



NEW MEXICO CHAPTER — SISTERS IN CRIME

THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume XV, Number 4 — July/August 2019

†The President's Corner†

Hello to all who lurk about, hunting for the perfect mystery.

Summer temperatures rise, and monsoon season approaches. Still, we keep reading and churning out our stories. But whether a reader or writer, or both, when something unusual happens, do you anticipate a plot twist?

These last three days have kept me on a plot-twist high. My husband and I drove to Colorado to attend my brother and wife's 50th wedding anniversary. They both have been married twice—to each other. (Yeah, head shaking, isn't it?) Their adult children arranged an elegant dinner for 20 of us to celebrate their parents' ability to endure this long-lasting, explosive union.

As the celebration progressed, I expected the usual miserable turn of events, taking us from the calm night into a perfect storm. Except plot twists tend to be unexpected, and this evening didn't disappoint. It turned out totally lovely.

Driving back to New Mexico, my cell phone died. No big deal. It's just a phone, right? Sigh. Phones are repositories for contacts, calendar events, and photos. My calendar *contains* my life. However, I'll take it into the "phone place" to see what they can do. Then let's see if I show up where and when I'm scheduled. Will I still feel this calm next week? There has to be a great plot twist somewhere in this.

A few weeks ago (can't tell you the date because—well, read the above paragraph), a good-sized group of us from Croak and Dagger experienced a most pressing event. (Okay, bad pun.) We took a fabulous tour of the Albuquerque Journal. (I'd show you photos, but—well, read the above.) We spent most of the morning there, talking to editors, reporters, photographers, and the person who writes obituaries. The Journal staff even ran the

presses just for us. Here's the plot twist (or maybe it's just an unintended consequence): Thanks to Janet Greger, our new friendship with some of the Journal staff has created the potential for future promotions of Croak & Dagger events!

Speaking of promotions, this summer many of our members are doing book signings, and some of our members' new books are hitting the shelves. Please take a second on social media to celebrate their accomplishments by giving them a "like." Even better, post a nice review on Amazon. After all, we are their support team.

Can't wait to see all of you at our July double-feature meeting! You won't want to miss Don Bullis's presentation and help the Albuquerque Journal honor Anne Hillerman with an award.

Skulking around somewhere,
Charlene Dietz, President

Don't Miss It: Tuesday, July 23, at 7 p.m.

Our July speaker will be Don Bullis, addressing "Criminal Intelligence" (is that an oxymoron, Don?). Don studied American History and Literature at Eastern NM University, then attended graduate school at UNM. He worked in several fields before beginning a career in law enforcement, which lasted until the early 2000s.

Don has also been a columnist for New Mexico Independent newspapers and served as editor of the Sandoval County *Times-Independent*. He writes a regular column for the Rio Rancho *Observer* called "Ellos Pasaron por Aqui." He has been an editor and columnist for several other publications.

Don is the author of 9 nonfiction books on New Mexico history and two novels, also set in New Mexico.

**And coming up...
Tuesday, August 27, at 7 p.m.**

Our August speaker will be Darynda Jones, revealing to us "The Missing Ingredient that will take your story from blasé to mouthwatering."

Darynda has won numerous awards for her work, including a prestigious RITA®, a Golden Heart®, and a Daphne du Maurier, and her books have been translated into 17 languages. Her books include The Charley Davidson series and The Darklight Trilogy, from St. Martin's Press.

Darynda grew up spinning tales of dashing damsels and heroes in distress for any unfortunate soul who happened by. She lives in the Land of Enchantment, also known as New Mexico, with her husband and two beautiful sons, the Mighty, Mighty Jones Boys.



Sisters in Crime **Guppies**

SinC Guppies is an online writer's support group. Guppies come from across the United States and Canada but share a passion for writing mysteries and a common goal of getting published.

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. For more information, check them out at www.sinc-guppies.org.



Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986.

The mission of Sisters in Crime shall be "to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition, and professional development of women crime writers."

And our motto is: "SinC up with great crime writing!"

Check out the Croak & Dagger Website (www.croak-and-dagger.com) for:

- Upcoming Programs & Events
- Meeting Schedule
- Our Authors & links to member authors' websites
- How to Join C&D / SinC
- Link to the C&D blog

REMEMBER: Our Croak& Dagger blog provides opportunities for free publicity for members. Contact our website maven, Susan Zates (address below) for more information or with an idea for a blog article. Get your name out there wherever you can!



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Noose News

LCC Coming to ABQ!

Left Coast Crime is thrilled to announce that LCC 2021 will be held in Albuquerque, April 8-11, 2021. Left Coast Crime is an annual mystery convention sponsored by mystery fans, both readers and authors. LCC is held during the first quarter of the year in Western North America. Conventions have been held from Anchorage to El Paso, from Boulder to Hawaii, and various locations in between (ed note: including Santa Fe in 2011).

“Our purpose is to host an event where readers, authors, critics, librarians, publishers, and other fans can gather in convivial surroundings to pursue their mutual interests.” Special guests for the 2021 gathering will include authors Mick Herron and Catronia McPherson, as well as “Ghost of Honor” Tony Hillerman.

Registration is now open for LCC 2021, aka “Southwest Sleuths,” which will take place at the Hyatt Regency downtown and includes a Welcome Reception, two special Breakfasts, the Awards Banquet, and admission to all panels and interviews. The early registration fee of \$195 extends through March 15, 2020, the close of LCC San Diego.

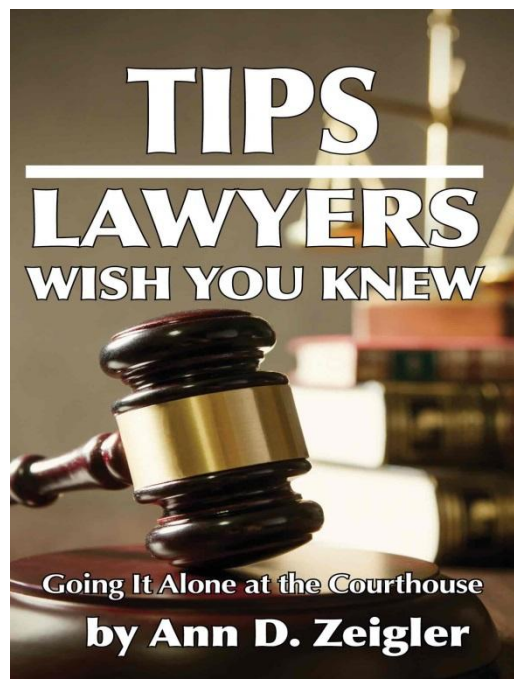
The convention rate at the Hyatt Regency, of \$134, is also available three days before and after the convention if registrants choose to extend their stay and explore Albuquerque.

If you are interested in learning more about “Southwest Sleuths,” or would like to take part with your fellow C&D members, contact LCC at: <http://www.leftcoastcrime.org/>. And watch this space for more in the upcoming months!

The mysteries of e-devices explained

Ann Zeigler will present “Criminal Fun with E-Devices,” a 13-part online class during August through RWA’s Kiss of Death online chapter for mystery/romantic suspense writers. The class is part of the Murder One (technical topics) section of KoD’s COFFIN (College of Felony and Intrigue) online workshops.

Apart from being the instigator of Croak and Dagger’s Great Library Adventure (see next page), Ann is the author of *Tips Lawyers Wish You Knew* (*Going It Alone at the Courthouse*), “a helpful guide through the vagaries of the legal system,” now available on Amazon or from your favorite bookseller.



2019 Celebration of Writing

There’s still time to enter your unpublished fiction or nonfiction work-in-progress in the “Celebration of Writing” contest sponsored by the Albuquerque Museum Foundation.

The winner of the **David Morrell Award for Unpublished Fiction** receives a certificate and a signed copy of one of the author’s books. Novels and short stories can run the gamut from straight fiction to mysteries and thrillers, SiFi and fantasy.

The winner of the **Anne Hillerman Award for Unpublished Non-Fiction** also receives a certificate and a signed copy of one of the author’s books. This contest defines Non-Fiction as “Narrative Non-Fiction,” in which factual matter is presented in a narrative style using literary techniques. “We want material told in a personal and richly detailed story.”

Submit a piece you are currently working on or polish a finished piece that has not yet been published. Limit one submission per category, per person. Submit up to 1,000 words, double-spaced. Submission deadline is **August 31, 2019**. There is no entry fee for unpublished works. Entries must be submitted in email form only. For submission details, go to: writing@albuquerquemuseum.org or call 505-842-0111.

AND there is still a short time to submit your *published* work of fiction or nonfiction (Publication date of January 1, 2014, or later). Deadline is July 15 (postmark date for your mailed books).

In Case You Missed It:

Great Library Adventure cat-herder Ann Zeigler summed up our adventures of late in the June edition of *InSinC*. Here's the gist:

The Croak & Dagger Great Library Adventure is not just about writer cat-herding. It's really about the care and feeding of librarians.

Here's the hard news, Sisters. Running a library is almost as scary-hard as running a bookstore. And we know booksellers all tap-dance on the edge of oblivion every day. We needed to find out the answer to a linked pair of questions: What do those kind folks at the library want and what do they need?

Two-plus years in, here's what we found out. They want books that they will love to tell their patrons about (aka hand-selling). They want books that their patrons will look at and say yes. They want books their patrons will recommend to each other. More precisely, they want their very limited dollars to work hard for their entire community.

And they want us, Sisters, to lean on the counter and ask them what they would like from us, instead of telling them what we want them to do for us.

What do they want, in practical terms, when we descend on them? They want displays for their locked display cases, should they be lucky enough to have display cases. They want supporting display materials that add instead of detract. They want give-aways, if any, that make sense. They want, in short, a thoughtfully pulled-together marketing package they can use—one that fits with what libraries do during daylight hours.

Displays

Librarians want informative displays that are attractively arranged, including colorful, expressive items that are of interest to their patrons. Happily, several of the Adventurers took art design courses as their out-of-major classes in college and or grad school. We know how to create elevation with flat items on a flat surface. Kudos to the educational system.

If our covers aren't colorful, no one's are. But those boring display case backs and bottoms are a whole other problem. One of the Adventurers took the bright red cloth out of the Christmas tree decorations box to use as a year-round background, covering the gray pressboard in the display case bottom. Another had a bright yellow square of fabric, perfect for spring backgrounds.

As for "expressive" – here's where we lean on the fact that we are a chapter of Sisters in Crime, with strands of glass beads draped over the covers, interspersed with small bottles labeled *Poison*, a magnifying glass, a plastic handgun, a teapot if it will fit, etc. (We have had more than our share of fun in dollar stores.)

Supporting Display Materials

What a concept! We offer, of course, the SinC 30th banner, which can easily be spotted across almost any branch library. This much-traveled item now has a wide strip of foam core board across the back, and a pair of 4' (yes, feet) plastic cords hanging from a ventilation grate. It has met up with duct tape, masking tape, package tape, and push pins.

In addition, we can offer a pair of 2'x4' vertical posters, updated monthly, with everyone's newest covers. Librarians are happy to know they can do anything they want with the new-covers posters, which are theirs to keep. Also, acknowledging that the big guys are a bit much for some locations, we have a pair of half-size (1'x2') vertical posters.

And for libraries unfortunate enough to just have a pair of bulletin boards and a few upright clear plastic holders, we have the very same posters reduced to 8.5x11 on heavy paper, double-sided for the display holders and single-sided pairs for the bulletin boards.

Give-Aways

We initially got some push-back on this, while the librarians looked at our 2x9-inch slick bookmarks with our logo on the front and location and dates of all our chapter meetings for the year on the back. We said we would gladly remove them after a week if this wasn't working. Now we get email requests to bring more.

Because We Love Librarians

And because they are delighted to be on our marketing team, if we do it their way. As one librarian reported sorrowfully of his reassignment to a shiny new branch, "No display case, nothing allowed on the walls. We're so sorry we can't have your displays. But could we have an event for you?" Of course you can, Brandon!

And, Sisters, of course you can celebrate your chapter, too.

An amateur sleuth helped authorities confirm the identities of New Hampshire murder victims

by Harmeet Kaur of CNN, June 7, 2019

(Excerpted from an article reprinted in the SinC newsletter. For the full article, go to: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/07/us/new-hampshire-bear-brook-murders-researcher/index.html>

Rebekah Heath is a research librarian by day, amateur detective by night.

Her sleuthing came to a satisfying conclusion when authorities confirmed a shocking discovery she made last October about the cold case known as the Bear Brook murders.

Officials revealed that they had identified three of the four victims found in barrels in 1985 and 2000 in Allenstown, New Hampshire. The woman was 24-year-old Marlyse Elizabeth Honeychurch, who also went by Marlyse McWaters, among other names. Two of the three girls were 6-year-old Marie Elizabeth Vaughn and 1-year-old Sarah Lynn McWaters, both daughters of Honeychurch.

It was an answer to a question that had remained a mystery for decades. Authorities on Thursday said the breakthrough was a result of information from relatives, DNA testing, genealogy research—and the diligent research of Heath.

In January 2017, investigators announced that a man named Bob Evans had likely killed the four female victims discovered in Bear Brook State Park. In August, they announced that “Bob Evans” was an alias for Terrence “Terry” Rasmussen. Rasmussen went by many names over the years. He was linked to the 1981 disappearance of a woman in New Hampshire and was serving time for the murder of his wife in California when he died of natural causes in 2010.

Though investigators had identified Rasmussen as the man who likely killed the four Bear Brook victims in 2017, the victims’ identities were still a mystery.

For years, helping connect people to their missing loved ones had been a hobby of Heath’s. Combined with her interest in the Rasmussen case, she got to work on trying to find potential matches for the victims in November 2017. She scoured ancestry message boards for terms like “California,” where Rasmussen had been arrested, or “missing sister” in hopes of finding a relative of the victims. Then she began compiling a list of names.

Heath found a posting from around 1999 about a relative looking for Sarah McWaters and her mother Marlyse McWaters. As she conducted further searches, Heath came across other relatives looking for the same woman. It turned out McWaters was also the mother of a girl named Marie Vaughn.

In a Facebook group about the Rasmussen case, Heath asked whether those missing people could be the victims found in Allenstown, but she didn’t get much of a response. So, she dropped it.

About a year later, Heath, who lives in Connecticut, was listening to a New Hampshire Public Radio podcast about the Bear Brook murders when information about the victims reminded her again of the woman looking for Sarah McWaters on that ancestry message board.

The listing contained an email address, so Heath said she tried to match the address to a Facebook profile. Heath reached out to one woman asking whether she was the same person who had made the ancestry posting. Within minutes, Heath received a response. It was her.

Heath asked the relative if she had any more information about Sarah and Marlyse McWaters. The shared more details, including that Marlyse had married a man with the last name Rasmussen.

“Right there, my stomach jumped,” Heath said. “It just rocked. I knew right away.”

Within two hours, Heath said she was on the phone with law enforcement in San Bernardino, California. Those authorities quickly turned the information over to investigators in New Hampshire who were already conducting DNA research.

Through advances in DNA technology, investigators were able to obtain DNA profiles of the degraded remains from the barrels. Barbara Rae-Venter, a genetic genealogist who also helped crack the Golden State Killer case, was able to confirm the identities of the victims via searches through DNA databases. That, plus the information that came in from Heath and the DNA samples from Sarah McWaters’ family, allowed them to make the final determination.

“Her work and our work converged, and it turns out that she was correct,” Strelzin told CNN. “She did some great work on the case and some great sleuthing.”

More Advice for Writers*

Take a pencil to write with on aeroplanes. Pens leak. But if the pencil breaks, you can’t sharpen it on the plane, because you can’t take knives with you. Therefore: take two pencils.

If both pencils break, you can do a rough sharpening job with a nail file of the metal or glass type.

Do back exercises. Pain is distracting.

Hold the reader’s attention. (This is likely to work better if you can hold your own.) But you don’t know who the reader is, so it’s like shooting fish with a slingshot in the dark. What fascinates A will bore the pants off B.

You most likely need a thesaurus, a rudimentary grammar book, and a grip on reality. This latter means: there’s no free lunch. Writing is work. It’s also gambling. You don’t get a pension plan. Other people can help you a bit, but essentially you’re on your own. Nobody is making you do this: you chose it, so don’t whine.

Don’t sit down in the middle of the woods. If you’re lost in the plot or blocked, retrace your steps to where you went wrong. Then take the other road. And/or change the person. Change the tense. Change the opening page.

**From Margaret Atwood (quoted in The Guardian)*

The 2019 Edgar® Winners and Nominees

Best Novel

The Liar's Girl by Catherine Ryan Howard (Blackstone Publishing)
House Witness by Mike Lawson (Grove Atlantic – Atlantic Monthly Press)
A Gambler's Jury by Victor Methos (Amazon Publishing – Thomas & Mercer)
Down the River Unto the Sea by **Walter Mosley (Hachette Book Group – Mulholland)***
Only to Sleep by Lawrence Osborne (Penguin Random House – Hogarth)
A Treacherous Curse by Deanna Raybourn (Penguin Random House – Berkley)

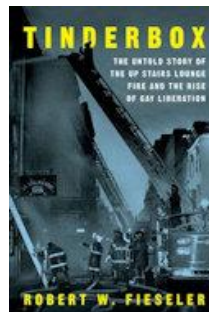
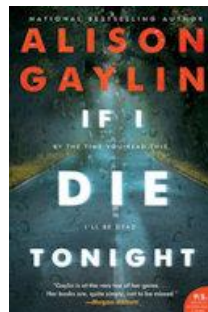
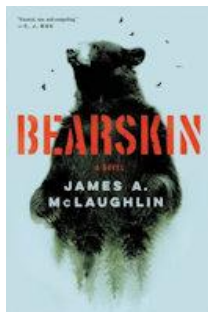
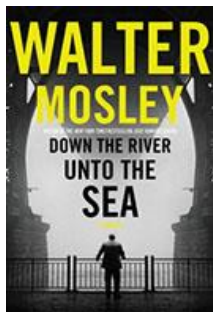
* Winners listed in red.

Best First Novel

A Knife in the Fog by Bradley Harper (Seventh Street Books)
The Captives by Debra Jo Immergut (HarperCollins Publishers – Ecco)
The Last Equation of Isaac Severy by Nova Jacobs (Simon & Schuster – Touchstone)
Bearskin by **James A. McLaughlin (HarperCollins Publishers – Ecco)**
Where the Crowds Sing by Delia Owens (Penguin Random House – G.P. Putnam's Sons)

Best Paperback Original

If I Die Tonight by **Alison Gaylin (HarperCollins Publishers – William Morrow)**
Hiroshima Boy by Naomi Hirahara (Prospect Park Books)
Under a Dark Sky by Lori Rader-Day (HarperCollins Publishers – William Morrow)
The Perfect Nanny by Leila Slimani (Penguin Random House – Penguin Books)
Under My Skin by Lisa Unger (Harlequin – Park Row Books)

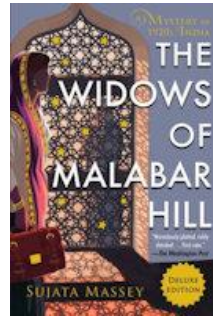
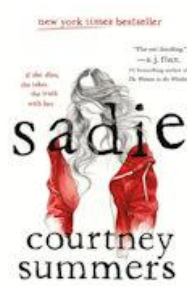
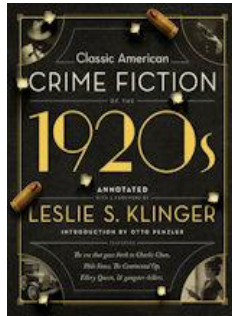


Best Fact Crime

Tinderbox: The Untold Story of the Up Stairs Lounge Fire and the Rise of Gay Liberation
by **Robert W. Fieseler (W.W. Norton & Company – Liveright)**
Sex Money Murder: A Story of Crack, Blood, and Betrayal
by Jonathan Green (W.W. Norton & Company)
The Last Wild Men of Borneo: A True Story of Death and Treasure
by Carl Hoffman (HarperCollins Publishers – William Morrow)
The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century
by Kirk Wallace Johnson (Penguin Random House – Viking)
I'll Be Gone in the Dark: One Woman's Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer
by Michelle McNamara (HarperCollins Publishers – Harper)
The Good Mothers: The True Story of the Women Who Took on the World's Most Powerful Mafia
by Alex Perry (HarperCollins Publishers – William Morrow)

Robert L. Fish Memorial

"How Does He Die This Time?" – Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine by Nancy Novick (Dell Magazines)



Best Critical/Biographical

The Metaphysical Mysteries of G.K. Chesterton: A Critical Study of the Father Brown Stories and Other Detective Fiction

by Laird R. Blackwell (McFarland Publishing)

Dead Girls: Essays on Surviving an American Obsession

by Alice Bolin (HarperCollins Publishers – William Morrow Paperbacks)

Classic American Crime Fiction of the 1920s

by **Leslie S. Klinger** (Pegasus Books)

Mark X: Who Killed Huck Finn's Father? by Yasuhiro Takeuchi (Taylor & Francis – Routledge)

Agatha Christie: A Mysterious Life by Laura Thompson (Pegasus Books)

Best Short Story

“Rabid – A Mike Bowditch Short Story” by Paul Doiron (Minotaur Books)

“Paranoid Enough for Two” – The Honorable Traitors by John Lutz (Kensington Publishing)

“Ancient and Modern” – Bloody Scotland by Val McDermid (Pegasus Books)

“English 398: Fiction Workshop” – Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine by **Art Taylor** (Dell Magazines)

“The Sleep Tight Motel” – Dark Corners Collection by Lisa Unger (Amazon Publishing)

Best Juvenile

Denis Ever After by Tony Abbott (HarperCollins Children’s Books – Katherine Tegen Books)

Zap! by Martha Freeman (Simon & Schuster – Paula Wiseman Books)

Ra the Mighty: Cat Detective by A.B. Greenfield (Holiday House)

Winterhouse by Ben Guterson (Christy Ottaviano Books – Henry Holt BFYR)

Otherwood by Pete Hautman (Candlewick Press)

Charlie & Frog: A Mystery by Karen Kane (Disney Publishing Worldwide – Disney Hyperion)

Zora & Me: The Cursed Ground by T.R. Simon (Candlewick Press)

Young Adult

Contagion by Erin Bowman (HarperCollins Children’s Books – HarperCollins)

Blink by Sasha Dawn (Lerner Publishing Group – Carolrhoda Lab)

After the Fire by Will Hill (Sourcebooks – Sourcebooks Fire)

A Room Away From the Wolves by Nova Ren Suma (Algonquin Young Readers)

Sadie by Courtney Summers (Wednesday Books)

TV Episode Teleplay

“The Box” - Brooklyn Nine-Nine, Teleplay by Luke Del Tredici (NBC/Universal TV)

“Season 2, Episode 1” – Jack Irish, Teleplay by Andrew Knight (Acorn TV)

“Episode 1” – Mystery Road, Teleplay by Michael O’Brien (Acorn TV)

“My Aim is True” – Blue Bloods, Teleplay by Kevin Wade (CBS Eye Productions)

“The One That Holds Everything” – The Romanoffs, Teleplay by **Matthew Weiner & Donald Joh** (Amazon Prime Video)

Mary Higgins Clark Award

A Death of No Importance by Mariah Fredericks (Minotaur Books)
A Lady's Guide to Etiquette and Murder by Dianne Freeman (Kensington Publishing)
Bone on Bone by Julia Keller (Minotaur Books)
The Widows of Malabar Hill by Sujata Massey (Soho Press – Soho Crime)
A Borrowing of Bones by Paula Munier (Minotaur Books)

The G.P. Putnam's Sons Sue Grafton Memorial Awards

Lisa Black, ***Perish*** – Kensington
Sara Paretsky, *Shell Game*, HarperCollins – William Morrow
Victoria Thompson, ***City of Secrets***, Penguin Random House – Berkley
Charles Todd, ***A Forgotten Place***, HarperCollins – William Morrow
Jacqueline Winspear, ***To Die But Once***, HarperCollins – Harper

Grand Master

Martin Cruz Smith

Raven Award

Marilyn Stasio, Mystery Book Reviewer - *New York Times*

Ellery Queen Award

Linda Landrigan, *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*



Here's a nifty website for a variety of articles on mystery writing: <https://crimereads.com/> links you to articles on such topics as crime movies set in New York, love stories at the core of the best psychological thrillers, and crime literature set in Dubai (among the topics explored in a recent newsletter).

Crime Reads is an offshoot of <https://lithub.com/> which offers links to an even wider variety of articles on writing, writers, and crime in the news, as well as some nifty, rarely seen photographs such as this one to the left of a well-known "Golden Age" author who wrote one of the most famous gothic suspense novels of all time (can you guess who she is?)

You can subscribe to both newsletters for the asking and get daily clicks in your mailbox to choose from.

Reviews

Keep Quiet by Lisa Scottoline. St. Martins Griffin 2014, 333 pp (TP).

Jake Buchman has an uneasy relationship with his teenaged son Ryan, and one fateful day offers to pick him up at the local movie theater after Ryan's date with a group of friends. On the way home, Ryan, who has a learner's permit, asks to drive. Jake, thinking this could be a good bonding moment, lets him, even though Ryan isn't supposed to drive after dark, even with an adult in the car.

Of course, the inevitable—at least in a suspense story—happens when Ryan hits a runner at the side of the road. Making a split-second decision that has huge consequences for their lives, and propels the plot and character conflict for the rest of the novel, Jake tells his son to say nothing; Jake will take the blame if it ever comes out that they were in the car that night. Meanwhile, “Keep Quiet.”

This sounds contrived, but Scottoline is so skilled that you identify with Jake's decision, convinced you'd likely do the same thing. Ryan's and his mom's reactions are equally credible and while you know they'll be found out eventually, despite Jake's and Pam's efforts to hide the truth, you hope for a good resolution.

About the only plot twist I didn't find credible was Pam Buchman's supposed affair with Ryan's school counselor, Dr. Dave, and would have been satisfied to learn that it was only Jake's paranoia that made Pam's infidelity seem likely to him. But that's a minor cavil, which wouldn't really have interfered with a satisfying ending had it gone another way.

Fast-paced and a compelling read. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

A Lady's Guide to Etiquette and Murder by Dianne Freeman. Kensington, 2018, 287 pp (HC).

Frances Wynn is an American, who “bought” her title by marrying an English lord hard up for money. Unfortunately, the marriage

was not as happy as Cora's to the earl in Downton Abbey, and when Reggie dies suddenly, Frances finds that she enjoys a great deal more freedom as a widow than as a wife. She rents a house for herself and her daughter Rose in London, then invites her younger sister Lily to join them and make her debut into society under the Countess' auspices.

However, life in the metropolis does not go smoothly. Frances is still battling her in-laws to keep her money for herself, and the police receive an anonymous tip that Frances may have had something to do with her husband's death. Only two other people know what really happened the night Reggie died—the Other Woman in his bed at the time, and the friend who helped Frances cover up the scandal. Inspector Delaney, a London policeman following up on the case, interrogates Frances, but cannot get her to reveal her secrets.

Meanwhile, a thief is busy relieving the Upper Crust of their jewels, and since Frances tends to attend the same events where the gems go missing, Delaney starts probing that too. Frances decides that she must help herself by investigating the thefts on her own.

There's another death along the way, and Frances continues skating on thin ice in terms of her reputation. Fortunately, the friend from *The Night in Question* is in love with Frances and continues to lend his aid. Even Delaney begins to admire her, and the countess even becomes almost-friends with *The Other Woman*. Needless to say, her investigations help solve both crimes.

There's not much historical detail in *A Lady's Guide* (I was halfway through before a casual note fixed the date for me at 1899), but the story moves along at a brisk, entertaining pace, and all the characters, even *The Family*, are at least interesting and often very likeable. It's no surprise that this was a 2019 nominee for the Mary Higgins Clark prize. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

Mrs. Sinclair's Suitcase by Louise Walters. Hodder Paperbacks, 2014 (PB)

In contemporary London, Roberta Pietrykowski works in a used bookstore, The Old and New. A longtime employee, she's good friends with her boss, Philip, owner of the store. Roberta delights in discovering old letters and postcards tucked into the used books she prices and shelves. She keeps many of the notes, imagining the lives of their authors.

When Roberta receives an old suitcase from her father that had belonged to her grandmother, she finds the most exciting and puzzling letter of all: written by her grandfather, dated after his death in WWII. The name on the suitcase is Mrs. D. Sinclair.

Roberta's father John is dying of cancer, keeping it secret from his 110-year-old mother. On her lucid days, when Roberta visits the nursing home, 'Babunia' asks when John's coming to visit. It's getting hard for Roberta to invent plausible excuses. Roberta longs to ask her grandmother about the suitcase and letter written by her grandfather, but hesitates for fear of upsetting her.

In the 1930s, "Mrs. D. Sinclair" was married to Albert Sinclair. Their marriage was strained by her many miscarriages, followed by a stillbirth. In 1940 Albert departs to fight in the war; Dorothy takes in laundry as her war effort, with two 'land girls' as lodgers.

When Dorothy meets Polish squadron leader Jan Pietrykowski, it's love at first sight for both. His visits and his letters are the high points of her life. She dreams of a future with Jan. But in a surprise crisis, she must make the most difficult and painful choice of her life.

Chapters alternate between past and present. Roberta eventually learns the secrets about her family. Dorothy's story is by far the most compelling; a sweet and tender wartime romance. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com.)

The Violets of March by Sarah Jio. Plume, 2011, 319 pp (PB)

Emily is in the throes of divorce, her formerly "perfect" life in New York City in disarray. A month-long visit to her childhood

summer vacation spot on Bainbridge Island in Washington State, with her beloved great-aunt Bea, provides a needed escape. Emily hopes to not only heal emotionally, but also to push past writer's block.

The setting is delightful: Bea's cottage at water's edge is just heavenly. Indeed it's a complete escape from "real life". Emily bumps into her old high school crush at the local market; He's still unattached, and interested in her. Emily meets a local artist and is instantly attracted to him as well. Sure cure for heartbreak: date two attractive, interesting, and eligible bachelors. Emily strolls along the beach to visit a kindly neighbor, Henry. He's a fascinating man, with a secret from the past.

Emily becomes aware of secrets in her family that she cannot understand, subjects Bea won't discuss. Then Emily finds a diary from 1943 in her bedroom. Reading the diary puts Emily in parallel worlds: in the past, Esther loves but not trusting Elliot; in the present, Emily waffles between boyfriends. As the diary unfolds, the two worlds begin to converge.

Only by finishing the diary can Emily accomplish all her goals, learn what happened in her family, use lessons from Esther's story to get her life back on course, and resolve all the long-standing hurt suffered by her old and new friends. A tall order, mostly filled by a romantic surprise ending.

A quick, entertaining read. Suspend credibility, let sentiment sweep you along, enjoy a few tears. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com.)

The Cheshire Moon by Robert Ferrigno. Avon reprint, 1994 (PB)

Quinn is a magazine reporter, living in a small cottage behind his ex-wife's house in Southern California, to be near his daughter. Jen is a photographer for the same magazine, fiercely independent. Quinn's friend Andy (clever but a social misfit) installs a black-market satellite dish for Tod, a television producer. Andy discovers Tod's murdered body, sees the murderer, and flees.

Andy fears for his life, and asks Quinn to help him. Quinn tries to interest Lieutenant

Morales in a search for the murderer. Morales prefers to believe Andy killed Tod, especially when Andy is found dead. Now Morales can just close the case.

Quinn knows Andy didn't kill Tod, and the murderer killed Andy as well. Now Quinn is the next target. He assumes Tod blackmailed Sissy, married to a movie star planning to run for governor, but he doesn't know why. Morales has old crumbled X-Rays in evidence. Whose? As Quinn and Jen dig into the past, they uncover more suspicious deaths, but the underlying motive remains elusive. Meanwhile the murderer continues to hunt for Quinn, to "protect Sissy."

Fast-paced treachery, violence, and steamy sex lead to deadly confrontation, with a final plot twist. Getting to know these interesting characters leaves me wishing for a sequel.

Don't miss the author's spectacular debut novel, *Horse Latitudes*. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

Solomon's Oak by Jo-Ann Mapson. Bloomberg USA, 2010, 382 pp (HC)

Solomon's Oak, set in contemporary Central California farm country, is a touching story of how three people overcome by loss eventually aid each other, recovering and reinventing their lives.

After her beloved husband's unexpected death, Glory Solomon is struggling not only with grief, but to keep her home. To meet essential expenses, she agrees to host an unconventional pirate-themed wedding at her farm.

Glory's friend, a social caseworker, brings teenage Jennifer to Glory "for only one night." Glory and her husband had successfully fostered teenage boys, but Jennifer comes with more emotional baggage than Glory could possibly handle...alone.

Joseph Vigil is an ex-cop, in pain from gunshot wounds at a crime scene that killed his best friend. He's living in his grandmother's cabin by a lake for a few months; comes to photograph the famous 200-year-old Solomon's Oak (without asking permission). When he sees

a sword fight, a staged part of the pirate wedding, his cop instincts kick in (and he's armed).

An engaging and compelling story, how each one battles fearsome personal challenges, yet they manage to bond together and achieve hard-won happiness, set against the beautiful backdrop of California's Central Coast. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

The Circular Staircase by Mary Roberts Rinehart. Dell Books, 289 pp (PB)

A mystery classic set in 1908 Pennsylvania. Spinster Rachel Innes rents a country house for the summer, while her Pittsburgh home is renovated. Rachel's adult niece and nephew, Gertrude and Halsey, plan to stay at Sunnyside with her. Rachel goes first with her maid Liddy, to open up the house for their visit.

Strange things begin to happen. They see a woman in white, hear tappings at night, etc. Liddy is easily frightened and immediately believes the house is haunted.

Rachel is pragmatic and sensible. She knows there must be an explanation. After yet another harrowing night, they discover a dead body at the foot of the circular staircase, a member of the Armstrong family that owns Sunnyside.

After the patriarch of the Armstrong family dies in California, the truth comes out: he embezzled a huge sum from his bank. Major impact on various characters in the story. The widow wants Rachel out of the house. It's quite obvious that the fire in the stables was set as part of a desperate need to get into the house. Clearly, to search for something. Rachel gets an idea and begins searching herself.

Gertrude and Louise Armstrong each have serious illnesses and troubles with romantic relationships. Halsey goes missing; almost gets killed. The gardener turns out to be someone else in disguise.

Lots of details about relationships and whatnot. Slower pacing than modern mystery novels. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

Publisher Awalt was an indomitable force

(excerpted from the obituary by Ollie Reed Jr. in the Albuquerque Journal May 26)

Back in the early 1970s, Paul Rhetts was the public relations director for Howard County Public Schools, between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., when an elementary school art teacher he had never met charged into his office.

“The first words out of her mouth were, ‘You’re not doing a very good job,’” Rhetts said.

The art teacher’s name was Barbe Awalt. And despite their rather abrupt and unsettling introduction, Awalt and Rhetts got married about 10 years later.

Awalt’s take-no-prisoners approach to saying what she thought and campaigning for what she believed was very much in evidence after she and Rhetts moved to Los Ranchos de Albuquerque in 1990 and started publishing books on the art, history and culture of the Southwest.

“She only knew how to go ahead at full speed,” said Don Bullis, a New Mexico history writer published by Awalt and Rhetts. “And she was unapologetic.”

Awalt, co-owner of Rio Grande Books and LPD Press and co-founder of the New Mexico Book Co-op, died on May 13, just two months after she had been diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer. She was 67.

“I once said that Barbe was one person I was pretty sure never needed assertiveness training,” said New Mexico writer and humorist Slim Randles, another author published by Awalt and Rhetts. “I have had other publishers but none of them have ever promoted books the way she and Paul did.

“She was hell on wheels and a thorn in the side of people she thought were taking advantage of other people.”

A shared love for Hispanic devotional art (santos) prompted Awalt and Rhetts’ move to Los Ranches. In late 1994, they published *Charlie Carrillo: Tradition & Soul*, a book about the prominent *santero*, that they themselves had written and designed.

The couple went on to publish books by Bullis, Randles, Rudolfo Anaya, Francelle E. Alexander, Nasario Garcia and many others. Today, Rio Grande Books and LPD Press, with about 350 titles to its credit, is one of the largest independent publishing companies in New Mexico.

“Her office was the Flying Star on Rio Grande,” said Randles, author of such Rio Grande Books titles as *Ol’ Jimmy Dollar*, a children’s book, and *Home Country*, a collection of humorous essays. “She’d call and say, ‘I’ll meet you at the office at 10 o’clock,’ and I knew that’s where she meant.”

Awalt and Rhetts founded the New Mexico Book Co-op in 1994.

“In our first-hand experience of writing and publishing books we found a variety of obstacles for local authors and publishers, not the least of which was establishing an ongoing relationship with bookstores where people could get the (local) books,” Rhetts said. “Barbe was a proponent of the idea that the more people who are behind something, the more likely it would be to succeed. The whole point of the co-op was to promote local books.”

To that end, Awalt and Rhetts started the New Mexico Book Awards program in 2007 and expanded that into the New Mexico-Arizona Book Awards in 2012. During the awards program’s first 10 years, 2,282 awards were given in recognition of 1,389 titles.

“Barbe championed all kinds of causes other people might not have taken on,” Rhetts said. “She was a champion for (taking action) against criminal acts or stupid public acts. She was a champion for open government and buying locally”

Rhetts said Albuquerque services will be announced later. Instead of flowers, Rhetts requested donations to the Pancreatic Care Action Network, www.pancan.org.

“Barbe particularly wanted me to carry on the banner for the New Mexico Book Co-op and the New Mexico-Arizona Book Awards, and I’m going to keep publishing too,” Rhetts said. “Her legacy was such that someone has to pick up the banner and keep it waving.”

2019 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, July 23, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 27, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 24, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 22, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 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 North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center at 7521 Carmel Avenue NE, just north of Paseo del Norte and west of Wyoming. Check our Web site, www.croak-and-dagger.com, for schedule changes and upcoming programs.

Summary of Findings

The *Nooseletter* is the internal organ of the Croak & Dagger (New Mexico) chapter 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. 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 and ideas for sources are also welcome.

Deadlines: Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the last day of the month *prior* to publication: Feb 28, April 30, June 30, Aug 31, Oct 31, and Dec 31.

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.

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Croak & Dagger members must also be members of the national organization of Sisters in Crime. For information on joining SinC, go to <http://www.sistersincrime.org>. For information about your local chapter, contact our membership chair at pwwood73@comcast.net