



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
 ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume IX, Number 3 — May 2013

†Expert Testimony†

As Writer’s House agent Simon Lipser commented to a Sisters in Crime interview team, digital books are transforming publishing.

The five biggest traditional publishing conglomerates all had healthy profit margins in 2012 – helped greatly by their e-book sales. Publishers all have agreed, at least in principle, that their e-books should be made available to library users.

Library Journal editors Wilda Williams and Barbara Hoffert told Sisters in Crime that in the next few years publishers may be dropping print Advance Reader Copies sent to reviewers and turning to e-galleys. Some publishers are already using NetGalley, an electronic system for transmitting galleys. This changes the logistics of assigning reviews.

Additional required steps take more time. Uploading a finished review and blogging and tweeting may lead to fewer reviews. Reviewers have less time overall due to the demands of social media. This particularly affects reviewers for *Library Journal*, who are volunteers. *Library Journal* is important because it pays extra attention to first time novelists and reviews smaller mystery publishers such as Five Star and Poison Pen Press.

Sarah Weinman at Publisher’s Market Place said e-books are the fastest growth sector for publishing revenues, so expect a greater focus on e-books. *Mystery Scene* magazine says it is difficult to review e-books since the expiration time for digital review copies and fact-checking logistics frequently conflict.

The biggest worry for Kelley Ragland at Minotaur Books is “how to make books discoverable.” There is a lot more pressure on the authors. The first questions asked of an author by this publisher are who is your audience and how will you market to them?

There is also a loss of newspaper book pages and fewer reviewers. Most book reviews are now appearing online. Amazon has bought one of the major online review sites – Goodreads.

If most of the reviews are online, what are the consequences for authors and readers? Are Minotaur’s Kelley Ragland’s worries about readers finding new books (especially e-books) and authors realistic? Will an Amazon-owned Goodreads be good or bad for authors and readers, especially those who do not use Amazon? Will sources such as *Library Journal* and *Mystery Scene* continue to be influential sources of non-commercially motivated reviews? Will independent bookstore newsletters continue to create a buzz?

We definitely live in interesting times!

– Jan Bray, President

Don’t Miss It!
Tuesday, May 28, at 7 p.m.

Our speaker for May will be **Jerry Goffe**, crime scene photographer.

“Jerry Goffe loves *CSI*,” said Jim Belshaw in a *Journal* profile a while back. “Both of them: the TV show that entertains him, and the work that has taken up much of his professional life. One never seeps into the other. The TV show is just that. A TV show. The work calls for more focus.”

Jerry has been a photographer for 41 years, mainly in forensic photography (having to do with criminal cases) and supplying legal evidence (in civil cases). He has also taught crime scene photography. His avocation is wildlife photography, which he began when a friend suggested he could be a volunteer at Bosque del Apache.

Popular local author **Steve Brewer** will be making a return engagement at our June meeting to talk about basic writing techniques.

Steve is the author of more than 20 books, including the recent crime novels *Party Doll*, *Lost Vegas*, and *The Big Wink*. His first novel, *Lonely Street*, was made into an independent Hollywood comedy starring Joe Mantegna.

Steve's short fiction appeared in anthologies, and he's published articles in *Mystery Scene*, *Crimespree*, and *Mystery Readers' Journal*.

A writing coach, he has taught at the University of New Mexico, the Midwest Writers Workshop and the Tony Hillerman Writers Seminar. He regularly speaks at writers' conferences and was toastmaster at Left Coast Crime in Santa Fe in 2011.

He served two years on the national board of Mystery Writers of America, and twice served as an Edgar Awards judge. He's also a member of International Thriller Writers.

A graduate of the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, he worked as a daily journalist for 22 years, then wrote a syndicated weekly column for another decade.

Married and the father of two adult sons, Steve lives in Albuquerque. For more about Steve, go to www.stevebrewer.us.com.

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
- 2013 Meeting Schedule
- Membership Form
- Speakers Bureau
- Links to Mystery Websites & Websites for Your Favorite Croak & Dagger Authors
- *The Nooseletter* Archive

AND: Remember that all members are invited to join the Croak & Dagger Yahoo group, an online gathering place for mystery writers. Join in! Log on to C&D's web page (www.croak-and-dagger.com) and click on the link for instructions. Exchange news and information about mystery books, movies, and TV shows, as well as online courses.

The Line Up

President – Jan Bray –
ohbray@nmia.com

Vice President – Joan Saberhagen –
joan@joanspicci.com

Secretary – Rob Kresge –
www.robertkresge.com

Treasurer – Fred Aiken –
FAAiken@aol.com

Membership – Pat Wood
pwood73@comcast.net

Programs/Publicity – Rita Herther –
RMHerther@aol.com

Website Coordinator – Susan Zates –
smzates@yahoo.com

Nooseletter Editor – Linda Triegel
newsette@earthlink.net

And coming up:

Croak & Dagger's July program will be a unique one – an author panel featuring past C&D president Margaret Tessler (author of 3 mystery novels and numerous short stories; Pat Wood, current C&D Membership chair (whose first mystery, *The Easter Egg Murder*, was published this year); Albert Noyer (whose latest Father Jake mystery is *One for the Money, Two for the Sluice*), and Sarah Baker, author of the Dassas Cormier mystery series.

Noose News

Chapter members were sad to hear of the death of member Joan R. Saks Berman on May 17. Joan attended meetings faithfully and often joined our “social hour” at Flying Star afterwards. As well as an avid reader and



mystery fan, Joan was a practicing psychologist specializing in women’s issues, PTSD, and several other areas. She was active in politics, culture, and the arts; as a first responder for the Red Cross; a published author; and an artist. Her mystery friends extend their sympathies to Joan’s family. We will miss her friendly face.

Rob and Julie Kresge are off on the Grand Tour of Europe, after attending Malice Domestic, where Rob reports he sold a gratifying number of all four titles in his Warbonnet Western historical mystery series. He also spoke at the Library of Congress while in the D.C. area (and sold still more books) as well as at the Southwest Book Fiesta in Albuquerque early this month, where he taped a segment for KOB-TV.

C&D Members!

Send news of your latest releases, good news of any kind, and any news you hear about your favorite authors to the Nooseletter at the address on page 2.

Contests still open:

The First Line Contest: Quarterly contest, open to all genres, but all stories must start with the first line prompt given at the contest’s website. Up to 3,000 words. ***Submission deadlines: Aug 1, Nov 1.*** For first lines, go to: www.thefirstline.com/submission.

Cutthroat Literary Award: Annual awards include the Rick DeMarinis Short Story Award, any subject, any style, up to 5,000 words. ***Fee for entry; Submit between July 15 and October 15.*** More information at: www.cutthroatmag.com/contest.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Award for Imaginative Fiction: Annual contest for stories in the fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and horror genres, with publication in *Rosebud* magazine for winners. ***Submission fee; deadline October.*** More details at: www.rsbd.net,

Zoetrope All-Story Short Fiction contest: Created by Francis Ford Coppola, *Zoetrope* magazine sponsors an annual contest that could just win you a contract with an editor. ***Contest opens July 1.*** For details, visit www.all-story.com/contests.

HELP WANTED!

Assistant editor: The *Nooseletter* editor is looking for an assistant to learn the ropes of putting out our bimonthly newsletter. The various aspects of collecting material, editing for length, and laying it out in the established format—or a new way if you have some ideas—will be shared between the current editor and the assistant for the remainder of the year.

We hope the assistant will graduate to being the full-time editor with the November elections (with the current editor as assistant during your getting-comfortable phase).

The only requirements are a desktop word-processing program (PC), Internet access, a few hours a month to meet and observe the process, and preferably some editing experience.

It’s fun—really!—and a great way to get to know local writers and what’s happening in the mystery genre. If interested, contact the editor at newsette@earthlink.net.

Texas woman self-publishes, hits best-seller lists

Excerpted from an Associated Press article by Jamie Stengle dated April 16.

After a feverish month of inspiration, Colleen Hoover finally fulfilled her dream of writing a book.

With family and friends asking to read the emotional tale of first love, the married mother of three young boys living in rural East Texas and working 11-hour days as a social worker decided to digitally self-publish on Amazon, where they could download it for free for a week.

“I had no intentions of ever getting the book published. I was just writing it for fun,” said Hoover, who uploaded *Slammed* a year ago in January.

Soon after self-publishing, people she didn’t know were downloading the book—even after it was only available for a fee. Readers began posting reviews and buzz built on blogs. Missing her characters, she self-published the sequel, *Point of Retreat*, a month later. By June, both books hit Amazon’s Kindle top 100 best-seller list. By July, both were on The New York Times best-seller list for e-books. Soon after, they were picked up by Atria Books, a Simon & Schuster imprint. By fall, she had sold the movie rights.

“I wasn’t expecting any of this at all. And I’m not saying I don’t like it, but it’s taken a lot of getting used to,” said the 33-year-old Hoover, who quit her job last summer to focus on her career as an author.

Hoover is both a story of self-published success in the digital age and of the popularity of so-called “New Adult” books, stories featuring [characters](#) in their late teens and early 20s. Others in the genre include Jamie McGuire’s *Beautiful Disaster* and J. Lynn’s *Wait for You*. The novels, which often have explicit material, are seen by publishers as a bridge between young adult novels and romance novels.

“In a nutshell, they’re stories of characters in their formative year, when everything is new and fresh,” said Amy Pierpont, editorial director of the Hachette Book Group’s “Forever” imprint.

When Hoover finished her third book, *Hopeless*, in December, she initially turned down an offer from Atria and decided to digitally self-publish again. By January, that book too was a New York Times best-seller and she signed that month with Atria to publish the print version, but kept control of the electronic version. The paperback is set to come out in May.

In February, Atria bought the digital and paperback rights to two upcoming books from Hoover: *This Girl*, the third installment in the *Slammed* series, set for release next month, and *Losing Hope*, a companion novel to *Hopeless* to be published in July.

Johanna Castillo, vice president and senior editor at Atria, said she learned about Hoover while perusing book blogs. Checking out Hoover’s blog that details not only her burgeoning writing career but also her day-to-day life, Castillo became enchanted. Around the same time, Dystel sent her Hoover’s books.

“I read them and I liked them and we moved forward very quickly,” said Castillo, who adds, “The voice that she has to connect with readers is very special.”

In a June post Hoover poignantly writes about being able to move from a single-wide mobile home to “a REAL house. A house with doors that work and an air conditioner that cools and electricity that doesn’t shut off if you run two electronics at the same time.

“Seven months ago, we were struggling to make ends meet,” she writes in the blog post. “Now, things are finally coming together and it’s all because of you guys. Every single person that spent a few bucks to buy a book that I wrote deserves a big THANK YOU from my whole family.”

Hoover says a confluence of events led to her writing *Slammed*, which tells the story of an 18-year-old girl who moves to a new state with her mother and brother after the sudden death of her father, falls for their 21-year-old neighbor who has a love for slam poetry and soon makes a discovery that means they cannot be together.

“When I sat down and wrote the first paragraph I was like ‘Oh, I can go with this,’” Hoover said. “I didn’t do an outline. I didn’t do anything. I just wrote sentence by sentence, not knowing where the story was going.”

Even after being able to quit her job and signing with Atria, Hoover said it wasn’t until a book signing she organized with other indie authors at a Chicago hotel in the fall that her popularity began to sink in.

“I remember coming down the stairs and there was this huge line with hundreds of people and someone goes, ‘There’s Colleen Hoover,’ and they all start freaking out,” she said. “That was I think the first moment that it hit me that this was way bigger than I thought.”

Hoover grew up in rural East Texas, was married with a baby by the age of 20 and got a degree in social work from Texas A&M-Commerce. She worked as an investigator with Child Protective Services before returning to school to get her qualifications to teach special education, which she did for a year before returning to school again to get a minor in infant nutrition and going to work for the federal Women, Infants and Children program, known as WIC.

On a recent blog post Hoover shared with her readers what she called “a really depressing blast from the past” — a MySpace post from 2006 she recently came across in which she writes that although she’s certain she “was born to write a book,” she believes that she never will. She writes that she’s researched whether it would be worth it to even try and decided that with the low odds of ever getting a publisher or being able to support herself writing, she shouldn’t even try.

She writes on her blog, “Good thing I didn’t listen to myself. It also says a helluva a lot about how much the publishing industry has changed.”

The Slow Death of the American Author

Excerpted from an op-ed piece by Scott Turow in The New York Times, published April 7.

Last month, the Supreme Court [decided](#) to allow the importation and resale of foreign editions of American works, which are often cheaper than domestic editions. Until now, courts have forbidden such activity as a violation of copyright. Not only does this ruling open the gates to a surge in cheap imports, but since they will be sold in a secondary market, authors won’t get royalties.

This may sound like a minor problem; authors already contend with an enormous domestic market for secondhand books. But it is the latest example of how the global electronic marketplace is rapidly depleting authors’ income streams.

Authors practice one of the few professions directly protected in the Constitution, which instructs Congress “to promote the progress of Science and the useful Arts by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.” The idea is that a diverse literary culture, created by authors whose livelihoods, and thus independence, can’t be threatened, is essential to democracy.

That culture is now at risk. The value of copyrights is being quickly depreciated, a crisis that hits hardest not best-selling authors like me, who have benefited from most of the recent changes in bookselling, but new and so-called midlist writers.

Take e-books. They are much less expensive for publishers to produce: there are no printing, warehousing or transportation costs, and unlike physical books, there is no risk that the retailer will return the book for full credit.

And there are many e-books on which authors and publishers, big and small, earn nothing at all. Numerous pirate sites, supported by advertising or subscription fees, have grown up offshore, offering new and old e-books free. The pirates would be a limited menace were it not for search engines that

point users to these rogue sites with no fear of legal consequence, thanks to a provision inserted into the 1998 copyright laws. A search for “Scott Turow free e-books” brought up 10 pirate sites out of the first 10 results on Yahoo, 8 of 8 on Bing and 6 of 10 on Google.

If I stood on a corner telling people where they could buy stolen goods and collected a small fee for it, I’d be on my way to jail. And yet these search engines do the same thing.

Google is also at odds with many writers because in 2004 it partnered with five major libraries to scan and digitize millions of in-copyright books, without permission from authors. The Authors Guild sued; years later, with a proposed settlement scuttled by the judge, the litigation goes on.

Google says this is a “fair use” of the works, an exception to copyright, because it shows only snippets of the books in response to each search. Of course, over the course of thousands of searches, Google is using the whole book and selling ads each time, while sharing none of the revenue with the author or publisher.

It got worse in 2011, when a consortium of some of Google’s partner libraries, the Hathi Trust, decided to put online some 200 books that the group had unilaterally decided were “orphans,” meaning they couldn’t locate the copyright owners. The “orphans” turned out to include books from writers like the best-selling novelist J. R. Salamanca—alive and well in Maryland—and the Pulitzer Prize winner James Gould Cozzens, whose copyrights were left to Harvard. The Authors Guild sued, and Hathi suspended the program. But that litigation also continues, even while millions of copyrighted works are stored online, one hacker away from worldwide dissemination for free.

The fracas with the Hathi libraries is emblematic of new fractures in traditional literary alliances. Even libraries and authors, usually allies, have grown less cozy. No one calls our public library system socialistic, though it involves free distribution of the goods authors produce, and even though in many Western nations, authors get a tiny fee when libraries lend their works. Authors happily accept our system, because libraries have nurtured them as writers and readers.

Now many public libraries want to lend e-books, not simply to patrons who come in to download, but to anybody with a reading device, a library card and an Internet connection. In this new reality, the only incentive to buy, rather than borrow, an e-book is the fact that the lent copy vanishes after a couple of weeks. As a result, many publishers currently refuse to sell e-books to public libraries.

An even more nightmarish version of the same problem emerged last month with the news that Amazon had a patent to resell e-books. Such a scheme will likely be ruled illegal. But if it is not, sales of new e-books will nose-dive, because an e-book, unlike a paper book, suffers no wear with each reading. Why would anyone ever buy a new book again?

Consumers might save a dollar or two, but the big winner, as usual, would be Amazon. It would literally own the resale market and would shift enormous profits to itself from publishers as well as authors, who would lose the already meager share of the proceeds they receive on the sale of new e-books.

Many people would say such changes are simply in the nature of markets, and see no problem if authors are left to write purely for the love of the game. But what sort of society would that be?

Last October, I visited Moscow and met with a group of authors who described the sad fate of writing as a livelihood in Russia. There is only a handful of publishers left, while e-publishing is savaged by instantaneous piracy that goes almost completely unpoliced. As a result, in the country of Tolstoy and Chekhov, few Russians, let alone Westerners, can name a contemporary Russian author whose work regularly affects the national conversation.

The Constitution’s framers had it right. Soviet-style repression is not necessary to diminish authors’ output and influence. Just devalue their copyrights.

Scott Turow, a lawyer, is the president of the Authors Guild and the author of the forthcoming novel Identical.

On the Other Hand:

Thriller writer Barry Eisler responded on <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com> on April 10 (an excerpt):

There are a lot of substantively interesting aspects of Turow's April 7 New York Times op-ed piece. Indeed, you could write a long article debunking all the factual mistakes, legal errors, misleading claims, and failures of logic that comprise Turow's screed. Happily, Mike Masnick of TechDirt has done so, in a devastatingly well-argued and empirically based piece called "[Authors Guild's Scott Turow: The Supreme Court, Google, Ebooks, Libraries and Amazon Are All Destroying Authors.](#)" I won't repeat what Masnick has already so ably pointed out, and will instead add just a few observations of my own.

Right from the title, Turow is doing no more than following the lead of the organization he represents, which has no business pretending it fundamentally concerns itself with what might be best for authors. But choosing a name that disguises your true purpose can confer certain tactical advantages and is why in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the organization charged with torture and brainwashing was called the Ministry of Love, and the organization charged with propaganda and historical revisionism was called the Ministry of Truth.

And it's why an organization primarily dedicated to protecting the interests of big publishing calls itself The Authors Guild. Think about how much less effective the Authors Guild would be if it called itself something more accurate—say, The Society for the Preservation of Legacy Publishing.

Another thing that interested me about Turow's piece was his reliance on theory and his refusal to consider real-world data. In fact, part of what makes Masnick's piece such satisfying reading is the way he cites actual studies, real-world evidence, and even the text of the Constitution (which Harvard-trained lawyer Turow gets wrong) to debunk Turow's theoretical claims. When someone tries to sell you on a theory but refuses to discuss available evidence that could support or repudiate the theory, it's another classic sign that you are being bullshitted.

Once upon a time, technology was such that the Great Guardians of Rich Culture and All That Is Good (AKA, the Establishment) could pontificate to the unwashed masses and there was no effective way for the masses to respond. In those days, anyone with access to a platform like, say, the New York Times had tremendous asymmetrical communication power. It's hard to argue that this kind of one-way communication was a good thing—unless you believe that a lack of accountability, a lack of peer-review, and a lack of diverse pressure-checking is good for society.

Obviously, the Internet has in many ways leveled the communications playing field, and now, when the high and mighty speak down to the masses, the masses can—and do—respond. What's fascinating is watching the reaction of people like Scott Turow, who act as though we're still living in a world where two-way communication isn't a real possibility and the masses can be safely ignored.

But what are we to make of this supercilious behavior? Read Masnick's article, then ask yourself why you should have any confidence in someone like Turow, who refuses to engage such a devastating rejoinder? Why you should respect someone who lacks the courage and even the minimal integrity to defend his own public arguments? Why you should trust someone who can't even back up his own claims?

What's so satisfying about all this is that you can't successfully ignore technology. Or facts. Or ideas. Denial has no survival value. When you stick your head in the sand, if you're lucky, the world will just pass you by. More likely, you'll get eaten. And that's what's happening to Scott Turow and the "Authors Guild." All the bullshit in the world can't change it.

Of course, Turow could easily prove me at least partially wrong about his lack of balls and integrity. Are you there, Scott? All you need to do is respond to Masnick's piece. His comment section is still open. So is mine. We don't censor debate.

Reviews

Rob's Random Shots

May Case File Number 1

Buffalo Bill's Dead Now by Margaret Coel, Berkley Prime Crime, 2013, 287 pp (HC)

This is the 16th book in Margaret's Wind River series and you might think there was no new ground to cover, either in a suitable mystery or in the relationship of divorced female Arapaho attorney Vicki Holden and recovering alcoholic Jesuit priest Father John O'Malley.

You'd be wrong on both counts.

This endlessly inventive author gives us a plot with not only an historical McGuffin twist (the device that drives the plot--Hitchcock), but also subtly takes the history between Vicki and Father John up a step. And just as I don't reveal plot spoilers in these reviews, don't expect me to give away any other major details.

The real history in this novel is fascinating. One hundred and twenty years ago, the regalia of Chief Black Heart was supposed to have returned to Wyoming with the cast of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show that had been touring much of Europe in 1890 and was finishing its tour in Germany. The chief, Buffalo Bill, and the rest of the cast returned as scheduled. But one man--Arapaho warrior Sonny Yellow Robe--and the regalia failed to make the boat.

Now the missing regalia has reportedly been located in Germany and has been purchased by a local art dealer for donation to the new Arapaho Museum on the grounds of the St. Francis Mission Church.

However, when the crates are opened at the mission, the regalia are gone. Suspicion immediately falls first on the art dealer, then on an Arapaho airport guard who may have been derelict. It takes Vicki and Father John the rest of the novel to sort through suspects, find new ones, and determine not only where and how the crate was emptied, but to locate the artifacts themselves. Local FBI concerns help make the

work of these amateur sleuths at the edges of the Federal case plausible and gripping.

Readers get two new treats in this outing—the action switches occasionally to Buffalo Bill, Chief Black Heart, and Sonny during the waning days of the 1890 show. Press accounts in the States have alleged that the Indians in the show are being mistreated and cheated of their promised salaries. The trio know these charges to be untrue, but decide to fold the show before the end of the season and take everyone home to refute the claims.

This frequent switching of timeframes works very well and readers will become as attached to the historical characters as they are to the two series protagonists. And I'm not just saying this because I made Buffalo Bill a character in my 1872 snowbound-train novel.

As for not revealing the relationship spoiler, I have to say that I found it a logical step, given the context of the scenes leading up to it. Margaret has not said what kind of mail she's received on this, and you'll have to check out the book for yourselves. My lips are sealed.♦

May Case File Number 2

Death Where the Bad Rocks Live by C.M. (Curt) Wendelboe, Berkley Prime Crime, 2012, 367 pp (TP)

As you can see, there's a common theme between these two books this month, both purchased at the Left Coast Crime conference in Colorado Spring last March: Native American history. The Arapaho in the first one and the Sioux (Lakota) in this novel.

We return to the Spirit Road mysteries by Wendelboe, a former Wyoming lawman, with this second outing about senior FBI Agent (and Lakota) Manny Tanno on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation. This story kicks off on a bombing range on the reservation in December 1944 and alternates between Indian past and present throughout the novel.

The rocks in the title are located in an area in the Badlands near the Lakota Stronghold, which locals mostly avoid, but children and

cattle sicken and die there. You will have no trouble in figuring out the source of the illnesses early in the book. It came as no surprise to me.

The twin McGuffins in this case are the discovery of three bodies in a blasted, half-buried car out in the Stronghold (familiar to those who saw the Val Kilmer film *Thunderheart*). The other McGuffin is the return of a “native son” in every sense of the term. Lakota Federal Judge Alexander Hamilton High Elk is prepping for Senate confirmation hearings that would make him the first Native American Supreme Court justice.

His return sets the plot boiling, and assaults, vandalism, and a couple of murders follow. Manny has his hands full trying to protect the judge, balance a difficult home life, and foster two younger cops, one of whom is the daughter of his old enemy, the Lakota tribal police chief (backstory on that relationship can be found in the first novel—*Death Along the Spirit Road*).

Complicating the investigation of this cold case is the discovery that the third body in the car is that of a young student Vietnam war resister who disappeared in 1969, 25 years after the first two men went missing. The first two suffered shrapnel wounds and were likely in the wrong place during a bombing practice run. The third was shot in the head at close range.

Relatives of the first two men want the murders solved and pressure is on Manny and his tribal cop assistants. But they also come under fire. Vandalism escalates to road rage and then to armed ambushes. When the judge’s old friend and bodyguard is found murdered, the latter ceases to be a suspect and the judge himself comes under suspicion, then disappears.

The plight of reservation Indians is well drawn. I first experienced that as a boy when my family travelled to Pine Ridge en route to California and we stopped to visit a former secretary of my Dad’s who had resigned to go help the Indians. ♦

—Rob Kresge (www.robertkresge.com)

Key:

PB = Paperback
TP = Trade paperback
HC = Hardcover

Honour Among Men by Barbara Fradkin, RendeVous Crime, 2006, 347 pages (TP).

Canadian author Barbara Fradkin’s first novel in her Inspector Green series takes place in Ottawa and Halifax, exotic locales to some of us south-of-the-border readers, but both the setting and the characters are rendered beautifully, if not always sympathetically. Canada Tourism probably won’t appreciate it, but local police forces should.

Inspector Michael Green has been stuck in an office job but gets back into the field when a homeless woman he knew is found dead. In her hand is a medal for bravery given during a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. What is Twiggy doing with the medal? What connection does her death have with the soldier who was awarded it?

Fradkin keeps the reader guessing as the story moves from an isolated death to a high-stakes election campaign. Green is aided by an eager detective from Halifax who’s been pursuing the death of a Bosnia vet and is sure the two cases are related. The characters, even the doomed Twiggy, are nicely drawn.

Excerpts from another soldier’s war diary are interspersed with the present-day investigation, revealing further clues to the higher-ups involved in a cover-up of a crime committed during the Balkan conflict.

Honour Among Men suffers only from an unmemorable title and an uninspired cover design, but the writing is clean and smooth, and the story draws you in, slowly but inexorably. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

The Baby Blue Ripoff by Max Allen Collins, originally published by Walker & Co., 1982.

Max Allen Collins is the very definition of a journeyman writer—that is, “an experienced, reliable performer...esp. as distinguished from one who is brilliant or colorful.” Collins has written literally scores of novels, screenplays, comic books, graphic novels, short stories, novelizations, etc., etc. He’s good at them all

and clearly makes a nice living doing what he does, even if he's never been a best-seller.

I first encountered one of his historical mystery novels, *The Hindenburg Murders*, a few years ago and enjoyed it (he's a gonzo researcher too), so when Amazon offered me 37 e-books for a buck, I picked out two—37 struck me as a weird number, and some were genres I don't care for—one of which was *The Baby Blue Ripoff*, the first in Collins' Mallory series.

The title sounds like a rip-off of John D. McDonald, and Mallory has certain traits in common with Travis McGee, even though he lacks a sidekick or a boat—or for that matter a first name. Indeed, he lives well inland, in Iowa, and is an ex-reporter, cop, construction worker, and hippie working desultorily on a novel. He's also a Vietnam vet, which doesn't quite jibe with the hippie part, but that's Mallory for you. The story is set sometime in the late '70s.

When he's not working on his whodunit, Mallory volunteers to deliver hot meals to elderly shut-ins, most of whom he becomes fond of, so that when one is killed in an apparent robbery gone wrong, he's determined to find whodunit for real. Not that the local cops welcome his aid, but he can't help it. Besides, he got beat up himself when he inadvertently brought his Styrofoam-covered hot meal to the victim's house at the wrong moment.

Mallory is distracted from his quest when he runs into the girl of his high school dreams—she of the baby blues—who asks him to protect her against her abusive husband. What's a knight errant to do—even without a boat?

Fast-moving, often funny, and definitely readable, on the page or the screen. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

Series Mysteries

The Last Kashmiri Rose by Barbara Cleverly, Bantam Dell, 2003, 310 pages (PB).

The first book of the Joe Sandilands mystery series set in 1920s India in the final days of the Raj. Commander Sandilands, a

Scotland Yard detective, has worked for the Bengal Police in Calcutta for six months and is eagerly awaiting his return home to England. On the eve of his departure, he is requested (ordered) by Sir George Jardine, the governor of Bengal, to conduct an inquiry at Panikhat, the station commanded by Bateman's Horse, the Bengal Greys.

Jardine's niece Nancy Drummond is married to the Collector of Panikhat (the highest-ranking officer). She wants an unbiased investigation of a recent death, as well as a series of deaths stretching back to 1910. Each victim was an officer's wife, and each death occurred in the month of March. Nancy believes there may be a connection between the deaths, but the local officers ruled them coincidental accidents.

Naurung Singh, an Indian policeman assigned to help Joe, is an intelligent and capable assistant. Joe feels that Naurung represents a sweeping change in India, the rise of native talent to manage the country.



Anglo-Indian terms are liberally sprinkled throughout the book, enhancing its period atmosphere. The luxurious life of British officers in an exotic setting is described in lavish detail. Servants attend to their every need; their days seemed to be comprised of bathing and changing clothes prior to every activity and meal.

Joe is a man of honor, tempered by compassion. He sees that justice is done, but does not feel it's necessary to reveal all the details, out of mercy for a survivor who would be devastated by the truth.

Although Joe was about to depart for England at the start of book one, I'm happy to see the next few books in the series continue with Joe in exotic Indian settings:

According to the Goodreads author page, Cleverly was inspired to write the Sandilands series by a tin trunk she found in her attic, which contained family mementos from her great uncle's travels in India. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

Learning to Swim by Sara J. Henry, Crown 2011, 304 pages (HC)

In the first book of the Troy Chance series, set in modern-day upstate New York, Troy Chance is a freelance journalist living in a small town in the Adirondacks. She is single by choice, owns a house, and rents out rooms to friends. She has simple, no-frill tastes and enjoys her life with the freedom to do as she pleases. Her boyfriend Thomas, a university professor in Vermont, wants to move their relationship into a deeper commitment, but Troy isn't ready.

She's on her way to visit Thomas, riding a ferry across Lake Champlain, when she sees a small child fall from another ferry on the lake. She doesn't think twice, just jumps into the frigid lake and begins swimming. She rescues the boy and just barely manages to reach the shoreline. Too exhausted and cold to face red tape, she takes the boy home with her. When they are safe and warm, she calls the ferry authorities, and is shocked to learn no one has reported a missing child.

The boy Paul, who speaks French, tells her he and his mother were kidnapped, his mother was shot, and his father doesn't want him. Troy is amazed by the fierce protectiveness she feels for Paul. She researches his parents' names online, and locates a man in Ottawa who might be Paul's father.

Troy must proceed very carefully - if the father was in any way responsible for the kidnapping and/or murder attempt, she certainly won't return Paul to danger. She travels to meet Philippe, counting on being able to tell face-to-face if Paul is safe with him.

Troy, Philippe and an Ottawa detective try for months to find the kidnapers. At first Troy stays in Canada with Paul and Philippe. She knows that she must eventually return to her own life, but has powerfully bonded with Paul, and is attracted to Philippe. She takes a lot of chances, placing Craigslist ads, emailing and meeting people she traced from Philippe's wife's emails. An attempt is made to snatch Paul from school, and Troy is run down on her bike by a large dark car, so she knows the

kidnappers are aware of her efforts to trace them.

Troy returns home and resumes her social life, but she doesn't stop investigating. Her life changed that day on the lake. She comes face-to-face with the mastermind behind the kidnapping, learns what really happened, and nearly loses her life. In my opinion, the book should have ended very shortly after that emotional peak of suspense, and its resolution. Instead, another plot twist reveals even more evil behind the crimes.

It's a riveting story, hard to put down. Don't stop to question the likelihood of events, or the convenient friends that are instantly available whenever Troy needs them. Just enjoy the upheaval Troy experiences when she unconditionally commits to protecting Paul - after all her effort to remain a free spirit.♦

—Susan Zates (*smzates@yahoo.com*)

Black Diamond Death by Cheryl Bradshaw, Createspace 2011, 238 pages (TP).

I was attracted to this first book in the Sloane Monroe series for the setting, modern-day Park City, Utah, my love of skiing, and because "black diamond" is the trail marker for expert ski slopes.

Unfortunately, after the prologue, the book has nothing whatsoever to do with skiing. It doesn't even need to be set in Park City, only somewhere with snow on the ground so the author can illustrate how quirky her protagonist is (she wears flip-flops in the snow).

Sloane Monroe investigates a skier's death because the skier's sister insists it was no accident. The ski resort certainly does not want publicity, and the police don't want a case, so Sloane faces opposition in her quest for information.

She discovers a violent ex-fiancé, and the crime seems fairly obvious. However she has no proof. So she continues investigating and discovers other crimes plus a more likely suspect. The mystery is believable and the case progresses at a reasonable pace. Sloane's

boyfriend Nick is a policeman, and I enjoyed the description of a cute trick Nick taught Sloane's dog, Lord Berkeley.

However, the book desperately needs editing. Awkward sentences stop the story flow completely. Words are used incorrectly. If grammar and style do not matter to you as a reader, go ahead and try the book.

Black Diamond Death was free from Amazon in a Sloane Monroe trilogy. I read this one all the way to the end because it meets the criteria for several reading challenges I'm in—e-book, first of a series, new author, etc.—but I do not plan to read more by this author. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

Death at Gallows Green by Robin Paige, Berkley Prime Crime, 1998, 280 pages (PB).

The second book in Paige's Victorian Mystery series is set in the Essex countryside. Young American Kathryn "Kate" Ardleigh moved to England to live with her aunts and work as one aunt's secretary in the first book of the series, *Death at Bishop's Keep*. She solved the mystery of her aunts' deaths with the help of Sir Charles Sheridan, a gentleman of the English aristocracy knighted for his pioneering work with photography.

Kate inherited her aunts' country house and has settled into a new lifestyle and begun making friends. In secret she continues writing penny-dreadfuls on her trusty Remington typewriter. She is scandalizing the more traditional in her village by learning to ride a bicycle from Edward "Ned" Laken, the detective who investigated her aunt's death.

Constable Arthur "Artie" Oliver, Ned's boyhood friend, is shot dead, heirloom emerald jewelry goes missing, and the constable's daughter Betsy is kidnapped; plenty of mystery for Kate to investigate.

Kate befriends shy Bea, a timid single lady who dreams of getting published. Kate and Bea track down clues to Artie's death, despite resistance from the police superintendent, and also help search for Betsy,

Meanwhile Ned exerts all possible efforts to find Betsy and restore her to Agnes, the woman he has always adored. At the courtroom trial held in the local pub, Charles introduces plaster casts of footprints and photographs to explain to a jury exactly how a crime was committed.

It's a pleasure to read the lovely descriptions of the Essex countryside that begin many chapters, and a lavish social event in the English countryside makes one marvel at Victorian luxury. Victorian class distinctions are presented in an amusing light:

To fully enjoy the characters and relationships as they develop, I recommend reading this historical cozy mystery series in order. Next book in the series is *Death at Daisy's Folly*. ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

The Key Lime Pie Murder by Joanne Fluke, Kensington, 2007, 342 pages (HC).

Book 9 of the Hannah Swensen mystery series, set in modern-day fictitious Lake Eden, Minnesota. Hannah owns The Cookie Jar with her dear friend and baker-partner Lisa. Hannah is still unable to decide between her two suitors: Norman the dentist or Mike the detective, each with his own unique appeal.

Hannah volunteers at the tri-county fair to fill in for a bakery judge. As usual, she has a full plate of responsibilities: she has been volunteered (by her mother) for the dunking booth, she's baking for the chamber of commerce booth, and filling in for Lisa in Herman's magic act.

One night at fair-closing time she's caught at lights-out on the midway, and just misses a murder. Of course she discovers the body, and from then on spends her time juggling her business and fair duties with investigating.

The Key Lime Pie Murder is a light, entertaining story, ideal for listening to while doing chores. Of course there's a happy ending, and plenty of recipes! ♦

—Susan Zates (smzates@yahoo.com)

2013 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, May 28, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, July 23, 7:00 p.m.
(bookmarks listing all meeting dates will
be available at the May meeting!)

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

COPYRIGHT © OF MATERIAL PUBLISHED HEREIN REMAINS THE PROPERTY OF INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS. NO PART OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE REPRINTED WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR(S).



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.

Summary of the Board Meeting Minutes of Sisters in Crime Croak & Dagger Chapter, ABQ, NM, May 20, 2013

Board members present: President Jan Bray, Vice President Joan Saberhagen, Treasurer Fred Aiken, Program Chair Rita Herther, *Nooseletter* editor Linda Triegel, and past president Olin Bray.

President Jan Bray called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. No additions were made to the mailed agenda, and the minutes of the March board meeting, e-mailed to members by Secretary Rob Kresge for review, were approved.

Treasurer's report:

The balance in the credit union checking account on April 30, 2013, was \$2,599.03. Since that time, checks were written to Fred Aiken for \$34.83 for reimbursement of water and ice purchases for the meetings since March 2012 and to reimburse Olin Bray in the amount of \$109.07 for the 2013 bookmarks. As of May 20, 2013, the treasury stood at \$2455.13. The treasurer said that the books are being kept on QuickBooks and may be audited at any time. The supporting documentation, bank reconciliations, etc. are in the white binder he had at the meeting.

Membership:

The treasurer reported that we have 34 paid members to date. We have 17 members from 2012 who have not paid 2013 dues. In addition, we have four paid members who paid their dues more than once. It was moved and seconded that those members who overpaid have the overpayment credited to the following years. Motion passed. The members who were credited were Rob Kresge (2014), Kelly Ann Kelly (2015), Joan Saberhagen (2014), and Charlene Dietz (2014). It was moved and seconded that the membership chair send email notification to 16 of the 17 members who have yet to pay 2013 dues that they are delinquent in their dues. One member had wanted to drop his membership. Motion passed.

Program report:

Rita Herther has the following speakers lined up for the next several meetings: May – Jerry Goffe, Crime Scene Photographer; June – Steve Brewer, former journalist at Albuquerque Journal; July – Round Table Panel: Pat Wood, Margaret Tessler, Albert Noyer, Sarah Baker; August – open [having difficulty filing it – trying to get an ER doctor to speak]; September – Pamela Christie, author; October – Michael Arkin, author; November – open; December – no meeting due to Christmas holidays Darynda Jones and David Morrell were suggested as other possible speakers

Other activities:

A picnic, possibly pot luck, was suggested for July or August. Perhaps at the Olin home or a park. Theme would be a birthday celebration for an author. Several names were checked on smart phones with P.D. James being suggested. Croak and Dagger would supply cake and beverages. Activity would include attendees talking about their favorite authors. This will be brought up at next week's general meeting to get the reaction of the membership. Other suggested activities were a trip to spend the night at a haunted inn either in Las Vegas or Mountainair, Old Town Ghost Walk, going to a play (Mark Twain's "Is He Dead?" at the Adobe Theater in the fall), or a field trip to a firing range.

There was no further old or new business.

Fred Aiken said that he would be out of town between Aug 13 and Aug 23 and that he is giving up his land line on May 21. Anyone needing to call him please use his cell phone [505-280-7628].

The next board meeting was set for 7 p.m. July 15 at Jan Bray's house. Jan adjourned the meeting at 8:30, after which Fred Aiken gave a brief report on the New Mexico Book Fiesta.

—Respectfully submitted, Fred Aiken, Secretary pro tem