



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



# THE NOOSELETTER

Volume X, Number 1 — January/February 2016

## †Expert Testimony†

As I say, “Happy New Year” to all of you, I must confess I wasn’t finished with the old one yet! It came and went much too fast this time, and left lots of incomplete projects to nag at me. I once heard someone say life is like a roll of toilet paper—the closer you get to the end, the faster it goes!

So it’s a bright, shiny year and a clean slate for Croak & Dagger. We have some new officers (thank you Margaret Tessler and Joan Taitte) and some (ah-hem) seasoned ones (I will NOT say OLD) Yours Truly, and Ann Zeigler. And at the moment we bring you something you haven’t seen in a long, long time—a completely female board of directors! I’m not saying that’s necessarily anything special, but it certainly is different. As you know, Sisters in Crime was started by women, to promote women mystery writers, and they’ve been doing a very good job for some time now. But as far as I can determine, Croak & Dagger has not, up until this year, had an all-female board. Time will tell if that turns out to be significant. Rest assured we will take our tasks to heart and work hard to make it a wonderful year for the entire chapter.

The Executive Committee of the Board is made up of the elected officers: President, Pat Wood; Vice President, Ann Zeigler; Secretary, Margaret Tessler; Treasurer, Joan Taitte. The rest of the board of directors, each of whom is a full voting member, is made up of our committee chairmen (or women), appointed by the president, and they will be: Nooseletter, Linda Triegel; Web Mistress, Susan Zates; Program Chairman, Rita Herther; Hospitality, Joan Taitte; Membership, Pat Wood; Member-at-Large, Joan Saberhagen.

Our names and email addresses will be posted in the Nooseletter every other month, and available on our website. I urge all of you who have questions or issues you wish to discuss, please contact one of

us. We would love to have your input, and want you to have a voice in how things are done. We also hope that there are those among you who will volunteer to serve on each of the committees. Did you know that a committee, by its very definition, contains several people who get together to accomplish a task? That means we could use your help and would love to train some of you to eventually take on these jobs.

As always, remember our meetings are the fourth Tuesday of the month, January through November. We do NOT meet in the month of December, and for 2016 only, we will not meet in February. So take a few moments, right now, to mark your calendars for those meeting dates. I’ll continue to send you reminders, along with information about the featured speaker for that month, but now you’ll always know when the next meeting will be. And, don’t forget, we are once again meeting at the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center at 7521 Carmel Avenue NE, north of Paseo del Norte and west of Wyoming Boulevard. See you at the meeting!

— Pat Wood, President

### **Don’t Miss It!** **Tuesday, January 26, at 7 p.m.**

**Christina Squire**, our January speaker, is retired from the University of New Mexico. She turned to writing mystery fiction, and her novel, *Murder at the Observatory* is set in the University of New Mexico Department of Physics and Astronomy. In the novel, protagonist Caroline Steele is bored with life, until she is suspected of killing her arch nemesis and must find the real killer to clear herself.

March's speaker will be **Jann Arrington-Wolcott**, a former journalist and magazine writer. She was a Founding Member of Women Writing the West and a Founding Faculty Member of the Tony Hillerman Writing Conference. Her award-winning *Christmas Celebration: Santa Fe Traditions, Crafts, and Foods* was named "one of the best Christmas Books Ever!" by *Good Morning America*.

Jann's first attempt at fiction, titled *Brujo*, sold internationally and was filmed as a TV movie titled *Seduced by Evil* in 1998. Her new thriller, *Deathmark*, was published to rave reviews in July 2014, by Pronghorn Press, WY., which also just released a revised version of the original *Brujo*, with the subtitle *Eye of the Raven*. A sequel is scheduled for release the end of 2016.

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The Albuquerque Croak & Dagger chapter of Sisters in Crime welcomes mystery fans, readers, and writers who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship and sensational speakers.

C&D meetings are held in the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center at 7521 Carmel Avenue NE, north of Paseo del Norte and west of Wyoming. Unless otherwise noted in the Nooseletter or our website, programs are free and open to the public.



**Sisters  
in  
Crime**

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

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

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

Check Out the Croak & Dagger Website ([www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com)) for all your Croak & Dagger information needs:

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

AND: All members are invited to join the Croak & Dagger Yahoo group, an online gathering place for mystery writers. Join in! Log on to C&D's web page ([www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com)) and click on the link to moderator Nancy Varian for instructions. Exchange news and information about mystery books, movies, etc., as well as online courses.

### The Line Up

President – Pat Wood –  
[pwood73@comcast.net](mailto:pwood73@comcast.net)  
Treasurer & Hospitality – Joan Taitte –  
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Nooseletter Editor – Linda Triegel  
[newsette@earthlink.net](mailto:newsette@earthlink.net)

Written a mystery? Written anything and need some feedback? If you're interested in starting a critique group, contact the Editor at [newsette@earthlink.net](mailto:newsette@earthlink.net).

## Noose News

### ***Left Coast Crime 2016 in Phoenix***

“The Great Cactus Caper” kicks off in Phoenix on February 25 when Left Coast Crime’s 2016 conference takes place at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix. Weekend events include daily panels, Happy Hour with Arizona’s Desert Sleuths and the Tucson chapter of Sisters in Crime on Thursday, an interview with International Guest of Honor Ann Cleeves on Friday, a Discover Mystery Breakfast on Saturday, and presentation of the Leftys Awards on Friday.

For more details and to register, click on [www.leftcoastcrime2016.com](http://www.leftcoastcrime2016.com).

### ***Sisters in Crime to receive a Raven Award***

The Raven Award from Mystery Writers of America recognizes outstanding achievement in the mystery field outside the realm of creative writing and will be presented to Sisters in Crime at the April 2016 Edgar Awards Banquet in New York City.

“Sisters in Crime is thrilled with this award, honoring nearly thirty years of work in the trenches, promoting the advancement, recognition, and professional development of women crime writers,” says SinC president Leslie Budewitz. “That it comes from one of our partners in crime and advocacy makes the honor doubly sweet.”

(See the next page for more on the 2016 MWA awards.)

### ***Motion on Signing Announcements***

To avoid sending a lot of announcements about forthcoming author signings and flooding our members with too many emails, the following motion was proposed at the September 15, 2015, board meeting:

Book signing announcements for Croak & Dagger members or other mystery writers can be included in the *Nooseletter*, if we know about them far enough in advance to include them (Refer to the last page of every issue for submission details, including deadlines—Ed.)

Other signing announcements will be sent out only with the meeting announcement, about the third week of each month. We will no longer try to send out such announcements whenever we hear about events.

Individual members can still let other members know about such events when they learn of them, but Croak and Dagger can no longer be responsible for such announcements.

Rob Kresge will be speaking and signing his Hillerman Award-winning *Saving Lincoln* as well as his books in the Warbonnet series at the Placitas Library on Saturday, January 30 at 2 p.m.

**Joe Badal** says, “Thanks for your support of my writing this past year. It was a momentous year, with the release of the rewritten and updated version of *The Pythagorean Solution*; the release of my first mystery, *Borderline*, and the release of *Death Ship*, the 5th installment in my Danforth Saga.”

The Danforth Saga was rated by Amazon in the Top 100 of all thriller series in 2015, and Joe was rated in the Top 100 of all authors of all genres. “None of these things would have happened without the support of readers.”

Joe’s next novel, *The Motive*, the first in his Cycle of Violence series, will be released in mid-2016. Go to [www.suspensemagazine.com/December2015Issue.html](http://www.suspensemagazine.com/December2015Issue.html) for free access to the magazine. Joe’s December Everyday Heroes Blog is on page 98.)





# Mystery Writers of America

## ***Mystery Writers of America Announces 2016 Grand Master Walter Mosley Plus 2016 Ellery Queen Award Winners***

**Walter Mosley** has been chosen as the 2016 Grand Master by Mystery Writers of America (MWA).

MWA's Grand Master Award represents the pinnacle of achievement in mystery writing and was established to acknowledge important contributions to this genre, as well as for a body of work that is both significant and of consistent high quality. Mr. Mosley will receive his award at the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Edgar Awards Banquet, which will be held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City on April 28, 2016.

When told of being named a Grand Master, Mosley said, "Receiving the Grand Master Award is the apex of my career as a crime writer; as a writer. It is, joyfully, one of the seminal events of my life."

Walter Mosley is one of the most acclaimed and prolific crime writers of our time. He started writing when he was 34, and since then has published over 40 novels. He is also the most successful and well-known crime writer of color. He is perhaps best known for his Easy Rawlins series, beginning with *Devil in a Blue Dress*, which was made into a film starring Denzel Washington. He has also written three other series, featuring Fearless Jones, Leonid McGill, and Socrates Fortlaw. In addition, he has written science fiction, non-fiction, social criticism, young adult fiction, plays, graphic novels, and numerous short stories.

Previous Grand Masters include Lois Duncan, James Ellroy, Robert Crais, Carolyn Hart, Ken Follett, Margaret Maron, Martha Grimes, Sara Paretsky, James Lee Burke, Sue Grafton, Bill Pronzini, Stephen King, Marcia Muller, Dick Francis, Mary Higgins Clark, Lawrence Sanders, P.D. James, Ellery Queen, Daphne du Maurier, Alfred Hitchcock, Graham Greene, and Agatha Christie.

The Raven Award recognizes outstanding achievement in the mystery field outside the realm of creative writing. **Two Raven Awards** will be awarded in 2016: one to Margaret Kinsman and the other to Sisters in Crime.

As a mentor, teacher, scholar, and editor, Margaret Kinsman has supported and promoted both the mystery genre as a whole and many individual writers. As senior lecturer in popular culture at Southbank University in London from 1991 to 2012, she played a leading role in making crime fiction an important and legitimate field of study. She has worked hard both to expand readership of our genre in the general public and to expand understanding of the genre as a powerful form of social commentary.

From 2004 to 2011, Kinsman served as Executive Editor of *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, the only American scholarly journal dedicated to the mystery. She continues to serve *Clues* as a consulting editor. She is an international authority on Margery Allingham and has published extensively on other American crime writers. She is a U.S. citizen who divides her time between London and Iowa City, Iowa, where she is conducting research in the Nancy Drew archives at the University of Iowa.

When told that she would receive the Raven Award, Kinsman said "'I am thrilled to know the MWA is giving me the Raven award - such recognition is indeed an unexpected, and very exciting, honour!"

At the 1986 Bouchercon in Baltimore, Sara Paretsky convened an initial meeting of woman writers who were concerned about both the rising tide of graphic violence against women in mysteries and the lack of equity in review, award nominations, advances, and other measures of a writer's success. The following year during the Edgars Week, a group of woman writers met in Sandra Scoppettone's SoHo loft for breakfast and formed Sisters in Crime. Initial steering committee members were a who's who of woman mystery writers, including Charlotte MacLeod, Kate Mattes, Betty Francis, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, Sara Paretsky, Nancy Pickard and Susan Dunlap.

The mission of Sisters in Crime is to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers. Membership is open to all persons worldwide who have a special interest in mystery writing and in furthering the purposes of SinC. The organization has approximately 3,600 members in some fifty regional chapters in the United States and Canada.

Previous Raven winners include Kathryn Kennison, Jon and Ruth Jordan, Aunt Agatha's Bookstore in Ann Arbor, Oline Cogdill, Molly Weston, The Mysterious Galaxy in San Diego, Centuries & Sleuths Bookstore in Chicago, Once Upon a Crime Bookstore in Minneapolis, Mystery Lovers Bookstore in Oakmont, PA, Kate's Mystery Books in Cambridge, MA, and The Poe House in Baltimore.

**The Ellery Queen Award** was established in 1983 to honor "outstanding writing teams and outstanding people in the mystery-publishing industry". This year the Board chose to honor Janet A. Rudolph.

Rudolph is the director of the fan-based Mystery Readers International, editor of the *Mystery Readers Journal*, a teacher of mystery fiction, and has been a columnist for most of the mystery periodicals. A native of Philadelphia, she now lives in Berkeley California, where she completed a master's degree in art history, a credential in secondary education, and a Ph.D. in religion and literature specializing in mystery fiction. She has received two Fulbright grants—one to India and another to Brazil.

*Mystery Readers Journal*, her brainchild, is the official publication of Mystery Readers International. Originally started as a newsletter to update the local mystery community on fun events, it is now one of the most important periodicals in the field. A quarterly, each issue focuses on a specific theme with major articles, author essays, special columns and a calendar of events. Members of MRI award the coveted Macavity for excellence in mystery writing.

On learning she would receive the Ellery Queen Award, Rudolph said, "I am astonished, delighted, and humbled to be included in the company of such illustrious past recipients of the Ellery Queen Award. I feel so privileged that over the past 31 years of publishing the *Mystery Readers Journal*, I was able to create and curate a forum in which over 1500 mystery authors contributed with essays offering different angles on shared themes in their writing, thus extending and increasing mystery reader awareness and enjoyment."

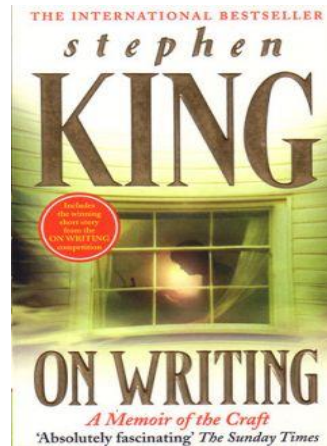
Previous Ellery Queen Award winners include Charles Ardai, Joe Meyers, Barbara Peters and Robert Rosenwald, Brian Skupin and Kate Stine, Carolyn Marino, Ed Gorman, Janet Hutchings, Cathleen Jordan, Douglas G. Greene, Susanne Kirk, Sara Ann Freed, Hiroshi Hayakawa, Jacques Barzun, Martin Greenburg, Otto Penzler, Richard Levinson, William Link, Ruth Cavin, and Emma Lathen.

The Edgar Awards, or "Edgars," as they are commonly known, are named after MWA's patron saint Edgar Allan Poe and are presented to authors of distinguished work in various categories. MWA is the premier organization for mystery writers, professionals allied to the crime-writing field, aspiring crime writers, and those who are devoted to the genre. The organization encompasses some 3,000 members including authors of fiction and non-fiction books, screen and television writers, as well as publishers, editors, and literary agents. For more information on Mystery Writers of America, please visit the website: [www.mysterywriters.org](http://www.mysterywriters.org)



## 36 KILLER WRITING TIPS FROM STEPHEN KING

*The following was originally published at <http://thewhynot100.blogspot.com/2014/04/36-killer-writing-tips-from-stephen-king.html?m=1>*



Stephen King has written more than four dozen bestselling books, from *Cujo* to *Christine*, from *The Shining* to *The Stand*, from *The Dead Zone* to *The Dark Tower*. His *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* is part memoir and part invitation—an opportunity to peek behind the curtain of a master craftsman. As he writes in the Foreword, “What follows is an attempt to put down, briefly and simply, how I came to the craft, what I know about it now, and how it’s done. It’s about the day job; it’s about the language.”

Fiction writers, present company included, don’t understand very much about what they do—not why it works when it’s good, not why it doesn’t when it’s bad. I figured the shorter the book, the less the bullshit.” The following are 36 favorite tips from one great storyteller:

1. “Put your desk in the corner, and every time you sit down there to write, remind yourself why it isn’t in the middle of the room. Life isn’t a support system for art. It’s the other way around.”
2. “Write with the door closed, and rewrite with the door open.”
3. “There are lots of would-be censors out there, and although they may have different agendas, they all want basically the same thing: for you to see the world they see...or to at least shut up about what you do see that’s different. They are the agents of the status quo.”
4. “Write what you like, then imbue it with life and make it unique by blending in your own personal knowledge of life, friendship, relationships, sex, and work. Especially work. People love to read about work.”
5. “Dumbo got airborne with the help of a magic feather; you may feel the urge to grasp a passive verb or one of those nasty adverbs for the same reason. Just remember before you do that Dumbo didn’t need the feather; the magic was in him.”
6. “The real importance of reading is that it creates an ease and intimacy with the process of writing; one comes to the country with one’s papers and identification pretty much in order. Constant reading will pull you into a place (a mind-set, if you like the phrase) where you can write eagerly and without self-

consciousness. It also offers you a constantly growing knowledge of what has been done and what hasn't, what is trite and what is fresh, what works and what just lies there dying (or dead) on the page."

7. "Stylistic imitation is one thing, and a perfectly honorable way to get started as a writer... but one cannot imitate a writer's approach to a particular genre, no matter how simple what that writer is doing may seem."

8. "While it is impossible to make a competent writer out of a bad writer, and while it is equally impossible to make a great writer out of a good one, it is possible, with lots of hard work, dedication, and timely help, to make a good writer out of a merely competent one."

9. "Good writing is often about letting go of fear and affectation."

10. "In my view, stories and novels consist of three parts: narration, which moves the story from point A to point B and finally to point Z; description, which creates a sensory reality for the reader; and dialogue, which brings characters to life through their speech. You may wonder where the plot is in all of this. The answer—my answer, anyway—is nowhere."

11. "For me, what happens to characters as a story progresses depends solely on what I discover about them as I go along—how they grow, in other words. Sometimes they grow a little. If they grow a lot, they begin to influence the course of the story instead of the other way around."

12. "We've all heard someone say, 'Man, it was so great (or so horrible/strange/funny) ... I just can't describe it!' If you want to be a successful writer, you must be able to describe it, and in a way that will cause your reader to prickle with recognition."

13. "Paragraphs are almost always as important for how they look as for what they say; they are maps of intent."

14. "In fiction, the paragraph is less structured—it's the beat instead of the actual melody. The more fiction you read and write, the more you'll find our paragraphs forming on their own. And that's what you want."

15. "Writing is refined thinking."

16. "Try any goddam thing you like, no matter how boringly normal or outrageous. If it works, fine. If it doesn't, toss it."

17. "You can't please all of the readers all of the time; you can't please even some of the readers all of the time, but you really ought to try to please at least some of the readers some of the time."

18. "You can approach the act of writing with nervousness, excitement, hopefulness, or even despair—the sense that you can never completely put on the page what's in your mind and heart. You can come to the act with your fists clenched and your eyes narrowed, ready to kick ass and take down names. You can come to it because you want a girl to marry you or because you want to change the world. Come to it any way but lightly. Let me say it again: you must not come lightly to the blank page."



19. “We need to experience the mediocre and the outright rotten; such experience helps us to recognize those things when they begin to creep into our own work, and to steer clear of them.”

20. “You undoubtedly have your own thoughts, interests, and concerns, and they have arisen, as mine have, from your experiences and adventures as a human being. . . . You should use them in your work.”

21. “For me, good description usually consists of a few well-chosen details that stand for everything else. In most cases, these details will be the very first ones that come to mind.”

22. “The important question has nothing to do with whether the talk in your story is sacred or profane; the only question is how it rings on the page and in the ear. If you expect it to ring true, then you must talk yourself. Even more important, you must shut up and listen to others talk.”

23. “What would be very wrong, I think, is to turn away from what you know and like...in favor of things you believe will impress your friends, relatives, and writing-circle colleagues.”

24. “Nobody is “the bad guy” or “the best friend” or “the whore with a heart of gold” in real life; in real life we each of us regard ourselves as the main character, the protagonist, the big cheese; the camera is on us, baby. If you can bring this attitude into your fiction, you may not find it easier to create brilliant characters, but it will be harder for you to create the sort of one-dimensional dopes that populate so much pop fiction.”

25. “I most often see chances to add the grace-notes and ornamental touches after my basic storytelling job is done.”

26. “Symbolism exists to adorn and enrich, not to create a sense of artificial profundity.”

27. “Good fiction always begins with story and progresses to theme; it almost never begins with theme and progresses to story.”

28. “Writing fiction, especially a long work of fiction, can be a difficult, lonely job; it’s like crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a bathtub. There’s plenty of opportunity for self-doubt. If I write rapidly, putting down my story exactly as it comes to my mind, only looking back to check the names of my characters and the relevant parts of their back stories, I find that I can keep up with my original enthusiasm and at the same time outrun the self-doubt that’s always waiting to settle in.”

29. “If you’ve never done it before, you’ll find reading your book over after a six-week layoff to be a strange, often exhilarating experience. It’s yours, you’ll recognize it as yours, even be able to remember



what tune was on the stereo when you wrote certain lines, and yet it will also be like reading the work of someone else, a soul-twin, perhaps. This is the way it should be, the reason you waited. It's always easier to kill someone else's darlings than it is to kill your own."

30. "There is a kind of unspoken (hence undefended and unexamined) belief in publishing circles that the most commercially successful stories and novels are fast-paced. I guess the underlying thought is that people have so many things to do today, and are so easily distracted from the printed word, that you'll lose them unless you become a kind of short-order cook, serving up sizzling burgers, fries, and eggs over easy just as fast as you can. Like so many unexamined beliefs in the publishing business, this idea is largely bullshit."

31. "The most important things to remember about back story are that (a) everyone has a history and (b) most of it isn't very interesting. Stick to the parts that are, and don't get carried away with the rest. Long life stories are best received in bars, and only then an hour or so before closing time, and if you are buying."

32. "When you step away from the 'write what you know' rule, research becomes inevitable, and it can add a lot to your story. Just don't end up with the tail wagging the dog; remember that you are writing a novel, not a research paper. The story always comes first."

33. "Too many writing classes make Wait a minute, explain what you meant by that a kind of bylaw... Writing class discussions can often be intellectually stimulating and great fun, but they also often stray far afield from the actual nuts-and-bolts business of writing."

34. "Submitting stories without first reading the market is like playing darts in a dark room—you might hit the target now and then, but you don't deserve to."

35. "Writing isn't about making money, getting famous, getting laid, or making friends. In the end, it's about enriching the lives of those who will read your work, and enriching your own life, as well."

36. "I've written because it fulfilled me. Maybe it paid off the mortgage on the house and got the kids through college, but those things were on the side—I did it for the buzz. I did it for the pure joy of the thing. And if you can do it for joy, you can do it forever."

### ***In case you were wondering...***

MI5 and MI6—the British Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service, respectively, are broadly equivalent to our FBI and CIA. They overlap in many respects but are fundamentally dissimilar in outlook.

MI5 tended to recruit former policemen and soldiers, men who sometimes spoke with regional accents and frequently did not know, or care about, the right order to use the cutlery at a formal dinner. They enforced the law and defended the realm, caught spies and prosecuted them.

MI6 was more public school and Oxbridge; its accent more refined, its tailoring better. Its agents and officers frequently broke the laws of other countries in pursuit of secrets, and did so with a certain swagger. MI6 was White's Club; MI5 was the Rotary Club; MI6 was upper-middle class (sometimes aristocratic); MI5 was middle class (sometimes working class). MI5 were hunters; MI6 were gatherers.

*(The definitions come from A Spy Among Friends, about the Kim Philby case, by Ben McIntyre)*

# Reviews

## Rob's Random Shots\*

### January Case File Number 1

*Fire and Ice* by Dana Stabenow, Signet 1999, 304 pp (PB).

This was the first in a new series for the prolific Dana Stabenow. In an editorial note, she explains that having written several books in the Kate Shugak series (Iditarod musher and sometime amateur sleuth), she wanted to tell stories about a policeman, and so invented State Police trooper Liam Campbell.

Following advice so many authors have received, she starts this book and its series on the worst day of its main character's life. He's been demoted for a mistake and assigned to a small coastal village, where he'll be the only law. (A running gag in this series opener is that Liam can't get his uniform washed and pressed in the tiny town and so spends nearly all of the book in civvies.)

In short order, Liam discovers several people in town he knows, and one, pilot Wyandotte Chouinard, with whom he had a tempestuous love affair a few years previously. Then he finds Wy's customary passenger (many pilots serve as fish spotters for fishing vessels during the annual fishing seasons) dead and her plane vandalized.

So Liam begins to meet many townspeople—Indians, white native Alaskans, and opportunists of every stripe hoping to strike it rich in the 49th state and then get back south to warmer climes. He participates in the opening of herring season as Wy's spotter and meets many suspects, including Wy herself. Dana did such a great job that I wasn't able to guess the killer or the perpetrators of other minor crimes or previous crimes he uncovers.

Dana said she wanted a series that would allow her greater latitude (pun intended) and a wider canvas for sex, violence, and colorful supporting characters. She succeeds, and I will read and review more Liam Campbell novels.♦

### January Case File Number 2

*Wait for Signs* by Craig Johnson, Penguin Books 2015, 224 pp (PB).

This is sort of a departure for me, a collection of short stories, Christmas classics written by the author of the best-selling (and filmed in New

Mexico) Walt Longmire series. Craig writes these stories and shares them online with rabid fans, each one on or around Christmas.

If you don't know already, the Longmire books are different fish than the TV series and are rife with more humor and good-natured banter. I first met Craig at a Hillerman Conference in Albuquerque hot on the heels of his first best-seller. Like his legion of fans, I've been sent all these stories, one at a time, but it's a pleasure to revisit them and possess a lasting record of the author's and his characters' warmth, wit, and wisdom.

I recommend starting with the second-to-last story, "Messenger," which will hook you into the rest. (They can be read in any order.) Walt, his deputy Vic Moretti, and lifelong friend Henry Standing Bear, returning from a successful fishing trip, arrive at a chaotic scene at a National Forest concrete pit toilet to find a ranger and a tourist "tree-d" on the roof while a mama bear and two cubs prowl below. Henry leads them away with their cooler of cleaned fish and the pair are rescued, only to find that a great horned owl is bumbling around lost in the depths of the pit toilet.

Much inventiveness and bitter banter ensues, primarily from Vic, who, as the lightest of the three, Henry and Walt must lower into the depths to free the owl. Henry has told them his people believe this breed of bird to be messenger from the spirit world and it may be bearing news of the imminent birth of Walt's grandchild back in Philadelphia.

I bought 10 copies, which Craig signed for me, to give as Christmas presents. When I first read "Messenger" to Julie a couple of years before this collection was published, with tears of mirth streaming down my face, she wiped her eyes and said, in a scene worthy of Longmire, "Don't ever read me another story like that while I'm driving down I-25 at 75 miles an hour. I can barely see through my tears!" ♦

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

**\*Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year!**

### January Case File Numbers 3 & 4

*Nowhere To Hide* and *Nowhere Safe* by Nancy Bush, Zebra 2012 and 2013, 384 pp each (PB).

Here's something else I've never done before, reviewed two books by the same author in the same *Nooseletter* issue, and in a single review. Last issue, I reviewed the first novel in this series, the Rafferty Family mysteries, by the sister of best-selling

thriller/mystery author Lisa Jackson. These are the second and third installments.

Two members of the Rafferty clan, Augie and September (known by the nickname “Nine”) are police detectives in an Oregon town. Besides sharing characters who are also family members, the other distinctive points in this series are that each subsequent book focuses on a different main character from the family and begins just minutes or hours after the previous novel ends. September is the detective who in this book catches the case of a vigilante apparently killing child molesters.

Chapters from the fully identified villain’s point of view are hallmarks of thrillers. Very few mysteries do this and if they do, keep the killer’s identity a secret. Not in this book. There are at least a half dozen point of view characters, major and minor, detective and criminals, and Ms. Bush handles them as deftly as if she’s been doing this all her life. Of the three so far, there’s more mayhem, more children endangered, and more sex between characters in *Nowhere Safe* than in the other two.

I won’t give away anything more except to urge you to find this series and read it in order as I’m doing. I have trouble making sense of the ending, but am confident that Ms. Bush will make it transparent in the next book, which may be out later this year, but only minutes after this story ends. You’re hereby warned: Her work is habit-forming. I must review her on Amazon, too. ♦

## January Case File Number 5

***The Readaholics and the Poirot Puzzle*** by Laura DiSilverio, NAL 2015, 336 pp (PB).

I had great hopes for this book, the second in the Book Club mystery series, and think others may enjoy this cozy series more than I did. Each book (three so far) uses an alliterative takeoff on a better known mystery, the reading of which sets series star Amy-Faye Johnson and her reading group in search of a killer over the course of the book.

The author lives in Grand Junction, CO, thinly disguised by another name in the books. This one involves a murder in a brewpub being opened by Amy-Faye’s brother. In short order, we find that the victim was universally despised and was a target of a women’s rights group in western Colorado.

Most of the sleuthing is done by the heroine, but she consults with members of her reading group, who sometimes provide useful insight. If I wasn’t overwhelmed by better books this issue, I would have spent more time listing the virtues of the author

and her series. If you’re looking for a clever, charming, spunky cozy, you will find this series appealing. I have to spend more bedtime reading Nancy Bush and hope my wife doesn’t learn of my addiction. ♦

### Key:

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

***Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*** by Susanna Clarke, Bloomsbury USA, 2010, 865 pp (HC).

A wonderful fantasy/history saga set in England and Europe at the time of the Napoleonic Wars. At Hurtfew Abbey in England, Mr. Norrell has compiled the most extensive library in existence of books on magic. He intends to re-establish and fully control ‘practical magic’ in England. He staged a magical event at York Minster that amazed and astounded all other magicians; afterward they resigned their occupation.

Norrell took on an apprentice, Jonathan Strange. At first they were a dynamic duo. They served the English military at home (Norrell) and abroad (Strange) during the Napoleonic Wars. Then trouble began...Strange chafed at Norrell’s narrow views, especially Norrell’s resolve to safeguard—never share—magic knowledge and practice.

This is an extremely long narrative covering many years and shifts in the relationship between Norrell and Strange, as well as politics in England, and the hijinks of a powerful fairy known as ‘The Gentleman with Thistledown Hair’. Those who enjoy detailed descriptions to the smallest minutiae will love this book!

No review could be complete without mentioning the \*footnotes\*. Many pages are footnoted with ‘historical’ references. Those footnotes themselves are the most delightful fiction—many are humorous anecdotes disguised as historical reference. Again, if as a reader you enjoy the tiniest detail and exquisitely constructed ‘backstory’—you will *love* this book. On the other hand, it would easily bore a reader who prefers shoot-em-up, snappy-dialogue action that translates easily to network TV.

I was introduced this masterpiece by a summer reading program, “Magical Summer,” at the local library. We read a few chapters each week and then discussed them online. My heartfelt thanks to the

librarians who chose this book and set up the program! I never would have chosen a book from the fantasy genre. This is a book to keep, to cherish, to reread. Sure it's long, yes it drags a bit in the middle, but I have never experienced anything like it before or since (and I read about 100 books per year). ♦

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

**Operation Napoleon** by Arnaldur Indridason (translated by Victoria Cribb), Minotaur Books 1999, 328 pp (HC)

In 1945, a German bomber crash-lands in Iceland during a blizzard. Puzzlingly, there are both German and American officers on board. One of the senior German officers claims that their best chance of survival is to try to walk to the nearest farm. He sets off, a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist, only to disappear into the white vastness...

Flash forward to the present. The U.S. Army is clandestinely trying to remove the wreck of an airplane from an Icelandic glacier (why it's a secret remains mysterious until the end, but we Americans don't come off with much integrity). A young Iclander, Elías, inadvertently stumbles upon the excavation and then promptly also disappears. But before he vanishes, he manages to contact his sister, Kristín. She embarks on a perilous adventure, determined to discover the truth of her brother's fate—and solve the riddle of Operation Napoleon.

This is apparently Indriadason's third novel but the first published in the U.S. His first two "Reykjavik Murder Mysteries" feature Detective Inspector Erlendur. Of these, I read *Silence of the Grave*, which was satisfying enough, but I liked *Operation Napoleon* better. You'll find the names and locales in each hard to pronounce (or "hear" in your head) but they read smoothly otherwise, and the unusual locale is interesting. ♦

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

**Don't Look Back** by Karin Fossum (translated by Felicity David), A Harvest Book, 2002, 295 pp (TP)

Here are a couple of Scandinavian mysteries that are a little different—one is Norwegian, the other set in Iceland.

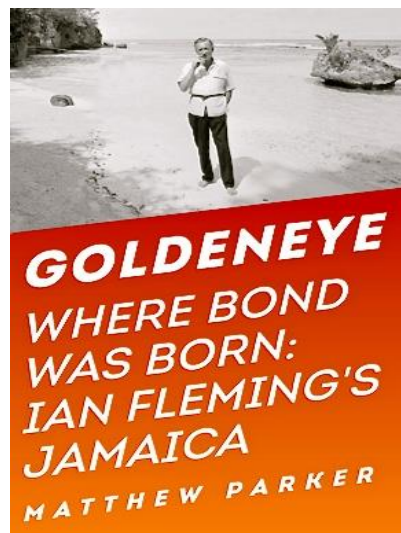
*Don't Look Back* starts with a suspenseful scene that you might suppose will be the main plot, but that's resolved quickly—and unexpectedly enough to confound your preconceptions. It seeps into the main mystery, though, which must have happened at

about the same time, but it takes a while for the reader to find out where the overlap is significant.

Inspector Konrad Sejer and his young, curly-haired assistant Jacob Skarre are called back to the same small fjord-side town only days after the first instance, to investigate another mystery, the death of a young girl by the side of a lake. Annie was strong, intelligent, and loved by everyone. What went so terribly wrong that she could have been murdered—or was it an accident or suicide? Was Annie as perfect as she seemed?

The introspective Sejer grows on the reader as a character. A widower who lives along with his dog, he still grieves for his late wife, but that helps him empathize with victims of the crimes he investigates. Minor characters are well drawn too, and the plot has some surprise twists, which are natural more than a shock, revealing hidden relationships among the characters and secrets behind the apparently quiet façade of this seemingly placid, if isolated town.

This is apparently the fifth in Fossum's series, although the first English translation. ♦



*Goldeneye: Where Bond Was born: Ian Fleming's Jamaica* by Matthew Parker. Pegasus Books, 2015.

For two months every year, from 1946 to his death 18 years later, Ian Fleming lived at Goldeneye, the house he built on a point of high land overlooking a small white sand beach on Jamaica's stunning north coast. All the James Bond novels and stories were written here. This book explores the huge influence of Jamaica on the creation of Fleming's iconic post-war hero.

Parker describes Fleming's self-imposed exile to Jamaica, where he thought up the idea of James Bond and did his best to avoid the upper-crust types he didn't much care for. Alas, to his disgust, Jamaica in the 1950s and early 1960s became a magnet for the beau monde who wanted to rub shoulders with Fleming and fellow residents Noël Coward and Errol Flynn. Parker dishes up lots of juicy gossip as he recalls the expected and sometimes not-so-expected visitors who frolicked in Jamaica in the 1950s.

The house Fleming built was modest and lacked many modern conveniences. However, the natural beauty and tropical climate was little short of a paradise for Fleming, who noted, "The sun is always shining in my books." He loved the island and island life but hated the social life, in particular the endless procession of visitors and his wife's elaborate parties.

Like his hero Bond, Ian Fleming was not a particularly likeable human being: an asocial curmudgeon, obsessive smoker, adherent of Old School British imperialism, but most of all, by modern standards a rampant racist. Yet there were other, more appealing sides to his character. To wit, the Fleming that's portrayed in this book is a full-on nature lover who reveled in the island's extravagant flora and fauna. Fleming's appreciation of the island's birdlife went so far as to his borrowing the name 'James Bond' from a real person, an American ornithologist who penned one of Fleming's favorite books, *Birds of the West Indies*.

Parker presents the case for the exotic flavor of the Bond novels being mostly Jamaican, and that the island, in all its mystery, melancholy and danger, is key to understanding the man and his work. The thesis is buttressed with lots of detail and the usual academic patina: extensive index, source notes, vintage photos, general bibliography.

Parker skillfully interweaves Fleming's life with post-WW2 events that inspired the creation and development of the Bond character. He provides summaries of the Bond books and discusses how they mirror Cold War history and attitudes. However, the book's ultimate value may be its unvarnished portrayal of the Old Boy British colonialism in the 1950s, which the traditionalists, including Fleming, stubbornly held onto even in the face of an obviously changing world. ♦

—Bryan Stone ([bcstoneb444@gmail.com](mailto:bcstoneb444@gmail.com))

The two most depressing words in the English language are "literary fiction" —David Hare

### Series mysteries:

#### All reviews by Susan Zates

**NOTE:** Print publisher noted; most also available (and/or read by the reviewer) in e-format.

***Gatsby's Last Resort*** by R.J. Rubadeau. Beacon Hill Press 2010, 298 pp (HC)  
(First book of the Telluride Murder Mystery series set in contemporary Colorado).

The Telluride setting is the reason I chose the book, but it presents such a seamy side of life in the community that I'm no longer eager to visit.

Wit Thorpe is owner/operator of the Last Resort Detective Agency, which sounds more impressive than it is; he sneaks around to videotape cheating spouses.

Basically Thorpe is a loser: spends his days in a bar, unwilling to follow directions or rules, fired from previous jobs, now lives off his wife, an Assistant District Attorney. He adores his daughters, spunky 10-year-old Cody and 3-year-old Katie (you wonder how his wife was ever attracted to him enough to marry and have his children; by the time of the book she has lost interest).

Thorpe alternates badly investigating murders with badly writing sleazy erotic fiction involving F. Scott Fitzgerald and a redhead. The murders are all related to an Arizona luxury resort for male homosexuals (including many Telluride-resident secondary characters).

Especially at the start, *Gatsby's Last Resort* is a non-stop list of wisecracking one-liners; some make you laugh out loud, or quote to someone nearby. Unfortunately, misspelling, poor grammar and incorrect word usage frequently halts the flow of reading (a previous reader left a list of misspelled/misused words in the book; I extended it to both sides of the page). ♦

***Dark Star*** by Alan Furst. Random House 2008, 466 pp (HC)  
(Book #2 of the Night Soldiers historical espionage series set in late 1930s and early-1940s Europe).

Andre Szara is a Jew from Odessa working as a journalist for Pravda, the cover for his Soviet espionage. He "runs" contacts within Germany to obtain information about the Wehrmacht's readiness and plans for war.

It's a grim tale, based on grim history, including Kristallnacht and Germany's invasion of Poland. It's hard to imagine how people survived those years (thousands did not). The book describes Soviet pogroms as well as Nazi persecution of Jews.



Many gripping suspenseful passages detail how Szara barely manages to survive in dire circumstances.

It's an eye-opener—expect to learn a great deal about the “run-up” to WWII. ♦

***Death in a Cold Hard Light*** by Francine Mathews. Bantam 1999, 352 pp (PB)  
(4th—and last?—book of the Merry Folger series set on contemporary Nantucket).

Merry is the daughter and granddaughter of Nantucket police chiefs, proud to be a detective on the force herself. She's good at her job, but doesn't feel her father thinks so. She's engaged to be married to wealthy Peter, and is on the mainland visiting her mother-in-law-to-be (a horrid snob) when her father calls her home to investigate a suspicious death.

From needle marks on the victim, the police chief fears the heroin trade has come to Nantucket. Merry takes a big risk in her relationship with Peter when she departs, but feels compelled to respond to her father's call for help. Maybe this time she can prove herself to him...

Jay Santorski was an athlete, not known to be a druggie, but he drowned with needle marks in his arm. Merry investigates all who knew him and worked with him, to learn more about his life and understand what went wrong. The victim and his friends are not of primary interest in the book—it's really about Merry and her father's relationship. There is an interesting side plot about the local breed of tiger-stripe scallops.

A shame for the series to end after this; she's a spunky heroine about to take on her greatest challenge. ♦

***Evening Stars*** by Susan Mallory. Harlequin MIRA 2014, 361 pp (PB).

The final book of the Blackberry Island trilogy set off the coast of Washington state.

Nina is the responsible one in her family—both her mother Bonnie and sister Averil “just want to be princess, don't want to be queen.” Neither faces up to the consequences of her actions; just leave problems for Nina to solve.

Nina gave up her dreams to leave Blackberry Island for medical school, to put her sister through UCLA. Nina watches the family antiques store accounts, and tries to keep up their home, but money is tight, and she's working full-time as a nurse. She works for pediatrician Andi in the Queen Anne on the hill (Andi's story is in book 2, *Three Sisters*).

Nina's car quits one evening, leaving her stranded in the pouring rain. Ex-boyfriend Dylan drives up and helps her out (she hasn't seen him since he dumped her a decade ago).

As the rain continues, Nina must get on the roof to cover a leak with a tarp (Bonnie ignored the leak and took off on an antiques buying trip with her lover Bertie). Nina falls off the roof, but gorgeous hunk Kyle catches her. He's a Navy pilot who fantasized about her since he was 12, determined to be her boyfriend.

Without notice, Averil drives up from Southern California (leaving her job and husband behind), bringing a stray dog she picked up along the roadside. Averil goes to bed for three days; Nina buys dog supplies and cares for the unexpected pet. Needless to say, there is plenty of cause for Nina to resent everyone else's irresponsibility.

From having no love life at all, Nina suddenly finds herself in a whirlwind fling with Kyle as well as resuming friendship with Dylan. Meanwhile she must deal with a host of unexpected problems due to a painting Bonnie brought home. As you expect from a Mallory novel, love conquers all in the end.

My favorite parts were the stray dog, the competent new employee Cindy, and the plane ride that gives Nina perspective. As she says to Kyle, “You promised to change my life and you did.” ♦

***Crime School*** by Carol O'Connell. Jove 2003, 364 pp (PB).

The sixth book of the Kathleen Mallory detective series set in late-20th-century New York City.

At age 10, Mallory was surviving on the streets by her wits. When NYPD homicide detective Louis Markowitz successfully caught Mallory, he and his wife Helen adopted her. Mallory lived with them until Helen's death, remaining fiercely independent and keeping her past secret.

Mallory joined the NYPD and was Markowitz's star pupil, the youngest detective and most talented. After Markowitz's death, Mallory tracked down his killer. She is now partners in an investigation consulting firm with Markowitz's good friend Charles Butler, who also happens to be hopelessly in love with her (platonically).

In a previous book we learned about Mallory's childhood in Louisiana, her mother's tragic death, and why Mallory chose to go by that name. In *Crime School*, we learn what happened in Mallory's early years on the streets of NYC.

Riker, once partners with Markowitz, is still on the force, still protective toward Mallory; she still



resists and resents protection. When Riker's informant Sparrow, a former call girl, is murdered, Mallory does not recognize her at the murder scene. It's been 15 years since Kathy lived with and stole for Sparrow; Sparrow had since had plastic surgery.

But Mallory recognizes the crime scene elements are the same as another murder case over a decade ago. Serial killer or copycat? Riker is the only one who remembers a fire long ago from which young Kathy fled. He wants to keep the shared history between Sparrow and Mallory secret—so he removes a book he recognizes as Kathy's from Sparrow's murder scene.

We discover in *Crime Scene* that Charles Butler is a bibliophile, with a dedicated room off his library where he repairs and restores fine books. Riker brings him the waterlogged paperback (a dime store Western) to salvage, with a half-truth explanation that it's a surprise for Mallory. Charles finds the antique bookseller and figures out much of the truth; he and Riker read the whole series in an effort to understand why Kathy loved the books as a child.

Mallory and Riker link the past and present prostitute murder cases, and Mallory discovers the perpetrator by process of elimination and a bold bluff. The full back story of Kathy's fascination with the Westerns is pretty contrived, but cute. ♦

***Cross Current*** by Christine Kling. Tell-Tale Press 2012, 415 pp (HC)

The second book of the Seychelle Sullivan mystery series, set on Florida's waterways.

Seychelle owns her own boat towing and salvage business, inherited from her father. She lives alone with her dog in a small cottage just off the water, and loves her freedom.

She always needs to make money to keep in business, so she is ever vigilant for boats in need of assistance. On her way to help out a stranded friend (who is careless with his batteries and supplies), she spots a small rowboat adrift, in it a young emaciated girl clinging onto a woman's corpse.

Seychelle rescues the girl first, before making an official report to the Coast Guard. She knows that because the girl is Haitian, she normally would be immediately deported. Seychelle vows to fight deportation for the girl, who said her father is American. Seychelle enlists a trusted friend to shelter (hide) the girl until her father can be found and Seychelle needs all the help she can get from many friends (including current or would-be boyfriends), to investigate in Haitian refugee neighborhoods.

Of course her efforts go up against a variety of evildoers; she is nearly killed several times before justice finally prevails in a surprise ending. I enjoy the series, primarily due to Seychelle's unique lifestyle and spunky independence. ♦

***The Hunt Club*** by John Lescroart. Signet 2006, 428 pp (PB)

The first book of the Wyatt Hunt mystery series set in contemporary San Francisco.

Currently a private investigator with his own business, Wyatt Hunt has many contacts from his wide variety of professional experience. Among his best friends are a homicide detective, a prosecutor and a defense attorney. Wyatt is of great assistance to his friends "within the law, outside the system"—when they need results faster than the bureaucracy can handle.

When a federal judge is murdered, the prime suspect seems obvious, but evidence is scarce. Wyatt keeps digging into the case and discovers surprising connections. He meets and is strongly attracted to a woman—but after she disappears, she becomes the new prime suspect. Despite circumstantial evidence, Wyatt is the only one to believe in her innocence and worry about her safety. He investigates yet another angle, overlooked in the official case, to ferret out the truth. Once he discovers the truth, he must gather evidence to go up against the rich and powerful.

Fast paced complex plot with multi-faceted characters, blending elements of police procedural, P.I. and courtroom thriller sub-genres. I look forward to reading more of the series. ♦

***92 Pacific Boulevard*** by Debbie Macomber, Harlequin MIRA 2014, 368 pp (PB).

The 9th in the Cedar Cove contemporary series set in a small town on Washington State's seacoast.

This installment starts with a body found in a cave, but is primarily about the relationship of the sheriff with a woman he's known since high school, Christine's breakup with James, and Olivia's recovery from cancer. Unlike previous books that had cliff-hanger endings, this one introduces the plot for the next, *1022 Evergreen Place*.

It's charming to read about long-term friendships in Cedar Cove, like the one Grace and Olivia share. The reader knows all the romantic entanglements will be resolved; I found some of the obstacles quite contrived this time around. I plan to continue reading the series, since I'm near the end and I like to finish series, but I will space out reading them (they're a little too cutesy). ♦

## 2016 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, January 26, 7:00 p.m.  
NO FEBRUARY MEETING  
Tuesday, March 22, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, April 26, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 24, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, June 28, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, July 26, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, August 23, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, September 27, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, October 25, 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, November 22, 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 North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center at 7521 Carmel Avenue NE, north of Paseo del Norte and west of Wyoming. 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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