details of everyday life provide historical authenticity: Abigail and housemaid Pattie scald the laundry in a cauldron over a fire; Abigail tries to adjust to drinking coffee to honor the tea boycott. The mystery plot is set against the rich background of historical events leading to the Boston Tea Party. It will be interesting to follow Abigail's further exploits in the series. SZ

## Magazine Reviews

I've been meaning to review *Mystery Scene* magazine for a long time and was finally galvanized into action when I received a copy of *The Strand* in my goodie bag at Left Coast Crime in Santa Fe. I have been putting out copies of *Mystery Scene* and the MWA newsletter, *The Third Degree*, at C&D meetings, where they are quickly snapped up, and thought I should finally review these two major magazines and make available their website information to our members and friends. Both *Mystery Scene* and *The Strand* are also available at Hastings stores.

*Mystery Scene* has received many prestigious awards from the mystery community. It's run by Kate Stine and Brian Skupin, who met at a mystery convention and soon married. A glossy, full-color magazine of 68 pages published five times a year, it contains articles, interviews, and reams of reviews. Besides mystery and thriller novels, it also pays attention to short stories, audio books, small presses, e-books, TV, movies, stage, classic tales and bygone authors, and, in the most recent issue, 22 pages of reviews covering 60 newly published works.

*Mystery Scene* can be found in most chain bookstores at \$7.50 an issue. For more information, try [www.mysteryscenemag.com](http://www.mysteryscenemag.com). **Highly recommended.**

*The Strand* is a completely different publication, but still both useful and entertaining for mystery readers and writers. It is named after the venerable British magazine of the 19th century which published most of the original Sherlock Holmes stories and serialized the four short Holmes novels. Revived in the 1980s, it is now a quarterly headquartered in Michigan and published in Tennessee, where it is handled by Ingram Distributors. Individual copies are \$6.95 and subscriptions run \$24.95. The current colorful issue, printed on heavy stock, contains 80 pages of interviews, articles, fiction, and reviews—10 pages in this issue, encompassing 18 novels for adults and young adults.

*The Strand* does not cover all aspects of the industry as *Mystery Scene* does, but it does carry short stories and is serializing a lesser known work by Graham Greene, with another chapter in each issue. Interviews in the current issue feature Joseph Wambaugh and Dennis Lehane; short stories for this issue were written by Alexander McCall Smith, Brendan Dubois, Joe Lonsdale, Peter James, and Katharine Hall Page.

Most interviews are conducted by Managing Editor Andrew Gulli, and are more detailed than the four or five that *Mystery Scene* carries. Mr. Gulli was a panelist at Left Coast Crime this year. For more, go to [www.strandmag.com](http://www.strandmag.com). **Highly recommended.**

## 2011 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, May 24, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, June 28, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, July 26, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, August 23, 7:00 p.m.

*Chapter bookmarks are now available listing upcoming meetings through year's end.*

### **Meetings are free to the public.**

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

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

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

### **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](mailto: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](mailto:contact@croak-and-dagger.com)

**Summary of the Board Meeting Minutes of Sisters in Crime,  
Croak and Dagger Chapter, ABQ, NM, May 16, 2011**

Board Members present: Olin Bray, president/treasurer; Joan Saberhagen, vice president; Rita Herther, program/publicity coordinator; Rob Kresge, acting membership chair; Linda Triegel, *Nooseletter* editor; Fred Aiken, Secretary.

President Olin Bray called the meeting to order at 7:13 PM. The Board thanked Linda Triegel for hosting the board meeting. The minutes of the March Board meeting were approved with two minor corrections. The Treasurer reported a balance of \$2,120.18 in the checking account. There was no membership report. No one has volunteered for the open membership chairman job. Fred Aiken will perform these duties until a candidate has been found.

Upcoming scheduled speakers are Judith van Giesen (May), Albert Noyer (June), Jonathan Miller (July), and Ray Collins (August). A letter was received from the Office of the Medical Investigator offering to have someone speak to us again. This will be followed up by Rita and Olin. It may be possible to arrange a field trip to visit their facilities.

Other activities discussed:

The Albuquerque Little Theater will perform *Witness for the Prosecution* in late January. The board agreed that this would make an excellent social outing. It was recommended that dinner be scheduled earlier than the last dinner theater outing. Rob Kresge volunteered to be in charge of this event.

Fred Aiken is still investigating a wine-tasting event at the St. Clair Winery.

Other suggested activities are an outing to the St. James Tea Room and the Old Town ghost tour.

Old Business:

It is unlikely that we will be able to hold a joint conference with SWW until late 2012. Rita Herther announced that she is considering running for the position of SWW President for next year. If elected, she will push for the joint Mystery conference.

New Business:

Rob mentioned that it is not too early to begin the process of soliciting nominations for Croak and Dagger chapter offices. Present board members are encouraged to inform Olin Bray of their intent to remain on the Board by July. We should also be encouraging our members to consider running for the open offices.

Next Board meeting will be July 18 at the home of Joan Saberhagen.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM.

—Respectfully submitted, Fred A. Aiken, Secretary