



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



# THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume X, Number 4 — July/August 2016

## †Expert Testimony†

Hello you wonderful mystery people! It occurred to me today that last year at this time we were knee deep in plans for our Mystery Roundup that we held jointly with the Rocky Mountain Mystery Writers of America. Those of you who were in on the planning recall it was a lot of work, but we were so proud of the event and the turnout that we almost busted our buttons patting ourselves on the back. Because of that conference, we added several new members to our roster, and meeting attendance has been pretty good, all things considered.

Now we are into the hottest part of summer, and people are a) on vacation; b) involved in other summer activities; c) do not want to leave the comfort of their air-conditioned homes to go out on a Tuesday evening for a Croak & Dagger meeting. That's why this message is to encourage all of you who are able to do so, please attend our meetings this summer. Rita Herther invites some really interesting folks to be our speakers, and we want to show them we appreciate their taking the time from their busy schedules to come share their stories with us. So I hope you will make a special effort to come to the July 26, 2016, meeting and the one on August 23.

We also want to remind you that several members of Croak & Dagger plan to attend the Adobe Theater production of *The Curious Savage* at the Sunday Matinee on July 17, 2016. Curtain time is 2:00 p.m., but the seats are first-come, first-seated, so be there when the doors open at 1:30 to snag your place. There really isn't a bad seat in the house because it is a

small, intimate theater where you are practically on stage with the performers.

If you want to attend, you must contact the Adobe Theater to get your tickets (\$10 for that weekend only). You can also go online at the Adobe Theater website and purchase your tickets for a small transaction fee at the ticket agent, Brown Paper Tickets. You can have them mailed to your house, or you can print them out on your computer and bring them with you.

After the play, those interested are going to dinner at El Bruno's, just south of the theater on Fourth Street. You need to contact me at [pwood73@comcast.net](mailto:pwood73@comcast.net) to let me know if you are attending either the play or the dinner. I will be making reservations at the restaurant and I need an accurate count.

So come on out. Don't give up on mystery during the summer. You never know what chills and thrills you might miss!

— Pat Wood, President

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

**Arnie Arias**, our July speaker, is a detective with the BCSO and will talk about his current undercover and behind-the-scenes police work. This involves the cultivation and management of an undercover profile and confidential sources, as well as the day-to-day work to keep up the front a detective has established. Should be fascinating, as well as useful for crime fiction writers!



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!"*

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.

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

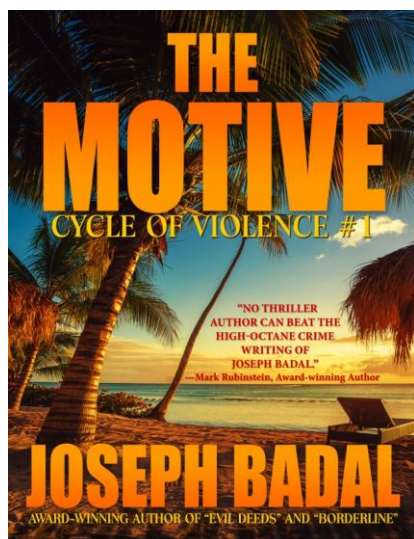
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Check Out the Croak & Dagger Website  
([www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com)) for all your  
Croak & Dagger information needs:

- **The Home Page** contains information on upcoming Croak & Dagger events and meetings.
- **About Us** contains information on our chapter, including a list of current officers.
- **Membership** provides information on joining Croak & Dagger and supplies a printable membership form. If you are looking for reasons to join, you will find them here. The Membership page also includes information enjoining the Yahoo group, an online community group, where members can exchange information about mystery books, movies, and TV shows; share news about local and national mystery events; and participate in occasional online classes. Croak & Dagger members may contact *nancy.varian@yahoo.com*, to sign up.
- **Speakers** lists Croak & Dagger members you may contact for information on topics of potential interest to mystery readers and writers. If you would like to be included in this list, e-mail your resume to *croakdagger@yahoo.com*.
- **Authors** provides links to sites for member authors (published or unpublished) who write crime-related fiction or nonfiction and to sites developed by any members when those Web sites concentrate on crime-related fiction or nonfiction works. If your Web site fits any of these criteria and you would like to be listed, e-mail *croakdagger@yahoo.com* with your Web address.
- **Resources**. This page provides a list of Web site links of interest to those of us who are into felonious fun. If you know a Web site you think is of particular interest to think is of particular interest to Croakers, e-mail us with that information.
- **Nooseletter Archive**. Provides links to archived issues of the chapter's *Nooseletter*.
- **Blog**. Provides a link to more information and articles from and by members on the C&D blog.

## Noose News

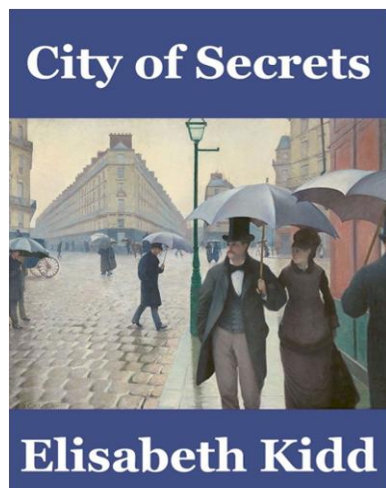
Joe Badal will read from and sign copies of his tenth and latest novel, *The Motive* (the first in his new series, *Cycle of Violence*) on **Saturday July 23 at 1:00 p.m.** at Treasure House Books in Old Town, and on **Saturday July 30 at 3:00 p.m.** at BookWorks on Rio Grande Boulevard.



Nooseletter editor Linda Triegel won first prize in the Gulf Coast Writers Association's annual "Let's Write" literary contest (short story category). To read her entry, go to:

[http://www.gcwriters.org/contest\\_lw\\_winners.htm](http://www.gcwriters.org/contest_lw_winners.htm).

Also look for *City of Secrets*, a historical romance with a suspense element available on Amazon and [www.belgravehouse.com](http://www.belgravehouse.com) under her pen name, Elisabeth Kidd. She is currently working on a cozy mystery set in a small New England town.



## SinC Celebrates 30 years

*(Excerpted from an article in the MWA's 70<sup>th</sup> annual Edgar Allen Poe Awards issue by Susan Dunlap, the third president of Sisters in Crime and the author of 25 mystery novels.*

The 1980s have been called the Second Golden Age of Mysteries. It was a heady time, particularly for women. Readers were discovering new women writers. Publishers were discovering readers wanted books by women writers.

And yet—you knew this was coming, right? And yet, we women were second-class.

So 30 years ago, in 1986, Sara Paretsky organized a meeting. Thirty of us. Writers, editors, booksellers, librarians, and readers in New York for the Edgar Awards. We talked about the inequality. Why were we in a gender ghetto? How could we demolish its walls?

Where to start? Were men paid higher advances? We figured yes. But the truth was that we didn't know what other people were paid, men or women. And it was considered poor form to ask. In an industry where a writer is valued by his or her advance, no one wants to admit they're not worth much. But we realized silence shackled us. So we told.

Were men reviewed more frequently than women? You betcha. Were then. Are now. Thus was born the review monitoring project (percentage of reviews by gender in publications all over the country).

Each time a need arose, members were eager to help out. When we needed a mailing list to spread the word, Carolyn Hart devoted every evening for a year. When we needed someone to do the long and tedious work of making us a non-profit, Dorothy Sucher stepped up. Sara Paretsky spearheaded a project to assess violence against women in mysteries.

All volunteer efforts.

Since that time, SinC has grown more than a hundred-fold. There are chapters all over the U.S. and Canada. Some of our sisters are brothers. We are a community that supports each other. We share our resources, just as we share our excitement over the discovery of new writers. Most basically, we share our interest in the mysteries we love.

*(See the next page for more history of Sisters).*

# ***A Brief History of Sisters in Crime***

*Compiled by Lora Roberts (excerpted from an article on the National SinC website)*

It gestated at the first-ever conference on Women in the Mystery, put together by BJ Rahn at Hunter College in March 1986. Sara Paretsky spoke on the growing use of graphic sadism against women in mysteries. “Remarks I made at the conference set off a firestorm around the mystery world,” founding mother Sara recalls. “Women began calling me from all over the country with their personal histories of treatment/mistreatment.”

The rising tide of activism among women mystery writers was boosted by Phyllis Whitney’s famous letter to Mystery Writers of America, pointing out that women authors weren’t being nominated for awards. By the time of Bouchercon in October, the ball was rolling. “I convened the initial meeting of interested women at the Baltimore Bouchercon in October 1986,” Sara says. At that meeting, she noted that books by woman mystery writers also weren’t being reviewed at a percentage equal to their participation in the field.

At the annual Edgars Week in 1987, interested women writers were invited to Sandra Scoppettone’s SoHo loft for breakfast, to meet each other and discuss the situation. At that meeting, Sisters in Crime was formed.

Initial steering committee members were Charlotte MacLeod, Kate Mattes, Betty Francis, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, Sara Paretsky, Nancy Pickard and Susan Dunlap. A newsletter was in the works. Information on publicizing books was being put together. The review project was under consideration. And the mission statement had been formalized: “Sisters in Crime is committed to helping women who write, review, buy, or sell crime fiction. Our ultimate goal is to become a service organization to address issues of concern to everyone involved in the mystery field.”

“The first two years of Sisters, I ran everything out of my eight-by-ten office, with stamps sent by Margaret Maron and a generous contribution from Jane Langton,” Sara says. “Dorothy Salisbury Davis’ support proved crucial—she was so respected by MWA members that she persuaded women like Mary Higgins Clark to join and she damped down some of the hostile fire we were getting from the mystery press.

“I remember being scared at the start,” Nancy Pickard says. “Our very first organizing meeting, I remember Sara at the front of the room, how brave she was, and how smart. It was exciting, fun, a little frightening. I remember thinking, ‘In our funny little world of mystery writers, we have come late to the woman’s movement, but here we are, at last.’”

Although all Sisters consider Sara their founding mother, Nancy was the first elected president. “I had to work up my nerve to call Margaret Maron to ask her to be my vice president—she said yes, and boy, was I ever the luckiest president ever! Besides being a wonderful writer, Margaret is the world’s best organizer, correspondent, and paper-keeper; she deserves all the credit for keeping the organizational part of SinC alive and functioning that year. I was delighted to hand her the gavel at the end of my year. I have felt proud, ever since, to be able to add to my resume, ‘Founding member and former president, Sisters In Crime.’”

Margaret Maron recalls, “After Phyllis Whitney’s letter to MWA and what many considered their dismissive response, Sara Paretsky sent a letter to every mystery writing woman she could find, asking if we were interested in forming a networking group. I thought it was great for someone of her caliber to take this on for all women; and although she hadn’t asked for money, I sent her a roll of stamps to help with mailing costs.”

Why SinC instead of SIC? “Several women wanted SIC, as in ‘Let’s sic ‘em!’” Margaret says, “but I knew we were less about hostility than about working together in sync, so I used SinC in all my correspondence and official letters. By the end of my term, SinC had become the standard abbreviation.”

According to Margaret, in the early days, everyone on the board worked hard to bring things to life. “Linda Grant laid out the first Shameless Promotion for Brazen Hussies on her dining room table. During those early days, whenever someone called or wrote with a ‘Why doesn’t someone—?’ the steering committee would say, ‘Why don’t YOU?’ Linda’s inspired booklet embodied that philosophy.”

Starting Sisters’ famous mailing list was Carolyn Hart’s early mission. “She collected and collated the names and addresses of almost every bookstore and library in the country and put them into a database that became our first mailing list for our SinC on the Shelf,” Margaret says. “Sharyn McCrumb introduced us to Gavin Faulkner, who was responsible for the layout and mailing of our first newsletters. Together, they designed many of the early bookmarks and postcards and other pieces of publicity material. Some of my best memories are of the true support that grew from nothing to a nationwide network.”

Mary Lou Wright, long-time treasurer, recalls, “When Sue Dunlap was president, she asked for volunteers at an annual SinC meeting. There was no show of hands for treasurer and I thought: I can do this, it’s just like my daytime job (then a business manager). My first task was renting a post office box in Lawrence, KS, where I lived. As we know, this has now become our permanent address. The treasury had very little money. When Carolyn Hart became president, she thought she was going to have to pay the printing bill out of her pocket. I realized that we weren’t charging dues annually, and once we got that process in place, the organization could operate somewhat smoothly, pay our bills and fund the new exciting projects that came along.

Following a suggestion from Sara Paretsky, I presented the idea of hiring an executive secretary to the board and even suggested Beth Wasson, a neighbor who had recently quit a very time-consuming job in retail.” Sisters has been blessed by Beth’s calm good sense and attention ever since. “With all due modesty,” Mary Lou says, “my suggestion of Beth Wasson was brilliant.”

Linda Grant became president during 1993-1994. She has said, “Most of our best projects were initiated by members who had a good idea and were willing to contribute the time and effort to bring it to fruition. When I think of the many, many hours of time that members contributed to creating and managing various projects, I am awed by the creativity and dedication.”

“One of the things I loved the most about serving as an officer in Sisters,” she continues, “was the sense of mutual support and community. We were friends as well as colleagues, and whenever there was a problem, there were people anxious to help. Whenever I faced a difficult problem or an important decision, I talked to Barb D’Amato, my veep, and Pat Carlson, the former president. In effect, the leadership of the organization was a kind of triumvirate consisting of the past, present and future presidents.”



In 1996, a large SinC project was undertaken by then-president Elaine Raco Chase: to hold a writing retreat in Houston. “It did a great deal to make SinC more visible than it had been before,” Barb says, “and added to the impression that we weren’t going to go away.”

During Annette Meyers’ year of being president, she undertook to get the same benefit for Sisters that other organizations of writers were enjoying: contributions from the Authors Coalition. “Participation depends on the number of published authors in the organizations that belong, so there was no reason for us to be denied membership. I enlisted the aid of Paul Aiken, Executive Director of the Authors Guild, and within a few months, we were on board. The income that has come in steadily from our membership in the Authors Coalition has kept Sisters in Crime well in the black.”

Medora Sale’s presidency focused on the health of the many SinC chapters springing up all over the country. “By then, many chapters not only had bylaws,” she says, “but were facing or had survived minor constitutional crises, as well as organizing and carrying out some extraordinary events and long-term projects, and we at National were occupied in fine-tuning a role to assist without smothering—although when I say National, I really ought to say Beth Wasson, who knew everything that was being planned, what it needed and how to help in the most clear-headed, useful way.”

The late Barbara Burnett Smith, who is sorely missed, served as president in 1999-2000 and accomplished something that author members of SinC had long wanted: she sponsored a survey that asked our writers frank questions about money, publicity, and other arcane details. “I believed then and still do that we need information in order to improve our lot as writers,” she said. “We have to know what authors are being paid, what publishers are providing in the way of support, etc. At the time, no one except agents and publishers knew what a ‘typical’ mystery might bring in advance money—I actually got some flack from members who didn’t think this project was a good idea, but I had many more supporters. If nothing else, we know the odds for making a good living with our writing.”

The hard work of the officers is a constant theme when former board members talk about Sisters in Crime. “One of our great strengths is that the office of president is not honorary, but is worked up to through service to the organization,” Barb D’Amato says. “As a result, the president comes into office knowing a lot about the organization.”

### **Sisters in Crime Breakfast at Malice Domestic - Spring 2007**



**Top Left:** Nancy Pickard, Kate Flora, Eve Sandstrom (aka Joanna Carl), Rochelle Krich, Patricia Sprinkle, Sue Henry

**Bottom Left:** Kate Grilley, Margaret Maron, Barb D’Amato, Susan Dunlap, Carolyn Hart



## MACAVITY AWARD NOMINEES 2016

**The Macavity Awards** are nominated by and voted on members of Mystery Readers International, subscribers to *Mystery Readers Journal* and friends of MRI. If you're a member of MRI or a subscriber friend and eligible to vote, you will receive a ballot on August 1, so get reading. The winners will be announced at opening ceremonies at Bouchercon in New Orleans in September. Congratulations to all.

### Best Mystery

*Little Black Lies* by Sharon Bolton (Minotaur)  
*The Long and Faraway Gone* by Lou Berney (Morrow)  
*The Hot Countries* by Tim Hallinan (Soho)  
*The Child Garden* by Catriona McPherson (Midnight Ink)  
*Life or Death* by Michael Robotham (Mulholland)  
*The Cartel* by Don Winslow (Knopf)

### Best First Mystery

*Concrete Angel* by Patricia Abbott (Polis)  
*Past Crimes* by Glen Erik Hamilton (Morrow)  
*The Killing Kind* by Chris Holm (Mulholland)  
*Where All Light Tends to Go* by David Joy (Putnam)  
*The Unquiet Dead* by Ausma Zehanat Khan (Minotaur)  
*On the Road with Del and Louise* by Art Taylor (Henery)

### Best Critical/Biographical

*The Golden Age of Murder: The Mystery of the Writers Who Invented the Modern Detective Story* by Martin Edwards (HarperCollins)  
*A Is for Arsenic: The Poisons of Agatha Christie* by Kathryn Harkup (Bloomsbury Sigma)  
*Meanwhile There Are Letters: The Correspondence of Eudora Welty and Ross Macdonald*, edited by Suzanne Marrs & Tom Nolan (Arcade)  
*Forensics: What Bugs, Burns, Prints, DNA, and More Tell Us About Crime* by Val McDermid (Grove)  
*The Lost Detective: Becoming Dashiell Hammett* by Nathan Ward (Bloomsbury)

### Best Short Story

"The Little Men" by Megan Abbott ([MysteriousPress.com/Open Road](http://MysteriousPress.com/OpenRoad))  
"On Borrowed Time" by Mat Coward (*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, June 2015)  
"Sob Sister" by Loren D. Estleman (*Detroit Is Our Beat: Tales of the Four Horsemen*, Tyrus)  
"A Year Without Santa Claus" by Barb Goffman (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, January/February 2015)  
"Quack and Dwight" by Travis Richardson (*Jewish Noir*, ed. Kenneth Wishnia, PM Press)  
"A Joy Forever" by B.K. Stevens (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, March 2015)

### **Sue Feder Historical Mystery Award**

*The Masque of a Murderer* by Susanna Calkins (Minotaur)

*A Gilded Grave* by Shelley Freydont (Berkley Prime Crime)

*Tom & Lucky and George & Cokey Flo* by C. Joseph Greaves (Bloomsbury)

*The Lady from Zagreb* by Philip Kerr (Putnam)

*Secret Life of Anna Blanc* by Jennifer Kincheloe (Seventh Street)

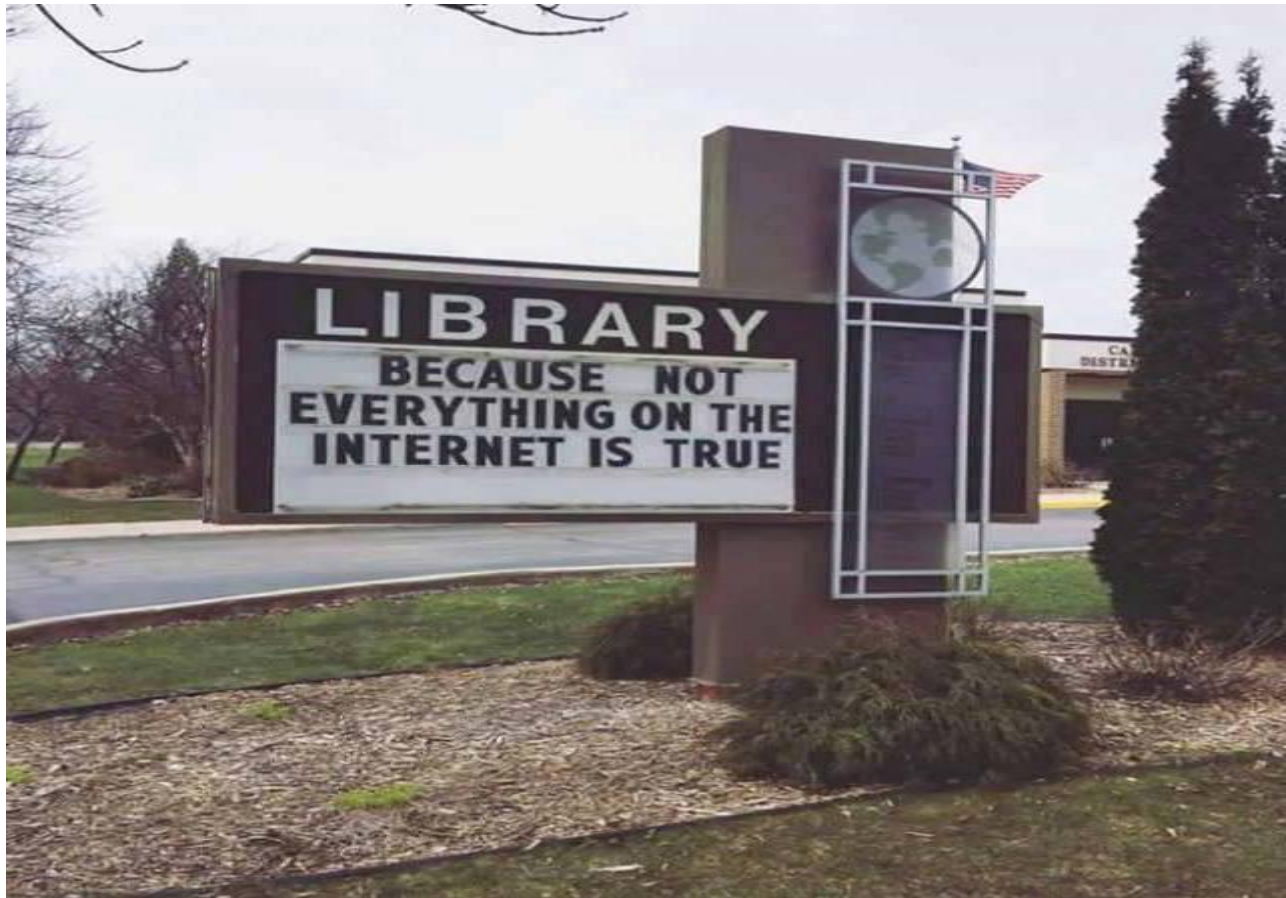
*Dreaming Spies* by Laurie R. King (Bantam)

For more information about the Macavity Awards and past nominees and winners, go [HERE](#).

[SUBSCRIBE to Mystery Readers Journal for '16](#). Four issues of thematic mystery reviews and author essays. Themes in 2016: **New York City Mysteries I** (Vol 32:1), **New York City Mysteries II** (Vol 32:2); **Small Town Cops** (Vol 32:3); **Mid-Atlantic Mysteries** (Vol 32:4); '17: **Big City Cops**...and more themes to be announced.

**Call for Articles:** Reviews, articles, and Author! Author! essays. If you have a novel that focuses on any of the upcoming themes, consider writing an author essay. 500-1500 words, first person, unclosed and personal about yourself, your books, and the theme. Think of it as chatting with friends and other writers in the bar or café. Add a title and 2-3 sentence bio/tagline. Send to **Janet Rudolph**, Editor, *Mystery Readers Journal*. Back issues are available as PDF and in hard copy.

*From Janet Rudolph, Editor, Mystery Readers Journal, [janet@mysteryreaders.org](mailto:janet@mysteryreaders.org)*



*(From actor George Takei via a Facebook posting.)*

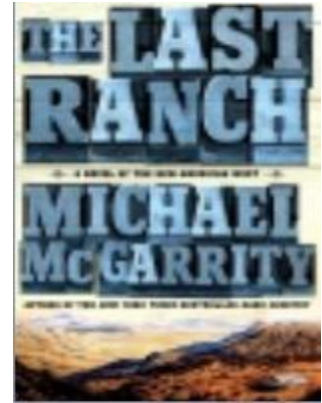


# Masters of Mystery in ABQ

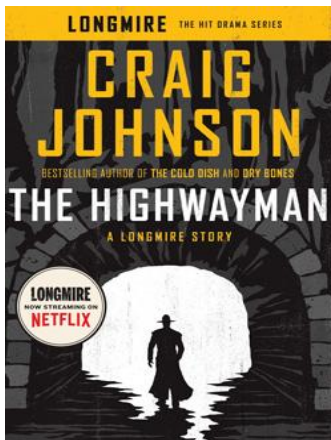
Their legions of devoted readers were delighted to find both Craig Johnson and Michael McGarrity in Albuquerque in May to talk about and sign their latest books.

Michael McGarrity was at Page One to introduce his new novel, *The Last Ranch*, the final volume in his American West trilogy that began with *Hard Country*, followed by *Backlands* to lead the Kerney family, ranchers in the Tularosa Basin, into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

*The Last Ranch* brings the family to—almost—the present. He considered writing a fourth novel, but instead will put the story of how Kevin Kerney got into law enforcement into a new short mystery, titled *Residue* but incomplete as of this writing. If you get tired of waiting for it, contact the author and tell him to “jingle his spurs” (a phrase he may regret explaining to his readers).



*Michael McGarrity is also the author of Anthony Award-Nominated Tularosa and eleven other bestselling Kevin Kerney crime novels. A former deputy sheriff for Santa Fe County, he also served as an instructor at the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy and as an investigator for the New Mexico Public Defender's Office. He lives in Santa Fe with his wife, Emily Beth.*



Craig Johnson was at the Main Library downtown on May 24 to tell us about *The Highwayman*, an offbeat Walt Longmire tale that could be described as a ghost story. The original inspiration for the story, as he told his listeners, and recounts in the novella, was a drive through the Wind River Canyon in Wyoming, when Craig and his wife stopped to help a stranded motorist. He was also influenced by a well-known ballad by Alfred Noyes, “The Highwayman” and a little-known Charles Dickens story, “The Signal-Man” (copies of both of these may be obtained from Ye Editor). Also see Rob Kresge’s review on the next page.

*Craig Johnson is the New York Times bestselling author of the Longmire series, beginning with A Cold Dish and recently (2015) including Old Bones. He is the recipient of the Western Writers of America Spur award for fiction. The series has been made into the hit TV show Longmire. Craig Johnson lives in Ucross, Wyoming (population 25) with his wife Judy.*



# Reviews

## Rob's Random Shots

### July Case File Number One

***The Devil's Hour*** by J. Carson Black, 2010, 285 pp (read on Kindle).

It's a pleasure to rediscover this author and her series, both of which I first encountered when I met her at Left Coast Crime in El Paso 10 or 12 years ago, just after I moved to New Mexico. By Book 3 in the series, Laura Cardinal has left her local Arizona police department and now works for the statewide open/unsolved unit, tackling a backlog of the worst and most difficult of the never-resolved cases. This novel finds her investigating the disappearance of three girls over a span starting more than a decade ago.

Her progress is interrupted when one of the girls miraculously reappears alive. Are the others alive? Can this one shed some light on the others' whereabouts?

Can she help Laura learn the kidnapper's M.O. and identify him after all this time?

It was really great to re-encounter this character and this series after so long. The *Darkness at the Edge of Town* had left me wanting more of Laura's adventures/investigations and it's a thrill to find her still working and on a most unusual case at that. Tragically, the released girl, now a young woman, is able to point her to the locale where she and another girl were held, but Laura finds the second missing woman's remains buried there. She was evidently killed shortly after her disappearance. How was the survivor able to remain alive for so long?

Danger increases for our intrepid investigator and one of her close friends is killed. But Laura perseveres at great risk and is able to resolve the case in spectacular fashion.

This is not Ms. Black's only series, and I intend to explore some of her other novels. I hope you do, too. ♦

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



### Key:

PB = Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

### July Case File Number Two

***The Highwayman*** by Craig Johnson. Viking, 2016, 208 pp (HC).

This is the latest offering from the prolific, best-selling, and multi-awarded author of the Longmire Wyoming crime series. Besides his well-known novels, Johnson is no stranger to the shorter forms of fiction, including his collection of short stories, *The Messenger*, and his novella *The Spirit of Steamboat* (which is not a mystery although a much younger Walt Longmire appears in it).

*The Highwayman* is a supernatural novella about the spooky radio calls for “officer needs assistance” sent on the State Highway Patrol radio frequency around the Wind River Canyon several times a month. The trooper died in a fiery collision in one of the canyon's tunnels more than 20 years previously. Highway Patrol officers are known to Wyoming law enforcement officers as “highwaymen,” regardless of gender, hence the title.

A female state trooper has been receiving the calls late at night and only in the canyon. No one else working the canyon and its tunnels has reported hearing such calls. Absaroka County Sheriff Walt Longmire and his friend Henry Standing Bear, far from Walt's home turf, encounter the female officer and learn of this radio anomaly when they travel through the canyon. They cannot hear the eerie radio calls either, but believe the officer in question is level-headed and that there must be something to her hearing the reported calls.

Complicating the original investigation of the dead officer's accident was the disappearance of thousands of commemorative silver dollars near that same time, some of which have since surfaced in and around the tunnel. The officer was suspected of having had a hand in the theft/disappearance and the appearance of one such coin in the tunnel that Walt and Henry find casts suspicion of the honesty of the young female trooper.

Family members of the female trooper are questioned and gradually her relationships yield clues that help Walt and Henry understand the original accident and her heretofore unknown connection to the dead officer.

There is a satisfying, albeit spooky, resolution to the case at the climax, reminiscent of Walt's snowbound visions of an Indian spirit in the novel-length *Hell Is Empty* several years ago. Anyone not

familiar with the Longmire novels and television series (are there any such people?), might find the woo-woo of this novella a little hard to swallow, but for fans, this slim volume is a real treat. ♦

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

### July Case File Number Three

*A Corpse in the Koryo* by James Church. Minotaur, 2007, 288 pp (PB).

This series will have flown under the radar of most mystery fans, although some critics placed it in the top 100 mystery novels of 2006. Inspector O (that's his last name, not just an initial) is a cop in North Korea, the "Hermit Kingdom" almost completely closed to the outside world, except for communist allies.

I was intrigued by the premise, since I spent more than five years analyzing North Korea—first through its propaganda, then tracking North Korea as a state sponsor of international terrorism (the South Korean airliner flight KAL 858 was blown out of the sky over the Andaman Sea by a North Korean couple in 1987 and the wreckage was never found). Ironically, when North Korean involvement was proved, there were no further attempts to disrupt or dissuade participation in the 1988 Seoul Olympics, which had been the North's goal.

What I just gave you above is far more interesting than the devastatingly boring novel I found. Literally nothing of a mysterious nature happens over the first half of the book and the story is as drab, depressing, and uneventful as the neo-Stalinist regime in Pyongyang remains to this day. I couldn't finish it. Don't you be tempted to start, unless you've been having trouble sleeping. ♦

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

#### BOOKMARKS

Have you seen them? Deep purple, with blood-red accents? Do you have one? Do you have a handful? The 2016 Croak & Dagger bookmarks are a great way to spread the word about our Sisters in Crime chapter. Hand out plenty, but keep one for yourself: they list all our meeting dates and times for 2016.

*The Ice Queen*, by Bruce Macbain. Blank Slate Press, 2015, 281 pp (PB)

Book 2 of Odd Tangle-Hair's Saga continues where *Odin's Child* left off. In this sequel Macbain provides a list of characters—35 difficult names that include Churillo Igorevic, Yaroslav Vladimirovich, Harald Sigurdsson, and Yelisaveta Yaroslavna.

Macbain's detailed and vivid writing brings his protagonist, Odd, to Novgorod of the Rus as *skald*—poet-companion of Harald, half-brother to the revered dead King Olaf of Norway. Harald enlists in the service of bookish Prince Yaroslav, but this does not please his wife, Princess Ingigerd, since she thinks Harald eventually will claim the throne of Norway and she wants a foster son, Magnus, offspring of Olaf and a concubine, to be the legitimate Norwegian king.

The year is 1032; Odd now is 19. At Novgorod, a town of ten thousand, he again meets Stavko, a slaver who supplies girls to the populace. Stavko tells Odd that he is to live in the palace and gives him a bribe from Ingigerd to spy on Harald and assassinate him. The beautiful princess summons Odd to an audience and charms him.

At a later banquet he meets Yaroslav and his brother Mstislav. Harald survives a suspicious "ambush," but chafing at winter inactivity, Harald and Odd pursue and defeat a bandit horde that terrorizes the area. Sixteen-year-old Harald is hailed for his victory, but a growing arrogance and demand for poems praising him starts to alienate Odd. During the long winter, Ingigerd takes Odd as a lover, under the nose of her distracted husband.

To celebrate Christmas, a feast is held in the palace. Despite the holy season, a brawl breaks out between Norwegians and mercenary Swedes, where Harald insults Ingigerd, and he and his men are expelled from the hall. The situation remains tense, but quiets down by Easter. Odd is to be baptized on that day and receives instruction, yet compares the Christian faith to the religion of Odin, his Norse god who lived long before Christ. Odd's trysts with Ingigerd continue, as does tension between Harald's political ambitions and enemies wishing Magnus to be king of Norway.

By early fall word arrives that Kiev to the south is besieged by Pechenegs, fierce Turkish nomads who sack settlements, then burn them down. Harald is ordered to lead one of two armies sent to relieve the city. After a bloody slaughter on both sides, a ruse devised by Odd, which involves cave-dwelling monks, routs the Pechenegs and Kiev is saved. Odd is wounded, yet betrayed by a still-angry Ingigerd,

he barely is exonerated at a sham trial and is declared an enemy by Harald.

Odd becomes the slave of a Saracen trader, whom he outwits. Stavko again rescues him and a reconciled Ingigerd tells him that Harald now is an important official, Miklagard, at Constantinople. She cajoles Odd to go there and kill the last claimant for the Norwegian throne. Disguised as a trading envoy and no longer the reckless youth who years earlier fled Iceland, as Miklagard looms into view, Odd is dazzled at its marble splendor, yet realizes that here he will find Harald—or himself be discovered and killed. ♦

—Albert Noyer ([www.novels.albertnoyer.com](http://www.novels.albertnoyer.com)).

### Series mysteries:

#### All reviews by Susan Zates

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

***Murder on Nob Hill***, by Shirley Tallman. Minotaur, 2004, 288 pp (PB).

(The first book of the Sarah Woolson historical mystery series set in 1880s San Francisco.)

From the start, it's clear this book has been carefully researched to present authentic period detail, from the lavish gowns, jewels and hairstyles at a posh dinner party to the wobbly furniture in a cubbyhole office of a junior attorney.

Protagonist Sarah Woolson is a fledgling attorney; she's passed the Bar and is eager for work, but now faces gender discrimination, from her eldest brother as well as from strangers. Sarah compassionately assists a widow who is being stonewalled by a probate attorney, and by her success cleverly lands her first job in a law office. She persists in investigating the victim's past, against major resistance from police and senior attorneys.

Sarah takes bold risks, propelled by the knowledge she's the only one who believes in her client. Subsequent murders prove Sarah was right, but closing in on the killer puts her in mortal danger.

The overall pace is slow and steady, rich with historic details. I look forward to reading more of the series. ♦

***Tilt-a-Whirl***, by Chris Grabenstein. Carroll & Graf, 2006, 321 pp (PB).

(The first book of the John Ceepak police procedural mystery series, set in a contemporary New Jersey seaside resort.)

John Ceepak returned from MP duty in Iraq to join the police force headed by his pal Cosgrove, a fellow former MP. Danny Boyle, narrator of the story, works for the police as a "summer job"—light duties, no weapon. Until partnering with Ceepak, Danny took his summer job as lightly as the term implies; easy pocket money for drinking off-hours with his buddies. Danny at first ridicules "The Code," strict rules of ethics that John lives by.

Sea Haven depends upon tourism, so John and Danny abandon their breakfast at the pancake house and hurry to the scene of a shooting in the amusement park. Twelve-year-old Ashley Hart was at the Tilt-A-Whirl giant turtle rollercoaster with her father Reginald when "the crazy man shot him."

Reginald Hart is the local wealthy real-estate and business tycoon, feared and hated by many. Although crime scene evidence is destroyed by a lazy, arrogant investigator, John saw enough to track a primary suspect—a homeless hippie type who works at the carwash.

As Danny works with John to solve the case, they uncover plenty of dirty dealings and deception. Danny begins to appreciate his partner's integrity, and by the end of the book, Danny gains a glimmer of understanding of why some dedicate themselves to law enforcement as a career.

The fast-paced plot takes unpredictable twists and turns, with laugh-out-loud moments. ♦

***Winter House***, by Carol O'Connell. Penguin, 2005, 332 pp (PB).

(8th in the Kathleen Mallory police procedural mystery series set in late-20th-century New York City.)

Winter House was the scene of a massacre 58 years ago, when most of the Winter family members were murdered in their home. Twelve-year-old Nedda Winter, aka Red Winter, disappeared on that day. Now she has returned and is living in Winter House with siblings Lionel and Cleo, and her niece Bitty Smyth.

When an intruder is killed at Winter House, Riker and Mallory take over the case. It's not a routine burglary gone bad; the intruder was a serial killer. Many unanswered questions remain about Nedda's disappearance and reappearance, and she's not talking. So Riker and Mallory enlist Charles Butler's help, due to his skill in psychiatry.

Charles falls for Nedda, becoming her champion, despite the police detectives' skepticism. It takes all the varied talents of Riker, Mallory, and Butler to ferret out the clues (legally or otherwise) and gradually learn what really happened in the



eccentric/dysfunctional family, and how the tragedy was exploited.

Many surprises and plot twists lead to a dramatic conclusion. Read the series in order, to get the full benefit of rich character development and complex interactions between Riker, Mallory and Butler. ♦

***Evan Help Us***, by Rhys Bowen. Minotaur, 1998, 223 pp (PB).

(The second book of the Constable Evans mystery series set in the late 20th-century in a small mountain town in Wales.)

Constable Evan Evans is a kind-hearted soul, more intelligent than most people expect from his gentle demeanor. He left big-city detective work for a quieter life in the mountains where he can enjoy the outdoors. He's fond of the local schoolteacher, Bronwen, but slow to show his affection, uncertain of her feelings.

When a seasonal resident uncovers what may be a major archaeological find, local attitudes vary. Some residents of Llanfair want no publicity whatsoever, preferring to keep their quiet life. Others want to beat the neighboring town, Beddgelert, with a famous site and consider renaming the town to have the longest name in the world.

Meanwhile the son of a long-time resident has returned to Llanfair after decades, and he wants to replace the generations-old family farm with new commercial properties. A young and pretty woman arrives with her daughter, frequently claiming Evans' time to show her around. Both the local pub waitress and the schoolteacher are fond of Evans, and they are so jealous of the new woman, they agree to team up.

Village nicknames "Evans the Law," "Evans the Meat," "Evans the Milk," "Roberts the Pump" provide humorous entertainment throughout the book. Even though protagonist Evan Evans is the village constable, consider this a light-hearted cozy mystery. ♦

***The Coconut Killings***, by Patricia Moyes. Henry Holt, 1987, 213 pp (PB).

(14th book of the Inspector Henry Tibbett mystery series set in the late 20th-century. Most of the series is set in London, where Henry is Chief Superintendent at Scotland Yard.)

This entry in the series is set on the (fictional) British Seaward Islands in the Caribbean. Henry and his wife Emmy have happy memories of vacationing

in the islands. Their friends John and Margaret own the Anchorage Inn on St. Mathews.

When John and Margaret's bartender is accused of murder, they contact Henry and Emmy with a desperate plea for Henry to come solve the case. They are certain of his innocence, but the local police believe he is guilty. John and Margaret trust that Henry will objectively search for the truth. As the victim was a US Senator, Scotland Yard approves a discreet investigation to avoid an international incident and lost tourism for the B.S.I.

While Henry is investigating the murder, a band of local youths begin a spree of riots and vandalism. Henry is attacked by and meets one of the ringleaders, a woman who calls herself Diamond.

Henry is able to analyze all the events and see that a smokescreen covers up the true criminal operation still underway. The challenge is in getting the local forces to understand and appropriately respond. It takes Henry's skill and easygoing personality to resolve the conflicts. ♦



## Sisters in Crime **Guppies**

SinC guppies come from across the United States and Canada. They have different occupations and avocations, but they share a passion for writing mysteries and a common goal of getting published.

"Few professions offer as many opportunities for rejection as writing does. Only the strong survive the path to publication. The encouragement and support of other writers can be the difference between giving up too soon and getting in print." (SinC Guppies)

Guppies is an online writer's support group. Subgroups represent cozies, noir, psychological and romantic suspense, and thrillers. The Mystery Analysis Group is a book discussion group aimed at discussing the craft, and the AgentQuest group can help with writing queries and synopses.

Interested in joining this online writer's support group? Check them out at [www.sinc-guppies.org/](http://www.sinc-guppies.org/).



## 2016 MEETING DATES

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 and ideas for sources are also welcome.

**Deadlines:** Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the last day of the month *prior* to publication: Feb 29, April 30, June 30, Aug 31, Oct 31, and Dec 31.

**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 Triage

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## Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?

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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).