



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



# THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume IX, Number 5 — September 2013

## †Expert Testimony†

### E-Books in 100 Years

There is a lot of discussion about e-books and audio books leading to the end of printed books and their whole ecosystem of publishers and bookstores. Seth Grodin blogs that “Books, those bound paper documents, are part of an ecosystem, one that was perfect and one that is dying quickly.”

Many bookstore owners, both large and small, are decrying the “show-rooming” phenomenon of browsing, sampling, discussing with salespeople, then buying online. This is a problem for many brick-and-mortar outlets of all kinds of goods.

One letter to the New York Times Book World said, “The end of the traditional bookstore and print books is cause of woe only among those of a certain age.” He writes, “More people than ever are producing artistic and creative content because the barrier to entry is lower than in the past and the means of distributing content is vastly more efficient. I’m reading *Journey to the Center of the Earth* on my tablet.”

All this reminds me of my experience visiting a 1<sup>st</sup> century synagogue in Israel. There were mosaic inscriptions on the floor that can still be read 1900 years later. We have printed books from the 1500’s and manuscripts thousands of years old – the Torah, the Bible, Aristotle, Sophocles, Greek playwrights, even the Code of Hammurabi in cuneiform on clay tablets. No technology is needed to access these treasures. Archivists call this a stable medium.

Technology can become obsolete – in fact it always does. Would we even have Jules Verne to download if it had not been preserved in a stable medium in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? What will happen to all of the content of e-books when their current technology goes the way of the tape recorder or the microfilm reader? Technologies are ecosystems too. Just ask the information technology professional how to read programs and data stored on punch cards.

– Jan Bray, President

### ***Don’t Miss It!***

**Tuesday, September 24, at 7 p.m.**

Our September speaker, **Pamela Christie**, started writing in the greenhouse on her farm in Canjilon, New Mexico, finding a quiet corner among the tomato plants while her baby slept. Life in her remote village offered plenty of chances to explore the landscape she writes about and to find evidence of the people who lived in the rugged kingdom centuries ago.


Pam’s writing began in earnest in 2000 after a chance encounter with a Navajo after her van broke down. In the year that followed she wrote *The King’s Lizard*, polishing it until its publication in 2004. In 2007, it was awarded the New Mexico Press Women’s Zia Award. *Dead Lizard’s Dance*, a sequel, followed in 2009. *Lizard’s Kill*, a third in the series, is on track for publication this fall. Read more about the Lizard Tales at [www.pamelachristie.com](http://www.pamelachristie.com)

Our October speaker will be lawyer and author **Michael Arkin**, whose debut mystery novel, *Out of Balance*, was an offshoot of his experiences in advocacy for and on behalf of children and domestic violence prevention.

His protagonist, lawyer Matt Lucas, is in the process of retiring to Santa Fe, when he is called upon to assist Linda Lawson, an award-winning San Diego reporter, in a seemingly routine investigation of an incident of domestic violence in the Mother Lode Country of Northern California.

Michael grew up in Arlington, Virginia, and received his law degree from the University of Oklahoma. A former U.S. Department of Justice trial attorney in Washington, D.C., he engaged in the practice of law for 44 years before relocating to New Mexico to reflect and write. He is working on a second novel, tentatively titled *Judicial Discretion*.

*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](http://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

### ***The Line Up***

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### **Don’t-Miss Special Events in November**

Something Special This Way Comes! Mystery reader fans, come to the November 26 C&D meeting and enter your name in the drawing for *Dinner With an Author*. There will be two drawings, two winners, of a dinner with Joe Badal or Judith Van Giesen. The authors will choose the restaurant, and you can be sure it will be a nice one. You must be present to win, so mark your calendars now. All current members in good standing are eligible to participate.

November’s regular program will be a *Historical Mystery Novel Round Table*. Two of the confirmed (so far) speakers are Sandra Toro, author of 4 novels, including *Secrets Behind Adobe Walls*, set in northern New Mexico in the late 18th century and dealing with witchcraft, murder, and New Mexico’s Crypto- Jews; and Lester Libo, a Chicago native and retired art dealer/curator, whose novel about political intrigue and identify theft in post-WWII Germany, *The Finishing Touch*, was published by ABQ Press.

## Noose News

**Albert Noyer's** third 5<sup>th</sup>-century novel, *Death at Pergamum: A Getorius and Arcadia Mystery*, has been published in a Kindle edition: The priest-physician at a pagan healing shrine is opposed by a woman presbyter, who stages a bizarre resurrection ritual on the "Throne of Satan" to discredit him. Noyer's *One for the Money, Two for the Sluice* is a Finalist in the 2013 New Mexico Book-Arizona Book Awards.

**Shirley Raye Redmond** reports that her hardcover suspense novel, *Stone of the Sun*, has been re-released in paperback and on Kindle. *New Mexico Magazine* declared it "a bang-up good mystery novel...."

**Margaret Coel** will talk about and sign her book, *Killing Custer*, at 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 26, at Bookworks (4022 Rio Grande NW). In her latest Wind River novel, Arapaho attorney Vicky Holden and Father John O'Malley are caught between two cultures that won't let go of the past and a killer who won't leave any witnesses.

**Anne Hillerman's** first mystery novel, *Spider Woman's Daughter*, is scheduled for an Oct. 1 release and has already received excellent reviews. She's setting off on a busy book tour, and you can catch her at the Hillerman Writers Conference in November. Besides wearing her conference-organizer-hat (along with Jean Schaumberg), Anne is joining the faculty for the first time as a panelist for "A Sense of Place."

**Joseph Badal's** story, "Ultimate Betrayal," will be included in the Written Remains anthology *Someone Wicked*.

**Patricia Smith Wood** was a guest blogger on mystery writer Beth Groundwater's website, talking about her book *The Easter Egg Murder* and her writing experiences. She is hard at work on her second mystery in the series, *Murder for Breakfast*.

**Steve Havill** is happy to announce that his new book, *NightZone: A Posadas County Mystery*, will be released in October by Poisoned Pen Press. The book will be the 19th entry in the sweeping Las Posadas series. *NightZone* follows New Mexico rancher Miles Waddell after he inherits \$330 million. Of course, trouble is brewing.

### 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.*

**Sandi Ault** talks about her life as an adventure-seeker in her work in a blog published by *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*. The August issue of the magazine published Sandi's short story "Wild Justice," featuring Jamaica Wild, the rough-and-ready sleuth from her Wild mystery series. The story provides a good introduction to the novels, which have won both the Mary Higgins Clark Award and the WILLA Literary Award.

## THIS IS YOUR PENULTIMATE NOOSELETTER!

Ye *Nooseletter* editor is retiring after the November 2013 issue.

Since no one has come forward to assume some of her editing chores, much less to volunteer to gradually take over the quarterly *Nooseletter*, the end is nigh.

The current editor is willing to help with content and editing should another volunteer step up, but she cannot continue to do the whole job herself.

If you can help, and were just shy about offering, don't be. Now's your time. Help out by contacting the editor at [newsette@earthlink.net](mailto:newsette@earthlink.net).

## **ANTHONY AWARDS PRESENTED**

The Anthony Awards, voted on by the members of the convention, were presented at Bouchercon 2013: A New York State of Crime on September 21, 2013. Our congratulations to the winners (listed first in each category) and all the nominees.

### **Best Mystery Novel**

- \* *The Beautiful Mystery* by Louise Penny
- *Dare Me* by Megan Abbott
- *Trinity Game* by Sean Chercover
- *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn
- *The Other Woman* by Hank Phillippi Ryan

### **Best First Mystery**

- \* *The Expats* by Chris Pavone
- *Don't Ever Get Old* by Daniel Friedman
- *The Professionals* by Owen Laukkanen
- *The 500* by Matthew Quirk
- *Black Fridays* by Michael Sears

### **Best Paperback Original**

- \* *Big Maria* by Johnny Shaw
- *Whiplash River* by Lou Berney
- *Murder for Choir* by Joelle Charbonneau
- *And She Was* by Alison Gaylin
- *Blessed Are the Dead* by Malla Nunn

### **Best Short Story**

- \* “*Mischief in Mesopotamia*” by Dana Cameron,  
*Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, November 2012
- “*Kept in the Dark*” by Shelia Connolly  
*Best New England Crime Stories: Blood Moon*
- “*The Lord is My Shamus*” by Barb Goffman  
*Chesapeake Crimes: This Job is Murder*
- “*Peaches*” by Todd Robinson, *Grift*, Spring 2012
- “*The Unremarkable Heart*” by Karin Slaughter  
*MWA Presents: Vengeance*

### **Best Critical Nonfiction Work**

- \* *Books To Die For: The World's Greatest Mystery Writers on the World's Greatest Mystery Novels*, edited by John Connolly and Declan Burke
- *Blood Relations: The Selected Letters of Ellery Queen, 1947-1950*. edited by Joseph Goodrich
- *More Forensics and Fiction: Crime Writers Morbidly Curious Questions Expertly Answered* by D.P. Lyle
- *The Grand Tour: Around the World with the Queen of Mystery*, edited by Mathew Prichard
- *In Pursuit of Spenser: Mystery Writers on Robert B. Parker and the Creation of an American Hero* edited by Otto Penzler.

# Elmore Leonard 1925-2013

(The following are excerpted from *The New York Times*)

## A Novelist Who Made Crime an Art, and His Bad Guys ‘Fun’

by Marilyn Stasio

Elmore Leonard, the prolific crime novelist whose louche characters, deadpan dialogue and immaculate prose style in novels like *Get Shorty*, *Freaky Deaky* and *Glitz* established him as a modern master of American genre writing, died at his home in Bloomfield Township, Michigan. He was 87.

To his admiring peers, Mr. Leonard did more than merely validate the popular crime thriller; he stripped the form of its worn-out affectations, reinventing it for a new generation and lifting it to a higher literary shelf.

Mr. Leonard, who started out writing westerns, had his first story published in *Argosy* magazine in 1951, and 60 years later, he was still turning out a book a year because, he said, “It’s fun.”

Despite his approval of the television version of *Justified* (from his short story “Fire in the Hole”), he had long been candidly and comically disdainful of the treatment his books generally received from Hollywood, even in commercially successful films like *Get Shorty* and *Out of Sight*.

Amused and possibly exasperated by frequent requests to expound on his writing techniques, Mr. Leonard drew up 10 rules of writing, published in *The New York Times* in 2001. “Try to leave out the parts that readers tend to skip,” “If it sounds like writing, rewrite it,” and other tips spoke to Mr. Leonard’s puckish wit; but put into practice, his “rules” do capture his own spare style.

Mr. Leonard’s narrative voice was crisp, clean and direct. He had no time to waste on adverbs, adjectives or tricky verb forms, and he had no patience for moody interior monologues or lyrical descriptive passages. His dialogue, too, was succinct. It takes only three words — “Look at me” — for Chili Palmer, the Miami loan shark in *Get Shorty*, to strike terror into the hearts of the deadbeat clients he hounds for late payments.

The western novels and short stories he wrote before turning to urban criminals attracted their own following, as well as movie producers. *Hombre* was made into a movie starring Paul Newman in 1967, and *3:10 to Yuma* was adapted twice.

Mr. Leonard delighted in his chatty characters’ affable amorality and pragmatic professionalism. He took special pride in the technical skills these gun dealers, loan sharks, bookies, thieves, grifters and mob enforcers brought to their trade. They may be criminals, but they know their business and they honor their work ethic.

Good guys and bad guys both, the players in Mr. Leonard’s books are always energized by the big, bad cities where they operate. There’s a wicked backbeat in his urban novels that pulses through cities like Miami, Detroit, New Orleans and San Juan. Atlantic City is its own sinister character in *Glitz*.

Although he was galvanized by the pace and patois of the metropolis, Mr. Leonard lived quietly beyond the city’s reach. During his 28-year marriage to Beverly Cline, which ended in divorce in 1977, he lived in Birmingham, a suburb of Detroit. When he got married for the second time, in 1979, to Joan Shepard, who died in 1993, he moved into a house seven blocks away. He and his third wife, Christine Kent, had a home in the Bloomfield Village area of Bloomfield Township, another Detroit suburb. That marriage, too, ended in divorce.

Elmore John Leonard Jr. was born in New Orleans on October 11, 1925. Nine years later, his father, an executive with General Motors, moved the family to Detroit. After graduating from high school in 1943, he did a two-year stretch in the Navy. Picking up his schooling at the University of Detroit, he graduated in 1950 and became a copywriter for a Detroit advertising agency.

Before going to work in the morning, he would try his hand at writing westerns. After selling his first story, “Trail of the Apaches,” he went on to write western novels and short stories throughout the 1950s and ’60s, including *Hombre* (1961), which was named by the Western Writers of America as one of the 25 best westerns ever written.

His first crime novel, *The Big Bounce*, set in Michigan, was published in 1969 and kicked off a series of them — including *Fifty-Two Pickup*, *Swag*, *Unknown Man No. 89*, and the raw genre masterpiece *City Primeval: High Noon in Detroit* — that to his fans define urban noir.

Did success spoil Elmore Leonard? No one who knew him would say so. The only thing slightly raffish about this soft-spoken, laconic author was his nickname, Dutch, and the cloth working-guy caps he wore in all kinds of weather. In person and in private, he was much like his hero in “Split Images”: “one of those quiet guys who looked at you and seemed to know things.”

## Barbara Mertz 1927-2013

### Barbara Mertz, Egyptologist and Mystery Writer, Dies at 85

by Daniel E. Slotnik

[Barbara Mertz](#), an Egyptologist who wrote best-selling mysteries and supernatural thrillers, many of them set in the Middle East, under the pen names Elizabeth Peters and Barbara Michaels, died on August 8 at her home in Frederick, Maryland. She was 85.

Ms. Mertz wrote nearly 70 books, beginning with two, under her own name, about Egypt. “She writes with an informal grace and contagious enthusiasm rarely found in books by qualified scholars,” Orville Prescott wrote in *The New York Times* in his review of *Temples, Tombs and Hieroglyphs*.

Ms. Mertz completed three novels before writing *The Master of Blacktower* (1966). At her agent’s request, she used the name Barbara Michaels. She was so relieved to finally sell a novel, she told *The Washington Post* in 1989, that “I would’ve accepted the pen name Jack the Ripper.” The nom de plume Elizabeth Peters, derived from her children’s first names, came later.

Her mysteries drew from the civilized detective stories of Agatha Christie and had a dose of Jane Austen-style romance. They often touched on scholarly topics — Etruscan archaeology, 19th-century Italian unification — and featured plucky heroines. She frequently returned to three protagonists: Vicky Bliss, an art historian at a museum in Munich; Jacqueline Kirby, a librarian turned romance novelist; and her favorite, Amelia Peabody, a Victorian-era amateur Egyptologist who starred in 19 books.

Her heroines often fought the sexist mores of their times. “I disapprove of matrimony as a matter of principle,” Ms. Peabody declares on the second page of *Crocodile on the Sandbank* (1975), the first book in the Peabody series. “Why should any independent, intelligent female choose to subject herself to the whims and tyrannies of a husband?” (She eventually married Radcliffe Emerson, a distinguished but mercurial archaeologist.)

Readers and critics appreciated Ms. Mertz’s rigorous background research. “Peters has always known how to romance us,” Marilyn Stasio wrote in a *Times* review. “But by letting history sweep through her fanciful tale, she also proves herself a conscientious scholar.”

Barbara Louise Gross was born on Sept. 29, 1927, in Canton, Illinois. She became fascinated by ancient Egypt when an aunt took her to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago when she was 13. She received a bachelor’s degree in Egyptology from the university in 1947 and earned her doctorate in 1952. She was unable to find work in academia because of sexism, she said.

Ms. Mertz was honored with a Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1998.

# Reviews

## Rob's Random Shots

I've been traveling in Europe and reading mostly from my Kindle; but I'm also more than a little behind on books I read just before leaving. I'll group eight short reviews in two categories to compare and contrast traditional mysteries (sometimes referred to as "cozies") and more hard-boiled mysteries and thrillers. The first four are reviewed below; the second batch will appear in the November *Nooseletter*.

***The Easter Egg Murder*** by Patricia Wood, Aakenbach & Kent, 2013 (TP)

***Casting Shadows*** by Margaret Tessler, Booklocker.com, 2012 (TP)

***A Killing at Cotton Hill: A Samuel Craddock Mystery*** by Terry Shames, Seventh Street Books, 2013 (TP)

***Deadly Secrets: A Mapleton Mystery*** by Terry Odell, Create Space, 2012 (TP)

Traditional mysteries usually feature amateur sleuths, but I enjoy both types of subgenre—the usually less violent cozies and their usually more violent, suspenseful, hard-boiled cousins. What these first four books share is that three of the four are by debut mystery authors, but they don't read like anyone's first efforts.

In *The Easter Egg Murder*, Croak & Dagger board member Pat Wood was bitten by the writing bug out of concern for a famous New Mexico unsolved murder that her FBI father had worked on in the 1950s. She changed the name of the victim and still living suspects but left the details of the crime intact and set her best-friend amateur sleuths Harrie McKinsey and Ginger Vaughn loose on the case.

Pat expands the motivation of her heroines' starting point and brings the passion that only close association with a cold case can create. The murder of "Chipper" Finn, a southern New Mexico party girl in the 1950s, resurfaces in her story, set in the 1980s, as Harrie and Ginger

assist a US senator, once a suspect himself and now working on his memoirs, in which he may identify the person he believes to be the murderer. In short order, the senator is seriously wounded by an unknown assailant, another person is killed, and the memoir manuscript goes missing. Harrie and Ginger experience growing personal peril for their involvement in the case, which leads to an exciting and suspenseful resolution.

To Pat's credit, she tells the story from multiple points of view. Alternating discoveries by Harrie and Ginger allow readers to see more evidence gathering and brainstorming than would have been the case with a single protagonist. The multiple points of view are generally a hallmark of thrillers and police procedurals, but the author juggles the chapters and the story deftly, leading toward a thrilling conclusion that combines danger and last-minute deduction. Readers will be pleased to know that this is only the first case for Ginger and Harrie. We need more New Mexican sleuths and this pair more than fills the bill.

Alone of these four books, *Casting Shadows* is not Margaret's first rodeo. Her series sleuth, Sharon Salazar, a New Mexican lawyer who also spends time and solves crime in Texas, and members of her extended family are back in this tale set mostly in Cloudcroft.

It's essential to give an amateur sleuth an occupation somehow related to crime and Sharon's legal smarts serve her well in this tale. Although she usually becomes involved in crimes through her many relatives, this case is personal. Sharon and husband Ryan, while on a ski vacation, stumble on the body of a teenage girl in the snow near a Cloudcroft ski lift.

I've learned a lot from Margaret and from Michael McGarrity about New Mexico geography from their novels and this is no exception. I've been to Cloudcroft, heard about the ghost in the hotel, and know it's a perfectly spooky place to set a murder. In short order, more of Sharon's relations are involved, placed in danger, and the danger escalates for her and Ryan as obstacles crop up in her attempts to help the small Cloudcroft police department.



Not only does she surprise the professionals in this case, but the identity of the killer surprised me, too. Logical, well-placed clues had me focusing on the wrong person before Margaret made all the pieces fit logically.

I met Terry Shames, author of *A Killing in Cotton Hill*, on a panel at Left Coast Crime in Colorado Springs in April. Terry provided us all with the first few chapters of her yet-to-be-published manuscript. I enjoyed meeting retired small-town sheriff Samuel Craddock, who tells this story in the unusual first-person *present* tense. “I walk into the room. Dora Lee’s nephew stands up.” I can’t recall reading that perspective before, and I’ve read a heck of a lot of books since my personal library began expanding in high school.

This sleuth has a good reason to investigate. The victim is his close neighbor and Samuel feels guilty for having dismissed her concern about a strange car the previous night. He finds her body in the first chapter. After that, Terry takes us through an excellent portrayal of small-town rural life—the poor, the prominent, the corrupt or incompetent (the current sheriff), local lawyers and busybodies, and the victim’s probably innocent nephew.

Samuel knows procedure and follows clues himself that escape the current law in his county. Family members of the deceased are interviewed, clues take Samuel to Houston, and friends try to get this recent widower to move on with his life even as he tries hard to keep an innocent boy from being railroaded. Big city discoveries help him solve the case, but he endures an arson attack before it’s all over. The book’s subtitle, *A Samuel Craddock Mystery*, promises us we’ll have other encounters with this quiet, self-effacing senior sleuth.

*Deadly Secrets: A Mapleton Mystery*, like the Craddock series, carries a subtitle promising a series. It’s a tactic I use myself, identifying my first three novels as *A Warbonnet Mystery*. I read the second novel in this series when Terry Odell was also on one of my panels at Left Coast Crime, so I wanted to go back and catch the first one. Neither volume was Terry’s first

odeo either. She has dozens of romance novels to her credit under various pseudonyms, and her polished prose and plotting reflect years of experience.

In these books, we look over the shoulder of small-town Colorado police chief Gordon Hepler as he and his force investigate a string of crimes culminating in the suspicious death of a driver outside of town and the murder of a local business owner. Are the two crimes related? How are a vulnerable pair of local residents involved? Why are a returned man and woman suspicious of each other?

We get multiple points of view in this story and they increase the suspense by raising more questions each time there’s a POV shift. This is a thriller tactic and it works particularly well here. Also unusual for a traditional mystery is the fact that this is a small-town police procedural and you’ll get so much detail on county-city cooperation, shift scheduling, radio and cellphone procedure—even vehicle maintenance—that you’ll feel ready to step into the small-town force yourself.

Except for the two “off-screen” murders, there’s very little violence, but a lot of suspense as various people are put in peril. There’s even a little romance involved, as I knew from having read the second novel. Relax. If you don’t like your romance culminated right in front of you, that takes place off-screen, too. ♦

—Rob Kresge ([www.robertkresge.com](http://www.robertkresge.com))

**Key:**

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

*The Time in Between* by Maria Dueñas, Atria Books 2012.

I cannot possibly give high enough praise for historical novel *The Time in Between*. It’s one of my favorite reads in at least a decade. The richly detailed story of ethics, courage and friendship sweeps from 1936 Madrid to Morocco to Portugal, with the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War and World War II.



In 1936 young Sira Quiroga lives a quiet life at home in Madrid, working at a dress-making shop with her single mother. Sira suddenly falls in love with a con man, jilts her long-standing fiancé just days before their wedding, and abandons her mother in Madrid, fleeing the law with her lover.

The relationship doesn't last long. Her lover leaves her pregnant in Morocco, skipping out on huge debts. Sira works tremendously hard and takes dangerous risks to survive. She makes a few deep and lasting friendships. To repay the debts her lover left behind, she sets up a dressmaking shop, to use her talent as a seamstress and clothing designer. Her clientele come from the highest society, including German officers' wives. Her excellent clothing designs earn her a handsome profit, and Sira recovers physically and emotionally.

Sira becomes best friends with Rosalinda Fox, an Englishwoman living with the Minister of Morocco. Rosalinda's free and easy spirit lifts Sira from her serious nose-to-the-grindstone life. As the Spanish Civil War rages, Sira desperately longs to rescue her mother from war-torn Madrid. Through Rosalinda's diplomatic community contacts, they find a journalist who arranges to smuggle Sira's mother out of Spain.

Sira and her mother Dolores enjoy living and sewing together once again, until one day Rosalinda begs Sira to do more for Spain and England, as an unofficial undercover informant. Leaving her mother behind in the safety of their Moroccan home and shop, Sira returns to Madrid with a new Moroccan identity and sets up a new exclusive dressmaking salon. She eavesdrops on her high-ranking clients' conversations and reports the details of their social events (where most military deals are arranged) using a clever 'stitches' code.

As Spain grows closer to entering the world war on the Axis side, Sira is sent to Portugal on a dangerous mission. Under cover of a shopping expedition for her dressmaking business, she must investigate a suspected double agent's business dealings. While in Portugal she meets the journalist who had smuggled her mother out of Spain and wonders at his true identity and

employer.

In a lovely heartwarming conclusion, Sira takes an assertive step toward happiness in a shared future.

Besides a compelling saga of Sira's transformation, the book provides fascinating descriptions of climate and lifestyle in Tetuan and the Spanish Protectorate. Rich historical detail of the politics in Spain and Morocco, wartime conditions in Spain and reasons for Franco's power are described, enough to hold your attention, yet not enough to bore.

Don't worry about the length of this book – you'll wish, as I did, that Sira's story would never end. ♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

***Every Contact Leaves a Trace: Crime Scene Experts Talk About Their Work From Discovery Through Verdict*** by Connie Fletcher, St. Martin's Press 2006, 386 pp (HC).

This is not the type of book usually reviewed in the *Nooseletter*, but it is very interesting and a lot of our members may find it useful. Fletcher is a journalism professor who has written several other books on the police. This book is a fascinating look at crime scene analysis by the people who actually do it.

The author writes a short introduction, but the rest of the book consists of short (from a few paragraphs to a few pages) stories and comments from over 75 crime scene experts from detectives to crime scene technicians to fingerprint experts. The stories are interesting in themselves and for writers they suggest a lot of plot ideas or just short scenes that can be included for added realism.

The narratives are organized into nine chapters: crime scene processing; crime scene interpretation (inside and outside scenes); trace evidence; body of evidence; DNA; crime lab; cold cases; and criminal trials.

There is also a short bio on each of the contributors, which provides a flavor of the broad range of expertise involved in modern crime scene analysis. For example, we all know that if someone breaks a window to get inside a

building there will be glass fragments inside. It turns out that the breakage also results in a blow back of tiny, almost microscopic, glass fragments which can be found on the perpetrator's hair and clothing and which can be matched to the broken glass at the scene.

The book is full of intriguing points like this. Unfortunately, few police departments have the expertise and equipment to do all types of possible analysis, but the range of what can be done is surprising.

Most mystery readers and writers, especially those into police procedurals, will find this a fascinating book. ♦

—Olin Bray ([ohbray@nmia.com](mailto:ohbray@nmia.com))

## **Series Mysteries**

*Silent in the Grave* by Deanna Raybourn, Mira 2007.

The first book of the Lady Julia Grey historical mystery series set in 1880s London. Julia watched helplessly as her husband Edward collapsed and died at a dinner party in their own home. Edward was sickly all his life, last in the family line with weak hearts, so it was easy to believe he died of natural causes. When Nicholas Brisbane suggested otherwise, Julia dismissed him rudely. It was a year later before she found evidence of foul play...

An intriguing story that builds slowly, introducing and developing complex characters that are sure to be in later series books: Lady Julia, who transforms over the course of the book like a butterfly from a moth; Nicholas Brisbane, a private enquiry agent with a mysterious past; Lord March, Julia's aristocratic father, with a surprisingly modern attitude toward his daughter; Lady Portia Bettiscombe, Julia's older sister and confidant; Madame Bellefleur, a new fast friend and kindred spirit; Valerius, Aquinas, Julia's loyal servant and ally; Mordecai Bent, Nicholas' friend who becomes Julia's trusted doctor; and the Tower raven, unwelcome at first, which later saves her life

Investigating a year-old death seems nearly

impossible, but Julia insists upon uncovering the truth. Separately and together, she and Nicholas pursue the clues, not quite trusting each other to share all they know. Red herrings and surprise twists abound. Julia unravels a complex and devastating web of secrets. The historical setting, society's rigid class rules and mores, play a significant role.

All loose ends are wrapped up; each odd clue fits tidily into the solution. I look forward to reading the next book in the series, *Silent in the Sanctuary*. ♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

*Murder Most Maine* by Karen MacInerney, Midnight Ink 2008.

The third book of the Gray Whale Inn series set on Cranberry Island, Maine. This cozy mystery series is a favorite of mine because the heroine, Natalie Barnes, is living her dream: to own and operate a bed-and-breakfast inn on a rustic island in Maine.

Betrayed by her old fiancé in Texas, Natalie has fled her old life and the hot weather of Texas for the cool outdoors. She is working harder than she ever imagined it would take to keep her business afloat, but in her first year on the island she has also made close friendships with townspeople, and has a romantic relationship with her neighbor John.

In *Murder Most Maine*, Natalie has contracted to host a week-long weight loss retreat. For the first time, she will need to cook all three meals each day for her guests, a significant workload. Plus she must follow strict dietary guidelines to prepare slimming recipes, not the scrumptious baked goods she normally serves. Nat rises to the challenge and provides flavorful meals (yes the recipes are included).

The retreat starts off with stormy Maine weather. Retreat leader Vanessa, a super-model type, turns out to be an old flame of John's... and they seem to be picking up where they left off. Charlotte, proprietor of the Cranberry Island Store and Natalie's best friend, is enthusiastic about meeting the retreat's hunky physical fitness trainer Dirk.

When a skeleton is discovered inside the historic lighthouse, the island is abuzz with curiosity, but then a murder among the retreat group takes center stage. When the police determine the victim was poisoned, they forbid Natalie to use her kitchen – which could effectively close down her business. Then a second murder occurs. Nat’s frantic to hurry along the case and find the killer, while racked with jealousy over John and Vanessa.

Natalie manages to find key clues to both the new murder and the historic skeleton’s identity. She confronts the killer and nearly gets herself killed, but all turns out well in the end...even in her love life.♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

***Buttercream Bump Off*** by Jenn McKinlay, Berkley Prime Crime, 2011.

Book 2 of the Cupcake Bakery Mystery series set in contemporary Scottsdale, Arizona. Following *Sprinkle with Murder*, this light-hearted cozy continues the misadventures of Melanie Cooper, Angela DeLaura, and Tate Harper, BFF and co-business owners of Fairy Tale Cupcakes.

I like this series for its basic premise: best friends pursuing a shared dream of owning a cupcake bakery. Their nemesis, Olivia Puckett, rival bakery owner, makes a brief re-appearance, just enough to spur them to set up a marketing contest.

Mel’s mother Joyce decides to go on a date and becomes the main suspect after her date is murdered. Mel is frantic to find the real killer and struggles to share business duties as she investigates.

Angie is smitten with a rock star, which almost – but not quite – brings Tate to his senses about his affection for her. Meanwhile Mel’s boyfriend Joe DeLaura continues to fall asleep on her couch, instead of providing the intimacy that she craves. There’s plenty of relationship tension to carry into a sequel.

Last but not least, the book includes recipes: Kiss Me Cupcakes, Orange Dreamsicle Cupcakes, Cupid’s Bliss Cupcakes and

Moonlight Madness Cupcakes, the recipe Mel bakes in *Sprinkle with Murder* when she has trouble sleeping ♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

***The Lost Luggage Porter*** by Andrew Martin, Faber & Faber 2006.

Book 3 of the Jim Stringer mystery series set in early 1900s England. It’s winter 1906 and Jim is downhearted, having moved to York to take a new job as railway detective. He sees the new assignment as a punishment for crashing an engine into a station in Halifax. He longs to return to his dream job of railway engineer. The only positive notes in his life are his wife and their soon-to-be-born first child. Of course his anxiety is enhanced by the need to support his family.

The new job’s instructions are suspiciously vague: to find and infiltrate a gang that has committed a series of railway crimes, including robbery and murder. His boss, Detective Weatherill, is more interested in eating lavish breakfasts and identifying crimes as non-railway (and therefore a matter for the city police) than solving the crimes and catching the criminals.

An odd young man working as the lost luggage porter provides Jim with clues, never in a straightforward manner. Jim has to be quick-witted and take a few punches to be credible in the underworld as well as join into the commission of crimes. He is constantly concerned about his future, since by joining the gang he is now a criminal, and he fears the railway police will not support or rescue him. Indeed they don’t - and Jim is forced to flee to France with the gang ringleaders. When they threaten his wife’s life, he must take desperate risks.

I enjoyed the first two books of the series (*The Necropolis Railway* and *The Blackpool Highflyer*) much more than this one. The earlier books were positive, as Jim worked hard to achieve his dreams; book 3 rambles along in a depressed mood. Jim is unhappy with his job and the uncertainty of his future. He loves his wife and is happy about imminent parenthood,

but is also irritated by her condition and behavior, and so spends most of his hours and days away from home. The steps he takes to find and infiltrate the gang are somewhat boring, mostly consisting of drinking in rundown pubs with shady characters. He never can figure out the right time or manner in which to arrest the criminals - just as well, since more policemen are corrupt than he realized.

On the strength of my satisfaction with the earlier books, I plan to read the next book in the series, *Murder at Deviation Junction*, in which I hope Jim will regain happiness and motivation in his work. ♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

***Skinner's Round*** by Quintin Jardine, Headline Book Publishing, 1995.

The 4th book in the Bob Skinner mystery series set in 1990s Scotland. This one is a must-read for an ardent golfer who enjoys mysteries.

At the new, exclusive and soon-to-open Witches' Hill golf resort along the East Lothian coast, a business partner turns up dead. Besides investigating the murder case, Assistant Chief Constable Bob Skinner is invited to take the business partner's place on a pro-am team for the grand opening tournament. He's on Darren Atkinson's team, in awe of the number-one golf professional who is dedicated to winning in all pursuits.

The Scotsman newspaper receives an odd letter about the murder. It jogs Bob's memory of a school project his first wife conducted, when one student quoted a witches' curse. Detective Maggie Rose investigates the history of Witches' Hill, and eventually teams up with a professor to dig into genealogical records. Readers interested in genealogy will enjoy the subplot of their research, which includes a family Bible with inscriptions from 1598.

Skinner's wife Sarah continues as the medical examiner, called out to pronounce death for each murder victim. Sarah and Bob's 3-month-old baby son Jazz is their pride and joy, a sweet note in their home life.

I'm a huge fan of straight-arrow Bob

Skinner. Unlike most popular fiction detectives, he isn't a recovering addict, his life is firmly on track and wildly successful, and he has positive nurturing relationships. As he explains to one of his detectives, "Aye, it sums up police work... [the victim] deserves retribution. It's down to us to see he gets it. Those are the clients of our detecting profession, Maggie, the victims and their families, first and foremost. That's where our duty lies. We're their avenging angels."

Skinner's tournament performance is described shot-by-shot as they golf the 18-hole course. The individual drives and putts are mildly interesting for a non-golfer, probably exciting reading for a golfer. But as he plays the course, Skinner remains a keen observer and criminal analyst. The final day of the tournament, he knows the killer's identity, and the suspense mounts. The last scene is absolutely fantastic! ♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

***My First Murder*** by Leena Lehtolainen, Amazon Crossing, 2012

The first book of the Maria Kallio mystery series set in modern Finland. Twenty-three-year-old Maria is on temporary assignment to the Violent Crimes Unit of the Helsinki Police Department. A seeker of justice, Maria intends to return to and complete her law school courses and eventually become a judge, but for now she has accepted a 6-month position filling in for a detective on medical leave.

Called out to a murder scene, she realizes the victim and several suspects are people she knew in her undergraduate days, including her former roommate. The police department is so short-handed she must stay on the case. Her previous friendships with victim and suspects prove to both help and hinder her investigation. She is able to make more contacts and speak more directly in some cases, however since she knew them all as friends, it seems a bit harder for her to discover the variety of crimes they are covering up.

Maria is constantly fighting gender battles on the job. Her boss is an alcoholic, never active



on the case. His prolonged absence is covered up, not officially acknowledged by higher management. She lives on her own, does not have a steady boyfriend, and is distant with her parents.

*My First Murder* is a solid police procedural that details the repetitive nature of detective work: Maria needs to question suspects repeatedly as she uncovers new evidence or formulates new theories. The book describes how exhausting and tedious an investigation can be and reveals the importance of forensic evidence. Breaks in the case may come at any time day or night, and Maria is frequently caught short without all her uniform pieces laundered and pressed. She substitutes garments as best she can, for which she endures teasing by colleagues.

Maria is a likable young woman, portrayed with very human characteristics. After a busy day she is tired, but when invited out for dinner and drinks with friends, she decides to go and have fun: "After all, I could always clean my apartment tomorrow, and there would be plenty of time for sleep when I retired."

The author provides Cast of Characters and Supporting Cast lists at the back of the book, which helps an English reader unfamiliar with Finnish names.

The Maria Kallio series currently has 11 books in the original Finnish, published 1993-2010; Book 2, *Her Enemy*, is the only other book translated to English (so far). Leena Lehtolainen is called "Finland's answer to Henning Mankell". Learn more from her website, [www.leenalehtolainen.fi](http://www.leenalehtolainen.fi) ♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

*A Sunless Sea* by Anne Perry, Ballantine Books, 2012.

The 18th book in the William Monk mystery series set in Victorian London. The title refers to the living hell of opium addiction. Monk finds a murder victim who was gruesomely mutilated and left on Limehouse Pier. He traces a connection to Dr. Lambourn, who was researching the widespread availability of opium for pain relief, and the tragic deaths of

children from overdose. Lambourn prepared a report to support a proposed pharmaceutical bill that would require accurate measurement and labeling with dosage instructions.

Dr. Lambourn died (an apparent suicide) soon after his research was rejected. Monk gets conflicting stories about the doctor: from colleagues who held him in high regard and respected his work, to a government minister who said the paper was rejected because it was anecdotal and hysterical. The more Monk learns, the more he suspects Lambourn's widow is correct, that he was murdered.

Monk enlists help from Oliver Rathbone, his wife Hester and long-time colleague Runcorn. Together they race to discover what information Lambourn included in his report, before yet another person is murdered in the coverup. To gain a fair trial Oliver has to compromise his values.

The mystery is interesting, there are clever plot twists, and the need for measurement and labeling is quite clear. It's enjoyable to read further adventures with Monk, Hester, Rathbone and Runcorn. But the story drags out slowly, ironically just like Rathbone dragged out the trial, and is far too melodramatic. Earlier books in the series dealt with equally serious crimes and moral issues, but with a balanced touch. ♦

—Susan Zates ([smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com))

An adaption of P.D. James' *Death Comes to Pemberley*, a continuation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, will air on Masterpiece Mystery in 2014. Matthew Rhys and Anna Maxwell Martin will star as Austen's iconic literary characters: Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet.

Host Alan Cumming's first mystery was *The Famous Five* by British author Enid Blyton, the first in a series, of which he read them all.

What was the first mystery novel you ever read? Send the title to the editor. We'll list the results.

## 2013 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, September 24, 7:00 p.m.

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

Tuesday, November 26, 7:00 p.m.

No December meeting

Tuesday, January 28, 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:contact@croak-and-dagger.com).

**Summary of the Board Meeting Minutes of Sisters in Crime  
Croak & Dagger Chapter, ABQ, NM, July 15, 2013**

Board members present: President Jan Bray, Vice President Joan Saberhagen, Treasurer Fred Aiken, Program Chair Rita Herther, Membership Chair Pat Wood, and past president Olin Bray.

President Janet Bray called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

Minutes from the previous board meeting were sent a few days after the Board meeting and only one minor correction was received. Minutes were approved as corrected.

Fred Aiken reported that the checking account had a balance of \$2,535.11. One membership of \$20 will be deposited Tuesday. The membership report was 38 members as per the treasurer's records. A copy was given to the membership chair.

There was no old business.

Rita Herther listed the programs scheduled for the remainder of the year, which are:

July – panel consisting of Pat Wood, Margaret Tessler, Albert Noyer, and Sarah Baker.  
August – Happy Shaw  
September – Pamela Christie  
October – Michael Arkin

Results of the survey conducted at the May meeting indicated that the clear choice for an outside group activity was a mystery play at the Adobe Theater. There was a 3-way tie for second place – tour of the UNM print-on-demand facility, shooting at a gun range, and a train trip and overnight at a haunted hotel in Las Vegas, NM. We will attend the mystery play at the Adobe with each person buying his own ticket online and a group reservation for dinner afterwards at the same restaurant as last year. Fred Aiken was appointed to research the UNM and shooting range events.

Rita Herther suggested a drawing for attendees at the November meeting to have a dinner with a published author. A motion was made, seconded and passed to spend \$75 from the treasury to fund this project. Rita will contact an author to participate.

Fred Aiken announced the Writers to Writers programs for the next three months, that the LERA writing contest was extended until July 31, and that the LERA annual conference would be held on November 9 at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. Pat Wood announced that she was featured in a two-page spread in *Prime Time*.

The next Board meeting will be held on September 16 at 7 p.m. at the home of President Janet Bray.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

*—Respectfully submitted, Fred Aiken, Secretary pro tem*