



SISTERS in CRIME  
**CROAK & DAGGER**  
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



# THE NOOSELETTER

Volume III, Number 6—November 2007

## †Expert Testimony†

### From the Prez

It's the time of year when we embark on serious holiday celebrations, take stock in the year just past, and get ready for a new one. In December, Croak and Dagger will live up to its motto with a holiday meeting and party filled with felonious fun and criminal companionship.

This celebration will also mark the end of the term for the 2007 board. Here's how your dedicated board members have worked hard this year to make your experience at Croak and Dagger more meaningful.

Jen Williams, program chairperson, did a fantastic job recruiting interesting and entertaining speakers. Remember the self-defense expert, the federal prosecutor, and the medical examiner? All great stuff! Thanks to editor Shirley Coe, we had an over-the-top *Nooseletter* filled with great book reviews, writing tips, and other mysterious matter. No board can be complete without a membership chairperson. Sarah Schwartz kept us posted on when our individual membership was about to expire, and reminded us about Croak and Dagger's exciting events. On top of that, Sarah maintained our awesome Croak and Dagger Web site.

Margaret Tessler, our secretary, dutifully recorded everything decided at our board meetings. Trust me, nothing got by her! Treasurer Bill Hershey—our only guy sister—did a great job of managing our bank account. We're all grateful to Bill for his energy and willingness to pick up miscellaneous loose ends and take care of them. By the way, Sarah and Bill are the reason our book exchange was fully stocked at every meeting. I'd also like to thank vice president Cheryl Wadleigh. In spite of difficult personal health issues, Cheryl backed me up whenever I needed it.

It was my joy and privilege to work with this board and to be your president. Thanks to everyone for supporting Croak and Dagger meetings and events. Come to the November meeting and vote for your *new* board members!

All the best.✓

—Lucinda Schroeder

## Don't Miss It!

**Tuesday, November 27, 7:00 p.m.**

**Gloria A. Casale, MD, MSPH** will speak to us about bioterrorism. Dr. Casale has had a long involvement with health care and public health issues. Following her work as a registered nurse, she earned an MD at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. After completing a residency in anesthesiology in 1984, she entered private practice first as an anesthesiologist and then as an emergency medicine physician. In 1996 Dr. Casale completed a second residency in preventive medicine and earned an MSPH at the University of Kentucky. In 2000 she was awarded a fellowship in health care policy development with the Department of Health and Human Services. Among her many professional interests are the international transport of pathogens and other public health issues, including travel medicine and integrative medicine. As part of her fellowship she studied bioterrorism and bioterrorism response at Fort Dietrich and the Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

Dr. Casale has provided medical advice and counsel to the transportation industry, and her effort in alerting the international port industry to various public health concerns has earned her recognition in many countries.

**Tuesday, December 18, 7:00 p.m.**

Join us for our **winter holiday gathering**. (Note: this is the *third* Tuesday of the month.)

## Croak & Dagger Elections Are November 27!

Here's our slate of candidates for 2008 Croak & Dagger officers:

President: Rob Kresge

Vice President: Penny Rudolph

Secretary: Margaret Tessler

Treasurer: Cheri Stow

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

Hospitality: open

Membership: Jonathan Sacks

Nooseletter Editor: Linda Triegel

Program and PR/Publicity: Ruth Brown Jimenez

Web Site Coordinator: Sarah Schwartz



Elections will take place on Tuesday, November 27. Come cast your vote! The new board will assume control in January. ✓

## September Murder Mystery Dinner



Croak & Dagger Murder Mystery Night suspects lined up after dinner to explain why they did or did not kill Richard Woods, a much-reviled man.

## Sisters in Crime

Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. *The purpose of Sisters in Crime shall be "to combat discrimination against women in they 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."*

## THANK YOU AND FAREWELL TO OUR 2007 CROAK & DAGGER BOARD

Many thanks to our 2007 Croak & Dagger board. 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).

### 2007 Officers

President: Lucinda Schroeder

Vice President: Cheryl Wadleigh

Secretary: Margaret Tessler

Treasurer: William Hershey



### 2007 Committee Chairs

Hospitality: Lucinda Schroeder

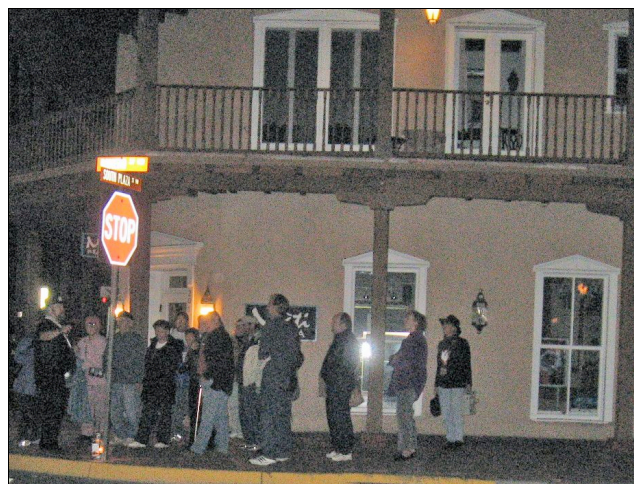
Membership: Sarah Schwartz

Nooseletter Editor: Shirley Coe

Programs and PR/Publicity: Jennifer Williams

Web Site Coordinator: Sarah Schwartz

## October Old Town Ghost Tour



Scarlet, a beautiful specter with long, red hair, used to work in the oldest profession across from this corner.



Our tour guide, Blake, told of Albuquerque's hatchet woman, who strikes down unfaithful lovers.

# The Cairn of Albertvs

## A Safe and Sound Samhain

*Salvus Samain . . .*

In days of yore when many high school students actually took Latin, the second year found them struggling through excerpts from Julius Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*. "*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres...*" The Cairn, a thoroughly undistinguished Latin scholar, was delighted when aeronautics was substituted for fourth-year Latin; there was a war on and Axis bombers might appear over Detroit, "the arsenal of democracy," thus it was important—if intrinsically futile—to be able to identify them.

But back to Julius. The Cairn's first writing attempt, some twenty years ago, was to retell the Roman commander's story from the viewpoint of a Celtic youth who lived at the time. The *Keltoi* had become a hot topic, and anyone with European ancestors tried to claim distant kinship with ancient tribes whose speech derived from a Celtic branch of Indo-European languages.

Chapter VI in the *Commentaries* gives an early glimpse of the Roman spin on the Celts. Fearless in battle—they had defeated a Roman army as recently as twenty-seven years earlier—warriors nevertheless harbored a psychiatrist's menu of phobias, including: fear of a pantheon of nature gods out to get them and a great fear that the sky would fall. Whatever *Celtique* genes linger in the Cairn more rationally wonder when the moon—a 2,160-mile-diameter sphere of rock, only 238,857 miles away—will come crashing down.

The gods were kept under control by druids, a hierarchy of priests who studied for twenty years, learning how to offer the lip-smacking human sacrifices that the gods seemed to relish. Their belief in reincarnation was hardly reassuring: that innocent-looking heron on the riverbank might be an enemy you killed, now in the service of a water god and waiting for you to take a fatal swim.

Transitional times were the most dangerous—intervals between dawn and daylight, daylight and dusk. Seasonal changes, "spirit nights"—such as May 1, the spring festival of Beltane and Midsummer's Eve—could be fun, but October 31—the eve of Samhain, November 1, the beginning of a new year—was particularly deadly. During that interval, unless ritually restrained, the spirits of the dead could cross over from the otherworld to our world and do deadly harm to the living.



Enter Hallowe'en. With the Christianization of pagan tribes, the Church declared November 1 All Saints' Day, a remembrance of the beloved holy dead. The interval before became All Hallows (Holy) Evening. The old superstitions still linger in witches, haunted places, scary costumes, and offerings of sweets to ward off mischief in the threat of "Trick or Treat!"

To be fair, Celts had developed a quite amazing culture, which merged into a Gallo-Roman society that became the basis of modern European civilization.

*Salvus Samain . . . a safe new year!✓*

—Albert Noyer, [www.albertnoyer.com](http://www.albertnoyer.com)

## Croak & Dagger

### Coming Events

**Tuesday, November 27, 2007, 7:00 p.m.:**

**Gloria A. Casale, MD, MSPH**

an expert on health care and public health issues speaking on bioterrorism

**Tuesday, December 18, 2007, 7:00 p.m.:**

**Winter holiday gathering** (the third Tuesday)

a time for sharing and giving (please feel free to bring cookies and holiday treats to share!)

We will have a Booktalk, where you can discuss your favorite (or not-so-favorite) authors and mysteries. (See the article about booktalks in this *Nooseletter*.)

We are also hosting a children's book drive. You are invited to bring a children's book (it can be a mystery, but doesn't have to be). We will donate the books we collect to Peanut Butter & Jelly, an Albuquerque-based organization that supports children and families who are at risk. They have a therapeutic preschool for children ages birth to five, and they also have outreach programs for children whose parents are incarcerated. They would appreciate books for children of all ages. Share the gift of reading with local at-risk children this winter season. For more information on Peanut Butter & Jelly, go to [www.pbjfamilyservices.org/index.html](http://www.pbjfamilyservices.org/index.html). E-mail Jen Williams at [jjkmb5@msn.com](mailto:jjkmb5@msn.com) with any questions.

**Saturday, February 16, 2008:**

**"Mystery, Mayhem, and Murder"**

**a mystery conference!**

Croak & Dagger and Southwest Writers team up to host a one-day mystery readers' and writers' conference.

# The Writer's Block

## A column on writing.

Earlier this year, I posted in this column Somerset Maugham's famous apocryphal assertion that "There are three rules in writing fiction. Unfortunately, no one can remember what they are."

Fortunately for us, MWA Grand Master Elmore Leonard took a stab at rules for writing nearly a dozen years ago. While he intended these rules to apply to mysteries, he has since acknowledged that they're equally applicable to any fiction. Leonard says a writer could violate any or all of them if she or he does it well and for good reason.

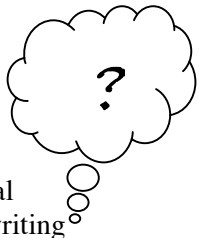
**1. Never open a book with the weather.** "If it's only to create atmosphere and not a character's reaction to the weather, you don't want to go on too long. The reader is likely to skip ahead looking for people."

**2. Avoid prologues.** "These often contain backstory, which you can drop in anywhere you want." I routinely violate this rule; all my manuscripts have prologues. A reviewer for the *Library Journal* said at the Bouchercon mystery convention in Las Vegas in 2003 that prologues could never have a place in a novel. Two other audience members insisted they were valid when the information in them was outside the period covered in the body of the novel and/or if they were in a point of view (POV) outside the novel's POV. The first speaker backed down and admitted those would be valid reasons.

**3. Never use a verb other than "said" to carry dialogue.** That's known as a "tag" to writers. Leonard has acknowledged that you can also use "asked" as a tag, but he meant writers should avoid such well-worn tags as "whispered," "shouted," "sighed," "screamed," and other overused words of that ilk. "The dialogue itself should convey emotion. Emotional tags are redundant and mark an amateur writer."

**4. Never use an adverb to modify the dialogue tags "said" or "asked."** Same reason as above. Most, but not all, violations of this rule routinely show up in romance novels. Leonard and other authors advise writers to minimize any adverbs and search out words ending in "ly" in order to eliminate them.

**5. Keep your exclamation points under control.** You can see how tough Leonard is on avoiding the use of tricks to prop up your prose.



"You should be allowed no more than two or three per 100,000 words." If you've already minimized or eliminated adverbs, you can see how hard it is also to chop out exclamation points.

**6. Never use the words "suddenly" or "all hell broke loose."** "This rule doesn't require a lot of explanation. Writers who overuse 'suddenly' also tend to exercise less control over their exclamation points."

**7. Use regional dialect sparingly.** Leonard says once we start spelling words in dialogue phonetically and loading the pages with apostrophes, we won't be able to stop. He's probably right. I wrote my whole first draft by dropping the g's from my male protagonist's dialogue and making my schoolteacher avoid contractions and use more educated words. Then I saw how forced that was and how Larry McMurtry makes Woodrow and Gus sound Texan without those tricks. If anybody needs to use regional dialogue or patois, make sure it's not your main characters. It's not too difficult to write or read it if only minor characters use it, and in very few appearances.

**8. Avoid detailed descriptions of characters.** You need to describe each character adequately, except for those who make brief appearances, what would be called movie extras. Leonard means you should use few telling details about major characters and don't describe new outfits every time your heroine appears in a new scene.

**9. Don't go into great detail describing places and things.** Likewise, locations should be briefly described the first time they appear in a scene and not again in subsequent scenes unless something important about that location has changed. A fire? The old rocking chair has been sold? "Even if you're good at it, you don't want descriptions that bring the action, the flow of the story, to a standstill."

**10. Try to leave out the parts that readers tend to skip.** This is the best-known and most-often quoted of Leonard's ten admonitions. Of course, all writers would do that if we could only identify those parts. Leonard says, "Think of what you skip in reading a novel. I bet you skip large paragraphs of prose that have too many words in them. I'll bet you don't skip dialogue." In other words, break up long paragraphs of description, eliminating as much of it as you can, and emphasize action and storytelling through dialogue. Leonard's works are so dialogue heavy that his style has been called "cinematic." Not a bad label if half your novels have been made into movies, as his have. ✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net



## Clues for a Successful Signing



In principle, a book signing is a fine concept. A writer is allotted a specific time and location, and the owner or coordinator of the store or library promises to promote and publicize in order to ensure a good crowd. Copies of the book will be there on time.

(Right! Better carry some in the trunk of your car, just in case.)

The goal, of course, is to sell product! The other objective is to promote good will. The risks, however, are myriad. Many things can and often do go wrong. A major risk involves location. If you choose the wrong store you could be very lonely. Do your homework. Find a tried-and-true location where successful readings are the rule rather than the exception. And timing is essential. Avoid holidays and times when sports mega events are scheduled. Demographic studies reveal that more women than men read mysteries, particularly college-educated women over forty. (We're not talking about chick lit here.) Pay attention to sports schedules because husbands sometimes want their ladies to share in the glory of whatever sport is on the tube. (Someone has to serve the nuts!)

It's a costly error to schedule a signing when another event involving a celebrity is scheduled for the same time. Though it would require a psychic to predict in advance the perfect time for a signing. Once, when a friend of ours scheduled a reading on Cape Cod, Hillary Clinton happened to be signing at the same time two blocks over.

In a former life, my cowriter and I were poets, with a couple of books each, and we toured New England. If you think it's not always easy to draw a crowd for a mystery signing, try poetry. This genre doesn't have the blind loyalty of mystery fans. In comparison, mystery writers generate marvelous loyalty. Once a fan has taken to an author's work, it's like an addiction. This is why independent mystery bookstores are able to stay in business, as Sisters in Crime members well know.

Our signings and readings as poets were going rather well. Then came Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where we knew no one. Was it lonely! Although our event had been publicized, at 7:00 every chair was empty. At 7:10 a homeless man came in and sat down. The show must go on, so we read a few poems and asked for questions. (Even the store manager was busy waiting on customers.)

When the man raised his hand, I smiled. "Yes?" Secretly, I thought, "Wow, we must have gotten through to him." He smiled and inquired, "Ain't there no refreshments?"

We're now doing signings for our new Maine mystery. For our launch, we chose a lovely bookstore located in Searsport in a historic old bank building. We knew that David McCullough had signed a few months earlier and that the lines had gone around the building. We were virtual unknowns, so we hoped for maybe a dozen friends. We were over the moon when thirty folks showed up, although most headed first for the wine and cheese.

Our second signing was in Bucksport, a mill town where our dentist and doctor happen to be located. We were scheduled for Saturday at 1:00 p.m. At five past, our hearts sank. Even the owner was reading the *New York Times*. At 1:10, a couple arrived who'd missed the previous signing. Then another couple, our doctor's nurse, her husband, and their visitors (captives!). Our spirits rose. Two minutes later, four more friends. Then three bored tourists wandered in from the B & B across the street. We read excerpts, answered questions, and then signed ten books. We were darned lucky, considering there were no refreshments.

Many events are planned for this fall and winter. Some will succeed; others will not. But the rule we must remember is that authors sell one book at a time. And let's not forget word of mouth. No store is too small, no library too remote. If they buy the first mystery in a series, there's a good chance they'll buy the second. Here's hoping!✓

—Carolyn Page,  
writing with Ross Erwin as "Page Erwin."  
*Their first mystery is Bloodsport at Hiram Bog.*

## 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!

E-mail [contact@croak-and-dagger.com](mailto:contact@croak-and-dagger.com) for further instructions. (PLEASE NOTE: *This is Croak & Dagger's new e-mail address.*)

# Croak & Dagger Booktalk

**Tell us about your favorite mystery at our December holiday gathering.**

Our final Croak & Dagger meeting of the year will be December 18 (the *third* Tuesday of the month). The evening will be a winter holiday gathering, a time to share stories about the great mysteries we've read this year. We hope many of you will prepare a booktalk to present, while we all enjoy felonious fun and criminal companionship.

## What Is a Booktalk?

A booktalk is an advertisement for a book. A booktalk is not evaluative and is not a review. It is an intriguing glimpse of what lies between the covers of a book.

## Booktalking Basics

- Talk about a book you have read.
- Talk about a book you like.
- Create your own style.
- Never tell the ending.
- At the end of the booktalk, show the book and announce the title and author.

## Tips for Delivering a Booktalk

- Use the present tense to involve the audience.
- Grab the audience with the first sentence.
- Drop your audience into the action, character, or mood.
- If you plan to use props in your talk, make sure each one you use has a purpose and does not overshadow what you are saying about the book.
- Keep the purpose of your talk in mind—persuading someone to read the book. Plan a beginning, a middle, and an end for your talk.
- End with a hook for your audience.
- Stop when you get to the end of your talk.

## Types of Booktalks

Use one or more of the following elements. How you talk about the book depends on the book's character. Be selective.

- *Plot summary:* When plot is the main focus of excitement, summarize the plot up to a climactic moment and stop. "To find out what happened next, read . . ."
- *Character description:* Describe one of the main characters in detail or briefly describe several of the main characters.

- *Episode, anecdote, or short story synopsis:* Tell one episode. Choose one early in the book, and one that gives the flavor of the characters and the action. This is good for collections of short stories, for books with chapters that stand alone, or for nonfiction that involves telling a series of events.
- *Mood-based presentation:* Capture a unique writing style or mood of the book, using quotes from it, reading short excerpts aloud, or stringing together phrases and sentences from the book to make your talk sound like the book. To create a mood (spooky or mysterious, for example), use your voice, changing the pitch, pace, and rhythm and pausing for effect to heighten the suspense.✓



*Most of the tips included here are from Nancy Keane, Joni Richards Bodart, or [www.thebooktalker.com](http://www.thebooktalker.com) Booktalking Colorado.*

## DON'T FORGET:

Tuesday, November 27, 7:00 p.m.  
(vote for new officers!)

Tuesday, December 18, 7:00 p.m.  
(the third Tuesday of the month)

Tuesday, January 22, 7:00 p.m.

## Croak & Dagger Classified

ABIQUIU AREA—New resident seeks writing group. Me: published in fiction and nonfiction, love mystery/suspense/literature, working on novel and short stories, can provide meeting spot. You: intermediate writer, published or not, able to give and take thoughtful, honest critiques, willing to travel to Abiqui. Please e-mail [donnamoorehead13@yahoo.com](mailto:donnamoorehead13@yahoo.com).



## Book Review: 1

*Jacob's Ladder*, by Jackie Lynn.

**A new author arrives in the Southwest.**

I had lunch last week on a matter related to a board on which I serve. At our table was a woman who had just moved to Albuquerque. In the small talk that followed introductions I asked what she did.

"Write and serve a UCC parish part-time,"

Lynne Hinton said.

"Great. I'm a writer too. Have you had any luck getting published?" I asked.

Her reply blew me away. "Yes. I published six books through HarperCollins and just finished the second book in a mystery series, published by St. Martin's Press using the name Jackie Lynn.

I told her about Croak and Dagger and asked if she would be interested in speaking at one of our meetings. I would recommend her to our program committee. Lynne said yes and would be interested in meeting New Mexico writers. As we left the restaurant she gave me a copy of one of her mysteries, *Jacob's Ladder*.

I set about reading the book immediately upon reaching home. *Jacob's Ladder* is a cozy set in Shady Grove, a campsite along the Mississippi River in West Memphis, Arkansas. Rose Franklin, a curious amateur sleuth, is surrounded by a funny group of characters who occupy the campground with her. Like many sleuths in mystery lore, she stumbles into more trouble than she can handle alone. Her friends help with advice and concerns for her safety as dangers mount. Rose had solved one murder shortly after moving to West Memphis (Lynne's first mystery—*Down by the Riverside*) and now finds herself trying to figure out the mysterious death of an old New Mexico pueblo Indian she discovers dead in his camper at Shady Grove.

I had a hard time believing Rose to be as naïve as she appeared about the sad history and horrific experience of Indians in early America. I also had to suspend belief concerning her withholding of evidence and encountering mysterious strangers in town as she seemingly stumbled toward solving the mystery. *Jacob's Ladder* is not a thriller but a quiet page-turner, a funny romp as Rose plods along, getting into increasing layers of trouble while the mystery unravels.

The book is a pleasant, amusing cozy, worth a couple of hours of light reading. I hope we get to greet Lynne at a future Croak and Dagger program meeting. ✓

—William Hershey

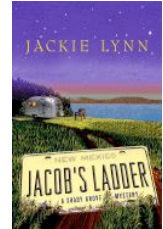


## Book Review: 2

*Jacob's Ladder*, by Jackie Lynn  
(a Shady Grove Mystery).

New York, St. Martin's Minotaur,  
2007. ISBN-10: 0-312-35231-X.

I always check the New Arrivals shelf at my local branch library. That's where a jacket showing *Jacob's Ladder*, seemingly embossed on a New Mexico license plate, caught my eye. The jacket flap revealed that the story was set in West Memphis, Arkansas, right across the river from my wife's hometown of Memphis, Tennessee. Two good reasons to try it, and I was still on the book jacket.



Now I'm past the book jacket. I've finished the book and reached a conclusion: There are books that should be read because of superb plotting, and there are books that should be read for their rich characterizations. *Jacob's Ladder* should be read to learn how bad a book can be and still get published. I mean *really* bad.

It's difficult to identify *Jacob's Ladder's* genre. It starts out attempting to be a mystery: in chapter 1, Zuni Indian Jacob Sunspeaker (note: *not* "Native American"—score one for non-PC-ness) pulls his trailer into a back corner of the Shady Grove Campground late one night. He has been followed from his New Mexico pueblo by a black SUV; isn't that about as obvious as an outhouse in the front yard? "No one witnessed the old man struggle and finally fall." Good start, but at five pages it's not exactly tightly written.

By the second of the thirteen pages of chapter 2 we have entered cozyland. We're introduced to the denizens of the campground, seemingly chosen for their diversity. There's Mary, the manager, for whom "English was not her first language" (but we never learn what was), whose speech varies inconsistently from faux Charlie Chan to pseudo-Ebonics. Ms. Lou Ellen, supervisory doyenne and mother-in-law of the campsite's owner, is a caricature of elderly Southern matronhood. Old Man Willie, a sort of general handyman, introduced in chapter 2 having erotic dreams, subsequently disappears, and then awakes at the finale to save the day, improbably. Lucas and Rhonda, the ex-con-but-redeemed owners of the campground, are currently off sailing up the Mississippi, but return with their Harley-biker gang to save the day, improbably. Mr. Lester Earl Perkins, the most interesting of the

(cont'd. on next page)

*(Book Review, cont'd.)*

group, is a three-wheeled dog who apparently arrived with Mr. Sunspeaker and whom Ms. Lou Ellen is convinced is the reincarnation of her second ex-husband, Mr. Lester Earl Perkins. It's an unusual cast that might be promising, in the right hands.

Heroine Rose Franklin is described as "a curious and spiritual sleuth." (Could that be a clue to the genre—a redneck Miss Marple?) Unfortunately her behavior seems more like a clueless divorcee with the genius of Winnie the Pooh and the dimension of a Mobius strip. She makes consistently dumb decisions that get her into trouble with the sheriff. She's the Jessica Fletcher of Special Ed 101. Example: Rose hides in a hidden compartment in the deceased Indian's trailer to avoid detection by a pair of bad guys intent on examining its innards, and is towed off westward on I-40 around midnight. It could be a promising plot line, but Ms. Lynn's estimate of the speed capabilities of a 1974 Ford pickup truck towing a Coachman camper-trailer would have benefited from better research. The truck gets to a motel parking lot in Henryetta, Oklahoma, a distance of 360 miles, while it's still dark (later determined to be 5:20 a.m.), which would require an average speed of 67.5 miles per hour. Highly unlikely.

The author challenges the reader's comprehension by a stilted, almost antiquated style that intrudes on the story's flow, causing one to stumble trying to decide what she is attempting to convey; e.g., "Rose turned toward the sidewalk and noticed the ponytail hanging down the man's back, the tall, dark manner of his figure." *Say what?*

Lynn includes an irrelevant and diversionary backstory in which Rose's ex-husband and his trophy wife visit the campground to tell Rose of her estranged father's approaching death. Rose's extended soliloquizing on the dilemma between attempting a reconciliation and carrying on with her new life adds nothing to the primary story line and seems to have been contrived to fulfill a minimum word requirement.

According to the jacket bio, author Lynn "is a writer and journalist who divides her time between North Carolina and New Mexico." *Jacob's Ladder* is the second in a possible series involving Rose and the Shady Grove cast. Lynn is also credited with six additional fiction volumes under a pseudonym and a nonfiction volume on meditation.

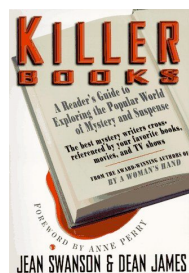
As the French put it: *chacun á son goût*, but I found this one barely digestible.✓

—Ira Rimson

## ROB'S RANDOM SHOTS

Something a little different this month. Reviews of two books that may help you with your holiday gift buying for mystery readers you know, or for dropping hints for a novel you might like Santa to bring you. These books describe many authors and subgenres of mystery. You're sure to find more of what you like to read than you knew existed. Check them out at your local library (or bookstore if you can find them there).

### November Case File Number One



***Killer Books: A Reader's Guide to Exploring the Popular World of Mystery and Suspense*** by Jean Swanson and Dean James, Berkley Prime Crime Reference, 1998, trade paperback, \$13.00, 358 pp.

OK, so this book is a getting a little dated. It makes up for that by being authoritative and exhaustive. But it's arranged so that *you* won't be exhausted. Try to find a newer edition.

This volume breaks up mystery and suspense into chapters/categories: "Cops" (76 pages) with sections on British police procedurals, their American counterparts, and the increasingly popular other foreign police novels, "Suspense/Psychological Mysteries," "Historical Mysteries," "Private Eyes," "Legal Thrillers," "Romantic Suspense," "Capers and Criminals" (from their point of view), "Reporters," "Writers and Filmmakers" (as sleuths), "Amateur Sleuths," and "Sci-Fi/Horror/Fantasy Mysteries."

Besides this breakdown, at the end of each chapter or subsection the authors provide a list of names of other writers in that category that they didn't profile in depth, and lists of theatrical and made-for-TV movies and TV shows that readers in that subgenre might enjoy.

And throughout each chapter there are groups of authors mentioned in very obscure categories that include authors of: "Classics Featuring Scotland Yard Inspectors," "Mysteries with Musical Themes," "Southwestern Mysteries" (including New Mexico's own Tony Hillerman, James Doss, Walter Satterthwait, Aimee and David Thurlo, and Judith Van Gieson), "Native American Sleuths" (including Hillerman, Doss, the Thurlors, and Margaret Coel), "Medical Themes or Detectives," "Detectives Who Like to Fish," "Sports Mysteries," "African-

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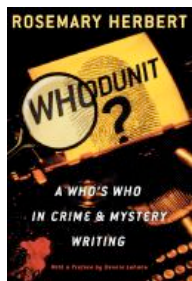


**(Rob's Random Shots, cont'd.)**

American/Black Detectives," "Gay or Lesbian Detectives," "Hispanic Detectives," "Gardening and Botanical Mysteries," "Mysteries with Cooking Themes," "Animal-Related Mysteries," "Environmentally Oriented Mysteries," "Clerical Sleuths," and "Actors in Mysteries."

As final touches to help you find what you'd like to read more of, Swanson and James conclude the book with an expected index of authors, but also include an index of characters and another geographic index of characters by state and foreign country. If you can't find a book or series you like in *Killer Books*, you're just not trying. Happy hunting.

**November Case File Number Two**



**Whodunit? A Who's Who in Crime and Mystery Writing** by Rosemary Herbert, Oxford University Press, 2003, trade paperback, \$18.95, 235 pp.

At first glance, this volume would seem to be shorter and perhaps less comprehensive than the Swanson-James reference book. Be not deceived. This book is printed in tiny type and single-spaced (the other book is space-and-a-half with 12-point type).

Rosemary Herbert has impressive academic and editorial credentials in the mystery field, and this book not only covers authors in a more up-to-date manner, but also lays out types of books and sleuths in every conceivable category. Besides the type size, though, the other drawback is that listings in this volume are not as readily accessible, being laid out in two-column, encyclopedia fashion. However, each entry gives detailed information on the author (separate name listings for sleuths) and the category and history of types of sleuths. Authors are in upper case; characters are in upper-and-lower case. Lacking are the Swanson-James movie and TV lists, a drawback for those seeking cinema treatments of favorite books and sleuths.

Besides nearly every mystery and thriller author and sleuth you've ever heard of, and hundreds you haven't, here's a partial list of the non-person categories Herbert explores, just the *a*'s: Academic Sleuth, Accidental Sleuth, African-American Sleuth, Amateur Detective, Animals, Antihero, Aristocratic Sleuth, and Armchair Detective.

Categories starting with other letters abound, including, just to name a sample: Great Detectives,

Sleuths with Disabilities, Clerical Sleuths, Con Artists, Sleuth Couples, Master Criminals, Elderly and Ethnic Sleuths, Feminists and Femme Fatales, Forensic Pathologists, Gay Characters, Gentleman (and Gentlewoman) Sleuths and Criminals, Hard-Boiled Detectives, Historical Figures, and on and on.

More than Swanson and James, Herbert notes in depth the great historical figures and characters in mystery writing, from Poe and Anna Katherine Green through Christie and Sayers and modern masters like Grafton (both of them), Cornwell, and Connelly.

Whatever your taste, if you're willing to spend a few nights, you can find authors and characters you'll enjoy and at the same time learn more about the mystery-thriller genre than you ever knew. I know I did.✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

**MORE MYSTERIOUS SOURCES**

Check out this Web site: [www.mysteryreaders.org](http://www.mysteryreaders.org). If you don't already know about this site and its quarterly publication, *The Mystery Readers Journal*, you should scope out the organization and the publication's table of contents and back issues. It covers a wide range of mysteries with a specific theme each issue and articles by well- and lesser-known mystery authors.

In addition, the International Mystery Readers award the annual Macavity prizes for best novel, best first novel, best short story, best nonfiction, and best historical mystery. The last two issues dealt with ethnic detectives. Last year's issues covered mysteries set in Italy, murder in the Far East, and academic mysteries. 2005's contents included art mysteries, bibliomysteries, and more on mysteries set in Italy.

The *Journal* is in its 18th year and has more than 2,000 subscribers, now including me. I just learned of it through 2008 Croak & Dagger vice presidential nominee Penny Rudolph. See if the site and the *Journal* don't interest you, too.✓

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

## Map Your Mystery



I often want to write about a place too far away to visit, and I need to know what's on a particular street corner. Flat maps are wonderful, but they don't provide the detail I need to give the setting

verisimilitude.

### Street and Bird's-Eye Views

Mapquest is a miracle. The September 2007 issue of *InSinC*, the Sisters in Crime newsletter, however, transported me to another level of mapping. Barbara Fister, in her article, "Research Tips: Finding Your Way in the Library," describes **Google Street View**. Street View only covers selected cities, and the views are not in real time, but what it does cover is worth checking out.

Through <http://maps.google.com> I went to Las Vegas, Nevada, and trolled up and down Las Vegas Boulevard—the Strip. I discovered the perfect wedding chapel where my protagonist, Taffy Black, marries Rhet Merriman. When the bride and groom leave the chapel, Taffy suggests the couple celebrate by robbing a bank. Thanks to Street View, I found a Nevada State Bank directly across Las Vegas Boulevard from the chapel and a Bank of America a block west on Bridger, the cross street. What luck!

What else is in the neighborhood? I made a satellite reconnaissance of the area—even adding street labels to it. A little computer hand allowed me to navigate the bird's-eye view and find out what buildings are in the vicinity for Taffy and Rhet's quick getaway.

While I was playing around with maps, I discovered Microsoft's <http://maps.live.com>. This site includes bird's-eye views of areas with easy navigation and, while it doesn't get to street level, it does provide 3-D map imagery that may get you where you want to go. I found another site, <http://www.everyscape.com>, which is set to launch this fall. At the outset it will include only four U.S. cities, but driving around at street level online—as **EveryScape** allows—may become an activity we expect for every locale before long.

These map features are just the beginning of a new world of data to amaze the mystery-reading public.

### Detailed Historical Maps

If you write historical works, the **Digital Sanborn Maps** are a miracle of a different sort. Between 1867 and 1970, Sanborn publishers created over 660,000 maps for more than 12,000 cities and towns in the United States to help fire insurance companies assess the risk of various properties. Some maps provide more detail than others, but they are all invaluable in learning what buildings were extant at certain points in history.

The Albuquerque/Bernalillo Library System doesn't subscribe to ProQuest, the company that provides Digital Sanborn Maps to libraries; however, the microfilm and some hard copy versions are available at the Special Collections branch. The University of New Mexico library *does* carry the digital maps.

Sanborn has maps for over 50 communities in New Mexico—from Alamogordo to Vaughn. I looked at Las Vegas, New Mexico, which has nine sets of maps covering October 1883 up to September 1948.

I needed an 1886 hotel for Walter and Bertha Featherweight. On the corner of Grand and Douglass—in the May 1886 map—I found the Occidental Hotel, and a block south on Douglass, I spotted the St. Nicholas Hotel. Situated between the two hotels, at 6<sup>th</sup> and Douglass, the Tamme Opera House begged to be the site of a murder. When I zoomed in, I saw an office next door labeled "Safe Deposit." Mr. and Mrs. Walter Featherweight will be well positioned to pull off some dastardly deed!✓

—Sarah Schwartz

## Classified Information

Know of Web sites of interest to our members?

Send a note to the *Nooseletter* editor.

# MYSTERY, MAYHEM, and MURDER



**SOUTHWEST WRITERS and CROAK & DAGGER**

**present**

**A Conference for Mystery Writers and Mystery Fans**

**Saturday, February 16, 2008**



**WHERE:** The conference will be held at the UNM Continuing Education Building, 1634 University Blvd. NE (just north of Indian School Road), Albuquerque, New Mexico. The evening banquet will be held at the MCM Eleganté Hotel, 2020 Menaul Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**WHEN:** February 16, 2008. Conference check-in (at the UNM Continuing Education Building) will be from 8:00–8:30 a.m. followed by the conference from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. The banquet (at the MCM Eleganté Hotel) will be from 6:30–8:30 p.m.

**WHAT:** Conference registration includes conference presentations and materials, lunch with featured speaker Larry Barker, refreshments, and the possibility of a 10-minute pitch session with either an agent or an editor. **The number of pitch sessions is limited, and the sessions will be assigned on a first-come first-served basis.** Banquet registration includes dinner at the MCM Eleganté with keynote speaker Susan Dunlap.

**WHO: Speakers for the daytime conference include:**

- Toni Plummer, editor, Thomas Dunne Books—“What Every Aspiring Mystery Writer Should Know”
- Larry Barker, investigative reporter, KRQE News 13—“The Case of the Missing Tourists: New Mexico’s Greatest Murder Mystery”
- Dr. Michelle Barry, pathologist, UNM Office of the Medical Investigator
- Zoe Fishman, literary agent, Lowenstein-Yost Associates
- Jess Benson, director, NM Poison and Drug Information Center—“A Writer’s Guide to Creating a Perfect Poisoning”
- Dianne O’Connell, book doctor—“The Key to Writing Success: Mastering Point of View”
- Lucinda Schroeder, former special agent, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—“The Language of Liars”
- Shirley Raye Redmond, award-winning author—“How to Hatch a Mystery Plot and Make it Chirp”
- Phil Young, National Park Service—“A Grand Canyon Divorce”

**The keynote speaker for the evening banquet is Susan Dunlap:** Anthony award-winning author of the Jill Smith mysteries, the Kiernan O’Shaughnessy series, and the first book in a new series featuring Darcy Lott, a stuntwoman with a secret—speaking on “Sisters in Crime: Twenty Years of Mystery.”

## **REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 1, 2008, TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE EARLY BIRD RATE**

**By mail:** Fill out the REGISTRATION FORM, with your check or credit card information, and mail to SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris Street NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111 (postmark by 2/1/2008 for the early bird rate). You can pick up a registration form at the next Croak & Dagger meeting, November 27.

**By phone:** Call the SouthWest Writers office at 505-265-9485 between 9:00 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday (for credit card payment only).

**Online:** Visit the SouthWest Writers Web site ([www.southwestwriters.org](http://www.southwestwriters.org)) to register online (credit card only).

**The number of spaces at the conference and the banquet are limited, as are the number of pitch sessions. We will try to accommodate everyone, but early registration is encouraged.**

**HOTEL:** For hotel reservations, call the hotel of your choice or call the MCM Eleganté Hotel (505-884-2511 or 1-866-650-8900) and ask for the Mystery Conference special rate (\$79.99 plus tax per night), which includes a complimentary full hot breakfast buffet, complimentary beverages in the evening, and free shuttle service to and from the airport.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Visit the SouthWest Writers Web site at [www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com) or call the SouthWest Writers office at 505-265-9485 between 9:00 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday.

## 2008 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, January 22, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, February 26, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 25, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, April 22, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 27, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, June 24, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, July 22, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, August 26, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, September 23, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, October 28, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, November 25, 7:00 p.m.  
December TBA

### Meetings are free to the public.

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

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

## †*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 e-mail to [newsette@earthlink.net](mailto:newsette@earthlink.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.✓



## Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?

\$20/year brings mystery to your life! The Albuquerque *Croak & Dagger* chapter welcomes mystery fans who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship, and sensational speakers.

Benefits of membership in the *Croak & Dagger* chapter include a subscription to our *Nooseletter*, close contact with local mystery writers, and fun events with other mystery fans.

You do *not* have to be a member of the national organization to join us. Come hear our next program speaker and meet the gang. We promise to bring mayhem and murder into your life.

Contact our membership chair, at [contact@croak-and-dagger.com](mailto:contact@croak-and-dagger.com).