



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



# THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume IX, Number 6 — November 2013

## †Expert Testimony†

### New at Your Library

A new survey from USA Today (*Ed note: See page 6 for a link*) showed that people who have e-readers read more books than those who don't use them. More than a third of readers report they are reading more books thanks to their e-readers and tablets.

How large is this reader market? Forty percent of adults, including 46 percent of those 18-39, currently own an e-reader or tablet. It is also impressive that 60 percent of college graduates own one. Fifty percent of those under 40 who own a reader of some kind comment on books on Facebook, Twitter, or book websites.

Book reviews, librarian recommendations such as the monthly mystery lists at the Cherry Hills Library, and browsing the shelves of your favorite library or bookstore have been joined by websites, both non-commercial ones such as NoveList (available on the Bernalillo County Public Libraries webpage) and commercial ones such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

A whole category of recommendation sites is emerging. Among the more interesting sites are bookish.com backed by leading publishing houses such as Hachette Book Group, Penguin Group, and Simon and Schuster. The site gives readers expert book recommendations using insights from editors and its proprietary recommendation technology.

Other book discovery platforms which may interest readers, authors, and agents include Goodreads, which was just bought by Amazon, and Jellybooks. There are even review articles about recommendation sites! There are a

growing number of ways for readers to find new authors and compelling stories and for authors to find new audiences. Which sites do you use?

The ABQ Library has a new tool to find and read magazines electronically. It is called Zinio and allows browsing among over 80 popular and specific-interest publications, many of which the library does not have in hardcopy. We took our iPad to a recent training session (Gizmo Garage) at Cherry Hills. You can download current and many (although not all) back issues of these magazines without limit. Neat deal. Try it.

— Jan Bray, President

### ***Don't Miss It!*** **Tuesday, November 26, at 7 p.m.**

The year-ending program at the November meeting will be a *Historical Mystery Novel Round Table*.

Speakers will be **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 "hidden Jews; **Lester Lebo**, a Chicago native and retired art dealer/curator, whose novel about political intrigue and identity theft in post-WWII Germany, *The Finishing Touch*, was published by ABQ Press; and **Albert Moyer**, whose three historical mysteries set in the fifth-century Roman Empire began with *The Saint's Day Deaths*.

## Wait, there's more...

November's meeting will also feature a 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.

## And Don't-Miss This Special Event in 2014

The Croak & Dagger board is lining up another fun theater party for the New Year, when the Albuquerque Little Theatre will present Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*.

*The Mousetrap* premiered in London in 1962—and it's still running there. In classic Christie fashion, the play is set in a country house—Monkswell Manor guesthouse, which inevitably gets snowed in. This doesn't stop Detective Sergeant Trotter, who arrives on skis to tell the residents there's a murderer lurking nearby.

A woman was murdered in London just before the action moves to Monkswell Manor, where the guest list turns out to be full of suspects. The murderer's identity, of course, is not divulged until the twist ending of the play. Audience members are asked not to divulge the surprise—although after 60 years, you can probably Google it.

But why spoil the fun? The Croak & Dagger theater party will see *The Mousetrap* on February 2, at the 2 p.m. Sunday matinee. A discounted ticket price for members will be available. Come to the November meeting to sign up.

## As well as...

Three Santa Fe thriller authors will speak to Croak & Dagger at the February 25 meeting. The panel will be moderated by Rob Kresge, author of the 2013 Civil War spy thriller *Saving Lincoln*.

Sarah Lovett is currently collaborating with former CIA covert operative Valerie Plame Wilson, co-authoring the second book in a series of "Vanessa Pierson" spy novels. The series debut, *Blowback*, was published in October 2013.

James Reich is the author of the novels *Bombshell* and *I, Judas*.

David Wood's Dane Maddock series of thrillers takes readers around the world in search of legendary artifacts and on quests to solve ancient mysteries. He is also the author of popular young adult and historical fiction titles.

More information on this program to come.

*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.*

**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

President – Jan Bray –  
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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!"

# NOVEMBER ELECTION

*The Croak & Dagger chapter works because of the efforts of dedicated volunteers.*

Each year, members of Croak & Dagger vote for candidates for the four elective positions on the C&D board who serve 1-year terms. As usual, this year's election will be held at the November meeting. All dues-paying members are eligible to vote.

If you cannot attend the November meeting, please e-mail your vote to the current membership chair, Pat Wood, at [pwood73@comcast.net](mailto:pwood73@comcast.net) **no later than** noon on November 25. Ballots will be distributed and counted at the November 26 meeting and the results announced at the end. The whole board officially takes office in December.

Many current board members have expressed a willingness to stay for another term, but we welcome newcomers to the roster, and nominations from the floor are welcome.

## ***Elective Positions***

The **President** presides at all membership meetings and executive committee meetings, sets goals and assigns responsibilities, polls members on major decisions, keeps members informed, and serves as group spokesperson.

### ***Candidate for 2014: Current president Jan Bray.***

The **Vice President** conducts meetings in the President's absence and fills in or assists when needed for any other executive tasks.

### ***Candidate for 2014: Current vice-president Joan Saberhagen.***

The **Secretary** takes minutes at monthly board meetings, sends out notices of board meetings when needed, and keeps members on track as to what matters have been decided.

### ***Candidate for 2014: Past President Olin Bray.***

The **Treasurer** maintains the chapter's checking account and, with the membership chairman, tracks income and outgo.

### ***Candidate for 2014: Current Treasurer Fred Aiken.***

## ***Appointive Positions:***

**Programs/Publicity:** uses chapter resources to come up with speaker ideas and lines up programs for two or three months at a time; also coordinates purchase of gift bookmarks and sends press releases.

**Nooseletter Editor:** collects material from members and the media, edits for length, lays out the bimonthly *Nooseletter*, and delivers it to the membership chair for email distribution.

**Membership:** works with the treasurer to maintain a data base of members, and sends out meeting announcements and the *Nooseletter* to members.

**Website Technical Support Manager:** maintains the chapter's website, renewing contracts with the site host, uploading announcements and other information when directed by the board.

# ***What Ever Happened to Book Editors?***

## **A veteran editor gets back to basics**

by Marjorie Braman (excerpted from *Publishers Weekly*, September 10, 2013)

I blame my parents for my love of reading, but I blame Scott Berg's biography of Maxwell Perkins (*Max Perkins: Editor of Genius*) for my desire to become an editor. Fitzgerald! Hemingway! Thomas Wolfe! Encouraging one novelist to drink less and write more; massaging the ego of another; wrestling the wild imagination of a third into readable form. Was Perkins a collaborator? No. Cowriter? Absolutely not. But he was an invaluable "second eye," trusted sounding board, and gentle critic.

It sounded to me like my true calling. But in my time, editing for a publishing house wasn't quite so simple.

A publisher once said to me, almost in passing, "We don't pay you to edit." The real message was: "Editing is not crucial. If you're an editor, what matters is acquiring."

After I'd left in-house editing and was being courted by an agency, the owner/agent said to me, "Remember, you can't sit in your office and edit." In other words, "If you're an agent, what matters is selling."

These comments imply is that editing is no longer the editor's main function; editing is done on your own time. But as a freelance editor, these models no longer apply to my work. I no longer have to jump on every promising submission overnight. I no longer need to be looking over my shoulder, hoping for the approval of the marketing, publicity, and sales departments. I no longer have to determine the worth of any particular project a year before publication (and we know how often publishers get that right!). The burden on the freelance editor consists solely of helping the author write his or her best possible book.

I'd been through a lot of upheavals in the business, and one of the more insidious, but telling, things I'd seen happen as publishers cut back on staff was the expansion of the role of editors. Need a copywriter? No, we'll get the editor to write the flap copy. Is the art department understaffed and overloaded? No problem, the editor will come into the art meeting cheerfully armed with ideas.

Need a blurb for the book to get the sales department excited? The editor, in consultation with her magic Rolodex, will get just the right quote from just the right author (whom she's never met, but for whom she somehow has a home address). It's a snap.

When I left publishing, I joined a group of four other editors; we call ourselves 5E. We put out a newsletter three or four times a year in which we muse about the business. We meet and discuss what we're working on. We appear together at conferences. In short, we've established the one thing the independent editor might miss on the "outside": a community of colleagues. We work for writers, agents, and publishers, at all stages of the publication process. Our only goal is to help each project reach its maximum potential.

In this changing landscape, as publishers look more and more at their bottom lines and continue cutting back on in-house staff, I can envision a model in which the in-house editor is the jack-of-all-trades that the publisher requires, while still editing select projects. For other projects, the in-house editor might need to work with a trusted freelance editor to help move things along.

But publishers have to acknowledge what every editor—in-house or freelance—knows: editing is crucial and can make the difference between the success or failure of a book.

The Center for Fiction's Max Perkins Award, given each year to an editor of note, describes Perkins's dedication to his calling in this way: "The recognizing, the encouraging, the guiding of talent—that, in his opinion, was a sacred task worth any amount of effort, of risk, of time expended."

*After a 26-year career in publishing, Marjorie Braman now works independently as an editor and consultant with writers, agents, and publishers.*

## ***Catching Up With Old Friends***

Being in Europe for four months and having only my Kindle to read from meant I could search and download books by favorite authors. Here are some short reviews and comments on the pluses and minuses of reading right up to the latest things your favorites have written. As an example, I'm caught up with Sue Grafton with *W Is for Wasted*.

**Michael Connelly**, who I often say is my single most favorite mystery writer, writes two series, the Harry Bosch LAPD and the Mickey Haller Lincoln Lawyer novels. He is the only author I know who brings characters from standalone books into his Bosch and Haller series. In the last Haller novel I recommended, *The Brass Verdict*, the two find out after a great conclusion how they're related to each other.

In my recent European reads, Haller works *The Reversal* and *The Fifth Witness*, the two are coequals in the first, when Haller is named a special prosecutor on a new trial for a previous convicted man. But that novel is topped by *The Fifth Witness*, in which a woman Haller already represents in a civil case is arrested for murder. You can learn a lot about legal procedures in this one and the conclusion will blow your minds, as it did mine.

In catching up with Bosch alone, I enjoyed racing through *Nine Dragons*, *The Drop*, and *The Black Box*. In the first book, Bosch is called to a murder scene involving a Chinese couple. He's barely begun to investigate when his daughter video calls via cell phone from Hong Kong to say she's been kidnapped. Her call is abruptly cut off, but Bosch is able to find clues in the video and heads to Hong Kong, where he receives help from a friend of his ex-wife and is able to rescue his daughter and return home to solve the original case, which takes a couple of turns before it's all resolved.

In *The Drop*, Bosch has been given three years before he must retire from the LAPD, and he wants cases more fiercely than ever. In one morning, he gets two. DNA from a 1989 rape and murder matches a 29-year-old convicted rapist. Was he an 8-year-old killer or has something gone terribly wrong in the new Regional Crime Lab? The latter possibility could compromise all of the lab's DNA cases currently in court.

Then Bosch and his partner are called to a death scene fraught with internal politics. Councilman Irvin Irving's son jumped or was pushed from a window at the Chateau Marmont. Irving, Bosch's longtime nemesis, has demanded that Harry handle the investigation. Relentlessly pursuing both cases, Bosch makes two chilling discoveries—a killer operating unknown in the city for as many as three decades, and a political conspiracy that goes back into the dark history of the police department.

In *The Black Box*, Bosch is working in the Open-Unsolved Unit on cold cases and he has his pick. So he chooses to take on a case he couldn't solve 20 years ago during the LA riots. A Swedish photojournalist was murdered and due to the stress on police coping with the riots, the case was never closed. Against all odds, Bosch finds the murder weapon, interviews suspects, makes trans-Atlantic phone calls and brings the killer to justice, almost losing his own life in the process.

**Craig Robertson**, a Scots authors whose Glasgow mysteries I encountered when I sat with him on a panel at Left Coast Crime in Colorado Springs last March, caught my attention with *Cold Grave*, a cold case novel about a 20-year-old murder on an empty island isolated by winter and a frozen lake. In Europe, I read two more of his novels that feature Glasgow police detective Rachel Narey and police photographer Tony Winter. Think "Castle" and you'll understand the relationship between the two. I enjoyed *Witness the Dead*, about another cold-case series of murders being re-enacted by a new killer, and *Snapshot*, his latest, about a sniper who begins to take out crime figures and drug lords, but then switches to shooting apparently corrupt police officers. The latter case strains the Tony-Rachel relationship.

I also had a chance to read Craig's first novel, *Random*, perhaps the most unusual mystery you and I will ever encounter—a serial killer story told from the killer's point of view. These non-sexual killings of mostly criminals are meant to mask a revenge murder of one for the drunk-driving death of the killer's daughter. I was in awe of Robertson's ability to make his killer a sympathetic protagonist, and we get an introduction to Detective Rachel Narey, whose early removal from the case may have saved her life.

Finally, I picked up a free book at LCC Colorado Springs, *Redemption* by **Kate Flora**, which I have not finished at the time of this writing. I mention Kate because at the 2001 Malice Domestic Conference in Washington, she and Linda Smith Rutledge were the pair who convinced me to join Sisters in Crime years before I was published and years before I helped found the Albuquerque chapter.

This novel is a police procedural set in Portland, Maine that will take your breath away. It's the best thing of its kind that I've read since the late Ed McBain's 82nd Precinct novels. Told from Detective Sergeant Joe Burgess's POV, we get a detailed look into homicide investigation and the burden on the private lives of cops and suspects that is rendered better than any of the cop shows we see on TV. As much as I like this book, when I finish it, I will place it in the book box at a chapter meeting. I want other readers to find Kate and Joe Burgess.

And that act brings me full circle. At a first year C&D meeting, I took a copy of Michael Connelly's third novel, *The Concrete Blonde*, out of a book box and that opened a whole new world of enjoyment for me. I hope you all will use the book boxes to find new authors that will stay with you a long time.

— Rob Kresge, [rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net), [www.robertkresge.com](http://www.robertkresge.com)

### ***Readers Who Read Digitally Read More***

According to a USA Today survey (quoted on [www.digitalbookworlds.com](http://www.digitalbookworlds.com)), E-Reader and tablet owners read 60% more books than those without digital devices.

USA Today and Bookish ([www.bookish.com](http://www.bookish.com)), a website designed to help readers discover and buy books, conducted a joint national poll of adults that found how e-readers and tablets are shaping the culture and attitudes toward reading. More than a third (35%) of readers report they are reading more books thanks to their e-readers and tablets. Adults with reading devices say they read an average of 18 books a year, while those without devices say they average 11 books.

Other findings include:

- Doubling the numbers from less than two years ago, 40% of adults — including 46% of those between 18 and 39 — currently own an e-reader or a tablet.
- 60% of college graduates have an e-reader.
- 27% of readers say they have used Facebook, Twitter, or book websites to comment on a book, and that number rises almost two-fold (50%) among those under 40 who own a reading device.

# Writing a Lee Child Novel in 8 Foolproof Steps

(Excerpted from an article by Guy Bergstrom on [www.criminelement.com](http://www.criminelement.com))

**Lee Child** is one of the best thriller writers, period, and one of my favorite authors. After 18 novels, even Child isn't immune from repeating himself a smidge. It's like a Bond movie: there are going to be gadgets, girls, tuxedos, and sharks, because such things are required by law. Here's a handy recipe for writing any Reacher novel.



## Step 1: Reacher is all by his lonesome

Our hero is a giant with the brains of Sherlock Holmes in the body of Conan the Barbarian, and he's innocently wandering:

- (a) through cotton fields in the Deep South.
- (b) alongside a highway in the Midwest while a snowstorm rages.
- (c) in the urban jungle of Manhattan on his world coffee-drinking tour.

## Step 2: Somehow, some way, trouble finds Reacher

While he's drinking coffee (black, always black!), evil events find Reacher in the form of:

- (a) bad guys kidnapping him along with a beautiful woman.
- (b) corrupt cops arresting him for a murder he didn't commit.
- (c) bad guys offering him a job which he declines, then takes just to get closer to the bad guys.
- (d) his old Army buddies are in trouble, or dying, and sending him secret messages via deposits to his bank account since he doesn't have a phone or address.

## Step 3: Despite being unattached to any person, place or cause, Reacher gets all curious and involved

Though he chooses to have no house, no wife, no job and no attachments, Reacher gets all attached to people he doesn't know and dives deeper and deeper into the world of the bad guys, who are:

- (a) rich criminal masterminds controlling a small town.
- (b) foreign terrorists led by a beautiful woman with a thing for knives.
- (c) serial killers who are secretly cops or Army officers.

## Step 4: A pretty girl with a gun and a badge

There is always a Girl, who typically has a small waist, a Big Gun, and a Shiny Badge. Why?

- (a) she's the only member of the local police force whom Reacher can trust.
- (b) she's the beautiful girl who Reacher got kidnapped with as he was innocently hitchhiking across America with only his folding toothbrush for company.
- (c) she's locked in the cell next door to him, until he busts them both out and they join forces to sleep in trashy motels as they track down the bad guys.
- (d) as the femme fatale, she must follow the 007 Rule and die after sleeping with Reacher.

### Step 5: Let the games begin

Reacher gets warmed up dealing with minor thugs and such, who are:

- (a) redneck idiots in a local coffee joint or tavern, who insult Reacher's hair, clothes, Girl with a Gun, or folding toothbrush.
- (b) the local corrupt cops.
- (c) soldiers gone bad, ex-soldiers gone bad, or militia crazypants with a hankering for Army surplus camo.
- (d) prison inmates in the next cell who got paid two packs of cigarettes to shiv him.



### Step 6: Drive it like you stole it

Tired of hitchhiking, and having no money, Reacher steals a car, a wallet or two and some guns from the minor thugs by:

- (a) head-butting their leader, thus scaring the other bad guys into running and such.
- (b) head-butting their leader, then punching the other bad guys, and twisting their knees in directions nature never intended.
- (c) head-butting the entire population of the tavern / prison / town (sorry, this is also required, unless he chooses option d).
- (d) borrows a car from the Girl with a Gun.

Also: once Reacher obtains a vehicle, he always does a K-turn, because U-turns are for nancypants.

### Step 7: One man versus an evil army

Though he has a few new friends hanging back in support, Reacher ventures to the lair of the bad guy and takes on every armed thug in the place using only his iron forehead, his fists, and:

- (a) the stolen car as a way of busting down the front door.
- (b) the memory of the dead Girl with a Gun as rage fuel.
- (c) empty water bottles and a red plastic jug of gasoline.
- (d) his folding toothbrush.

### Step 8: Later, gators

Despite risking his life, freedom, and folding toothbrush for a bunch of people who are now dead—or he'll never see again—Reacher abandons them to hitchhike off into the sunset because:

- (a) having a girlfriend means settling down and having a job, a house, and a washing machine, and he would rather stick needles in his eyes.
- (b) after a few days of bliss, Reacher and the surviving girl come to the decision that it just wouldn't work out.
- (c) Reacher has to hop on the first Greyhound out of town before the cops ask him all kinds of questions about all kinds of dead bodies who got their skulls caved in.
- (d) while drinking coffee in a diner, he was immediately approached by another beautiful woman with a Big Gun and a Shiny Badge, and they both get kidnapped and put in the back of a U-Haul.

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*Guy Bergstrom is a speechwriter and reformed journalist. His thriller (Freedom, Alaska) won an award at PNWA 2013, and he's represented by literary agent Jill Marr. He can be found on Twitter @speechwrightguy or at his blog, [redpenofdoom.com](http://redpenofdoom.com)*



# Reviews

## Rob's Random Shots

### November Case File Number 1

*Spider Woman's Daughter* by Anne Hillerman, Harper Collins, 2013, 301 pp (HC)

Breathe easy, fans of Tony Hillerman's Joe Leaphorn-Jim Chee Navajo mysteries: His daughter has done a first-rate job of continuing her father's legacy while at the same time exploring new emotional and geographic terrain. You'll want to get this book. Buy it, borrow it, or get it from your local library.

It's hard to review this novel, though, without giving away the central plot point. But since the author mentions this in her appearances and readings, I think I'm safe in disclosing it right off the bat. Joe Leaphorn can't say anything in this book because he's the target of a murder attempt in the first chapter that leaves him in intensive care and unable to speak or, until late in the book, communicate in any way.

Thus it falls to Sergeant Jim Chee and his wife, Officer Bernadette Manuelito, to find a motive and identify the killer. And solving such a case is never easy. Naturally, the FBI takes an interest and in this book, FBI agents are helpful. Captain Largo puts Chee in charge of Navajo liaison but puts Bernie on leave, since she was a witness to the parking lot shooting and should not be part of the investigation. Naturally, she's not going to take this lying down and Chee understands, knowing there will be no keeping Bernie from contributing.

This raises the stakes for them and the suspense level for the reader. Will she be found to be violating the captain's order? How can she investigate if her hands are tied and she has to deal simultaneously with the complaints of her mother and sister? Where is Joe's long-time companion, anthropologist Louisa Bourbonette, and why is she impossible to find?

We get treated to extensive Reservation and Four Corners geography as Jim and Bernie

crisscross the reservation and spend time in Chaco Canyon, Southwest Colorado, Cuba, and Santa Fe, where Leaphorn is hospitalized. We get Navajo family relations, generational disconnects, and more romance than we're used to in Tony's novels. So it's fair to say readers get more than we hoped for in this first effort to continue Tony's series. Anne's initial foray doesn't read like anyone's first novel. It's comforting to find high-quality writing, expert plotting, familiar characters and locales, and to know we'll be in good hands in the next Hillerman novel. ♦

—Rob Kresge ([rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net))

### Key:

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

### November Case File Number 2

*Killing Custer* by Margaret Coel, Berkley Prime Crime, 2013, 309 pp (HC)

Father John O'Malley and Arapaho attorney Vicky Holden return in this latest Wind River mystery. In case you missed the previous novel, 2012's *Buffalo Bill's Dead Now*, this does not contain historical flashbacks to the 19th century like that volume did, but nevertheless, the past is always present in this book, too.

When I met Margaret at her September Bookworks signing, I had to ask her: Her last two books used Custer and Cody; so did my third Warbonnet mystery, *Death's Icy Hand*. My fourth, due out next year, uses Crazy Horse. Was she planning to use Crazy Horse in her next novel? She assured me she wouldn't; Crazy Horse is Sioux (Lakota) and she uses Arapaho characters almost exclusively.

That said, this novel gets off with a bang, literally. More than one bang, in fact. At a big parade in Lander to mark the start of the new rodeo season, re-enactors portraying members of the 7th Cavalry ride for the first time. The

man portraying Custer, Edward Garrett, himself a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, encounters Arapaho warriors making a “dare ride” around the cavalry, an Indian tactic from the 19th century that involved charging in, drawing fire, and withdrawing, both to show their bravery and to count the numbers and weapons of the soldiers. But unexpectedly, Garret falls dead, shot in the dust, confusion, and rearing horses by an unknown assailant.

Since this was the first appearance by “Custer” in an Arapaho parade and their warriors were conducting the dare ride, suspicion falls quickly and hard on the warriors, especially on their leader and on their best horseman, both known to Father John and Vicky. With no weapon to be found, the local FBI seems stymied, but everyone suspects the warriors of the murder—from Arapahos to white residents of Lander, to the re-enacting wife of Garrett who plays Libby Custer.

Complicating the investigation is a missing half million dollars that Garrett wanted to withdraw the previous day for a land deal from a local attorney/investment broker who seems to have been kidnapped. The attorney’s secretary has a thumb drive that backed up his files, but when she is in turn murdered, the drive cannot be found.

Father John and Vicky interview warrior suspects, jealous and resentful re-enactors, and Garrett’s wife, trying to stay clear of the official investigators while trying to keep local tempers and resentments against the warriors down to only a simmer. Figuring out the real killer and motive lands them in danger and only some last minute quick thinking saves the day.

Margaret’s Wind River mystery series continues to please readers in this inventive 17th installment. ♦

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

***Criminal Justice*** by Barbara Parker, Signet  
1998, 448 pp (PB)

Dan Galindo used to be a successful federal prosecutor. He used to be happily married. He used to live in a luxury home in Miami and

belonged to an exclusive country club. Now his ex-wife lives in luxury, while he lives in a tiny apartment and works out of a has-been defense attorney’s office in a seedy part of town. He has limited visitation rights with his son. He has a spoiled-brat girlfriend who plays in a hoping-to-be-discovered rock band.

Dan’s downfall came when he refused to put a key witness on the stand because he knew the witness lied. He followed his conscience. But when the feds lost the case, Dan was fired. None of the hotshot Miami legal firms wanted a failure. Lacking work and self-confidence, he drank away his marriage.

Dan lost everything important in his life except his integrity, which makes him a sympathetic hero in this story, surrounded by criminals and biased law enforcement.

Federal prosecutor Elaine McHale respected Dan when they worked together. She’s now on a money-laundering case with the DEA. Dan enters their radar by representing a rock musician as a favor to a friend. The DEA suspect the rock band is a front for criminal activity and assume Dan is fully aware and participating in the crimes, since he is seen regularly with the criminals. The DEA doesn’t know (nor would they believe) Dan is just doing a favor so he can borrow an exotic speedboat.

When Dan’s girlfriend is viciously murdered in Dan’s apartment, after leaving a recorded message that she was going to tell him something important, the police are so certain Dan committed the crime, they don’t investigate the murder. Dan must track down the killer himself. His efforts link him further to the federal investigation and the criminal kingpin.

Suspense mounts as more deaths occur, the rock band desperately tries to produce a demo record, and Dan struggles to fix his life. Betrayals abound.

A fast-paced thriller with interconnecting plot threads, “recommended for mature audiences” due to violence. Overall, it’s a fairly dark and depressing depiction of Miami’s underbelly, with only Dan and Elaine shining through. ♦

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

*Down River* by John Hart, Minotaur 2007, 336 pp (HC).

This psychological mystery/thriller set in modern-day Rowan County, North Carolina, won the 2008 Edgar Award for Best Novel.

Adam Chase has been living in New York since his acquittal from a murder charge. He is bitter that his father chose to believe his stepmother Janice's damning eyewitness testimony over his protestations of innocence.

Boyhood best friend Danny calls and begs Adam to return home to help him, but will not explain why. Adam refuses at first, but within a few weeks finds himself driving south.

He is driven by bitterness, torn between the need to reconcile with his family and yet dead set against it. Each family member harbors dark secrets, and the entire town is set against the Chase family for another reason. A power company wants to buy the Chase property and is offering big money to residents used to living on the poverty line. Adam's father will never sell. The family farm is his birthright.

On Adam's first day back in town he encounters violence and meets it with fierce brutality of his own. His former girlfriend, Robin, is now a police detective and makes it clear she is over him.

When Grace, Adam's boyhood playmate, is savagely beaten, the sheriff arrests Adam. Even after Grace regains consciousness and clears Adam, the sheriff is suspicious.

Adam discovers bodies and witnesses a suicide, which make the biased officers certain of his guilt. Adam must investigate a clue the police don't care about—like the older woman last seen talking with Grace.

The more Adam investigates, the more he strains his relationships with Robin and his father. Adam reveals many unexpected family secrets, including a shattering revelation about his mother's death.

*Down River* is the kind of mystery where believable suspects are ruled out by process of elimination, and all clues must be followed up to learn all the truth. A dark story with a satisfying, just wrap up. ♦

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

## Series Mysteries

*After the Armistice Ball* by Catriona McPherson, Constable 2005, 288 pp (HC).

The first book of the Dandy Gilver mystery series set in 1920s Scotland.

Dandelion ("Dandy") and her husband Hugh reside at Gilverton, Hugh's family estate in Perthshire. It's 1923, the Great War is over, and Dandy is bored.

Her friend Daisy Esselmont needs help with an awkward situation: it seems the famous Duffy Diamonds went missing while the dowager Lena Duffy was a guest at Daisy's country house. Dandy agrees to investigate.

Lena Duffy is a disagreeable woman. Her oldest daughter Clemence is aloof. But youngest daughter Cara is delightful, and she has a wonderful man for her fiancé. It's a shocking loss when Cara suddenly dies, shortly before her wedding to Alec.

The circumstances of Cara's death seem suspicious to Dandy and Alec, so they go to the seaside town where the "accident" occurred, and begin interviewing everyone.

The mystery is so-so, Dandy being the least likely person to succeed as an investigator, but the writing style is the true appeal of the book. Dandy rambles, delightfully on and on about anything that pops into her head. Her thoughts reveal the social customs and mores of 1920s Scotland. Apparently Dandy is English, not a native Scot, and she comments on Scottish customs from an outsider perspective.

If you find Dandy's rambling monologue style entertaining, as I do, by all means read the series. I will. ♦

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

*A Sheetcake Named Desire* by Jacklyn Brady, Berkley Prime Crime 2011, 296 pp (PB)

In this first book of the Piece of Cake mystery series set in modern-day New Orleans, Rita Lucero is "a trained cake artist, a graduate of the French Pastry School in Chicago." But instead of pursuing her skills professionally, she

is chopping onions in her uncle Nestor's Mexican restaurant in Albuquerque.

Why? Her pending divorce from the soon-to-be-ex-husband. It's been two sad years getting over him. She has struggled to get his signature on the divorce papers, so she travels to New Orleans to deliver the papers personally.

She never gets the chance to see him again—alive, that is. And she must use all her training to save the business, Zydeco Cakes, from disaster. It's all part of a systematic sabotage program she didn't know anything about.

At first Rita is the primary suspect, because she had married way, way up from being “a poor, orphaned Hispanic girl from Albuquerque, New Mexico,” to joining the aristocratic, old-money Thibodeaux-Renier family in New Orleans. After she is welcomed by Philippe's mother, police suspicion moves to one of Rita's old pastry colleagues, Ox. Rita refuses to believe Ox could sabotage Zydeco Cakes. She is determined to ferret out clues from the acts of sabotage and find the real killer.

Major obstacles in Rita's path are her late husband's blonde bimbo girlfriend, Quinn Goddard, and rival bakery owner Dmitri Wolff. A puzzling detail is the phone message from Philippe that Rita received on the morning before his murder: he suggested their breakup was a mistake and wanted to talk about starting over. It jars with all the assertions from employees of Zydeco Cakes that Philippe loved Quinn. Especially hard to swallow is Rita's eventual acceptance that Philippe loved Quinn, who is an obnoxious, obvious phony.

The book includes recipes. ♦

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

***The Keepsake*** by Tess Gerritsen, Ballantine Books 2008, 349 pp (HC).

This 7th book of the Rizzoli & Isles mystery series is set in modern-day Boston. Jane Rizzoli is a homicide detective; Maura Isles is the medical examiner. In this installment, Jane and Maura are on the track of a serial killer who preserves his victims for “keepsakes” as a mummy or tsantsa (shrunken head).

There are plenty of creepy and/or suspenseful scenes, but of course Jane and Maura triumph in the end. I really love reading this series. It's packed full of forensic details and investigative procedure description. Jane and Maura are believable human beings with plenty of brainpower tempered by kindness and compassion.

Point of view shifts between Jane and Maura and their colleagues as they work the case, the museum assistant who is being stalked by the killer, and near the end from the killer. Surprise plot twists make an exciting ending.

I recommend this series to fans who enjoy nitty-gritty forensic detail in police procedurals. I strongly suggest reading the series in order, to understand relationships between the main characters and the background of cases they've solved (survived) together. The first book of the Rizzoli & Isles series is *The Surgeon*, so scary it still gives me chills to remember. ♦

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

***Death of a Tart*** by Kate Borden, Berkley Prime Crime 2004, 197 pp (PB).

This is the first book of the Peggy Jean Turner mystery series set in modern-day New England. Cobb's Landing is a small town steeped in history. It was founded before the Revolutionary War by Josiah Cobb, whose button factory provided the town's jobs until it succumbed to modern-day global economics.

Peggy Jean Turner is the mayor of Cobb's Landing, “...a town stuck in the fifties. The 1750s.” When her husband died eight years ago, Peggy took over his job as mayor, as well as owning/operating Tom's Tools & Hardware. Her young son Nick is her pride and joy. His affection for her in return is charmingly portrayed in the very first chapter, which really hooked me on reading the book.

Just next door live the Coopers: Chuck the high school shop teacher, his wife Lovey and their son Charlie, Lovey is Peggy's lifelong best friend and confidante, a strong secondary character through the book. It is very pleasant to read about close friends and neighbors getting together for backyard barbecues and popping

into one another's houses to chat.

As mayor, Peggy struggles to keep the town going with a limited budget. A stranger named Max comes to town and shrewdly cons the townsfolk to invest in a complete makeover. He wants the town to become a colonial replica resort town (think Williamsburg). Folks are thrilled – until the bills come due.

For at least the first half of the book, I was sure the mystery was about Max – where did he come from and what was his real agenda, not to mention how the townspeople would survive their new debts. Then Peggy gets involved in what seems at first to be a subplot but then turns into the primary mystery, involving lifelong town residents, inheritance, genealogy and witchcraft, unraveling the long-hidden secrets of people Peggy thought she knew well. It seems an odd switch.

I enjoyed the early chapters most, where the key townspeople and their relationships were introduced, but on the whole I enjoyed the book enough to read more of the series. Book 2 is *Death of a Trickster*. ♦

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

***The House on Tradd Street*** by Karen White, NAL 2008, 329 pp (TP)

The first book of the Tradd Street mystery series set in modern-day Charleston, South Carolina. I was immediately hooked by many great lines in the beginning of the book, as I got to know protagonist Melanie Middleton.

Melanie is a real estate agent specializing in historic homes. But she prefers her stark white newly built townhome, sparsely furnished. At least that's what she says.

She meets an elderly gentleman in his historic Tradd Street home, hoping for a new listing. She doesn't get the listing – instead she inherits the house (and its ghosts). However she cannot turn over the house for a quick profit; she must first live in it and restore it, according to the terms of Mr. Vanderhorst's will. He selected Melanie to inherit because she saw his beloved wife's ghost in the garden, and his wife "only allows those she approves of to see her".

As she begins restoration, she suddenly

acquires two new boyfriends, too. But do these men care about her, or do they just want to hunt for legendary treasure in the house?

Over the course of restoring the house, Melanie confronts issues from her past as well as crises in the present. She grows stronger emotionally, builds caring relationships, and solves the mystery of the treasure. She eventually feels as Mr. Vanderhorst did, "It's a piece of history you can hold in your hands."

I normally don't choose to read books containing supernatural elements. I enjoyed this book anyway, and I look forward to reading the next book in the series, *The Girl on Legare Street*, in which Melanie will face more emotional challenges from the past. ♦

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

***Into Thin Air*** by Thomas Zigal, Thomas & Mercer, 2011, 275 pp (PB)

Sheriff Kurt Muller carries around a lot of emotional baggage, and trying to keep the peace in Aspen, Colorado (his home town), only adds to his woes. When a body is found in a creek, his investigation finds drug traffickers, international terrorists, and local power struggles—not to mention clashes with an obnoxious FBI agent. He begins to wonder if he can really handle the job.

On the plus side, although Muller's ex-wife is a mental case, his young son is the light of his life. His friends are loyal, and the victim's wife turns out to be a beautiful Argentine who easily sets his mind in pleasanter directions, at least temporarily.

Good characters but perhaps a too violent and over-complicated a plot, or maybe, not being a skier, I just couldn't warm up to the Aspen "culture." A fictional ski resort might have suited the stories better.

This is s first novel, and one hopes the next will present a simpler plot with the same colorful cast. Meanwhile, I recommend Craig Johnson's Sheriff Walt Longmire series instead as the gold standard is this old-fashioned-lawman-in-the-modern-West subgenre. ♦

—Linda Triegel ([ljt23@earthlink.net](mailto:ljt23@earthlink.net))

## 2013-14 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, November 26, 7:00 p.m.  
No December meeting  
Tuesday, January 28, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, February 25, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 25, 7:00 p.m.

### Meetings are free to the public.

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

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

Check our Web site, [www.croak-and-dagger.com](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, November 18, 2013**

Board members present: President Jan Bray, Vice President Joan Saberhagen, Treasurer Fred Aiken, Secretary Rob Kresge, Program & Publicity Chair Rita Herther, Membership/Communications Chair Pat Wood, Website Manager Susan Zates, *Nooseletter* Editor Linda Triegel, and past president Olin Bray.

President Janet Bray called the meeting to order at 7:12 PM. There were no additions or changes to the agenda. The minutes from the September board meeting were formally approved.

**Treasurer's report:** We had \$2,836.42 in the Croak & Dagger account. We took in \$40 for two renewed memberships and paid out \$118 for our annual renewal of our post office box, making a current balance of \$2,758.42.

The board voted to pay two bills--one for the annual PO box rental and the other to reimburse Fred for his water and ice expenditures for the last several general meetings. Fred gave a check for \$178.71 to Rita for expenses (bookmarks, engraving, and a box of thank-you cards). Fred or Olin will submit the necessary tax papers for the chapter for 2013. Olin will see to the printing of the annual order for chapter bookmarks. Projected cost to be around \$100.

**Membership report:** No current figures were discussed. There was discussion over whether the treasurer who deposits membership checks should take over membership and let the membership/communications chair just be responsible for communications of meetings, outside activities, and sending out the *Nooseletter* to paid members. It was decided that Fred would collect all the money, give a report on new members' checks or renewals to Pat, and update the email lists for members. Pat will maintain the friends list and use both lists for announcements and other communications. Board member job titles will remain the same for the time being.

**Program report:** The November 26 general meeting will be an historical mystery authors roundtable consisting of Sandra Toro, Lester Libo, and Albert Noyer. January's speaker will be historical mystery novelist Brian Stone. February's program will be a thriller writers program.

**Announcements:** Rob Kresge will take over the *Nooseletter* editor position from Linda Triegel effective with the January issue. He's learning the ropes right now.

**Old business:** The slate has been set for the elections at the November 26 general meeting. President: Jan Bray, VP: Joan Saberhagen, Secretary: Olin Bray, Treasurer: Fred Aiken. Appointive positions include Programs: Rita Herther, *Nooseletter*: Rob Kresge, Membership/ Communications: Pat Wood, Website: Susan Zates.

**New business:** Agatha Christie's play, *The Mousetrap*, will be at the Albuquerque Little Theater from Jan 24 through Feb 9. The board voted to make the Sunday, Feb 2 matinee a group event, with optional dinner afterwards at a location to be determined. General tickets cost \$22 and the senior rate is \$20. The group rate is \$18. Last time we subsidized tickets to members only, not spouses or friends of the chapter. The board will consider whether to offer a similar member subsidy for this performance. It was also discussed and decided to continue to pursue other outside activities like a visit to a shooting range.

Pat asked if the board would consider issuing chapter membership cards. She volunteered to create a sample; Susan will send her a downloadable logo to use on the card. Olin is looking into the issue of using the SinC logo.

The board meeting adjourned at 8:41. The next board meeting will be on January 20, 2014. The next board meeting will be on January 20, 2014.

—Respectfully submitted, Rob Kresge, Secretary