



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume VIII, Number 3 — May 2012

†Expert Testimony†

E-books Are Increasing Reading

As mystery fans, we probably all read a lot more than the average person. Or in Garrison Keillor's words, we are all above average. The ebook competition is heating up with the new Barnes and Noble Nook Division, which got a \$300 million investment from Microsoft, with a promise of another \$300 million.

Whatever the problems people see with ebooks, they do seem to be increasing the amount of reading many people, especially the owners of ebook readers, are doing.

This column summarizes some of the results of the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project survey. For the complete results go to <http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2012/04/04/the-rise-of-e-reading/>

Of American adults 21% have read an ebook in the last year. It was only 17% before the last Christmas season. Almost 29% have an ebook reader or a tablet. The average ebook consumer read 24 books last year, while non-ebook readers only average 17. The medians (where half of the values are above and half are below) for these two groups were 13 and 6.

Furthermore, 42% of the ebook readers say they are reading more now. On any given day 49% of the owners of ebook readers read an ebook and 59% of them read a printed book. Of those 16 or older, 78% read at least one book (in any format) in the last year.

Many readers are using multiple devices—42% used computers, 41% used dedicated ebook readers (Kindle, Nook, etc), 29% used cell phones, and 23% used tablet computers.

Ebooks are preferred for speedy access and portability, while print books are preferred for reading to children and sharing with others.

Both print and ebook readers prefer to buy rather than borrow—54% for print book readers and 61% for ebook readers. Only audio book consumers prefer to borrow rather than buy, by about two thirds to one third.

People read for four reasons—for pleasure, to keep up with current events, for research, and for work or school. Owners of ebook readers are more likely than non-owners to read for all of these purposes. For pleasure 80% read at least occasionally and 36% read almost every day; for current events 78% read occasionally and 50% almost every day; for research 74% read occasionally and 24% almost every day; and for work or school 56% read occasionally and 36% almost every day.

In summary, while ebooks may be creating problems for publishers, they seem to be increasing the number of people who are reading and the amount of reading they are doing. This can't be bad for authors.

— Olin Bray, President

Don't Miss It!
Tuesday, May 22, at 7 p.m.

Our special guest speaker for May is author, playwright, and retired academic Richard E. Peck, whose works include *Final Solution*, a Best Science Fiction Novel of the Year awardee. See the next page for more.



Richard E. Peck's writing career — detoured for years — resumed when he left academe. After a career as an English professor and university administrator — president at one time or another of three universities — he now divides his time among three very satisfying pursuits: restrained meddling in the lives of his children and grandchildren, golfing at a level far below his aspirations, and writing.

Dr. Peck continues to resist persistent but fading desires to return to the classroom. Occasional consulting stints remind him of the political pressures he's traded away in order to take on the even more demanding but self-imposed goals and deadlines of full-time writing.

Richard E. Peck was born in Wisconsin. After graduating from high school (at 16) and two years of factory work, he enlisted in the Marine Corps, as a green PFC was selected for flight training, and in June 1956 was commissioned the youngest officer and pilot in the USMC at age 19. He subsequently completed an A.B. at Carroll College in 30 months, his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin in 3 years. He taught English at the University of Virginia and Temple University, then filled administrative positions at the University of Alabama and Arizona State, leading to presidencies of ASU, the University of New Mexico, and the University of South Florida.

During those years he committed his time and energies to scholarship, and his popular writing became infrequent. He did manage to complete 12 produced plays (three of them winners in national competitions), a score of short stories, a Best Science Fiction Novel of the Year (*Final Solution*), and TV scripts, as well as two editions of poetry.

Dr. Peck is a member of Screen Writers Guild of America (West) and has contributed occasional columns to a number of newspapers. He lives in Placitas, where he takes the 16 steps from his bed to his word processor every day and sits, telling stories, until the gorgeous New Mexico sunsets distract him.

The Albuquerque Croak & Dagger chapter of Sisters in Crime welcomes mystery fans, readers, and writers. Meetings are held in the police briefing room of the James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Substation, 12700 Montgomery NE (1 block east of Tramway). Unless otherwise noted, programs are free and open to the public.



Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. *The mission of Sisters in Crime shall be "to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry."*

Our vision is: "Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers."

And our motto is: "SinC into a good mystery!"

Check Out the Croak & Dagger Website for all your Croak & Dagger information needs.

www.croak-and-dagger.com

- Upcoming Programs
- 2011 Meeting Schedule
- Membership Form
- Speakers Bureau
- Links to Mystery Websites & Websites for Your Favorite Croak & Dagger Authors
- *The Nooseletter* Archive

The Line Up

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Noose News

June speaker

The speaker at the June 26 Croak & Dagger meeting will be Annmarie H. Pearson, a member of New Mexico State Poetry Society, whose first mystery novel, *The Fetish Ruby*, has just been published.

Annmarie has published poetry in several venues and has held the Chair position of the Rio Grande Valencia Poets for three years.

. She is also a Fiber Artist with weaving, knitting, and crocheting. She resides in Los Lunas with her husband Bill Pearson

Theater party

On July 14, Croak and Dagger will gather as a group to attend a production of *Angel Street* at the Adobe Theater. This play is based on the 1940s movie *Gaslight* starring Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer, Joseph Cotton, and a young Angela Lansbury as a saucy parlormaid.

The chapter will receive the group rate of \$12 per person and we have reserved 20 tickets for the performance. More details will be available at the May and June meetings...just one more, really good reason to join Croak and Dagger or pay up your dues for this year! We do fun things, folks!

Book signing

Michael McGarrity's latest novel, *Hard Country*, was released this month, and he will appear at the Costco at 500 Eubank SE in Albuquerque at Noon on Saturday, June 2. Get there early if you can. There will be a crowd.

At 2 p.m. that same day, Michael will be both speaking and signing at Barnes & Noble at the Coronado Mall in Albuquerque.

Michael McGarrity is the award-winning author of the Kevin Kearney series of twelve mystery novels. The College of Santa Fe has established the Hillerman-McGarrity scholarship to recognize the contributions of both New Mexico writers.

MWA University in Denver

The Rocky Mountain Chapter of Mystery Writers of America will host a full-day writing seminar under the auspices of national MWA at the Westin Downtown in Denver on August 11.

Mystery Writers of America University (MWA-U) is a full-day, low-cost writing seminar designed to teach participants the essential skills needed to write a novel, from the idea stage to the final editing. The focus is on the craft of writing, and the college-level courses are taught by published writers and experienced teachers. The core curriculum includes:

- After the idea
- Dramatic structure and plot
- Setting and description
- Character
- Editing
- The writing life

MWA-U is offered throughout the country, initiated by MWA chapter presidents who contact MWA national to request a session in their region. The full-day writing seminar is primarily designed as a member benefit but is open to the general public and applicable to all genres of fiction writing.

For detailed information about the Denver workshop and other sessions scheduled for 2012, visit www.rmmwa.org.

Written a Novel?

Polished Prose Manuscript Copyediting Service (specializing in mystery and romance fiction) will help you submit a superior, professionally presented manuscript to that agent or editor you're trying to impress. For details, write to The Editors at prosepolisher@earthlink.net.

Report from Malice Domestic 24

The 24th annual Malice Domestic mystery writers' conference was held April 26-29 at the Hyatt Hotel in Bethesda, Maryland/

This was my 10th Malice conference for traditional mysteries (all right, cozies, if you must call them that), beginning in 2001. It used to be right in my backyard, Crystal City, Virginia, but this is the second year it's been held at a Maryland suburban location, about 10 miles from my high school. Featured this year were:

Guest of Honor—Jan Burke

Toastmaster—Dana Cameron

Lifetime Achievement—Simon Brett

Poirot Award—Lee Goldberg (author and screenwriter)

Malice Remembers—Tony Hillerman (Lifetime Achievement and Best Nonfiction in 2002). His daughter

Anne presented her Hillerman Country slide show and reading Sunday afternoon.

Amelia Award (the first)—Elizabeth Peters, creator of Amelia Peabody and author of 67 novels)

This Year's Agatha Award Winners:

Best Novel—*Three Day Town* by Margaret Maron

Best First Novel—*Learning To Swim* by Sara J. Henry

Best Historical Mystery—*Naughty in Nice* by Rhys Bowen

Best Nonfiction—*Books, Crooks, and Counselors* by Leslie Budewitz

Best Short Story—"Disarming" by Dana Cameron, *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*

Best Children's/Young Adult Novel—*The Black Heart Crypt* by Chris Grabenstein



Since this was my first time to sit on a Malice panel and sell and sign books, my view into other activities was somewhat restricted by my schedule. But here's a quick overview:

Malice-Go-Round (or "Speed Dating for Authors"). On Friday afternoon, about 200 fans and writers flocked to more than 20 twelve-person tables where two chairs are left vacant. I and my partner for this two-hour event, Robert Spiller, author of modern mysteries with a high school math teacher sleuth, began at one table as did 20 other pairs of authors lucky enough to win the lottery for this event. The central timer gave each of us 90 seconds to pitch our book and then 30 seconds to rotate to the next table. We spied and handed out postcards and got real good at encapsulating what we'd written.

That evening was the live *auction of mystery-related items* to benefit a children's literacy project. Among the other items, I donated a baseball cap from Craig Johnson's Walt Longmire series ([begins on A&E on June 3rd](#)) that alone brought in \$250.

My Saturday morning panel, "*Have Gun, Will Travel: Mysteries Set Out West*," was moderated by brand-new author Linda Rodriguez (see my review elsewhere) and authors Casey Daniels, Greg Lilley, and Anne Hillerman, whom I got to sit next to. Signings immediately after.

I also assisted moderators at two other panels that interested me:

"Making History: Agatha Best Historical Nominees," moderated by Harriette Sackler and authors J.J. Murphy and my friend Ann Parker, who won this year's Bruce Alexander Award at LCC Sacramento in March. Winning author Rhys Bowen fell the previous day, hurt her back, and had to be transported back to California. I didn't try for a nomination since I only found out about this new award two days before nominating ballots were due. But next year

"The New Nick and Noras: Mixing Romance and Murder," moderated by Stephanie Evans, with authors Kate Carlisle, Elizabeth Duncan, Kathleen Ernst, Christina Freeburn, and Barbara Graham.

I ought to be out of space by now. Please check www.malicedomestic.org to see all the attendees and Google the websites of any that interest you.

—Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net, www.robertkresge.com

E-Book Borrowing, Preceded by E-Book Waiting

The following is excerpted from an article by Alan Finder in the April 11, 2012, New York Times:

As a technical matter, it's remarkably easy to borrow an e-book from your local library. But not if you want to take out the best-selling biography of Steven P. Jobs, the hero of the Internet age who helped lure tens of millions of people to personal computers, tablets and other digital devices.

The publisher of the Jobs biography, Simon & Schuster, does not sell digital books to libraries. Five of the six major publishers of trade books either refuse to make new e-books available to libraries or have pulled back significantly over the last year on how easily or how often those books can be circulated. And complaints are rampant about lengthy waiting lists for best sellers and other popular e-books from the publishers that are willing to sell to libraries.

Want to borrow "The Help," the novel by Kathryn Stockett? On New Jersey's state e-book consortium, 375 people were waiting for a copy recently. At the New York Public Library's Web site, 193 members had put a hold on a digital edition of Stieg Larsson's trilogy, which begins with "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo."

"We hear a lot of frustration," said Christopher Platt, the director of collections and circulation operations at the New York Public Library. "It's rational. We don't expect our readers to understand the complexities of the publishing industry."

These complexities may only increase with the announcement on Wednesday that the Justice Department had filed a civil antitrust action against major book publishers and Apple, accusing the companies of colluding in 2010 to raise the prices of e-books. In the meantime, though, if you can find the e-book you want in the library, it's easy to check it out. You don't have to go to the library to borrow a book, and even better, you don't have to go there to return it. Books vanish from your device when they are due. And you can get access to a library's e-books from myriad devices, including e-readers, tablets and smartphones.

You do have to learn one of the two basic systems. One is for Amazon's Kindle, which works directly through Amazon.com and is the easier of the two. The other requires you to download software from the Adobe Web site, and works for other e-readers. Some people find the software unwieldy, as well as difficult to download initially, librarians say. But it is manageable.

It is possible to download e-books from a library directly to some e-readers via Wi-Fi. For others, digital books must first be downloaded to a computer and then to an e-reader via a USB cable.

Here are some guidelines on how to borrow books for the most popular devices: Amazon's Kindle, which was made available for library books last September; Barnes & Noble's Nook; the Sony and Kobo e-readers; and tablets, laptops, PCs and smartphones.

Amazon Kindle: If you don't already have an Amazon account, you must create one on the Web site. Then go to your library's Web site and find the e-book listings. When you select an e-book to borrow, choose the Kindle format of the book. Click to check out. Select "get for Kindle," which will redirect you to the public library loan page on Amazon.com. From the "deliver to" menu, select "your Kindle." Choose "get library book," and it will be sent via Wi-Fi to your e-reader. (Caution: Some publishers require that certain e-books be transferred with a cable from a PC to a Kindle, even if Wi-Fi is available.)

Nook, Sony and Kobo: On a Web browser, search for Adobe Digital Editions on Adobe's Web site. Once on the site, click on the "download now" link to get the software that works with these readers. Click "launch" to begin the installation; when you see the setup assistant, click "continue." Click on the link for an Adobe ID online. A new browser will open; click on "create an Adobe account" and fill in the required information. Once your account is created, close the browser and return to Adobe Digital Editions. Enter your new Adobe ID and password and click to activate the software.

A new screen will appear for Adobe Digital Editions. Connect your Nook or other e-reader to your computer via USB cable. A screen will say “device setup assistant.” Click “authorize device.” A message will confirm the device has been authorized. Click “finished.”

You are now ready to go to the e-books section of your library’s Web site. You must select the EPUB format of a book, which uses the Adobe software; a cable is required to transfer an e-book from your computer to your e-reader.

IPad: Apple’s iPads and many other tablets and smartphones have apps for both the Kindle’s e-book software and for the Adobe Digital Editions software used by the Nook.

The vast majority of libraries use a software system called Overdrive to host their e-book collections. Browsing on most of these sites is similar to shopping on an online retailer’s site, and checking out a library’s e-book is also similar. Remember to select the appropriate format — Kindle or EPUB for Adobe Digital Editions — before adding a book to your cart.

Libraries are permitted to lend each digital book only one at a time, under licensing agreements, which is a prime reason for the long waiting lists on highly popular e-books.

The relative ease with which digitized books can be borrowed has left many publishers fearful of declining sales and the potential for piracy. Macmillan and Hachette, as well as Simon & Schuster, refuse to sell e-books to libraries.

Last year, the Penguin Book Group said it would no longer make new e-books available, and HarperCollins set new restrictions, saying its e-books may be checked out from libraries only 26 times, after which they expire.

While the publishers may be wary, consumers have taken to e-readers and tablets with astonishing enthusiasm.

Three years ago, 2% of American adults owned an e-reader, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, and only a few had a tablet. By January, in the latest Pew survey, 28% of adults said they owned an e-reader or a tablet, or both.

Libraries have been scrambling to catch up. Many have significantly expanded their budgets for e-books, buying from independent publishers and smaller houses.

Circulation has taken off. In Seattle, 512,000 e-books were borrowed last year, compared with 213,000 in 2010. The Seattle Public Library now has about 100,000 digitized books, although that is only a small fraction of its 2.3 million print holdings. In December and January, e-book circulation in the Chicago Public Library increased by 230 percent over a year earlier.

Growth has been equally rapid at the New York Public Library, which has about 88,000 digitized books and audio books, nearly double the amount from a year ago, Mr. Platt said. In the 12 months ending in February, members borrowed more than 646,000 e-books, more than double the number in the previous year.

Many libraries offer classes to teach people how to use e-readers and how to set up the software to borrow digital books. Still, libraries are straining to respond to the vast surge in demand despite publishers’ restrictions and their own stretched acquisition budgets.

“They know they’re in this highly volatile time,” Molly Raphael, the president of the American Library Association, said of the local libraries. “Publishers are trying to figure things out and libraries are trying to figure things out.”

Don’t Forget:

Left Coast Crime is coming back to the Rockies! The 2013 conference will be held in Colorado Springs, March 21-24, 2013, where “Murder is the Last Resort.” Featured guests: Craig Johnson & Laura Lipmann. To register and check for updates: www.leftcoastcrime.org/2013.

Reviews

Rob's Random Shots

The two books I'm reviewing in this issue have a couple of things in common. Although one protagonist is a police chief and the other a licensed PI, both stories are told from the first person and do an excellent job of making their settings like another character. Hard to imagine them taking place anywhere else.

May Case File Number 1

Every Last Secret by Linda Rodriguez, Thomas Dunne/St Martin's, 2012 (HB)

This book won the 2011 Malice Domestic contest for best unpublished traditional (think Agatha Christie) mystery novel. The prize included publication. In 2001, I entered the manuscript of my first mystery, *Murder for Greenhorns*, for the same prize. It was an early draft and unworthy to stand with the work of that year's winner, Julia Spencer-Fleming. You may have heard of her. With the springboard of publication in 2002, her novel, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, featuring sleuths Episcopal Priest Clare Fergusson and Miller's Kill, NY, Police Chief Russ van Alstyne, went on to win six major awards that first year, an unprecedented sweep for a debut mystery novel.

Like Julia's book (yes, I have met her, complimented her work, and read all her subsequent books), Linda's does not read like the work of a first-time author. And like Julia, her invented small town (in this case, Brewster, Missouri) becomes a character in the book. While Julia alternates chapters between her two sleuths' POVs, Linda uses only the first-person POV of her protagonist, Choteau University Police Chief (and refugee from the Kansas City PD) Marquitta Bannion, better known to family and friends as "Skeeter," usually shortened to Skeet. Skeet is half Cherokee, divorced, and keeps a cat and a dog named Wilma Mankiller. (Linda doesn't explain the name to readers and

didn't need to explain it to me. I hope you all know the significance.)

Like Julia, Linda wastes no time in getting to Skeet's first murder on campus and also like her predecessor, immediately begins stretching what most folks think of as the boundaries of Agatha Christie-type mysteries. We get a lot more forensics, more murders, the endangerment of children, the kidnapping of one, gunplay, physical assaults of Skeet and her elderly father, and the eventual shooting death of the killer by a minor.

Whew. In case you're still keeping up, that's a lot of stretching to the traditional more gentle, genteel, and cerebral Hercule Poirot/Jane Marple/Sherlock Holmes/Lord Peter Wimsey exemplars of a subgenre usually referred to derogatorily as "cozies."

Anyway, back to our sterling debut mystery: Chief of campus police Skeet is charged with finding out who murdered a student newspaper editor. She quickly identifies several faculty members as suspects and begins to interview them. Her quest is disrupted by the torture (see, another stretch of the cozy canvas) and murder of the editor's older wife. Linda treats us to a side trip to gather information in nearby Kansas City, where she encounters problems from her past—her disgraced cop dad, her ex-husband (still on the force)—but paints a wonderful picture that made me want to see Kansas City again.

Returning to Brewster and the Choteau campus, the action revs up, more bodies appear and we roar to a breathtaking shootout finale. The protagonist's situation looks ripe for a series and I hope to read more Skeet novels by Linda Rodriguez in coming years.

(Full disclosure: Linda was the moderator of my panel on mysteries set in the West at Malice Domestic near DC in late April.) ♦

—Rob Kresge (www.robertkresge.com)

Key:

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

May Case File Number 2

The Hanged Man by Walter Satterthwaite, UNM Press, 1993, 258 pp (TP)

This excellent novel, on the face of it (yes, that's a pun about covers), couldn't be more different from *Every Last Secret*. The protagonist is Joshua Croft, a male private eye working in Santa Fe. The suspects, instead of academics, are New Age spiritual gurus—alien channeler, astrologer, tarot card reader, psychic, Satanist, crystal healer, and Native American shaman (yes, I thought of that pun, too), with adopted professional names like Freefall, Morningstar, and Buffalo.

Both these novels share a couple of important points. They are both told from the first person POV. They involve a small group of suspects who all know each other, and they capture the feel of the setting so well that it acts almost as an additional character. But while Linda Rodriguez' maiden effort could take place at other small college campuses, readers who know Santa Fe and elements of its lifestyle and culture, will know this book couldn't be set anywhere else and is a great send-up of Santa Fe New Age types. All of Walter's suspects' neighborhoods, homes, and architecture should resonate with readers in our chapter.

As for the crime, magician Quentin Bouvier is found hanged in his bedroom after an all-night party/sleepover by nearly a dozen New Age friends. He won the bidding the night before (\$200,000) for an antique and much sought-after tarot card (Death, naturally) and the police have arrested Giacomo Bernardi, the losing bidder. Bernardi's lawyer contacts Joshua's boss, Rita Mondragon. If you've read previous books in this series, you'll know how Rita ended up in a wheelchair.

Rita and Joshua make snappy repartee. And Joshua has, like Craig Johnson's Walt Longmire and all the best private eyes of page and screen, usually hilarious thoughts, too, to which we readers are privy, thanks to the first person POV.

Joshua interrogates the small group of suspects, with varying degrees of cooperation

and even a sexual come-on or two. That's another stretch of the traditional cozy label. Before he can finish a first round with each of them, another suspect is murdered, this time with an ice-pick and by someone whose description doesn't match any of the other suspects. Naturally, the police don't think the two crimes are related; in real life, I think they'd make the connection.

Before you think this is an elaborate Southwestern game of *Clue*, Joshua is driven off the Ski Santa Fe road and pretty spectacularly nearly killed; his car is totaled. Like Linda's book, more mayhem than a normal cozy.

By the end of the novel, Joshua has identified the killer of both men. Being an author doesn't help; I was completely surprised. I'd make a lousy PI. I cannot recommend Walter Satterthwaite's work too highly. I understand he has retired from writing, but you can find his books easily on Amazon and in local libraries and used bookstores. The series starts with *Wall of Glass*. ♦

—Rob Kresge (www.robertkresge.com)

Omission

Mention of one of your favorite New Mexico mystery writers was inadvertently left out of Rob's review in the last *Nooseletter of Now Write! Mysteries*, edited by Sherry Ellis and Laurie Lamson, one of a series of books for aspiring authors.

Judith van Gieson contributed a chapter on "Writing the First Chapter" (which this editor also remembers from a talk she gave at a Hillerman Conference a few years ago). Check it out!

The Rope by Nevada Barr. Minotaur Books, 2011, 357 pp (HC)

It's been a while since I read an Anna Pigeon mystery, and it seemed that *The Rope* would be just the way to get back into the habit. It worked, but it was a creepy trip, more so even

than the one we took to the bottom of the largest Great Lake in *A Superior Death*, my previous favorite.

The Rope is a kind of prequel to all the Anna Pigeon books, telling us how she first came to work at a national park—Glen Canyon National Recreation Area—and filling in more than we'd known about where she came from, both physically (the New York theater world) and emotionally (she's grieving her husband's sudden death). It's the "previously untold story," as the book jacket puts it, "of Anna's first foray into the wild and the case that helped shape her into the ranger she became."

Fresh off the bus, the Eastern dude takes on a menial job as a "seasonal," or part-time employee at Lake Powell, mostly picking up after park visitors who act like feral cats and use the sandy shores as a litter box. One day, she just ups and disappears, leading co-workers, who haven't yet gotten to know her, to think she's given up and gone back to the Big City.

She really just went for a hike, but somewhere along the line she was attacked and tossed, naked and without food, water, or any subsequent memory of how she got there into a "solution hole," a deep pit in the rock scoured out by millennia of water and wind.

Unfit and untrained to deal with wilderness of any kind, Anna also finds she's not alone, but it's small comfort—the other occupant of the "jar," as Anna comes to call it, is a dead young woman barely buried there. Clearly Anna was put there to die too, but she's too stubborn and angry to let fear kill her when the fall didn't.

The story begins in the same disjointed way that Anna's brain tries to process what's happened (she's been drugged too), but we gradually get to know the other park personnel, particularly Jenny Gorman, Anna's bunkmate and self-prescribed therapist. When Anna finally gets herself out of the jar—I admit, I kept skipping ahead to see how she'd do it, but I read every word along the way—the narrative becomes more linear as Anna tries to figure out what happened, who "Kay," the dead girl in the jar, is, and how she will face her own future.

There's just enough warmth in the story and characters to make up for the creepiness of the initial disaster—and there's another harrowing event to come, involving both Jenny and Anna. I liked Anna's theater background (being a fan myself and appreciating her frequent references), I liked Jenny, and I liked Buddy, the "small comfort" that eventually helps Anna get out of her sandy prison. I didn't guess the killer, but I usually don't and usually don't care who did it since the journey is the fun part.

For Barr regulars and anyone else who likes a good yarn, well written, *The Rope* is highly recommended. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

Short Takes

The Puzzled Heart by Amanda Cross.

The Puzzled Heart is the twelfth book in the Kate Fansler series set in 1990s New York City. Kate Fansler is a university professor; her husband Reed Amhearst is an attorney. Both consider themselves liberals.

Reed is kidnapped, and Kate receives a note demanding that she repudiate her feminist beliefs in print, or Reed will be killed.

Kate turns to friends for help. They bring Kate a Saint Bernard puppy as an elaborate cover for frequent meetings to discuss strategy. They investigate right-wing groups who may have student contacts with Kate. They find where Reed is held captive and free him. However, they still need to uncover the organizers of the deed.

Years ago I read and enjoyed the earlier books in the series. This book doesn't have much action; it is primarily a string of conversations between Kate and her friends. As I recall, the series does primarily focus on hypotheses rather than action.

I could not identify with any of the characters and have lost interest in the series. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

2011 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, May 22, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 26, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, July 24, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 28, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 25, 7:00 p.m.

Meetings are free to the public.

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

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

Check our Web site, www.croak-and-dagger.com, for schedule changes and upcoming programs.

Summary of Findings

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

†*Nooseletter* Submissions†

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

Length: Articles should average 500 words, but short items are also welcome.

Deadlines: Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to publication: Feb 15, April 15, June 15, Aug 15, Oct 15, and Dec 15.

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

Submissions: Please submit via e-mail to newsette@earthlink.net, with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically. ♦ —Linda Triegel

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Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?

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

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

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

Contact our membership chair, at contact@croak-and-dagger.com.