



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



# THE NOOSE LETTER

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## †Expert Testimony†

One day while discussing my schedule with a group of friends (who, by the way, are not writers), I mentioned I had a Croak & Dagger meeting that week. One of the group gave me a raised eyebrow and inquired what in the world was a Croak & Dagger meeting. As I explained that Croak & Dagger is the Albuquerque chapter of Sisters in Crime International, that brought on even more questions. They wondered if I was engaged in some heretofore hidden criminal activity.

So I gave them the typical explanation that Sisters in Crime is an organization created for the purpose of promoting and supporting female mystery writers. When someone mentioned that sounded rather sexist, I quickly added that men were welcome to become members if they wished. Thinking I had satisfied that discussion and we'd move on to another topic, one fellow in the group gave me "that look." You ladies probably know which look I mean. It's the one some guy, spoiling for an argument, gives you when he thinks you are trying to foist some new women's liberation philosophy on him. So I took a deep breath, counted to five (I don't have the patience to count to ten), and began my story.

I won't take up valuable space to repeat that here, because I know Rob has lots of reviews and other great news to bring you this issue. Instead, I hope you will go to the Sisters in Crime website at <http://www.sistersincrime.org>, click on the "About" button, and go to the subheading of "History." If you haven't already

done that, you really should, because it's an inspiring story, and it will make you proud to be a part of such an organization. One of my favorite parts of the story relates that when several women involved in the organization phase wanted to use just the first letters of the group, SIC, as in "Let's sic 'em", wiser heads prevailed. One of the prime founders said "... but I knew we were less about hostility than about working in sync ..." and so SinC became the go-to, shortened acronym we use today.

Women mystery writers have come a long way, Baby! We are now routinely included in the various awards given out yearly, and many have become as famous as their male counterparts. That's what happens when a group works "in sync", to help each other succeed. I hope the Croak & Dagger Chapter of Sisters in Crime always follows that lead.

--Pat Wood

Croak & Dagger Chapter President, 2015

***Don't Miss It!***  
**Tuesday, March 24, at 7 p.m.**

Our March speaker will be Robert DeBuck, who served in many important and interesting positions with the Albuquerque Police Department from 1986 to 2006. Come hear him talk about undercover work, emergency response, cold cases, the Junior Police Academy, and many other subjects.

## **Don't Miss Our Room Change for the April 28 Meeting—Room 6!**

### **Eye in the Sky**

By Gaillyne M. Ferguson (used by permission of the author)

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)—or “drones,” as many people have come to know them—are catching the attention of law enforcement’s accident reconstruction and criminal investigation units worldwide. In the United States, however, the technology is fairly new. This may be due to public perception and ignorance of Fourth Amendment violations, but one particular agency—the Mesa County, (Colorado) Sheriff’s Office (MCSO)—is leading the way to quell the fears of such violations. Their hard work and dedication are proving the value of UAVs for law enforcement and other public safety organizations by making the program transparent through education.

In 2009, the MCSO teamed up with Dragonfly Innovations, Inc. of Saskatoon, SK, Canada, to test potential law enforcement capabilities for free through a mutual agreement. Since then, MCSO Unmanned Aircraft Program Manager Ben Miller has been instrumental in not only working along with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to ensure adherence to regulations regarding the use of UAVs by public safety organizations, but he is considered a thought leader on the application of small UAVs.

From tactical operations and crime scene reconstruction to search and rescue and fire operations, Miller’s experience and expertise in operating a variety of UAVs has enabled him to develop defensible crime reconstruction within less than three millimeters.

“MCSO has learned a tremendous amount over the years, but it has not been without obstacles, especially when it came to the public’s (association) with what is done with missile-bearing predator drones in the military,” Miller said. When talk of UAV use by law enforcement began in the U.S., pressure by the media and privacy groups started raising concern among the public with discussions of the potential for government spying and demands that the FAA protect people’s privacy under the Fourth Amendment.

Miller says the Sheriff’s Office was aware of the public’s privacy concerns and since the FAA still had an ill-formed regulatory structure, MCSO decided to study their own uses for years before writing policy. “We then drafted a policy and sent it through a significant review process in which the policy review committee critiqued it,” he said. “We found that many of the issues we felt we needed to address were covered in other departmental policy. Things like personal use, attention to sensitive images, etc. At the end of the day, the UAV is a camera. We have used cameras in our agency for years and our policies have developed over time into a robust guide as to what is appropriate and what is not.”

When it comes to concerns over privacy, many seem to have misunderstood the primary responsibility of the FAA. It is not to protect an individual’s rights against unreasonable search and seizures under the Fourth Amendment, but rather “to provide the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world.” This was reiterated by Justice Sandra Day O’Connor in the Supreme Court’s ruling on the United States’ *Florida v. Riley* (1989), when she offered a concurring opinion: “...FAA regulations whose purpose is to promote air safety, not to protect the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures.”

The use of aircraft in law enforcement is nothing new. Manned aircraft, both fixed wing and helicopter, have been used for decades with high-powered cameras on board. Search and seizure issues related to these uses have been frequently addressed by the judiciary and any incident involving UAVs would receive the same or greater level of review.

The benefits of police departments utilizing UAVs are extensive. Agencies in both the United States and Canada have used UAVs for everything from accident reconstruction and crime scene documentation, to assisting search and rescue personnel, SWAT teams, and fire departments.

MCSO currently uses the Draganflyer X4-ES model, a product of Draganfly Innovation, Inc. It is a five-pound, four-rotor helicopter measuring 34.24 inches wide and 34.25 inches long, with a height of 11.5 inches and a top diameter of 42 inches. With the capability of adjusting itself, the X4-ES “tilts” forward during windy conditions or when flying to another location, the same as a real helicopter, but the camera remains in position automatically. The most recent camera used for the X4-ES is the Sony RX100II, which is capable of live digital broadcasting from the aircraft directly to the screen of the GCS Transmitter or Android-based tablet/smartphone. The X4-ES is able to stay in the air for up to 30 minutes. Though they are capable of going much higher, the FAA limits legal operation during daylight hours to an altitude of 400 feet above ground level (AGL) and within line of sight to the operator.

Besides using UAVs for accident and crime scene reconstruction, MCSO has also found the technology beneficial for search and rescue operations, where they have been able to cover a vast area with fewer human resources. In other emergency responses, MCSO has found UAVs useful in aiding firefighters by detecting hot spots in a major structure fire by using the camera’s “Forward Looking Infrared” (FLIR) capability. Recently, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) “F” Division used a UAV to successfully locate a man after he wandered off into the vast Canadian wilderness following an auto accident. With such a large geographical area to cover, the RCMP found this tool to be well worth the investment.

According to Miller, at the time MCSO started experimenting with law enforcement capabilities of the Draganflyer X6, “the FAA had little experience with small UAV and the process at the time.” The first year was a learning curve as Miller and his staff learned the capabilities of the UAV as it pertained to law enforcement as well as what it could not do. The Draganflyer X6 was mainly used to collect data for 3D crime scenes. The MCSO later moved to the improved Draganflyer X4-ES and added a larger fixed winged UAV called a Falcon UAV for search and rescue operations. Miller cited the biggest advantage to the system as “the price and being able to see the world even at 50 feet in the air because it changes perspective.” It costs MCSO approximately \$25 per hour to operate the UAV on a mission as compared to the expense of manned aviation, which runs between \$500 and \$1,200 per hour. In Mesa, CO alone, the county used to spend upwards of \$10,000 for manned aircraft missions.

Years ago, in order to obtain an overhead photograph, departments had to call in fire departments or baskets from a city works department to get elevated shots. That is no longer the case with UAVs. Since they are compact and can be stored in the trunk of a cruiser or in the vehicle of a reconstruction unit, they can be assembled and in the air within five minutes. The UAV can easily be piloted to the exact location and with a GPS hold option, can maintain that exact position while the camera angle, zoom and shutter are adjusted. From tactical operations, search and rescue, HAZMAT operations, bomb squad and detailed aerial mapping to crime scene and traffic collision documentation, UAVs have been a valuable resource for many law enforcement agencies worldwide. The images and video tell a story either in real time or later during the investigation and ultimate prosecution. Live video feed either provides live tactical or search/rescue information or allows the

operator to frame shots needed. Incredible video precision allows departments to create highly detailed information with a level of accuracy of less than one centimeter. The sequence of images can be used to create a photo-realistic 3D visual model of a crime or collision scene and can be viewed from any angle, measure points and see things that might have been overlooked while walking the incident. A 3D crime scene model generated by the aircraft can be sent to a 3D printer, creating a physical model that everyone can touch and see.

Miller explained how the UAVs accomplish their department's goals. "We fly grid patterns over an area in question and take photos every few seconds as we fly. The photos are then 'aligned' using software and consolidated into one large photo that is accurate to the real world within millimeters. From a large photo, we can locate each pixel in three dimensions, pulling flat photos into a 3D object or model. We can animate or print on a 3D printer. We just have one shot at capturing all the images before things start to change, so we want to get it right. The first step in documenting or recreating a crime scene is measurement. We must be able to accurately place all items in a crime scene and understand their relationship with one another."

The interactive 3D models perform complex measurements within the scene, between objects, vehicle, skid marks or even calculate complex areas to determine volume. Processing a crime or accident is also much faster through the use of UAVs. "This technology speeds the process and reduces our time on scene, the time a road is closed, the time a business is closed or the amount of time before a family can be let back into their home after a crime," Miller said. "This new technology helps us considerably and the people we serve."

Today, there are six UAV test sites in the U.S., including one at the Grand Forks, CO Air Force Base, which hosts an annual unmanned aircraft conference. Demonstrations featuring the Draganflyer X4-ES recording evidence, such as skid marks and debris, from a two-car accident were held recently. Though Mesa's FAA certificate of authorization limits the UAVs to their jurisdiction, they have been granted special permission from the FAA to assist neighboring departments in other communities. The FAA requires pilots to have a private pilot's license to fly unmanned aerial systems at night, so Miller said that night flights will not be an option. When asked if he felt UAVs were something every department in the United States could possibly have in the future, Miller said, "as much as the democratization of aviation is occurring in small UAVs for everyone else, it will occur for law enforcement as well."

For more information on how UAVs can benefit your department, please visit Draganfly Innovations, Inc. at [Draganfly.com](http://Draganfly.com) or the Mesa County Sheriff's Office at [www.Mesauas.com](http://www.Mesauas.com).

## **The 2014 Agatha Award Nominees are:**

### **Best Contemporary Novel**

*The Good, The Bad and The Emus* by Donna Andrews (Minotaur Books)

*A Demon Summer* by G.M. Malliet (Minotaur Books)

*Truth Be Told* by Hank Phillippi Ryan (Forge Books)

*The Long Way Home* by Louise Penny (Minotaur Books)

*Designated Daughters* by Margaret Maron (Grand Central Publishing)

### **Best Historical Novel**

*Hunting Shadows* by Charles Todd (William Morrow)

*An Unwilling Accomplice* by Charles Todd (William Morrow)  
*Wouldn't It Be Deadly* by D.E. Ireland (Minotaur Books)  
*Queen of Hearts* by Rhys Bowen (Berkley)  
*Murder in Murray Hill* by Victoria Thompson (Berkley)

### **Best First Novel**

*Circle of Influence* by Annette Dashofy (Henery Press)  
*Tagged for Death* by Sherry Harris (Kensington Publishing)  
*Finding Sky* by Susan O'Brien (Henery Press)  
*Well Read, Then Dead* by Terrie Farley Moran (Berkley Prime Crime)  
*Murder Strikes a Pose* by Tracy Weber (Midnight Ink)

### **Best Nonfiction**

*400 Things Cops Know: Street Smart Lessons from a Veteran Patrolman* by Adam Plantinga (Quill Driver Books)  
*Writes of Passage: Adventures on the Writer's Journey* by Hank Phillippi Ryan, ed (Henry Press)  
*Death Dealer: How Cops and Cadaver Dogs Brought a Killer to Justice* by Kate Flora (New Horizon Press)  
*The Art of the English Murder* by Lucy Worsley (Pegasus Books)  
*The Poisoner: The Life and Crimes of Victorian England's Most Notorious Doctor* by Stephen Bates (Overlook Hardcover)

### **Best Short Story**

"The Odds are Against Us" by Art Taylor (EQMM)  
"Premonition" (*Chesapeake Crimes Homicidal Holidays*) by Art Taylor (Wildside Press)  
"The Shadow Knows" (*Chesapeake Crimes Homicidal Holidays*) by Barb Goffman (Wildside Press)  
"Just Desserts for Johnny" by Edith Maxwell (Kings River Life Magazine)  
"The Blessing Witch" (Best New England Crime Stories 2015: Rogue Wave) by Kathy Lynn Emerson (Level Best Books)

### **Best Children's/Young Adult**

*Andi Under Pressure* by Amanda Flower (ZonderKidz)  
*Greenglass House* by Kate Milford (Clarion Books)  
*Uncertain Glory* by Lea Wait (Islandport Press)  
*The Code Buster's Club, Case #4, The Mummy's Curse* by Penny Warner (Egmont USA)  
*Found* by Harlen Coben (Putnam Juvenile)

**The winners will be announced at the Agatha Awards Banquet on May 2, 2015.**

## **SinC Monitoring Project Annual Report 2014**

by Barbara Fister, reprinted from **InSinC** newsletter

The Sisters in Crime Monitoring Project, started when the organization was founded in 1986, takes an annual look at how much of the available book review space is given to women writers in the crime fiction genre. Volunteers collected data from more than three dozen print and digital publications. The percentages of women writers published and reviewed has climbed significantly over the past quarter century, and in 2014 showed gains in nearly every category.

**Award Nominations.** As usual, we used the books submitted for Edgar Award consideration as a benchmark to see who was getting published and in what formats. Women writers edged ahead over

2013, with 53% of submitted mysteries in the Best, Best First, and Best Paperback- or E-Original categories written by women. (Founding members of the organization estimated that about a third of published mystery writers in the late 1980s were women.)

As before, women appear to be more likely to be published in paperback- or electronic- original form than in hardcover. Men continue to hold an edge in hardcover as represented by Best Novel submissions, though women authors in 2014 accounted for 46% of the titles in that category compared to 43% in 2013 and 38% in 2012. Men also held a small advantage in the Best First category submissions. Women again dominated the Mary Higgins Clark category, which was started after its namesake complained that women weren't getting their share of award nominations. However, all but three of the submissions were also submitted to other categories. As in previous years, *Deadly Pleasures* was more generous in giving space to reviews of books by men, with reviews of women's books capturing 36%, the same as last year.

**All the Reviews Fit to Print.** In 2014, women authors gained a slightly greater share of book review space in traditional review outlets. National newspapers all saw an increase in the percentage of women authors reviewed, ranging from 44% of the mystery reviews in *The New York Times* (up from 36% in 2013) to 30% of reviews in *The Wall Street Journal* (up from 27%). The only decrease from recent years was in the *Washington Post*, which gave 45% of its mystery review space to women authors in 2013 but only 35% in 2014.

In local newspapers, women authors also gained slightly, with an overall increase from 41% to 42% of all mystery reviews. The overall number of reviews in monitored newspapers declined, however, with several newspapers dropping reviews from their pages entirely. We also looked at reviews in *Entertainment Weekly*, which had an equal (though rather small) number of crime fiction reviews of books by men and women. NPR, disappointingly, favored male writers heavily, with only 24% of their crime fiction reviews featuring books by women.

As in previous years, *Library Journal* was more generous to women mystery authors with its review space than *Publishers Weekly* or *Booklist*. We monitored five genre-focused publications, all but one of which saw some increase in the percentage of women's books being reviewed. *Mystery Scene*, which had been giving male authors slightly more than half of its reviews, has returned to nearly equal coverage (49%). *Suspense Magazine* increased its attention to women's mysteries to 60%, a significant increase over last year. *RT Reviews* (formerly *Romantic Times*) has always provided more space to women authors. This year, it weighed in with 78% of its reviews focusing on books by women.

**The Digital Scene.** Interestingly, the percentage of women authors reviewed in the born-digital review sites we have monitored since 2011 is still generally high, but not quite as high this year. Reviews of women authors in *Reviewing the Evidence*, a site that has published more than 10,000 reviews since 2001, dropped from 42% down to 36%. (The overall number of reviews published also dropped after one of its editors started a separate UK-based site, *Crime Review*.) *Bookbitch*, a review site with many contributors, increased its coverage of women writers to 40%. Readers of *the I Love a Mystery Newsletter*, a book review publication that had migrated from print to the web and lasted more than twenty years, were sad to learn that it would cease publication in 2014.

In addition to review websites, we looked at more than a dozen book review blogs. Among US-based bloggers monitored, women authors continued to get a generous share of attention, with 58% of reviews going to books by women authors. Male authors were given the edge by European and Australian bloggers monitored in 2014, with only 42% of their reviews covering works by women writers.

**Looking at "Best of 2014" Lists.** Finally, to round out our annual snapshot, we took a look at *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, and *Kirkus* to see how women authors fared in their end-of-year list of best mysteries and thrillers. Combining their lists, twenty-three male authors and sixteen female authors were counted among the best. Digging a little deeper, we noticed that the women whose books were included on these lists were equally comfortable writing about male or female protagonists (or, in

some case, multiple points of view involving male and female characters). A couple of the male authors' books featured female protagonists, but it was far more likely that male authors' books featured male protagonists. Research has long suggested that women are more likely to read both male and female authors than men, who are more likely than women to say they prefer to read books by authors of their own gender. This look at a small number of well-received books raises the possibility that women authors may be more comfortable imagining their fictional worlds through characters of another gender than male writers are, though it would take more research to confirm that hunch.

**Conclusion.** All in all, women writers saw advances in 2014 in terms of getting their mysteries published and getting reviews. That said, male authors still have an edge when it comes to being published in hardcover, getting reviewed in the most prestigious mainstream national publications, and in having their work recognized in "best of the year" lists.

*When not chairing the SinC Monitoring Project and serving on our board, Barbara Fister is a librarian at the Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota. She writes the Anni Koskinen mystery series.*

## REMEMBRANCE

Excerpted and edited from *Another Thursday's Child* by Elaine Abramson, used by permission of the author

*(Do you have a writing story you'd like to share with our members? Send to [rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net) )*

2013

An email invited my husband Stan and me to attend a remembrance for Ethel, a fellow author and a woman loved by everyone who met her. Her apartment in an upscale assisted living development would be the gathering place for the ninety-six-year-old woman's family and friends.

Two years earlier in the building's party room, Ethel had celebrated the publication of the only book she ever wrote by having a book-signing party. Friends brought fruit, cakes, and drinks. She sat at the oval dining table happily signing her memoir about brain injury and its ramifications. Now the book that was a labor of love would be remembered by all who had helped her make her dream of publication a reality. Friends helped her take it from manuscript to publication. One did the copyediting, another the cover design, a third converted the text to book format, a fourth put the book in the CreateSpace template, and the fifth set up an Amazon sales account for her.

Modern art decorated the walls of the small two-bedroom apartment. Picasso prints seemed to be her favorite. Simple but elegant brightly colored modern furniture graced the rooms. The standing-room-only crowd was attired in somber dark-colored warm winter clothes on a sunny but cold day. Buffet tables with sandwiches, cakes, cupcakes, cookies, seasonal fruits and vegetables, and drinks lined the dinette walls.

Sylvia spoke, holding a plate of small sandwiches and tropical fruit.

"Her book would never have been published if I hadn't put it together for her. It was so disorganized, you couldn't figure out what she was trying to say. She knew her subject but she had no idea how to put it into readable copy."

"Thank you, thank you! What you did made Mother happy, very happy," said her grandson, the bespeckled computer whiz kid who had flown in from the East Coast. "All Grandma talked about was her book and all the wonderful people who gave their time and talent to help her get it on Amazon."

He turned to my husband Stan, and they started talking about where they worked and the computers they worked on.

"Now that she's gone, what do we do with the book?" asked Ethel's sad-faced married daughter.

"Leave it on Amazon and collect the royalties. Ethel would want you to do it," Sylvia said.

After Ethel's daughter introduced Stan and me to her husband and other members of Ethel's family and friends, a short stout woman with fluffy steel gray hair and big oval bifocals came up to me.

"You're the lady who was on television, aren't you?" She smoothed out her dark gray tent dress and studied me as she waited for an answer.

“Yes,” I answered.

“You were on the *Today Show*.” She became more and more animated as she spoke. “I can’t believe that I’m actually meeting the woman who lost so much weight just by eating in restaurants. How long did it take you?”

“A little over a year.”

“WOW!” Her eyes opened wide. “Did you really do it by eating only in restaurants?”

“I haven’t cooked in four years. I’m having the time of my life eating out. And if I’m lucky, I’ll never cook again.”

She looked at my husband for confirmation.

“Elaine doesn’t cook,” he said.

She had that faraway look in her eyes as if she was trying to remember something. Suddenly she blurted out, “You wrote a book about it too, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I did.”

“I gotta take off weight like you did. Where do I get a copy of your book?”

I looked at my husband and shrugged. I wasn’t sure what to say or do. We were at a remembrance for someone who had died. Was this the appropriate time and place to be selling books? She continued talking about the television program I had been on.

People standing around us listening to our conversation acted like her behavior was nothing out of the ordinary, like book sales occurred at events like this every day. Remembrances were no longer the somber dreary gatherings I remembered from my childhood.

In the background I heard Sylvia tell Ethel’s daughter how to change Ethel’s Amazon account over to her name so her mother’s book could continue selling on the internet, so I concluded that if Sylvia was talking book sales, I should be able to sell my book too.

“I have books in my car. If you’d like one, my husband can go downstairs and get one for you.”

“Please, please have him do it.”

As Stan walked out the door, she rushed over to the couch and collected a black leather purse almost as big as a suitcase.

“How much?” I told her and she handed me a wad of dollar bills.

When Stan returned, I handed her *From Fat to Fabulous: A Diet Guide for Restaurant Lovers*, my restaurant lover’s diet book. She clutched it to her bosom. Shyly she asked, “Can you autograph it for me?”

“I’d be delighted.”

“Happy Eating!” I wrote and signed my name.

When Stan and I left the remembrance, she was still holding my book next to her bosom and her eyes were lit up with that *I’m going to heaven* look.

Sylvia was telling Ethel’s daughter, “Remember to keep track of all book sales because you have to pay taxes on them.”

--Writing as E.S. Abramson, Elaine Abramson’s *Thursday’s Child* series of nonfiction short stories was nominated for the Nobel Prize by the National League of American Pen Women.

## Good News for Laura Sanchez!

Local author Laura Sanchez was interviewed by Adam Baca in the **March issue** of *Albuquerque The Magazine*. Laura is a previous speaker to the Croak and Dagger chapter. Check out her full-page interview on her debut mystery novel, *Killer Miracle*.

## Reviews

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| Key:<br>PB=Paperback<br>TP=Trade Paperback<br>HC=Hardcover |
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### Rob's Random Shots

#### March Case File Number One

*Shaky Ground* by Steve Brewer, St Martin's Press, 1997, 233 pp, HC

Full disclosure: I've read nearly all Steve's books and own many and count him as a friend. This is the fourth volume in the bumbling PI Bubba Mabry series, all of which are humorous mysteries. This one is no exception. I've read Bubba books before and after he married Albuquerque newspaper reporter Felicia Quattlebaum (no, I don't know where Steve comes up with some of his names—see Kwanzaa Dupont in one of my previous Brewer *Nooseletter* reviews). We get the name Harry Whitewoman in this one, among others. Since this book details the pending nuptials of Bubba and Felicia, it serves as a hilarious tipping point in the Bubba-Felicia relationship.

Don't let the title throw you. There's no Albuquerque earthquake in this one. But right from the get-go, when Bubba discovers the body of a geology professor murder victim at a site near where a Rio Rancho-like development is under way, we get a sense that all is not right with property and land rights. This case involves a mobster in hiding, who is trying to project the squeaky-clean image of a real estate developer, academic rivalries within the UNM geology department, the Albuquerque Police and even the FBI, just about the only law enforcement agency that Bubba hasn't offended before.

Sure enough, bumbling Bubba doesn't so much crack the case as get it cracked over his head. After being kidnapped, shot at, roughed up, and nearly destroying his wedding plans, events conspire to reveal the killer and Bubba appears to wrap things up nicely. But, oh yeah,

there's that wedding thing. Last minute change of venue and an ill-fitting tuxedo don't phase our hero. And I can't spoil the suspense, because if you're a Bubba fan, you know they'll get married at the end of this book.

#### March Case File Number Two

*Murder Once Removed* by Roz Russell, CreateSpace Publishing, 2013, 344 pp, PB (*I read a proof copy; you should look for the e-book on several devices that CreateSpace serves*)

It gives me great pleasure to review the debut novel by a member of one of my critique groups. It gives me further pleasure to say that reading this was an unexpected treat, since Roz had not shared this particular work with the group several years ago.

This story is set in contemporary Albuquerque and Santa Fe. That said, although protagonist Jessica Curtis is a reporter for an Albuquerque paper, she spends at least three quarters of the book in Santa Fe. The city becomes almost like another character.

In the first chapter, readers see the dumping of a body, but we don't know the identity of the killer or the victim. Then Jessica is called into her editor's office to learn that another reporter, Joe Taylor, has been found dead, presumably murdered. Her editor makes Jessica responsible for completing the story Joe was working on, the three-year-old unsolved murder of Santa Fe art dealer Michael Lange.

This quickly leads Jessica to Santa Fe, where the many suspects in Lange's murder live and work. They include a U.S. Senator, his chief aide, a painter, the owner of an art gallery, and a real estate broker. Other characters include the Albuquerque cop investigating the Taylor murder and a Santa Fe reporter who knew about the Lange murder and was intimate with Taylor.

Jessica spends a lot of time in Santa Fe, trying and sometimes succeeding in interviewing most of the suspects, although the

senator himself is hard to get to. What she finds is an interlocking relationship among the five suspects in the Lange murder, so all of them would have had motives to kill Joe if he had uncovered the truth. Eventually, Joe's missing notes turn up, which help Jessica, but she can't find the tapes he made of his conversations with the suspects until late in the book, when she is in grave danger herself. The danger keeps getting graver, as one after another, the leading suspects begin to be murdered.

Can Jess solve the case before all her suspects die? If the killer thinks the victims have incriminated him or her, will Jessica become the next victim?

This novel does not read like the first work of a novice, but like the self-assured work of a pro in the mystery trade, who likely has many more stories to tell.

### **March Case File Number Three**

*A Place of Execution* by Val McDermid, St. Martins Minotaur, 1999, 404 pp, HC

Let me say right off, I got this book from the book box and I'm putting it back for others to enjoy. If you can't find it there, go to any ABQ library or get the e-copy. *This is the best mystery you will read all year. It blew me away, but you have to read the whole thing to get that impact. No skipping around!*

Following close on the heels of the debut novel above, I got a copy of a multi-award-winning novel by a justifiably lauded author. Val McDermid is best known for her Sherlock Holmes in retirement series, married (yes, married) to the younger Mary Russell.

This book won nearly every major prize in mystery fiction and by the end I could see why. It is at once a British country police procedural; a study in, as Michael Connelly put it, not how cops work on a case, but how a case works on cops; a detailed study of a very isolated/insular town; and ultimately it breaks all those molds and transcends the mystery genre.

December 1963. A young, newly-promoted police inspector catches a missing persons case in a tiny hamlet that gradually goes from a wandering teen, Alison Carter, into a full-blown search effort by civilians and police, assembling

clues that suggest she was murdered.

Eventually, Inspector George Bennett and his dogged sergeant put together a persuasive circumstantial case with the girl's bloody clothing and pornographic photos, but the body can't be found.

Then the case goes to trial and Bennett is raked over the coals by the high-powered London defense attorney. Doubts emerge, enlarge, and are assuaged. George's pregnant wife delivers a son during the trial, distracting him and increasing his sense of inadequacy.

Then the verdict is delivered and the case becomes famous.

Cut to the final third of the book, set 25 years later, in 1998. What? There's more to the story that long afterwards? Yes. The now grown son of George Bennett has a fiancé, whose sister is an investigative reporter trying to land a job with a major magazine. She digs into the case and raises questions that lead George to reexamine what he believed and come to a shattering conclusion.

*You'll be shattered too. Read this book.* Enjoy the police and judicial procedures. Stick with it and be blown away, as I was in those last few pages.

### **March Case File Number Four**

*Under the Dragon's Tail* by Maureen Jennings, St. Martin's Press, 1998, 243 pp. HC

Have you seen the excellent and hugely popular *Murdoch Mysteries* that ran on PBS and are now available through Netflix and on DVDs? Our son put us on Netflix and besides the first six seasons of the runaway hit *Doc Martin*, we spend many evenings in the first five seasons of this excellent historical police procedural set in 1890s Toronto that features appearances by important historical figures of the era and early forensics and inventions that would later become regular parts of everyday life in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. You can get the DVDs on Amazon, or watch *Murdoch* on Netflix, but they are not available for rent at Hastings because they're Canadian.

The credits for the show say they're based on characters created by Maureen Jennings; her

daughter Christina is one of the show's producers. Female viewers swoon over Detective William Murdoch, male viewers swoon over coroner Dr. Julia Ogden, we all laugh at Inspector Thomas Brackenreid and Constable George Crabtree, and high-five the early forensics, great inventions, and famous figures that populate this justifiably famous fan favorite.

That said, I was warned by Amazon reviewers that the books (only four, of which this is the second) are historically accurate, but do not contain the humor and romance of the TV series. Although I enjoyed this novel, it pales in comparison with the video episodes. For instance, I did not understand the title; there is no mention yet of a Chinatown that might justify it. Murdoch and Julia do not pine for each other. She appears only briefly on a single page. Crabtree is described in the book as a husky giant rather than the slight actor, and the inspector comes off as gruff and unforgiving without the actor's portrayal of a heart of gold. And Murdoch even has a mustache in the books!

The plot concerns the murder of a midwife involved in abortions, and while the book offers many great historically accurate insights into beliefs and actions of the time, it does not encourage me to seek out the other titles.

In most cases, readers dislike movie or TV adaptations of favorite books. In this case, so far, I must say I find the reverse to be true. Eschew this book and get to your TVs!

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

(The following reviews were all written by Susan Zates, [smzates@qwest.com](mailto:smzates@qwest.com))

*Midnight at Marble Arch* by Anne Perry is book 28 of the Thomas Pitt mystery series set in Victorian England.

Most of the books in the series deal seriously with social ills of Victorian society; the primary theme of this novel is the terrible impact of high-society rape in Victorian times. The young

woman, besides suffering shock and physical injury, would be considered "ruined" for life, a social outcast. If it were known she had been raped, she would not be able to make a high-society marriage. Many families chose not to report rape, for the sake of their daughter's future in society. Many young women who found themselves pregnant and hopeless after rape chose suicide.

Familiar and beloved characters Victor Narraway and Vespasia Cumming-Gould play major roles in this book. Thomas Pitt is head of Special Branch, which typically does not investigate rape. However, the ambassador from Portugal has asked him for justice, following the rape and death of his daughter. A pattern emerges as Pitt and Narraway carefully question high-society families about attacks upon their daughters; not all survived, and most are not brave enough to report what happened.

Catherine Quixwood, a grown and married woman, was also raped and beaten, then poisoned. Narraway promises her widowed husband that he will investigate her murder. Evidence points to an acquaintance, who is charged with murder. But Narraway's careful attention to details convinces him the wrong man is on trial. He and Pitt and Vespasia race against time to find sufficient evidence to identify the known rapist and free the unjustly accused man. A complicated web of motives and deceit is finally unraveled, in a tense and fatal showdown.

*The Egyptologist* by Arthur Phillips is set in Boston, Sydney and Egypt, in two distinct time spans: 1922-1923 and 1954.

The entire story is told in letters. There are two primary narrators: Ralph Trilipush, a self-proclaimed Egyptologist trying to make a historic discovery on a dig in Egypt; and Harold Ferrell, an Australian private investigator, recalling years later his missing-person-turned-murder inquiry. The plot lines intersect at Margaret Finnerman, engaged to Trilipush in 1922, who is the ancestor of Macy, the person who contacts Ferrell decades later, curious about Margaret's past.

Ralph Trilipush took Harvard and Boston by

storm, with tales of an ancestral English mansion, Oxford education, and a guaranteed-success expedition to Egypt. Trilipush convinced Margaret Finnerman's father, a nouveau riche department store baron, to gather a group of investors and finance his expedition.

Harold Ferrell was hired by an Englishman (Davies) back in 1922 to find illegitimate Davies descendants in Sydney, Australia. Ferrell is an opportunist. Back in 1922, as soon as he senses a mystery with a descendant's military record, he adds additional clients (so he can bill multiple fees and extend the case). Harold suspects Trilipush murdered the Australian Davies bastard. Decades later, Ferrell is ever the opportunist, trying to get Macy to interest book publishers in his recollections of cases.

I listened to the audio version, which adds interest with the English and Australian accents. The story starts off great, lots of humor, plenty to read between the lines. Second half drags, especially as it beats the "immortality" theme to death.

*Coda in Black* by B. C. Stone is the first book of his Peter Warlock series set in post-WWII Phoenix.

Peter Warlock is a music critic working freelance/part-time for a newspaper. When the local symphony conductor is murdered, it seems like a random burglary gone wrong, but the newspaper editor asks Warlock to look into it. He decides to investigate the conductor's past, that he took pains to keep hidden.

On an expense-paid trip to Australia for the newspaper, Warlock reviews a local opera concert as he uncovers secrets about the conductor. As Warlock learns the conductor's political past, he suspects international repercussions, and digs deeper, using personal contacts from his own past. The story moves along at a rapid clip, and quite delightfully leaves the reader to fill in between-the-lines. I am curious where the series will go from here.

*The Black-Eyed Blonde* by Benjamin Black is book ten of the Philip Marlowe hard-boiled

detective series set in 20th-century "Bay City" (Los Angeles) California.

The previous nine Philip Marlowe detective stories were written by the grand master of hard-boiled detective novels, Raymond Chandler—a very tough act to follow! Yet this book follows the original series smoothly and believably.

Marlowe is still a very tough cookie, hard to beat up, impossible to intimidate, with a practiced eye for attractive females. He's partially infatuated (or is it mesmerized?) by his stylish and elegant client, a rare black-eyed blonde, who initially asks him to find a missing person. When he soon discovers the person is dead, his client acknowledges it coolly and asks him to dig deeper. The more Marlowe learns, the more he gets beat up, as the plot twists and turns. Enjoy the ride.

*A Christmas Hope* by Anne Perry is 11th in her series of Christmas mysteries set in Victorian England at Christmastime.

Claudine Burroughs "made a good match," in other words married a sober and wealthy man, so she lives in high society luxury, but her husband does not love or respect her, and she is lonely. She has only found fulfillment and a sense of purpose by volunteering at Hester Monk's clinic, an activity of which her husband does not approve. In the Christmas season, she is required to attend a great many parties, concerts and other stifling social events with her husband, in order to promote his career. She hates making meaningless small-talk. When at the Giffords' party, she seeks fresh air outside and briefly chats with Welsh poet Dai Tregarron, but soon is required to return to the phony small-talk inside.

A violent incident takes place on the patio with three young men of high society, a prostitute somehow smuggled into the party, and Tregarron. The woman is badly beaten and unconscious. The young men band together and claim they tried to save her from Tregarron. Claudine sees that Tregarron is the only one trying to revive the woman, so she wonders if the young men are lying to protect themselves. Tregarron flees the scene, which immediately causes all the high-society partygoers to believe

he is guilty.

Claudine learns that the Giffords' daughter is about to be engaged to one of the young men. Claudine cannot stop worrying that Tregarron may be caught and hanged for a crime he did not commit. To investigate, she enlists help from Squeaky Robinson at the clinic. He is reluctant to help at first, but after asking his contacts about Dai Tregarron, he too comes to believe in the man's innocence. When the young woman dies in hospital, the stakes get even higher—now Tregarron is wanted for murder.

Claudine stretches the boundaries of polite behavior to warn the young daughter about to be engaged that her fiancé is lying about the incident. The young woman provides startling corroboration to Claudine's theory of what happened--and after great soul-searching, the two women inform her parents. Claudine reveals her own pain at choosing the "right" marriage without love. The Giffords prove to have better values than their peers, and justice is done. Then Claudine bravely stands up for herself at home. Too bad the story ends there!

*Dark Entry* by M. J. Trow is the first book of the Kit Marlowe historical mystery series, set in 1583 Cambridge, England.

Christopher Marlowe is about to graduate from Corpus Christi, where he is the ringleader of a band of students who sneak off campus at night to pubs.

The point of the book seemed at first the grim punishments given to students caught sneaking back to campus by the control-freak sadistic professors. Then it dwelled on nitty-gritty unsavory details of life in a dorm without modern conveniences. Finally, the book got to the mystery: Christopher discovered the dead body of a friend, decided it was murder, and determined to solve it. Christopher has contacts from other schools and high-ranking officials to help him. The setting is so historical, it's hard to relate to characters, scenes, motives, relationships, or much of anything. The resolution is a bit surprising.

*Death on a Vineyard Beach* by Philip R. Craig is the seventh book of the Martha's Vineyard mystery series set in the late 20th century.

J.W. Jackson and his bride Zee are on their honeymoon, attending a musical performance in Boston, when J.W. foils an assassination attempt. Luciano Marcus, the intended victim, is a wealthy retired mobster with a well-guarded estate on the Vineyard. He's grateful to J.W. for saving his life, and hires him to investigate the incident. J.W. can't refuse, since both he and Zee saw the shooter, putting them in danger too. J.W. convinces Zee, who hates guns, to learn how to shoot, with surprising results.

Marcus is also in a long-standing legal dispute with the island's Wampanoag Indians over a cranberry bog on his property. When J.W. checks into the dispute, to see if it could be cause for the shooting attempt, he meets Bill Vanderbeck, who can mysteriously appear at will on Marcus' well-guarded estate.

Besides investigation and target practice, J.W. and Zee find time for fishing and/or clamming, and prepare a gourmet meal from their day's catch. In the evening, when Zee returns home from work (she's an emergency room nurse), J.W. has martinis and bluefish pâté ready. They relax on the balcony and enjoy the view through the trees on their secluded lot all the way to the water.

This series should definitely be read in order, for maximum enjoyment of the character development. The author clearly expresses his love for the island, and the vast economic difference between those who visit the island only for summer vacation, vs. islanders who live and work there year-round.

*(Editor's note: For another island series, check out the Merry Folger police mysteries set on Nantucket, written by Francine Mathews, author of the Jane Austen mysteries and a slew of great spy novels.)*

*An East End Murder* by Charles Finch is book 4.5 (see below) of the Charles Lenox mystery series set in Victorian England. Lenox is a now a Member of Parliament, with far too many responsibilities to pursue his former career (and

his true passion) as a detective full time. But he happens upon a situation he cannot ignore (fraud at a home for orphans), since he is uniquely qualified to solve it (with his knowledge from a previous case). A short, enjoyable read, available only as an eBook.

*A Burial at Sea* by Charles Finch is book five of the Charles Lenox series set in 1873.

At his brother's request, Charles goes by sea from England to Egypt on a clandestine mission, masked by an official government visit. England fears France may be preparing for war, and needs a trusted person above suspicion to investigate affairs in the Suez. Lenox is reluctant to leave his wife, since they are expecting their first child. I enjoyed the fascinating wealth of historical detail about daily life aboard ship in the Victorian navy; the author notes that this book required more research than all previous books in the series combined.

When a murder is committed on board ship, the captain asks Lenox to determine the culprit. Lenox welcomes the opportunity to return to his first passion, detection, which he has given up due to the responsibilities of being a Member of Parliament. Red herrings abound! Additional murders shorten the list of suspects, but the case remains confusing right up until a harrowing confrontation, which Lenox barely survives.

Ashore in Egypt, Lenox twice again narrowly escapes death, as he attempts to pursue his clandestine mission. I look forward to reading more of the series, in which I suspect Lenox will continue with espionage as well as detection.

*A Slice of Murder* by Chris Cavender is the first book of the Pizza Lover's mystery series set in contemporary Timber Ridge, North Carolina.

Eleanor Swift is grieving the death of her beloved husband, determined to make the restaurant they started a success. Eleanor's sister Maddy provides help and moral support as they together run "A Slice of Delight" (the sisterly love/support is 'shoveled on' a bit thick). When Eleanor discovers a dead body as she delivers a pizza, she ends up the primary

suspect. Because she once slapped the guy back in high school? Oh, please, what a thin premise!

The author must intend this to portray narrow-minded and limited thinking in a small town. As Eleanor snoops around trying to determine the real culprit, she is also pursued by a would-be boyfriend, who refuses to understand that her late husband was the one true love of her life. He's a nice guy, but impatient to date her. Eleanor eventually finds the killer, clears her name, and keeps her restaurant going. A fun, easy read. I look forward to reading more of the series.

*Orchid Beach* by Stuart Woods is the first book of the Holly Barker series, set in contemporary Florida.

Holly Barker has just retired from her military career, after losing a sexual harassment case. She dines with her father and Chet Marley, one of his best friends from combat days. Marley is chief of police in Orchid Beach. He's in the process of investigating his own staff, and needs a trusted right-hand assistant, so he offers Holly the job of deputy chief. She's ready for a complete change, so she accepts.

But a few weeks later when Holly arrives in Orchid Beach, Marley has been shot. She steps into as acting chief of police, and proceeds with caution, unsure who can be trusted. Not only was Chief Marley attacked, his best friend Hank Doherty was murdered. Holly "inherits" Doherty's amazing dog Daisy, a delightful character in the story and her loyal protector.

Holly visits the exclusive Palmetto Gardens, a guarded community of luxury estates, but she becomes suspicious of the militaristic security force and sophisticated communications satellite, far more than luxury homes should need. As Holly investigates Marley's shooting and Doherty's murder, in parallel she also investigates Palmetto Gardens. The fast-paced mystery escalates into a thriller, complete with an FBI takedown. Oh, and Holly finds time for romance as well. A fun read that probably would make a great action-adventure movie.

## †Nooseletter Submissions†

*Croak & Dagger* members and friends are encouraged to contribute articles, reviews, and essays on aspects of mystery writing *and* reading for publication consideration. 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 shorter 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 submissions via e-mail to Rob Kresge at [rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net), with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all paid-up members electronically. ♦

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### 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. ♦

Our March speaker will be Robert DeBuck, retired from many senior positions with the Albuquerque Police Department. He will speak about real-life police work, which differs from portrayals in the media, including movies and TV.

Our April speaker, Sarah H. Baker, grew up in New Orleans, the city of music, food, and wonderful stories. After running off to Alaska to enjoy a taste of the wild pipeline days, she returned to the Lower 48 and earned a Master's degree in engineering. Writing as S.H. Baker, Sarah has penned four installments in the Dasso Cormier mystery series. [www.shbaker.com](http://www.shbaker.com)

### The 2015 C&D Chapter Line Up

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### Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday, April 28

Tuesday, May 26

Tuesday, June 23

Meetings are free and open to the public.

As of April, meetings will be held every fourth Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., in **Room 6** at the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center, 7521 Carmel Ave, NE, one traffic light north of Paseo del Norte, off Wyoming Blvd.

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



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!"*

## Summary of the Board Meeting Minutes of Sisters in Crime Croak and Dagger Chapter, ABQ, NM, March 16, 2015

Board members present: Vice President Ann Zeigler, Secretary Olin Bray, Treasurer Fred Aiken, Nooseletter Editor Rob Kresge, and Member-at-large Joan Saberhagen.

--Vice President Ann Zeigler called the meeting to order at 7:16. Minutes from the January 19, 2014 meeting were approved – moved by Fred Aiken and seconded by Joan Saberhagen.

--The Treasurer reported that our checking account balance was \$1,871.15 and our savings account balance was \$1015.45. The treasurer reimbursed Olin Bray \$109.04 for the bookmarks. The treasurer's report was accepted.

--Membership report: Our current paid up membership for 2015 is 32, up from 22 at the January board meeting.

--Programs report: The next two programs (March and April) will be Robert DeBuck (a career APD senior officer talking about his experiences), and Sarah Baker (talking about her writer's journey).

--Website: Our website is up to date with the speakers for March and April.

Announcements: None

Old business: Southwest Writers (SWW) is interested in doing a joint meeting with Croak and Dagger. At our January meeting, the board liked the idea and was getting additional information. It sounds like SWW is interested in inviting Croak and Dagger members to one of their Tuesday evening (the third Tuesday of each month) meetings at 7:00, but is not expecting us to do anything special for the meeting. In the past SWW was charging \$10 for non-members, but our understanding is that they have stopped doing that. Fred is going to check and make sure. Our members would not want to pay to attend a joint meeting.

We are proceeding with planning for a joint event in Albuquerque with the Rocky Mountain Mystery Writers Association (RMMWA) chapter that is headquartered in Denver. Rob has been checking on five possible hotels – Hotel Albuquerque, Hyatt Regency, Marriott Pyramid, Best Western Rio Grande Inn, and Sheraton Uptown. Joan suggested considering the Marriott on Louisiana, which is where Bubonicon meets, and Rob will look into it. Current planning calls for six panels (3 morning and 3 afternoon) on a Saturday in late August or September. The last Saturday in August conflicts with Bubonicon, the science fiction convention, but there is a lot of crossover. The event would be free for members of RMMWA and Croak and Dagger and we are assuming the event would be open to non-members for a nominal amount – perhaps \$25, which might include a one-year membership in Croak and Dagger. (After the last conference where we did this, in 2007, our membership jumped to over 60.) Meals would not be included. However, we are checking on possibly doing a reception with a cash bar either Friday or Saturday night or both. Rob is checking on the cost of a room and possibly munchies. When we get the information, we should work out a budget and decide how much we can afford. Since our next regular board meeting is not until May 18, we may need a special board meeting before then or we may be able to make all the decisions using email.

New business: At the February meeting we really packed our meeting room. Rob is checking on the possibility of getting a larger room. **Room 6, on the second floor just beyond the restrooms for Room 7 is available and we will get it beginning with the April meeting.**

The next board meeting will be at 7:00 at Joan Saberhagen's home on May 18, 2015.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45.

## Help Wanted

*Nooseletter* editor Rob Kresge is seeking a replacement starting in the 2016 calendar year. Rob will have been the editor for 2014 and 2015 and would like more flexibility for family travel next year.

Duties entail:

- Scanning issues of National Sisters in Crime newsletter *InSinC* for reprintable articles that would be of interest to our chapter members who don't belong to the national organization. If you do not belong to National yourself, you can have someone who does send you recommended articles for the *Nooseletter*.
- Scanning other mystery publications like the Mystery Writers of America newsletter for the same kind of thing. Articles from both National SinC and MWA appear by permission in this issue.
- Seeking permission via email to reprint these selected articles.
- Receiving submissions from our own chapter members (book reviews, news of successes).
- Converting and saving each contribution as individual Word documents.
- Compiling the *Nooseletter* six times a year in odd numbered months. This involves:
  - Editing contributions and selected items for *Nooseletter* use (takes about one day).
  - Placing selected items into the Word template (takes about half a day).
- Converting/saving the entire Word document into a PDF and sending it to the appropriate Croak & Dagger officer to distribute it as an email attachment to paid-up members of C&D.

The *Nooseletter* editor attends C&D board meetings six times a year in odd numbered months (same months as *Nooseletter* release).



## 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).