

MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA—LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

ONE MORE ELECTION IN THE NEWS



From left: Les Klinger, Naomi Hirahara, Gary Phillips, Jeri Westerson, Kathryn Lilley, Richard Brewer.

Can you stand anymore election news?

This time, it is not Republicans jousting with Democrats, but formidable authors taking the reins of the Mystery Writers of America Los Angeles Chapter.

Les Klinger continues as the chapter president, with a new Board of Directors of both new faces and old...er...that is, familiar. New Directors are : Gary Phillips, Jeri Westerson, Kathryn Lilley, and Richard Brewer. Familiar faces continuing on the Board are Debbie Atkinson, Bill Fitzhugh, Naomi Hirahara,

Kris Neri, T. Jefferson Parker, and Pamela Samuels-Young. Congratulations to the entire slate, and may the next two years see some exciting things coming out of the Los Angeles chapter.

Join us at our next brunch meeting on Sunday, January 25 from 11am-2pm at the Smokehouse 4420 West Lakeside Drive, Burbank, California 91505. Members \$30, guests \$35. We will be discussing the "Future of Publishing." Send checks or pay through Pay Pal at www.socalmwa/meeting.htm

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Transom Notes

Transom Notes is so full this month, it is continued onto another page. Please go to Page 8 for more!

John Morgan Wilson invites all to his launch party on Sunday, Jan. 4, 3-6pm for the newest Benjamin Justice mystery, at the Gendarmerie Spa at 9071 Nemo St., West Hollywood (310/858-9009; www.thegendarmerie.com). ~~**Dianne Emley's** first three Detective Nan Vining thrillers will be released back-to-back by Ballantine in a publishing event. The "Thrillology" began on December 30 with the paperback reprint of the *Los Angeles Times* bestseller, *The First Cut*. This will be followed by two brand new Nan Vining adventures: *Cut to the Quick* on January 27 and *The Deepest Cut* on February 24. The series will be translated into six languages, published as audio books, and will be Mystery Guild and Doubleday Book Club "Featured Books." ~~**Joan Del Monte** has published her third mystery, MUD BLOOD, featuring murder in the Sacramento Delta. Joan will sign her book at the Venice, Ca. Abbot Kinney Library on Feb 11, 2008, at 6:30 p.m. ~~**Robert S. Levinson's** short story, "The Quick Brown Fox," from the October '08 issue of *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, has been chosen for inclusion in BEST MYSTERY STORIES OF 2008, edited by Edward Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg; to be published by Bleak House Books. It makes the fifth consecutive year one of Bob's stories from *Hitchcock* or *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* has been selected. (**More on Page 8**)

The President's Rap Sheet



2008 ended with the passing of another mystery legend, the great and incredibly prolific Donald Westlake. Don's books were clever, insightful, funny, and entertaining—everything that one could ask for in a reading experience. He was also a larger-than-life personality, who made a strong impact on everyone who met him. His death was a reminder that we need to make a special effort to remember the people behind the books we treasure.

MWA will celebrate its 64th birthday this year (along with Mr. Poe's 200th). One of the special emphases suggested to the Board of Directors is refocusing on preserving the history of MWA, especially by gathering oral histories. This is an effort to retain that which is by its nature evanescent—human memories. Stories by and about giants like Don, Hillary Waugh, Tony Hillerman, to name but a few, who passed from among us this year, and still-present icons like our newest

Grand Masters, Sue Grafton and James Lee Burke.

In a way, this echoes a theme I've repeated many times in this column: the primary benefit of MWA membership is not learning specific techniques, it's getting to know and "network" with other mystery writers. If you're only listening to recordings of our programs (and don't forget that they're available on our website!), you're missing the best part. We had a great holiday party this year, with a record number attending. Thanks especially to our outgoing Program Chair, Dianne Emley, for this stellar event. Dianne promises to continue to host some of our special parties!

Thanks also to a great Board of Directors for 2008. Patty Smiley, Linda O. Johnston, and Doug Lyle, who are retiring from the Board, were stalwarts in working for the Chapter, and they all know that they're not escaping from involvement by the mere act of

retirement! We have several new Directors this year, Richard Brewer, Kathryn Lilley, Gary Phillips (although Gary served on the Board in past years), and Jeri Westerson (adding the title of Director to that of So Cal MWA Newsletter Editor); and with the return of the remaining Directors, Debbie Atkinson, Bill Fitzhugh, Naomi Hirahara, Kris Neri, Jeff Parker, and Pamela Samuels-Young, we plan to have a great program. We're especially looking forward to the first California Crimewriters Conference, being held in June, in partnership with Sisters in Crime/Los Angeles, and in coordination with the Horror Writers Association, who will have a program in Burbank the same weekend.

I'm truly honored to serve as Chapter President for a third term. I take tremendous pride in representing our Chapter at events around the country and at the National Board meetings. I look forward to seeing you during 2009!

Killer Quote

There is a rumor that many authors partake of spirits on an obsessive level. Can it possibly be true? At any rate, here is this month's Killer Quote from Raymond Chandler, all about scotch, intertwined with sex. Ah yes. Doesn't drinking always involve a dame?

"A swift California twilight was falling. It was a lovely night. Venus in the west was as bright as a street lamp, as bright as life, as bright as Miss Huntress' eyes, as bright as a bottle of scotch."

— *Trouble is My Business*

By Raymond Chandler

GRIT, WIT, & IT

By James Scott Bell

Lead characters must draw us in. When we think of great works of literature, we flash to the main characters—Huck Finn. Gatsby. Tom Joad. Scarlett O'Hara.

Commercial fiction works the same way. Think of the staying power of Raymond Chandler's Phillip Marlowe, or Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch.

What is it that makes these characters unforgettable? In analyzing hundreds of memorable characters, I believe three factors prevail above all. I call them *grit*, *wit* and *it*.

Grit

Let me lead off with the one unbreakable rule for major characters in fiction: *No wimps!*

A wimp is someone who just takes it. Who reacts (barely) rather than acts. While a character may start out as a wimp, very early on he must develop real *grit*. He must do something. He must have forward motion.

Grit is guts in action. It is as described in Charles Portis's *True Grit*. Rooster Cogburn is the lawman who helps young Mattie Ross track down her father's killer. Cogburn is said by another character to be "double tough, and fear don't enter into his thinking."

All well and good, but grit in fiction must always be shown in action. Portis does this at the climax when Cogburn rides out to face Ned Pepper and his gang, reins in his mouth, firing guns with both hands.

Another gritty character is Scarlett O'Hara in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. While not entirely admirable, especially early in the novel when she overplays coquette, Scarlett faces many challenges with courage. She is the one who has to help Melanie "birth" her baby, and later hold Tara together during Reconstruction.

In *Rose Madder*, Stephen King gives

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NEWS

The Los Angeles Police Department Pacific Area has chosen **Patricia Smiley** as its 2008 Reserve Officer of the Year in recognition of her work at LAX in the Airport Crimes Investigative Unit and as a Pacific Burglary/Theft detective. Patty will be among other

honorees at a city-wide banquet scheduled for 2009.

A one-act play based on "The House Without A Key" – the 1925 book that introduced Honolulu police detective Charlie Chan – will be performed on the Big Island: in Hilo March 5th, 6th, and 7th, at the East Hawaii Cultural Center; and then across the island on March

8th, at the Marriott Waikoloa Resort, where the play will highlight the start of the national Left Coast Crime convention of mystery authors and fans. For more information about the play, contact producer **Hal Glatzer**, at 808-895-4816 or hal@halglatzer.com For more information about Left Coast Crime, please go to: www.leftcoastcrime.org/2009

Sheila Lowe has been invited to appear at a Golden Globes event in January to analyze handwriting and hand out copies of her latest forensic handwriting mystery, *Written in Blood*.



INAUGURAL CRIME WRITERS CONFERENCE: Develops Both Emerging and Established Writers



Best-selling authors Robert Crais and Laurie King will be the keynote speakers at the inaugural California Crime Writers Conference, cosponsored by

the Southern California chapter of MWA and the Sisters in Crime L.A. chapter, on June 13-14, 2009 at the Pasadena Hilton.

This two-day conference is an effort to expand Sisters in Crime L.A. chapter's successful biennial No Crime Unpublished Conference, held every other June. This new partnership will make it possible for more classes to be offered for established writers while also aiding those who hope to get published for the first time.

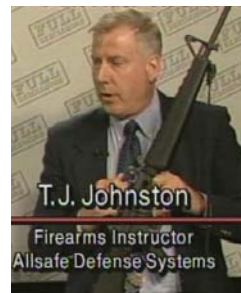
"I am looking forward to attending as many sessions as possible," said Edgar Award-winning author and Southern California MWA chapter board member Naomi Hirahara, co-chair of the conference with Susan Beery and Jane DiLucchio. "In this economic climate, writers, whether published or not, need to hone their writing and marketing skills and be ever diligent in exposing themselves to new ways of doing things."



Gayle Lynds.

Gayle Lynds, New York Times bestseller of eight international espionage novels, will lead two craft classes—"The 9 Secrets to Writing Best-Selling Thrillers" and "You, Too, Can Plot." Jerrilyn Farmer, a former UCLA Extension instructor whose upcoming novel co-written with Joan Rivers recently received a starred review from *Publishers Weekly*, will also be teaching a session on plotting. Southern California MWA board member Gary Phillips will lead a class on rewriting, while James Lincoln Warren and Melodie Johnson Howe, both members

of the Criminal Brief blog, will discuss the art of the short story. Registration form is on page 6 of this newsletter.



Firearms expert T.J. Johnston is part of the program, left, as is J. Corey Freidman of Nick Harris Detectives, below, and Kim Dower, bottom left.



Fresh Blood

Active

- Eva Montealegre (Topanga, CA)
- Percy Spurlark Parker (Las Vegas, NV)

Affiliate

- Marjorie Fireman (West Hollywood, CA)
- Franklin Levy (Las Vegas, NV)
- Mark Shapiro (Tarzana, CA)



"Grit"

us a Lead who, in the beginning, is weak and vulnerable—a horribly abused wife. In the Prologue we see Rose Daniels, pregnant, savagely beaten by her husband. The section ends, *Rose McClendon Daniels slept within her husband's madness for nine more years.*

Chapter one begins with Rose, bleeding from the nose, finally listening to the voice in her that says *leave*. She argues with herself. Her husband will kill her if she tries. Where will she go? But she works up the courage to open the front door and take *her first dozen steps into the fogbank which was her future.*

Every step she takes now requires grit. Rose is unprepared for dealing with the outside world, with simple things like getting a bus ticket or a job. And all the while she knows her husband is going to be tracking her. Still, she moves forward, and we root for her. It would have been easy for King to spend ten chapters detailing the abuse Rose took from her husband. But being a master of the craft, he knew that would have been too much "taking it."

If your novel seems to be dragging, one of the first places to look is right here, at the heart of your Lead. Is he giving up too easily? Has he been taking it for too long? Are there too many scenes where he's thinking or reacting and not *doing*?

Go back and put in some fight in an earlier scene. Get the Lead's dander up again. Make him take some action against a person or circumstance. Whether it is as simple as taking a step into the unknown, or charging ahead into a dangerous battle, courage bonds us with the Lead.

To portray grit in action, you must *prepare* then *prove*.

- Think up a scene early in your novel where your character must show inner courage. For example, he has to confront his boss over some company infraction. He can go through with it, foreshadowing a greater display of courage to come toward the end.

- Or the above character can back down, setting up the necessity for growth. In the Oliver Stone movie, *Wall Street*, the young stockbroker Bud Fox is asked by financial giant Gordon Gekko to do some unethical snooping on a rival. At this crucial turning point Fox gives in, though he knows it's wrong. Fox will have to grow through bitter experience, and develop the grit to confront Gekko at the end.
- Finally, play up your character's inner battle at the time of challenge. This will add a layer of depth to the confrontation. No one except James Bond goes into battle without fear.

Next time, we'll look at *wit* and *it*.

James Scott Bell (www.jamesscottbell.com) is the author of TRY DYING, TRY DARKNESS and the forthcoming TRY FEAR from Hachette/Center Street. He is also the author of Writers Digest Book's #1 bestseller, WRITE GREAT FICTION: PLOT & STRUCTURE. This article is adapted from Bell's newest WD release, WRITE

GREAT FICTION: REVISION & SELF-EDITING. He has taught novel writing at Pepperdine University, the Santa Barbara Writers Conference and numerous conferences in the United States and London. He was the fiction columnist for Writers Digest magazine, following in the footsteps of his first influence, Lawrence Sanders. He grew up, lives and writes in LA.



BOB LEVINSON TO GIVE WORKSHOP

Short Story Workshop - Learn to Write Short Stories with Robert S. Levinson. Workshop is on January 18, 2009 at 2 p.m. at The Mystery Bookstore, 1036-C Broxton Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90024. Cost is \$25 for SinC/LA members; \$30 for non-members.

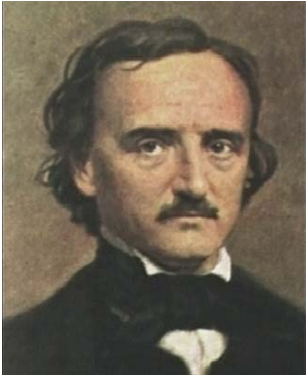
Instructor Robert S. Levinson, frequent contributor to the Ellery Queen and Alfred Hitchcock mystery magazines, is donating his time and expertise on the art of the short story. In addition to writing the bestselling Neil Gulliver & Stevie Marriner "Affair" series and stand-alone novels such as "Ask a Dead Man," "Where the Lies Begin," and this year's "In the Key of Death," Bob's shorts have been chosen for "year's best" anthologies five years running, and he's been voted an EQMM readers favorite three years in a row.

Topics will include, Basic Story Structure, How to Get Great Story Ideas, Getting the Story Written, Short Story Markets. Bring pen and paper.

As an added bonus, Bob will critique the first full double-spaced page of your story if you sign up for the Workshop and submit your page NO LATER than January 9th. Send one full page of your story (in Word format) to Ashley Ream, Workshop Coordinator at author@ahream.com

This workshop is the perfect opportunity for any writer to spruce up their skills and get those short stories out there. Pay with PayPal.com: Go to PayPal.com, click on "Send Money," type in: sistersincrimela@yahoo.com, type in \$25 if you are a Sisters in Crime/LA member or \$30 for non-members, and add a note: "Levinson Short Story Workshop" and your name.

Attendees may also sign up at the door with cash or check but will not receive the one-page critique.



In living color! He's so life-like.

It is 2009, and for once in my writing life, I can look back at the previous year and think what a wonderful year it was! My first novel debuted to great reviews and has continued to hold its own.

YOUR EDITOR SPEAKS—JERI WESTERSON

An amazing feat considering it's an historical mystery and I'm a no name author. *And* especially when one considers the crumbling economy. Of course, January is also a time for looking forward. 2009 will hold exciting things for authors. The upcoming conference with Sisters in Crime (see story on page 3) will focus on emerging writers and today's marketplace. Conventions continue to march across our path. There is a whole slew of them (below) to fit every genre. There is no denying that the

upcoming months might be challenging for writers of every stripe, due to the hard economic times we are facing. There is already news from Publishers Weekly that publishers are looking at cutting attendance at such venerable conventions as Book Expo. Publishers have also laid off employees and put a freeze on a hiring and salaries. Most troubling of all, some have put a freeze on some new acquisitions. This is a good time to belong to organizations like Mystery Writers of America. We need to be able to discuss the changes ahead and how to face

them. Come to our Jan 25 meeting (see page 1 in the election story). Go to the web site (www.solcalmwa.com) and update your information. Make sure you, your website, and your works are listed on the site.

But most importantly, do keep writing. Check out Bob Levinson's short story workshop (see page 4). This is a time to improve skills as well as marketing. You can't stop mystery writers unless you pry our laptops from our cold, dead hands. And even then...
TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com

The Crime Calendar

Love is Murder—Jan 6-8, Chicago, IL, <http://www.loveismurder.net/>

Sleuthfest— Feb 26– Mar 1, Deerfield Beach, FL <http://www.mwaflorida.org/sleuthfest.htm>

Left Coast Crime— Mar 7-12, The Big Island, HI, <http://www.leftcoastcrime.org/2009/>

Malice Domestic—May 1-3, Arlington, VA, <http://www.malicedomestic.org/>

Bloody Words—May 7-9, Ottawa, ON, Canada <http://www.bloodywords2009.com/>

Daphne Du Maurier Festival—May 6-13, Fowey, Cornwall, UK, <http://www.dumaurierfestival.co.uk/index.php>

Crimefest—May 14-17, Bristol, UK, <http://www.crimefest.com/>

Mayhem in the Midlands—May 21-24, Omaha, NE <http://www.omahapubliclibrary.org/mayhem/>

Book Expo of America—May 29-30, New York, NY, <http://www.bookexpoamerica.com/>

American Library Association Annual Conference—July 9-15, Chicago, IL, <http://www.ala.org/ala/confservices/upcoming/upcomingconferences.cfm>

PulpFest 2009—July 31-Aug 2, Columbus, OH, <http://www.pulpfest.com/>



Bouchercon 39—Oct. 15-18, Indianapolis, IN, <http://www.bouchercon2009.com/>



Sisters in Crime/LA and Mystery Writers of America/SoCal Present

California Crime Writers Conference

June 13-14, 2009
 The Hilton Pasadena
 168 South Los Robles Avenue
 Pasadena, CA 91101

Don't Miss Our Keynote Speakers, Best-selling Authors Robert Crais and Laurie R. King!



Whether you're a new author or established writer, this conference has something for you!

- Two days of workshops and breakout sessions
- Top-flight faculty, including best-selling authors, literary agents, legal and forensic experts
- Sessions on PR and book marketing
- Manuscript critiques (*limited to first 30 registrants*)
- Goodie bags, giveaways and raffles
- Agents cocktail party
- Book-seller and vendor room
- Luxury hotel setting



Registration Rates

(Registration fee must be received by cutoff date.)

December 7 thru Feb. 28	\$265
March 1 thru June 12	\$300
On-site registration	\$325
Manuscript critique (5-page submission)	\$ 50

For more information, visit
www.sistersincrimela.com/ccwc.htm
www.socalmwa.com/ccwc.htm

Please print clearly

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

Email address* _____

To register and pay by check: Make check payable to "Sisters in Crime/LA" and mail with completed form to Sisters in Crime/LA, 1107 Fair Oaks Avenue, PMB 338, South Pasadena, CA 91030.

To register online and pay via PayPal: Visit www.socalmwa.com/ccwc.htm.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conference fee _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> MWA member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript critique \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> SinC member |
| Total enclosed _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-member |

* Required to confirm registration.

Ah, Those Readers!

By Lee Goldberg

Five hundred people, mostly women, showed up to see fifty male mystery authors, mostly MWA/SoCal members, at the 9th annual Men of Mystery luncheon and booksigning in Irvine in November. During the autograph session, I was sitting at a table signing my MONK and DIAGNOSIS MURDER novels alongside author Thomas Greanias and my brother Tod Goldberg when a guy came up to me to ask a question... "My wife read a Monk book you wrote, I don't know which one, but he was wearing a raincoat." "Okay," I said. "She thought it was terrible. Have you written a Monk book that's good?" "And she thinks your brother is fat and that you're stupid," Tod said to me. I laughed. The guy looked at Tod. "I don't understand." "You just came over here and told Lee that your

wife hated his book." The guy looked at Tod with a bewildered expression on his face. "That's why I want to know which one is good." He looked at me. "Can you recommend one?" "What didn't she like about the book?" I asked. "She said it was very, very dark." "My Monk book," I said. "Yes," he said. "The one with the raincoat." "Oh, that must be the Monk book I wrote about pedophilia," I said. To be honest, I forgot what was said after that though I remember that my brother was busy typing on his Blackberry, giggling to himself as he updated his Facebook page with the conversation. Later, at the end-of-the-day signing, a woman came up to me with a DIAGNOSIS MURDER novel. As I signed it, she asked: "Did Dick Van Dyke have any medical training?" "No," I said. "Then how was he able to play a doctor on TV?" "He was acting," I said. "You can

do that?" "Tobey Maguire wasn't bitten by a spider and imbued with super powers and he was able to play Spiderman." She shook her head in astonishment. "'Weren't you worried about getting sued by people? What if they followed his advice and got killed?" "Then they were too dumb to live," I said. "Natural selection." She walked away. I think she was insulted. That's me, winning friends and new readers everywhere I go. Finally, at the cocktail reception for the authors, a woman standing beside me said hello. "I'm Carole," she tugged at the name tag on her chest. "Want an excuse to stare at my boobs?" "Do I need one?" I asked. "It helps," she said. "I'm a happily married man," I said. "The only boobs I'm allowed to stare at are my wife's." She thrust hers at me anyway. I walked away and immediately told the story to authors Bob Levinson (who, like me, is an authentic Kentucky Colonel) and Alan Jacobson and pointed the woman out to them. I'm not sure, but I think Bob rushed over there for a look.

DON'T GET BYTTEN

By Ben Malisow

Hot Potato

I am a capitalist. In fact, I am a Capitalist: one of only two people in the world, that I am aware of, that celebrate Capitalism Day (each year, we decide which day it will be; it's nice having that flexibility). I have nothing against business or profits or the free market—I laud these things.

With that said, there are some business practices that are downright skeezy. The one I discuss with this article is not exactly that— not totally scummy. But it sure is not clean and decent and smelling of warm apple pie.

Nope.

The practice of information-harvesting, for profit, while trading outstanding loans, is just ugly. Not outright disgusting, but not quite admirable.

Here's the lowdown: you owe someone money; they hold your IOU. They could wait a long time for you to pay them off, realizing a small amount of interest on

each payment made over an extended period, which adds up to a large amount.

Or they could turn around and sell that IOU, your debt, to someone else, for a little bit less than the total of the interest (and principal) of what you would have paid them. So, for instance, if they gave you a loan at 10%, they might sell it to someone for the loan amount plus 8%. The new owner of the loan gets 2% profit on the deal.

You might have already guessed that the poster child for the model I'm describing is home mortgages— these days, it's very common for mortgages to change hands two or three times within the first five years of origination.

Now, there are people who want to end this practice; they think you should be able to stick with the lender you entered into a contract with, as you had certain expectations of the service when you signed, and those expectations may differ from the service

offered by another lender. Whatever— again, I am a free marketeer, and think that anyone should be able to sell any asset they legally own, even if it's a debt.

However, that being said, the problem I have with this practice is a little loophole in privacy laws which, when coupled with the speed and capabilities of computers to harvest and distribute information, creates an annoying and unethical business practice.

Here's the thing: federal law requires that all customers be allowed to tell any financial services company NOT to release their personal or customer information. In fact, the law requires that all financial services vendors inform customers how to opt out of any information-disbursal activities the company might otherwise engage in (selling a list of telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for targeted advertising, for example).

But the loophole that allows marketing to continue is a fairly large one: financial services companies are allowed, by law, to share your information *internally*, with other departments within any organization which has access to your information...and because many financial service providers are so huge, that means that a lot of people and companies have access to your data, even if you opt out.

Here's where it gets uglier: when one lender (say, a mortgage company) sells your loan to another, the new owner not only gets your loan, but your data, too. And while the new owner might notify you of your right to opt out of any marketing schemes within a timely manner, as required by law, they might not "be able" to process your request to opt out until after they've sold your info.

This happened to me this summer: my "new" mortgage company, Midland Mortgage Co., was pretty quick about billing me— it seems there was

Continued on Page 8

"Bytten" continued

no problem getting all the right info where it needed to go in order to send me a statement, and to collect my money. They were even able to send me a notice that I could opt out of any information-sharing, within the first week they took my loan. But when I called to opt out, I was told that my information wasn't in "the system" yet, and I would have to call back in a couple of weeks.

Computers: fast for getting money, slow for cutting off a revenue stream. Evidently.

We are in an age, already, where our information is as valuable as our cash, because electronic systems enable the storage, reference, and distribution of that information in a profitable manner. Until we recognize this, and act accordingly, we will lose out on some value we might get from our own data. I'll offer up more examples in following months.

Again, if there's any particular topic you'd like to see addressed in these pages, or if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me, via the information posted on my website: www.benmalisow.com.



Ben's first book, **1,001 Things To Do If You Dare**, was launched by Adams

Media in April. His second, **Terrorism**, part of the *Criminal Investigations* series from Chelsea House, came out in September of last year. Ben has provided computer and information security services to DARPA, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI, among other customers. He holds an MBA, a CISSP, and a CISM, among other alphabet-soup-flavored goodies.

Transom Notes

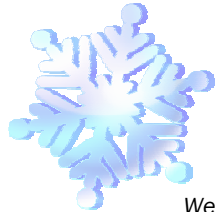
Sheila Lowe signed for two more books in her *Written in Blood* series. *Dead Write* is scheduled for August publication. ~~ **Elizabeth Gunn** reports that her second Tucson mystery, *NEW RIVER BLUES*, will be published in May by Severn House. The first book of this new series, *COOL IN TUCSON*, is in stores now in both hard cover and trade paper. ~~ Hilliard & Harris just published a collection of **Kris Neri's** short stories, *THE ROSE IN THE SNOW: TALES OF MISCHIEF AND MAYHEM*. The collection contains some new stories, some of Kris' personal favorites, and her two Derringer Award-winners. Kris will also be teaching a private mystery and thriller structure class for the Guppy Chapter of Sisters in Crime. The six-week class, which will debut in late January 2009, is only open to Guppy members, and will feature Kris' unique approaches to structuring crime novels. ~~ **Paul Levine's** story, "Development Hell," appears in the anthology "On a Raven's Wing," celebrating Edgar Allan Poe's 200th birthday. Other contributors include Mary Higgins Clark, Thomas H. Cook, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, S.J. Rozan, Rupert Holmes, Peter Lovesy, John Lutz, Don Winslow, and Stuart Kaminsky, who edited the volume. ~~ **Gary Phillips** and **Naomi Hirahara** will repeat their panel performance with **Gay Tottl Kinman** moderating on February 10, 2009, for an Elderhostel program, "CSI: Los Angeles" talking about writing mysteries in Los Angeles. ~~ **Gay Tottl Kinman** will again be the group leader for the Elderhostel program "Art Collectors" February 2009, which has classes and visits to LACMA, the Getty, the Norton Simon and The Huntington art museums. ~~ **Andrew Neiderman's** new thriller, *THE MAGIC BULLET*, was published on December 1 by Dorchester. It is a thriller based on actual current cancer research. Dorchester has contracted to do a second Neiderman thriller, *GUARDIAN ANGEL*, in 2009. Neiderman's trade paperback of his hard cover, *DEADLY VERDICT*, published by Severn House, was released in the U.S. on December 1. ~~ **Linda Palmer** (writing as Melinda Wells) has the 2nd in her series of culinary mysteries coming out February 3, 2009: *DEATH TAKES THE CAKE*, from Berkley Prime Crime. Book # 1, *KILLER MOUSSE*, was published in February 2008. Also as Melinda Wells, she has a mystery short story in the ACWL anthology, *MURDER PAST, MURDER PRESENT*, due out in April, 2009. ~~ BBC Audio has recently purchased the British large-print rights to **Dorothy Howell's** debut mystery *HANDBAGS AND HOMICIDE*. This follows the October series launch in the U.K. by Little Black Dress. ~~ **Jeri Westerson** will be reading from her debut mystery *VEIL OF LIES* at the SinC LA chapter meeting on Jan. 11, 2pm at the South Pasadena Library. *Veil* was chosen as the Editor's Choice in the Historical Novel Review and was the Discovery Book of the Month for December at the Mystery Bookstore in Westwood. She will be giving a presentation on "Medieval Forensics" at the Buena Vista Branch at the Burbank Library at 7pm on January 21. In February she is giving a presentation at a luncheon at the Dana Point Library on Feb 10 and offering another presentation at the "Romance Tea" at the Huntington Beach Library on Feb 11. ~~ **Cindy Pierre-Morton** published a 200 word piece in the Las Vegas Review Journal. The article picked ten of the best entries to include in their article about the stories behind their favorite Christmas ornaments. You can see the article here at <http://www.lvrj.com/living/36525219.html>.

MWA Holiday Party at the Jonathan Club

Over fifty members and guests gathered at the Jonathan Club on Santa Monica beach for the So Cal MWA Holiday Party. The rain that had threatened did not appear, but the clouds did, creating a spectacular sunset over the ocean.



Aileen Baron and son.



From left, Jeri Westerson, Naomi Hirahara and Wes Fukuchi.



From left, Sue Ann Jaffarian, Paul Levine, Lee Goldberg.



The party gets started.



From left, Terri Nolan, Debbie Mitsch, Jeri Westerson, Dianne Hemme, and the beautiful Santa Monica Sunset..



From left, Les Klinger, Wes Fukuchi and Naomi Hirahara, and Dianne Emley.

MARCH OF CRIME



MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA
Southern California Chapter
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To advertise in TMOC, visit our website at www.SoCalMWA.com for information.

Any opinions expressed herein are those of each author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Mystery Writers of America or the local chapter.

Next Meeting: Sunday, January 25, 11am–2pm at the Smokehouse 4420 West Lakeside Drive, Burbank, California 91505. Members \$30, guests \$35. We will be discussing the “Future of Publishing.” Send checks or pay through Pay Pal at www.socalmwa/meeting.htm

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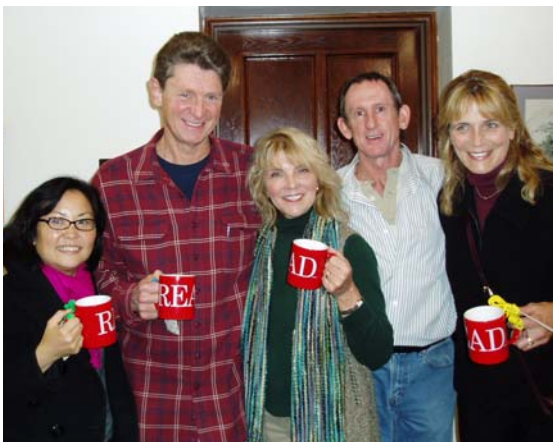
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The Last Word



MWA members at a December 15th event at the Memorial Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library.

From left: Naomi Hirahara, Paul Levine, Patricia Smiley, Bobby McCue (manager of *The Mystery Bookstore*) and Harley Jane Kozak.