



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume II, Number 6—November 2006

†Expert Testimony†

From the Prez

Since Croak & Dagger has just celebrated its second birthday, I hope you'll join me in a nostalgic and often funny trip down memory lane.

Like every good enterprise, ours didn't appear out of the blue. For some time, a number of people had been tossing around the idea of starting a Sisters in Crime (SinC) chapter in Albuquerque, but an actual meeting of minds didn't take place until the summer of 2004. Rob Kresge, Penny Rudolph, Pari Noskin Taichert, and Joyce Moore met at Starbucks (where better?) with Carol Babel, then president of the Las Cruces chapter, and began planning in earnest.

Thanks to Principal Ed Briggs, our first meetings took place at Grant Middle School. We moved from the large gym to the cozier teachers' lounge, but we had to compete with noisy band practice. Our first speaker, Dr. Richard Peck, did an admirable and entertaining job of speaking above the oom-pah-pahs.

Thanks to Cal Page and Roy Zarucchi, we moved in February 2005 to our present location at the John Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation. Not only is it roomy and quiet, the ambience is ideally suited for a group of mystery fans.

A surprise bonus occurred there when APD Sgt. Terry Molander happened to stop by one evening. Our scheduled speaker was unable to come, and Vice President Sarah Schwartz came to the rescue by inviting Sgt. Molander to share some of his experiences in the police force. His impromptu presentation turned out to be one of the highlights in our chapter's history.

Our programs have provided a good balance of speakers: authors and technical experts, men and women. Twice we've had highly successful tours of the morgue. Our future is bright with the prospect of continuing programs of mystery and mayhem!✓

—Margaret Tessler

—TRUE CRIMES—

Selected biographies of your Croak & Dagger board members.

Fred A. Aiken (Hospitality chair) is currently in his sixth year of teaching chemistry, geology, and astronomy at Rio Grande High School. Prior to teaching, he worked for thirty plus years in the engineering field, chiefly in the process and equipment design and construction field. After receiving a master's of business administration degree in 1974, Fred obtained his license as a registered professional engineer in 1975. In 2006, he received his master's degree of education and is now in the process of obtaining National Board Teaching Certification.

Fred has written numerous articles. He has contributed articles to *Guidepost* and *Angles on Earth* publications. His workshops on "The Business Side of Writing" have been well attended. In 1995, he chaired the Midwest Space Development Conference and was the vice chair of the 2001 International Space Development Conference.

Nanette, his wife of 32 years, and Fred have one daughter and two grandchildren. He is an active member of New Life Presbyterian Church, where he serves as an elder and as a commissioner to Presbytery. He is currently active in Southwest Writers, the New Mexico and National Science Teachers Associations, the Albuquerque Gem and

Mineral Club, and the Albuquerque Astronomical Society. For the past three years, he has served on the Instructional Council of Rio Grande High School. Only modesty and lack of space prevent him from listing all of his many achievements.✓



Croak and Dagger

Coming Events . . .

On Tuesday, November 28 at 7:00, our speaker will be Martha Egan, author of the recent mystery novel *Clearing Customs*. She'll talk about her research, writing the book, and the international trips she takes that inspired it.

We'll also be voting for new officers at the November 28 meeting.

On Saturday, December 16 at 1:00, our speaker will be Steven F. Havill, who's coming all the way from Raton, weather permitting. Steve is published by Poisoned Pen Press of Phoenix and is into his second series of police procedurals based in the fictional Posadas County, New Mexico. Come hear him tell how he got started, why he needed a fictional setting, what he's learned from police ride alongs, and other research.

DON'T FORGET:

Tuesday, November 28, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 16, 1:00 p.m.
Tuesday, January 23, 7:00 p.m.

These meetings will be held in the briefing room at the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation, 12700 Montgomery Blvd. NE, one block east of Tramway. ***Our program meetings are free to the public.***



Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. ***The purpose of Sisters in Crime shall be "to combat discrimination against women in the mystery field, educate publishers and the general public as to the inequities in the treatment of female authors, raise the level of awareness of their contribution to the field, and promote the professional advancement of women who write mysteries."***

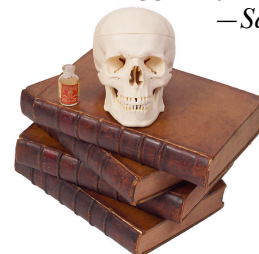
Croak & Dagger Web Site Gets a Facelift

Check out the Croak & Dagger Web site—
www.croak-and-dagger.com:

- The **Home** page contains information on upcoming Croak & Dagger events.
- **About Us** contains information on our chapter, including a list of current officers.
- **Meeting Schedule** lists all scheduled program meetings.
- **Membership** provides information on joining Croak & Dagger and supplies a printable membership form. If you are looking for reasons to join, you will find them here.
- **Speakers Bureau** lists Croak & Dagger members you may contact for information on topics of potential interest to mystery readers and writers. If you would like to be included in this list, e-mail croakdagger@yahoo.com with your resume.
- **Authors/Favorite Links** provides links to sites for member authors (published or unpublished) who write crime-related fiction or nonfiction and to sites developed by any members when those Web sites concentrate on crime-related fiction or nonfiction works. If your Web site fits any of these criteria and you would like to be listed, e-mail croakdagger@yahoo.com with your Web address.
In addition, this page provides a list of Web site links of interest to those of us who are into felonious fun. If you know a Web site you think is of particular interest to Croakers, e-mail croakdagger@yahoo.com with that information.
- **Nooseletter Archive** provides links to archived issues of the chapter's *Nooseletter*.
- **Contact Us** provides visitors with the chapter's e-mail address.

If you have any suggestions for improvements to the Web site, e-mail croakdagger@yahoo.com. ✓

—Sarah Schwartz



Croak & Dagger Elections Are November 28!

Here's how our slate of candidates for Croak & Dagger officers in 2007 looks as this issue of the *Nooseletter* goes to press:

- *President*: Lucinda Schroeder (author, retired federal agent)
- *Vice President*: Cheryl Wadleigh (fills in for the president as needed)
- *Treasurer*: **Vacant** (maintains our checking account, deposits membership fees, and makes disbursements as needed)
- *Secretary*: Margaret Tessler (author, former chapter president, VP, and secretary)

Come to the November 28 program meeting to learn who the final candidates are and to vote for our new officers for 2007.

The following people have volunteered to chair our standing committees (the president makes the final appointment):

- *Hospitality*: **Vacant** (brings snacks to monthly meetings, and maintains a cash jar for contributions)
- *Membership*: Sarah Schwartz (works with the treasurer to maintain a spreadsheet of members; also sends reminders of meeting dates once each month and sends out the newsletter bimonthly to the mailing list)
- *Nooseletter Editor*: Shirley Coe (a year's experience in this job; increased issues from four to six this year)
- *Programs and PR/Publicity*: Jennifer Williams (a frequent volunteer at mystery conferences)
- *Web Site Coordinator*: Sarah Schwartz (this year's VP; already off to a great start renovating the chapter Web site)

Anyone who is interested in volunteering for one of the still-vacant positions, please contact Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net, or Shirley Coe, shirleycoe@comcast.net, before the meeting. ✓



THANK YOU AND FAREWELL TO OUR 2006 CROAK & DAGGER BOARD

Many thanks to our Croak & Dagger board in 2006. We appreciate your work behind the scenes and right in front of us. We've enjoyed good programs, good eats, and good noose (news, that is).

2006 Officers

President: Margaret Tessler
Vice President: Sarah Schwartz
Treasurer: Ira Rimson
Secretary: Stephanie Hainsfurther



2006 Committee Chairs

Hospitality: Fred Aiken
Membership: Stephanie Hainsfurther
Nooseletter Editor: Shirley Coe
Programs: Rob Kresge
PR/Publicity: Stephanie Hainsfurther
Web Site Coordinator: Nancy Varian, Sarah Schwartz

Croak & Dagger Books in Print

We would like to compile our very own Croak & Dagger *Books in Print*, and we want you to be part of it. If you have written a mystery, thriller, or crime-related book, or if you have consulted as an expert on a mystery, thriller, or crime-related book, please notify Shirley Coe at shirleycoe@comast.net.

IN THE LOOP

If you haven't joined already, all members are invited to join the Croak & Dagger community group, an online gathering place. Exchange information about mystery books, movies, and TV shows; share news about local and national mystery events; and participate in occasional online classes. Join in!

For further information, contact Sarah Schwartz, croakdagger@yahoo.com.

The Cairn of Albertvs

Copts and Robbers.

Coptoi et Latrones.

COPTS. Getting published changes your life, often dramatically if you research places you never dreamed you would see. Since 1993 Jennifer and I have traveled to Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Turkey, Cyprus, and Israel. This year we'll spend Christmas Eve in St. Mark's Coptic Cathedral at Cairo, Egypt, then visit a few of the locations on the Holy Family Trail venerated as "Jesus Slept Here" sites. These are based on the Coptic tradition about the flight into Egypt mentioned in St. Matthew's gospel.

The Orthodox Coptic Church believes it was founded around AD 50 by St. Mark, author of the earliest gospel. He was murdered at Alexandria by a pagan mob, but Christianity took hold in that city; by the fourth century the religion had a distinctive character, including monasticism. The Coptic language is ancient Egyptian written with a Greek alphabet adaptation. Those Gnostic Gospels discovered in 1945, and the recently ballyhooed "Gospel of Judas," were in Coptic. Historical fiction can be as fresh as today's news items!

ROBBERS. The Roman Empire was crisscrossed by paved roads, most of them built by army grunts when not fighting barbarians or rebellious subjects. This *Cursus Publicus* had way stations located about 25 miles apart—a day's journey—where travelers could eat meals, stay overnight, and have their carriages dunged out by slaves. Managers spoke Latin, Greek, and local dialects, so everyone understood each other. If you had an imperial pass, lodgings were *gratis*. In AD 333 a Bordeaux citizen traveled overland from Gaul's Atlantic coast to Constantinople in three months, a crow-flying distance of 1,600 miles that averaged 17.8 miles a day! Strip maps showed distances between towns, so you knew where you were and could tell the kids when they whined, "Are we there yet?"

Rome gradually lost its grip on provinces that were overrun by barbarians, and travel became dangerous. Germanic and Gothic chiefs took over senatorial estates, while many rank and filers took to the roads as highwaymen. If caught they were crucified, as were the two thieves hung alongside Christ.

Not only property was in danger; the Christian Church feared the spiritual highjacking of members'

souls. Theological differences were settled in councils, where bishops argued the pros and cons of Christ's human vs. divine natures, and Mary's role in the Incarnation. Sessions were as heated as any in the U.S. Congress.

"The Robber Council." In 449 a council was held at Ephesus to vindicate Eutyches, a churchman accused of heresy. This time only his partisans were allowed to speak, and opposition was violently squelched, including papal delegates with a letter from Leo I condemning the heretic. When Eutyches was exonerated, cries of *Latrocinium! Latrocinium!* arose—the Latin equivalent of "highway robbery." The name stuck.

Two years later Copts broke with the Greek Orthodox Church of the time. Today, living among Egypt's 65 million Muslims, an estimated 3.5 to 10 million Coptic Christians still maintain their traditions. One is that St. Joseph kept a diary; now there's a story line!✓

—Albert Noyer, www.albertnoyer.com

Dastardly Duels: Mystery Short Story Contest

Cowboys and Indians Magazine and Wordharvest are soliciting stories in their mystery short story contest.

Guidelines

Each mystery short story must be set in the Western or Southwestern United States. Each story must include at least one cowboy and/or Native American character. Short stories must be 2,500 words or less, written in English, and unpublished.

Each story must be accompanied by a check or money order for \$10.00. Critiques are available for an additional \$100.

All entries must be postmarked no later than September 15, 2007. The winner will be announced at the Tony Hillerman Writers' Conference Focus on Mystery, November 1–4, 2007. You don't have to attend the conference to enter.

Prize

The winning story receives a cash prize of \$1,500 and publication in an upcoming issue of *Cowboys & Indians* Magazine.

Further Information

For more information as it becomes available, go to www.wordharvest.com.

More Dastardly Duels: Mystery Novel Contest

A mystery novel competition was announced at the 2006 Tony Hillerman Writers' Conference, held November 2–5, in Albuquerque.

The competition, sponsored by the Tony Hillerman Writers' Conference and St. Martin's Press, is open to any writer who has never had a mystery published and is not under contract with a publisher for publication of a mystery. Only one manuscript entry is permitted per writer.

All manuscripts submitted: a) must be original, unpublished works of book length (approximately 60,000 words) written in the English; b) must not violate any right of any third party or be libelous, and c) must generally follow the guidelines below.

Guidelines

- Murder or another serious crime or crimes is at the heart of the story, and emphasis is on the solution rather than the details of the crime.
- The story's primary setting is the Southwestern United States, including at least one of the following states: Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, or Utah.

Deadline

All entries must be received or postmarked no later than July 1, 2007.

Prize

The winner will receive a contract with St. Martin's Press with a \$10,000 advance, so spray dust remover on your keyboard and get cracking!

Further Information

For complete information go to:
www.thomasdunnebooks.com/TD_News.aspx.

A New Company

A new company has formed to help all writers for performance. The Screen-Play Trio is a team of experienced screenplay and stage play writers set up to write, adapt, and critique works for performance.

For information, contact Cliff Gravel at (505) 888-1747 or see the latest New Mexico Film Directory at www.nmfilm.com.

Croak & Dagger Member Is Award Finalist!

Congratulations to Gerald Weinberg!

Gerald (Jerry) M. Weinberg's book, *Weinberg on Writing: The Fieldstone Method* (Dorset House Publishing, ISBN: 0-932633-65-X, www.dorsethouse.com/books/wow.html) was one of three finalists for the Best Books 2006 Awards, in the Writing/Publishing Category, USA Book News.

Randy Rice, author, editor, and publisher wrote about *WOW*: "This book set me free as a writer. I recommend this book to anyone who writes, who may aspire to write and also to those who are intimidated by the thought of writing."

A complete list of winners and finalists in each category can be found at:
www.usabooknews.com/bestbooksawards2006.html.✓

Sisters Tour the Morgue, Saturday before Halloween



On the morning of October 28, 14 intrepid souls, ranging in age from 13 to more than a couple of senior citizens, toured the morgue—er, the Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI)—near UNM Hospital. The number 14 is significant for two reasons. That was 100 percent of those who had signed up to come—no no-shows. And we left with the same number! No one was left behind.

This was Croak and Dagger's second annual tour there, giving attendees insight not only into the workings of OMI and the morgue itself, but also, as citizens, letting us in on the extensive problem of unattended deaths (where a physician is not present) in New Mexico, which the OMI is called on to resolve. For those of you who haven't taken the tour yet, here are some statistics that might help you in your reading or writing. In New Mexico:

- There are 14,000 deaths a year
- 5,000 deaths a year are unattended or otherwise require a call for opinion from OMI
- 2,500 cases annually require the body to be brought to Albuquerque for resolution

(cont'd. on next page)

(Sisters Tour the Morgue, cont'd.)

- 2,100 cases a year require autopsies (that's 15 percent of the 14,000 annual deaths; the national average requiring autopsies is 7 percent)

The OMI is open and working 365 days a year. It has a staff of 60 and handles an average of six autopsies a day. It dealt with five the day we visited, but had 15 the day before. While there we viewed an autopsy film; as they say, "You'd have to be there" to appreciate it.

Among those being autopsied the Saturday we were there were: a 24-year-old female traffic accident victim from Dona Ana County, whose seatbelt had been severed (cause of death for possible insurance claims or suit); an old unidentified male found dead in his car with scattered syringes; and an incomplete skeleton unearthed in Luna County. OMI regularly donates skeletons to UNM's Maxwell Anthropological Museum. After the Smithsonian, Maxwell has the largest skeleton collection in the U.S.

The categories of deaths that the OMI deals with are:

- Suicide (rising in New Mexico and nationwide, too)
- Homicide (steady at about 180 a year)
- Accidental
- Natural causes
- Undetermined

Accidental and natural causes are the leading categories of death; homicide and undetermined are the least common. OMI sees 300–320 overdose deaths a year.

The morgue can perform up to six autopsies at a time, but investigators prefer not to handle more than four at a time. University medical students act as resident physicians and fellows on staff. They join the eight staff doctors in the examination rooms. OMI personnel include an orthodontist and a forensic anthropologist, who's just back from Darfur, Iraq. OMI also conducts international exchanges with facilities in Mexico. Morphology technicians at OMI handle gross cutting (I know, I know), organ removal, fluid containment, and filing.

Investigators are on call 24/7 to handle any sudden increases in cases. Half of all calls statewide for OMI assistance are from Bernalillo County. Doctor/investigators may travel to all parts of the state as needed, but there is a network of deputy medical investigators in the field in many counties and larger towns. These are often doctors, EMI technicians, or even law enforcement personnel who

are trained and certified, and who moonlight in that capacity.

About 220 bodies brought in each year are unidentified (i.e., Jane Does or John Does). OMI clears about 96 percent of its Jane and John Does by eventually matching fingerprints or DNA in databases. *CSI* notwithstanding, it takes about 8 to 10 months for a detailed DNA comparison.

OMI can be a resource for readers and writers of mysteries; it also has resource problems that citizens need to know about. The backlog in toxicology cases is one of OMI's biggest issues right now.

Toxicology reports take about week; a general screen for other substances takes two or three. OMI's workload is up by 5 to 6 percent a year, driven primarily by families or insurance companies requesting research for litigation. The OMI building is 30 years old, and OMI hopes to move into a larger facility through budget funds in another year or so.

Along with its routine business, the OMI plans for mass disasters like plane crashes or an avian flu outbreak. It was responsible for identifying the hanta virus when it popped up here in the last decade, isolating the virus and finding the cause within about six weeks.✓

LINK TO THE CROAK & DAGGER WEB SITE

Do you have a mystery-related Web site? All Croak & Dagger members who have written fiction (published or unpublished) in the mystery/crime/thriller genres or related nonfiction (such as how to fire a gun, telltale signs of various poisons, or how to write mystery/crime/thriller fiction) are invited to link their mystery-related Web site to our Croak & Dagger Web site. Contact our webmistress, Sarah Schwartz, at croakdagger@yahoo.com. Let her know your URL, and she'll set you right up.

—*Surrogate Evil*—



I'm pleased to announce our fourth Lee Nez novel, *Surrogate Evil* (Forge hardcover), available in discerning bookstores everywhere beginning

November 28. Lee Nez is a New Mexico state police officer and the first Navajo vampire. But Lee isn't a traditional neck-biting creature to be feared or pitied. Officer Nez is a half vampire, thanks to the timely intervention of a medicine man in 1945—the year Lee was “turned” by a Nazi soldier/vampire seeking to steal the plutonium scheduled to fuel the first atomic bomb.

Back on the force after all those decades, Lee is protected by industrial strength sunblock and badass shades, patrolling New Mexico highways exclusively on the graveyard shift. The nearly black uniform—that's just another plus.

In *Surrogate Evil*, Lee and FBI agent Diane Lopez go undercover to get the goods on a mysterious ex-government employee named Newt Glover. The man is dealing drugs and terrorizing his rural neighbors in the East Mountain area of Bernalillo County. Until now, Glover has managed to avoid arrest and conviction, probably because he's been blackmailing county officials, including a few deputies in the sheriff's department.

Lee's special nightwalker abilities may be tested to the limits, however. Glover was ambushed one night not long ago by neighbors who'd been pushed too far. Despite being shot at close range, Glover turned up the next day without a scratch on him. A few days later, it was his neighbor who disappeared. To make things worse, Lee and Diane also discover that Glover may be involved in child pornography and the recent disappearance of a local boy.

The Lee Nez series—*Second Sunrise*, *Blood Retribution*, *Pale Death*, and now *Surrogate Evil*—has provided the perfect opportunity to create stories that allow me to combine my background as a science teacher with my imagination and experiences growing up on the Navajo Nation. Nothing has pleased me more than hearing from people around the world who've enjoyed reading these cross-genre adventures.✓

—David Thurlo, coauthor of the *Ella Clah*,
Sister Agatha, and *Lee Nez* series
published by Forge and St. Martin's Minotaur

The Used Book Conundrum: One Author's Perspective

“You're going to hate me,” said a very nice woman on an airplane when she found out I was an author.

“Why?”

“I sell used books.”

“Oh, that's all right. As long as people are reading my books, that's what counts,” I said, believing with all my heart that that was true.

Now, two years later, I'm not so sure.

For those of you who don't know, royalties are based on wholesale rather than retail sales. Authors often earn a single-digit percentage of the wholesale price. You couldn't buy a stick of gum with the per-book royalties that mass-market paperback authors reap. Hard covers pay more, but not much.

When someone buys a book that's in print at a used bookstore (physical or on the Internet), the author and the publisher don't make a cent.

You might wonder how anyone could get that upset, or feel any kind of angst, about seven cents here or, even, a dollar there. Goodness me, how miserly. How *preposterous*.

The ugly truth is that *sales*—not *reading*—drive careers.

Publishers drop good writers all the time. I've met too many authors who've been abandoned mid-series because their sales were merely *all right* instead of *stellar*.

Before I was published, I thought that if people read my books—be they used or at the library—they'd then purchase my new books on publication. I've learned that the reality is less sanguine. Frankly, most people who frequent used bookstores are looking for deals. They're not going to buy my new books; they're going to haggle over fifty cents.

Publishing is a business. Without sales, the business doesn't thrive. On an emotional and egotistical level, I'd rather have scads of readers—no matter how they acquire my books—read and praise my work.

On a professional, survival level, I can't afford this view anymore. Nor can hundreds of authors who have seen their publishing lines axed because of a lack of sales. And yet, people come up to those same authors and rave about how they love their books, how they've read every single one they've bought at a used bookstore.

What's an author to do?

(*cont'd. on next page*)

(The Used Book Conundrum, cont'd.)

Are we to be grateful to businesses that deprive us of our living?

A few months back, someone worked out that most titles in the U.S. market annually sell 500 copies or less. When you think in those smaller numbers, you realize just how much of an impact used bookstores have on the bottom line for publishers and authors.

What's the moral in all of this?

For me, it's a decision to buy more of my friends' books rather than scouring Amazon.com or other used venues. It's a plea to you to buy the books of authors you enjoy rather than assuming someone else will.

Do I advocate getting rid of all used bookstores? Absolutely not. There are people who can't afford books and, for some reason, don't want to go to libraries (at least these public institutions purchase books from the publisher). Like many other people, I've bought used books myself. I've participated in book exchanges such as the one we have at Croak & Dagger.

But, now, I understand why several professional writing organizations are trying to regulate the used-book industry, to force it to compensate authors and publishers.

This is a question of survival rather than greed.

As members and supporters of Sisters in Crime, it should be an issue that each of us considers each time we choose to spend our money on books. ✓

—*Pari Noskin Taichert*

ROB'S RANDOM SHOTS

November Case File Number One

The Cold Dish by Craig Johnson, Viking Press, New York, 2005 (also now available in mass-market paperback)

I met this first-time author at last November's "Tony Hillerman Focus on the Mystery Conference." At the time, I remember thinking, "Oh, great. Just what I need. Another Wyoming mystery author to crowd the market along with Margaret Coel, Virginia Swift, and C. J. Box." But I listened to him speak, bought his book, and read it. He's the kind of competition every would-be author dreads: Craig Johnson writes clear, powerful prose, has invented memorable, believable, and sympathetic characters, plots like Robert Parker (who recommended this book), and knows Wyoming inside and out. He lives in the small town (population 25) of Ucross, but he invented a town and county for this story.

The Cold Dish is a sly reference to the way revenge is supposed to be served. Walt Longmire, the aging, overweight sheriff of Absaroka County, has a rare case of murder on his hands. One of four white boys convicted of raping a young Cheyenne girl two years before is found shot to death in a manner Walt quickly sees was not a hunting accident. Complicating the case is his concern for the safety of the other three boys—still at liberty—and his feelings for Vonnie Hayes, a wealthy local widow. Adding to his problems are a rebellious passed-over male deputy who may be a suspect, an empowered female deputy from out of state with a foul mouth, and the curious attention of the retired sheriff Walt replaced.

Walt only has two allies he can count on: Victoria Morretti, the female deputy, and his lifelong friend Henry Standing Bear, a fellow Vietnam vet. There are a plethora of suspects with motives—Cheyenne relatives, one of the boys who distanced himself from the others, townspeople, that suspicious deputy, and a wealthy rancher.

Standing over the mystery is another main character—Wyoming winter weather. One shooting takes place in a snowstorm. Walt averts a second in the teeth of a howling blizzard. Great Wyoming authors like Coel, Swift, Box, and Johnson make their settings, and in some cases the weather, a force that is as likely to do in the good guys as the bad guys. They are to Wyoming as Carl Hiaasen is to Florida, as James Lee Burke is to Louisiana, and as J. A. Jance, Tony Hillerman, and Michael McGarrity are to Arizona and New Mexico.

Johnson's second Walt Longmire mystery, *Death Without Company*, is out now in hardback. His third, *Kindness Goes Unpunished*, set in far-off Philadelphia, will be published next March. You can get a copy of *The Cold Dish* in mass-market paperback. Do yourself a favor and discover this new author of mysteries set in the West. He (and Walt) will be back and should be nominated for some awards this year.

November Case File Number Two

The Drowning Man by Margaret Coel, Berkley Prime Crime, New York, Hardback, \$23.95

This is the only time in two years that I've reviewed an author twice in the *Nooseletter*. What am I doing, playing favorites? You bet. The two authors who have most influenced what I write are Margaret Coel and Tony Hillerman. All of us feature more than one protagonist, and we alternate chapters from each
(cont'd on next page)

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

person's point of view. This won't be my last Coel review, and I plan to revisit Hillerman (his latest, *Shape Shifter*, comes out this month).

Coel's tales of the modern Arapaho/Shoshone reservation in Wind River, Wyoming, feature two of the best-drawn characters in mystery fiction: Father John O'Malley, Jesuit priest at St. Francis Mission and recovering alcoholic; and Vicky Holden, Arapaho attorney and divorced mother of two. As you'd expect, physical romance between these two isn't possible, but there are longing glances, wistful daydreams, and the occasional joining of hands.

This latest installment will resonate with New Mexico readers. It involves the theft of petroglyphs, chiseled and cut from harder rock than those in the porous, fragile, volcanic lava that are peppered across Albuquerque's west side. Someone has just stolen a sacred glyph, the "Drowning Man," in a manner reminiscent of a similar crime seven years ago. In the wake of the original theft, suspect Travis Birdsong killed his purported partner and has been in prison ever since.

But if Travis did steal the original petroglyph, who has stolen this one? Are the two crimes related? Before the current theft is well-known, an Indian contacts Father O'Malley to act as middleman if the Arapaho want to buy back the petroglyph. If not, it goes on the clandestine artifact market. At the same time, Vicky examines the trial transcript and is determined to reopen his case and get Travis a new trial. Their roles in this investigation endanger both their lives.

Among other skills, Coel always provides plenty of suspects, at least six in this case. She also excels at devising subplots that keep her protagonists twisting in complicated ways while trying to focus on the investigation. Vicky's on-again, off-again romance with law partner Adam White Eagle threatens her law practice, her efforts on behalf of Travis, and her safety. Father John must contend with active opposition to his middleman role from the local FBI agent and the dangerous presence of an old priest who has taken shelter at the mission at the behest of O'Malley's superior.

My previous favorite in this series was number ten, *Wife of Moon*, on which I gave Margaret a little help on one chapter. I like this one even better. Get any of her books at a bookstore or library, and see if she doesn't become an author you're glad to return to, time and time again.✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

Dastardly Duels Thrice: Chesapeake Crimes Three

The Chesapeake Chapter of Sisters in Crime invites all published and unpublished writers to submit a short story for possible inclusion in the third volume of *Chesapeake Crimes*, to be published by Tidewater Publishers (www.cmtp.com/).

Donna Andrews and Marcia Talley will serve as coordinating editors for this volume, and the editorial panel will be Karen Diegmuller, Lisa Tillman, Mary Augusta Thomas, and Gail Meredith. Sujata Massey has agreed to write the introduction.

Deadlines

Potential contributors must submit stories by January 31, 2007. The editorial panel will make its decisions by March 31, 2007.

Submission Guidelines

All contributors must be members of Sisters in Crime. Stories must be set in the Chesapeake Bay region. Each submitted story must be fiction, a mystery, and your original work. Stories must be between 1,000 and 7,500 words.

Subject matter, setting, and style are at the writer's discretion—cozy, hard-boiled, humorous, dramatic, historical, paranormal, contemporary, it's your call. Have fun! There are also no limitations for previously published or series characters.

The Process

The editorial panel will read all stories "blind" (i.e., without knowing the identity of the submitting author). Writers whose stories are selected for the anthology will receive no financial compensation. Sisters in Crime national chapter bylaws prohibit any member from earning income from Sisters in Crime ventures. All profit and earnings will be the property of Sisters in Crime; royalties will be divided among the Sisters in Crime chapters represented in the volume.

Further Information

Visit the Chesapeake Chapter Web site, www.chessiechapter.org, for complete submission guidelines.

For questions about the process, contact Donna Andrews at donna@donnaandrews.com or Marcia Talley at Marcia.talley@gmail.com.✓

—Marcia Talley, President, Chesapeake Chapter,
and Donna Andrews, Vice President

A Writing Assignment



A professor told his class one day: "Today we will experiment with a new form called the tandem story. The process is

simple. Each person will pair off with the person sitting to his or her immediate right. As homework tonight, one of you will write the first paragraph of a short story. You will e-mail your partner that paragraph and send another copy to me. The partner will read the first paragraph and then add another paragraph to the story and send it back, also sending another copy to me. The first person will then add a third paragraph, and so on, back and forth. Remember to reread what has been written each time in order to keep the story coherent. There is to be absolutely *no* talking outside of the e-mails, and everything you wish to say must be written in the e-mail. The story is over when both agree a conclusion has been reached."

The following was actually turned in by two of his English students, Rebecca and Gary.

THE STORY: (*First paragraph by Rebecca*) At first, Laurie couldn't decide which kind of tea she wanted. The chamomile, which used to be her favorite for lazy evenings at home, now reminded her too much of Carl, who once said, in happier times, that he liked chamomile. But she felt she must now, at all costs, keep her mind off Carl. His possessiveness was suffocating, and if she thought about him too much her asthma started acting up again. So chamomile was out of the question.

(*Second paragraph by Gary*) Meanwhile, Advance Sergeant Carl Harris, leader of the attack squadron now in orbit over Skylon 4, had more important things to think about than the neuroses of an airheaded, asthmatic bimbo named Laurie with whom he had spent one sweaty night over a year ago. "A.S. Harris to Geostation 17," he said into his transgalactic communicator. "Polar orbit established. No sign of resistance so far..." But before he could sign off, a bluish particle beam flashed out of nowhere and blasted a hole through his ship's cargo bay. The jolt from the direct hit sent him flying out of his seat and across the cockpit.

(*Rebecca*) He bumped his head and died almost immediately, but not before he felt one last pang of regret for psychically brutalizing the one woman who had ever had feelings for him. Soon afterward, Earth stopped its pointless hostilities toward the peaceful farmers of Skylon 4. "Congress Passes Law

Permanently Abolishing War and Space Travel," Laurie read in her newspaper one morning. The news simultaneously excited her and bored her. She stared out the window, dreaming of her youth, when the days had passed unhurriedly and carefree, with no newspaper to read, no television to distract her from her sense of innocent wonder at all the beautiful things around her. "Why must one lose one's innocence to become a woman?" she pondered wistfully.

(*Gary*) Little did she know, but she had less than ten seconds to live. Thousands of miles above the city, the Anu'udrian mother ship launched the first of its lithium fusion missiles. The dim-witted wimpy peaceniks who had pushed the Unilateral Aerospace Disarmament Treaty through congress had left Earth a defenseless target for the hostile alien empires that were determined to destroy the human race. Within two hours after the passage of the treaty, the Anu'udrian ships were on course for Earth, carrying enough firepower to pulverize the entire planet. With no one to stop them, they swiftly initiated their diabolical plan. The lithium fusion missile entered the atmosphere unimpeded. The president, in his top-secret mobile submarine headquarters on the ocean floor off the coast of Guam, felt the inconceivably massive explosion, which vaporized poor, stupid, Laurie and 85 million other Americans. The president slammed his fist on the conference table. "We can't allow this! I'm going to veto that treaty! Let's blow 'em out of the sky!"

(*Rebecca*) This is absurd. I refuse to continue this mockery of literature. My writing partner is a violent, chauvinistic semiliterate adolescent.

(*Gary*) Yeah? Well, you're a self-centered tedious neurotic whose attempts at writing are the literary equivalent of Valium. "Oh, shall I have chamomile tea? Or shall I have some other sort of F--ING TEA???" Oh no, I'm such an airheaded bimbo who reads too many Danielle Steele novels!"

(*Rebecca*) A\$\$hole.

(*Gary*) Bitch.

(*Rebecca*) F**k you, you Neanderthal!

(*Gary*) Go drink some tea. Whore.

(TEACHER) A+. I really liked this one. ✓



Mysteries and Thrillers

(Adapted and edited from the version published by **Carolyn Wheat** in the 2000 edition of *Writer's Yearbook*,

with added perspective from **David Morrell**, creator of Rambo, author of dozens of bestsellers, and founder and copresident of the International Thriller Writers.)

This is a chart of some of the differences between mysteries and thrillers. Because of the many subgenres of mysteries and thrillers, some of these differences will appear a bit forced or arbitrary, but I found most of them to be clever, original, and insightful. Other writers might highlight “different differences.” They are intended to stimulate your thinking, not to be definitions set in concrete. They are also intended to generate discussion. Write a letter to the editor of the *Nooseletter* or bring up this subject at one of the Croak & Dagger chapter’s monthly meetings.

In a mystery novel . . .	In a thriller/suspense novel . . .
The reader is presented with a puzzle.	The reader is presented with a nightmare.
We are meant to identify with the detective.	We identify with the struggling protagonist.
The detective usually has skills he/she needs to solve the puzzle.	The protagonist often must learn new skills in order to stay alive.
Thinking is paramount for readers.	Emotion is paramount for readers.
Some important action (often the murder) takes place offstage.	Almost all the important action takes place onstage.
The story usually takes place within a fairly small circle of characters (suspects).	The protagonist of a thriller finds him/herself thrust into a larger arena.
Readers are looking for clues.	Readers are expecting surprises.
The author withholds and doles out information as needed.	The author provides more information than may be needed at that point in the story.

In a mystery novel . . .	In a thriller/suspense novel . . .
Ideally, the reader should remain one step behind the protagonist.	Readers are given information that lets them be one step ahead of the protagonist.
Readers more often expect a series of stories. The protagonist likely will survive.	Readers know a book can be a standalone. The protagonist may or may not survive.
The story asks “Who done it?” or “Why?”	The story provokes the question “What’s going to happen next?”
The protagonist is looking for clues he/she can rely on.	The protagonist faces unexpected betrayals.
The protagonist must sift through red herrings.	The protagonist struggles against a cycle of distrust.
Endings ought to be intellectually satisfying.	Endings ought to provide emotional satisfaction.
Books tend to be 300 pages or less.	Books can be longer than 300 pages.

My own view is that the bottom line is really the process.

In mysteries, the reader is presented with a crime that knocks the little world in the novel out of equilibrium.

- The sleuth struggles to resolve the crime and return a sense of balance to the world.
- Readers only get clues as the sleuth encounters them, but isn’t sure of their importance.
- *Murder on the Orient Express (Calais Coach)* and *The Nine Tailors* work this way.

In a thriller, readers are early on shown a plot or event (Hitchcock called it “the McGuffin”), which, if carried to completion, would take the novel’s world out of balance.

- The rest of the book is a struggle by the protagonist and his allies to prevent that action.
- Readers get information ahead of the protagonist so they will worry about the safety of the characters as the novel progresses.
- *Day of the Jackal* and *Eye of the Needle* work this way.✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

Third Annual Tony Hillerman Writers' Conference: "Focus on Mystery"



This year's Tony Hillerman Writers' Conference, held from November 2–5 at the Hyatt in downtown Albuquerque, brought nearly 300 readers and aspiring authors to hear an impressive assemblage of talent, many of them—attendees and authors—new to the conference this year.

Thursday, November 2

Tony Hillerman returned to lend his expertise, sense of humor, and considerable charm to the opening interview. "Joe Leaphorn," actor and Santa Fe resident Wes Studi (*Dances with Wolves*, *Last of the Mohicans*, *Skinwalkers*, and so on) conducted the interview. Tony recounted the story of his original agent telling him of *The Blessing Way* manuscript might be successful: "If you revise it, leave out all that Indian stuff." Wes recalled how the Leaphorn character was rewritten for the PBS Mystery movies and that his wife's character, Emma, proved to be so popular that the producers kept her alive for all three films, rather than having her die at the beginning of *A Thief of Time*.



Hemingway Award-winning Santa Fe author Sean Murphy conducted a daylong pre-conference workshop on November 2 on "Secrets of Compelling Fiction—Adding Dimension to Your Writing." Even though workshops on the first day cost extra, this one was particularly well attended.

The workshop was followed by an opening reception (at which Wes Studi confided that he had just finished working on the *Lonesome Dove* prequel, *Comanche Moon*, playing Chief Buffalo Hump and that his son was played by Adam "Jim Chee" Beach).

Friday, November 3

Friday morning included an interview with Tony and a high-spirited panel discussion about humor in mysteries. Former Croak and Dagger chapter president Pari Noskin Taichert, chapter speakers Susan Slater and Virginia Swift, and Wyoming novelist Craig Johnson read passages from their

favorite humorous mystery authors, then contributed elements from their own writing. Craig said he had trouble holding his humor in check. Virginia enumerated and gave examples of the seven types of humor found in mysteries, the "six s'es and a b."

They are:

- Situational humor
- Satire
- Sarcasm
- Slapstick
- Self-mockery
- Social comment
- Black humor

At the Friday luncheon, perennial conference favorite Michael McGarrity (author of the Kevin Kerney police procedurals) gave tips for new writers from his years of experience in the business. "If I'd only known then what I would find out later . . ."

The first set of afternoon breakout sessions included Virginia Swift on using both humor and the mundane, Sean Murphy on the business of writing, and J. A. Jance on plotting, drawing on her expertise from 33 novels. The second session comprised Gail Larsen on developing your public speaking skills in order to approach editors and agents and to speak at your own signings, Sean Murphy on improving your writing through multisensory descriptions, and Michael McGarrity quizzing his audience to help us learn the elements of writing good dialog. Interested attendees toured the morgue in the company of Sarah Schwartz, a conference volunteer and our chapter vice president.

Saturday, November 4

Virginia Swift was our Saturday morning breakfast speaker on how researching history and mystery are similar. She not only made history come alive for us, she had us all rolling up our sleeves and anxious to begin researching material for our novels.

We then heard from a panel of four publishers—UNM Press's Luther Wilson, local independent publisher Gibbs Smith, Anna Gallegos of the Museum of New Mexico, and editor Peter Joseph of St. Martin's Press in New York. Luther confided that while UNM Press is a leader among university presses in the amount of fiction it publishes, it has had to cut back to eight novels a year. The mysteries it publishes are contemporary Southwest tales from authors who live in the Southwest (needless to say, preferably those who live in New Mexico and have their tales set here). You can find helpful information on how to approach editors on the "Evil Editor" blog, which critiques query letters.

(cont'd. on next page)

(Tony Hillerman Writers' Conference, cont'd.)

Over lunch, Susan Slater interviewed Craig Johnson, whose first Wyoming mystery, *Cold Dish*, featuring Sheriff Walt Longmire, is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. He brought Walt Longmire campaign buttons and bumper stickers that many of us were soon sporting—just in time to confuse New Mexico voters on Election Day!

The first set of Saturday afternoon breakout sessions included J. A. Jance spilling the secrets of “Series That Sell,” Larry Gustafson on “A Writer’s Guide to the Legal Process,” and Tim McNeese on the “Indians of the Southwest in Tony Hillerman’s Fiction.”

Larry continued his legal introduction in the second breakout session. Chapter speaker and former federal undercover officer Lucinda Schroeder spoke on interrogations and identifying deceptive speech. Craig Johnson told us about how to build character “the easy way,” noting that character is revealed by what is said about a character, what that character says, and what that character does.

J. A. Jance, the evening keynote speaker, was both moving and eloquent in describing the struggle she had getting started and balancing her personal life with her professional one. She concluded with a heartbreaking a capella rendition of Janis Ian’s plaintive “At Seventeen,” which described how “ugly ducklings” like her had learned to cope. Also at the banquet, editors from *Cowboys & Indians* magazine announced that Kent Anderson, a federal prosecutor from Tennessee, had won the third annual Tony Hillerman short story contest. He was photographed with first-year winner Dennis Herrick of Albuquerque and second-year winner Craig Johnson of Ucross, Wyoming.

Saturday Announcement

Peter Joseph of St Martin’s Press delivered a bombshell that evening, announcing the creation of his company’s annual Tony Hillerman Prize for the best unpublished first mystery novel set in the Southwest. The award includes a \$10,000 advance and hardback publication. This is a significant award. Only St. Martin’s Press does this, and the Hillerman prize joins their Malice Domestic Best First Traditional Mystery prize awarded each spring and their Best First Private Eye Mystery prize, also awarded annually.



Sunday, November 5

St Martin’s Press closed out the conference at breakfast on Sunday with a presentation on “How to Write a Winning Mystery.”✓

†**Nooseletter Submissions**†

Croak & Dagger friends are encouraged to contribute articles, reviews, and essays on aspects of mystery writing *and* reading for publication consideration. Information on relevant conferences or events is also welcome. Especially let us know if you have published a new book or story, or have an upcoming local author event. (Unbridled enthusiasm for your own mystery book is encouraged here.)

Length: Articles should average 500 words.

Deadlines: Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to publication: February 15, April 15, June 15, August 15, October 15, and December 15.

The Living and the Dead: As a general policy, articles and information should focus on living authors rather than dead ones, but that's not set in concrete shoes. Articles about specific historical development of the crime-mystery writing genre, for example, would be welcome.

Submissions: Please submit via email to shirleycoe@comcast.net, with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically.✓

—Shirley Coe

Summary of Findings

The *Nooseletter* is the internal organ of the Croak & Dagger chapter, Albuquerque, of Sisters in Crime (SinC). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and editors.



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Contact the membership chair at croakdagger@yahoo.com.