

MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA—SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

NEW SLATE OF MWA BOARD MEMBERS



Naomi Hirahara



Deborah Atkinson



James Scott Bell



Christa Faust



Darrell James



Pamela Samuels Young



Evan Kilgore

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MWA-SoCal balloting has been concluded. The results: Chapter President—Naomi Hirahara. Chapter Directors (two-year terms)—Deborah Atkinson, James Scott Bell, Christa Faust, Darrell James, Pamela Samuels Young, Evan Kilgore. The new directors and Naomi as Chapter President take office on January 16, 2010. Congratulations to all!



Fresh Blood

Active:

Debra Ginsberg (San Diego, CA), Barbara DeMarco-Barrett (Corona del Mar, CA)

Affiliate:

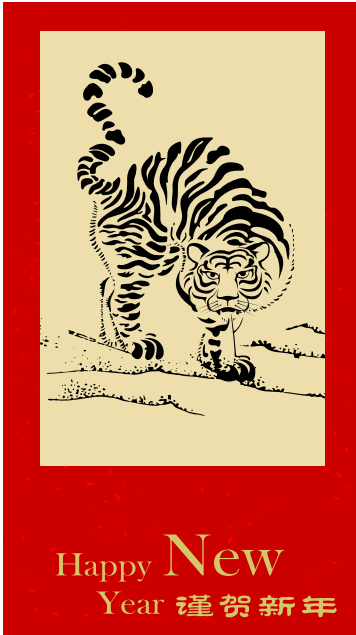
Randy C. Reade (San Diego, CA), Scott Baldyga (Los Angeles, CA)
Stefanie Auerbach Stolinsky (Los Angeles, CA)



The President's Rap Sheet

Naomi Hirahara 

New President Message



What We Can Learn from the Day Job

In June 2009, I started something that I haven't had in more than 10 years: a day job. And my employer is not a small boutique public relations agency, where I've done freelance work in the past, but the largest bureaucracy in the nation—the U.S. government.

The job is just temporary until April or perhaps into early summer (I've come to understand that I'll probably always do "seasonal work" during my writing career), but it's given me important insights on what's really important for us as mystery writers:

1) Time is of a premium—for both writers and readers!

As a result, when I return back to my fulltime freelance work status, I don't think I'll spend as much time reading publishing industry and mystery blogs as well as participating in social networking sites as I did before the day job. I know that Internet marketing as been pushed as a magic PR pill for authors, but I

wonder how many readers even have the time to fully engage in social networking and Internet surfing as it relates to mystery books.

Yes, Internet presence is crucial in this day and age. Every author, for example, needs a website. But the use of technology also needs to be smart, efficient, and relevant.

2) The power of engaging with readers face to face should not be minimized.

With the advent of the Internet, old fashioned appearances have received a bum rap. My day job has forced me to get out of my writing hovel and mix with masses of people. If you write for a niche market, nothing beats getting out there—not only for bookstore signings, but for established large events—to actually meet readers who are not familiar with your work.

And as people get used to relating with each other through e-mails and Twitter, the act of actually talking and meeting someone in person will actually become an even more powerful experience.

3) The story is the most important thing.

As the literary world debates on the merits and effect of electronic text-delivery systems like the Kindle and the iPhone, there's a lot of good news for mystery writers. Action-propelled narrative apparently works well on these devices. People are actually reading more than ever.

Of course, with publishers cutting back on their book lists and some small presses even closing up

shop, the future for professional authors seems challenging, at best. But people are still in search of a good story. Our writing, more than ever, needs to shine and stand out.

For 2010, the Year of the Tiger (my year, actually!), I hope that the SoCal chapter of MWA embraces these following tenets:

- Use our time wisely and figure out ways to write and publish while balancing life's other demands.
- Apply technology efficiently and not wastefully.
- Continue our activities with the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, West Hollywood Book Fair, Left Coast Crime Los Angeles, and perhaps other groups, such as the Southern California Independent Booksellers Association.
- Develop our craft through chapter meetings and our next California Crime Writers Conference in 2011.

To achieve these goals, we need your help. If you'd be interested in volunteering and help plan activities, please contact our program chair Kathryn Lilley at keslilley@yahoo.com. We will be launching our first program of the year with a discussion with Kristen Weber, former senior editor of the Penguin Group on Saturday, January 23, at Tom Bergin's Tavern in Los Angeles.

I'm honored to serve the chapter this year and hope to do at least half the job of my great predecessor, Les Klinger.

Hope to see many of you on the 23rd!



A Farewell Message from Outgoing Prez, Les Klinger



Nothing I can write here will truly convey my feelings at the conclusion of three years of serving as Chapter President. It was a deep honor, greatly appreciated. I loved carrying the flag for MWA generally and for our Chapter in particular at dozens of events. I also found great pleasure in serving on the National Board and helping to shape important policies for the organization as a whole.

Early on, I concluded that the best way for me to “lead” was to surround myself with brilliant colleagues to do the work and then take all the credit! Let me remind you here of those who worked so hard for our Chapter over the last three years:

Our Chapter directors included Debbie Atkinson (who served as our Secretary from afar), Lynette Brasfield, Richard Brewer (Mr. T-shirt), Bill Fitzhugh (Mr. Gumbo!), Greg Hurwitz, Linda O. Johnston, Kathryn Lilley, Doug Lyle, Annette Mahon, Kris Neri, Jeff Parker, Gary Phillips, Gene Riehl, Pamela Samuels-Young, Theresa Schwegel, and Taylor Smith.

Taking on a large, thankless job, our newsletter editors, Eric Stone (twice!), Randy Hicks, and Jeri Westerson.

To get us back on the right track, we organized a Chapter Board retreat in early 2007, and this was energized by the participation and cheerleading of four past Chapter Presidents, Jan Burke, Bob Levinson, Nathan Walpow, and Jim Warren. Jim also did a fantastic job as our webmaster, not only maintaining our excellent webpage and meeting/newsletter archives but bringing us into the twenty-first century with PayPal.

Finally, there are *the* women (to quote Dr. Watson):

Margery Flax, our National office administrator, without whom MWA would simply cease to function; Patti Smiley, who served as program chair in 2007 and took on several other key jobs; Dianne Emley, party planner extraordinaire, program chair in 2008, and Treasurer; Naomi Hirahara, program chair in 2009, co-chair of the California Crimewriters Conference, and incoming Chapter President; and my wife Sharon, who (behind the scenes) made it all possible for me.

Of course, there were countless others who volunteered for booths, worked at events and participated in our programs, some Chapter members, some just good friends.

To every one of you, my sincerest thanks for a wonderful three years, and my warmest wishes for the future! I look forward to seeing you at Chapter meetings!

Les Klinger,
Past Chapter President

Killer Quotes

“My New Year’s Eve Toast: to all the devils, lusts, passions, greeds, envies, loves, hates, strange desires, enemies ghostly and real, the army of memories, with which I do battle — may they never give me peace.”

—Patricia Highsmith

The Crime Calendar

Sleuthfest-- Fort Lauderdale, Florida, February 26—28, 2010
<http://www.mwaflorida.org/sleuthfest.htm>

Left Coast Crime-- Los Angeles, CA., March 11—14, 2010
<http://www.leftcoastcrime.org/2010/>

Los Angeles Times Festival of Books—Los Angeles, CA, April 24 & 25, 2010
<http://www.latimes.com/extras/festivalofbooks/>

Malice Domestic-- Arlington, VA., April 30 - May 2, 2010
<http://www.malicedomestic.org/>

Mayhem in the Midlands - Omaha, Nebraska, May 27 - 29, 2010
<http://www.omaha.lib.ne.us/mayhem/>

Bloody Words - Ottawa, Canada, May 28 - 30, 2010
<http://www.bloodywords.com/BW-2010index.html>

Deadly Ink - Parsippany, NJ, June <http://www.deadlyink.com/>

PulpFest - Columbus, OH, July 30 - August 1, 2010 <http://www.pulpfest.com/>

Killer Nashville - Nashville, TN, August 20 - 22, 2010
<http://www.killernashville.com/>

West Hollywood Book Fair—West Hollywood, CA, September 26, 2010

Bouchercon--San Francisco, CA, October 14 - 17, 2010 <http://www.bcon2010.com/>

The Great Manhattan Mystery Conclave-- <http://www.manhattanmysteries.com/>

Noir Con - A conference dedicated to the celebration of Noir. Philadelphia, Pa, Nov. 4 - 7, 2010 <http://noircon.com/>

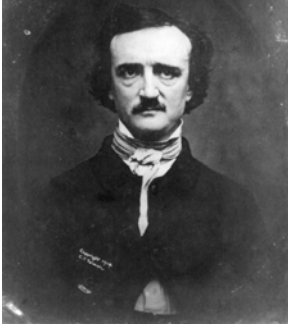
Murder and Mayhem in Muskego - Muskego, WI, Nov. 13, 2010
<http://www.murderandmayheminmuskego.com/>

Murder in the Grove--<http://www.murderinthegrove.com/>

New England Crime Bake-- <http://crimebake.org/index.htm>



YOUR EDITOR SPEAKS JERI WESTERSON



What's in store for 2010? The changes we have seen in the publishing world recently have set our heads to spinning. *Kirkus Reviews*, one of the venerable if not vilified

"Big Four" reviewers has been unceremoniously ousted. That leaves a big gap in the reviews which leaves a big gap in the blurb business we rely on. Is it the last to go? Certainly not. But wait. The New York Times says it may *not* be dead after all. Don't blink.

And Random House made the first salvo on the e-book front, making the assumption that their contracts with authors already covered owning the e-book rights. Oh yeah?

E-books. They are the wave of the future, and perhaps not as fearsome as we once thought. But will you be able

to bring your Kindle on board the airplane when newer, stricter rules are enforced due to recent events with a Nigerian banker's son (oh so many jokes there) on a Northwest flight?

There's a lot ahead for us. I'm curious myself to see how it all pans out. How will publishing change in the next few years? Will it be good for authors? Keep your eyes and ears open and be ready for anything!

themarchofcrime@gmail.com.

Save the Date

Saturday, January 23, 2010—11 am
Discussion with Kristen Weber, Former Senior
Editor at Penguin Group

Tom Bergin's Tavern
840 S. Fairfax Ave, LA (323) 936-7151

Saturday, February 27, 2010—11am
Discussion with e-publisher Marci Baum

CHAPTER NEWS

John Morgan Wilson has a short story, "The Camera Never Lies," in the February issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

Andrew Neiderman, known best as the author of *The Devil's Advocate*, and as the V.C. Andrews ghostwriter, will have his 100th published novel out in January, *Guardian Angel*, Leisure Books, Dorchester Publishing. Neiderman is currently developing his novel *The Devil's Advocate* as a stage musical in London with the Rival Theater Company. They are looking at a March-April launch. The music was composed by Sarif Tribou out of Holland. Neiderman also hopes to get his remake of *Flowers in the Attic* underway this coming year through The Hatchery, a production entity in Los Angeles.

Mad Dog & Englishman novel, *Server Down*, by **J. M. Hayes**, was chosen by Library Journal as one of the five best mysteries of 2009.

Amnon Kabatchnik announces the release of *Blood on the Stage: 1925-1950, Milestone Plays of Crime, Mystery and Detection*. This is the second in the series and provides an overview of the most important and memorable theatrical works of crime and detection of this period.

Top Publications, Ltd. has announced the publication of *Murder In La-La Land*, the next Sisters In Crime/LA anthology, to be released in May 2010. Editors: **Naomi Hirahara, Eric Stone and Juliet Blackwell**.

Sheila Lowe will be one of 15 authors featured at Murder in the Magic City and Murder on the Menu in Birmingham, AL Feb 7, 8. And in other news...following a tussle with her publisher, which she lost, her next book's perfect title, *Unholy Writ* (it's about a religious cult!) has been changed to *Last Writes*.

New Publisher in Town

Dan Smetanka is Editor-in-Chief of a new independent house right here in Los Angeles. Phoenix Books, Inc. has a new staff and ownership and an entirely new lease on life with a different editorial direction, including the new book by Matthew Randazzo V in its catalog.

Scott Phillips, author of *The Ice Harvest*, is joining Smetanka. They will publish his new crime noir, tentatively titled *Supply*, in September or Oct 2010.

Phoenix Books, Inc. is located at 9465 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 840, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, 310.273.7722



Courage to Write in 2010

By James Scott Bell

It takes courage to write.

Not the kind of courage that a soldier displays going into battle, or a firefighter reveals charging into a burning building. That's elevated courage, the kind that deserves to be honored in our culture. I'm not getting anywhere near to describing that kind of guts.

I'm talking about the non-lethal world, where it takes a degree of courage to do almost anything worth doing. Because for every enterprise of note there are critics and doubters, scoffers and jeerers, ready to pour acid rain on your parade.

It takes courage to write because obstacles and doubts come in many forms and build big brick walls to try and stop your progress.

Dick Simon (of Simon & Schuster) once said, "All writers are scared to death. Some simply hide it better than others."

It's gong to take courage to write in 2010, because we all know the publishing business is in major shakeup mode right now. Trying to predict the future of the industry is sort of like trying to judge the family prospects of guests on *Jerry Springer*—can any relationship survive?

With all this going on, any writer – new or established – can start to wonder: Is the dream worth it? Do I have any chance of getting published? Staying published? Am I good enough? Am I a fraud? Are the odds too great?

Every true writer faces questions like this. And every true writer finds a way to dig down and write on.

Over a fifteen year writing career (twenty if you toss in the uncompensated beginnings) I've faced all the same doubts. Through trial and error I worked out a few ways to keep on keeping on. Maybe one of these will help next time you feel like throwing in the towel.

1. Think in terms of *one more page*. Don't ponder the future or replay the past. Don't stew about the industry or the myriad things you can't control. Think about the work in front of you. Get that page done, then move on to the next. Establish a quota system and stick to it. The writing itself becomes the best way out of the bog of doubt.

2. Get some visual motivation. When I decided I was going to be a writer no matter what, I went out and bought a black coffee mug with *Writer* written in gold across it. A little corny, sure, but I didn't care. I wanted to earn the right to be called a writer, and seeing the cup daily reminded me of the commitment I'd made.

In my office now I have pictures of three writers I admire.

The first is of Stephen King, in his home office, feet up on the desk, looking over a manuscript. He's dressed casually. His dog is under his legs, looking at the camera.

This is my idea of the good life.

"Courage" continues on Page 8

I Was the Author Who Was There

By Lee Goldberg

A few weeks ago I was a guest speaker at a gathering of 250 members of the American Association of University Women in Ventura. As always happens at these events, I had some bizarre encounters.

There was another author who'd cancelled his appearance at the last minute because of a death in the family. During the morning signing, a woman came up to me and asked:

"Are you the author who isn't here?"

"No," I said, "I'm here."

"That's good," she said and walked away.

I thought of a couple of better answers to her question after she left. I should have said "Yes, I am the author who isn't here" just to see what she would have said next. Or I could have said "No, I'm just a hologram." I wonder if she would have touched me to see if I was real.

Another woman came up to me and asked me to sign a book to her.

"Make it to Katie," she said.

"Why does your nametag say Phyllis?" I asked, just to be saying something.

"Because the woman didn't show up and I swiped her tag."

"Why didn't you use your own?"

"I'm crashing the party," she whispered and winked at me.

A better man than me would have turned her in but she bought a book, so I wasn't going to rat her out.

During my presentation, I mentioned my encounter with the woman who asked of me if I was there. It got a big laugh. At the signing that followed, that woman came up to me and she wasn't happy.

"You humiliated me," she said.

"I didn't point you out or even look at you," I said. The truth was, I'd forgotten what she looked like so I couldn't have pointed her out even if I wanted to. "Nobody knew it

was you."

"I knew I was me," she said.

"That's always good," I said.

"I made an honest mistake before," she said. "You could have been him."

I still have no idea what she meant, but she bought a book. I withstood the urge to sign it in the other person's name. After her, another woman came up to me and told me how much she enjoyed my talk.

"I wish I'd gone to high school with you," she said.

"Why is that?"

"So I could have made love to you and married you," she said.

Okay, that totally threw me. I had no idea what to say. I just sort of stammered, signed her book, and she walked away. She was followed by a woman who had a burning question about Monk.

"Is Monk ever going to get any?"

"You mean have sex?"

"Yes," she said. She'd actually asked me the same question during the question-and-answer session but I guess my answer didn't satisfy her.

"Well, the show is over, so no, I don't think so."

"What about in your books?"

I shook my head. "I just don't see it."

"I do," she said. "Vividly."

"You do?"

"I can tell you exactly how it would go."

"With whom?"

"Anybody," she said. "I could send you the scene and you can use it with any woman you want."

I politely passed on the offer.

I don't know what drugs the Four Point Sheraton was putting in the drinks, I'm just glad they didn't put any in mine.

Men of Mystery Meet & Greet

By Joan Hansen

On Saturday, November 21st, we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of Men of Mystery. We honored our "long-timers" authors who have been with us since our early days—among them MWA-SoCal members: Jon Breen, Lee Goldberg, Tod Goldberg, Chris Holmes, Ken Kuhlken, Bob Levinson, Dick Lochte, Sam McCarver, and Thomas Perry.

This Anniversary celebration was attended by 550!! with 62 male mystery writers including our major speakers Tim Dorsey and Michael Connelly.

Among our attendees was an ardent fan who flew "over the Pond" from Perth, Scotland, just for the Event.

When I founded Men of Mystery ten years ago, we featured Michael Connelly who began his speech with, "When Joan asked me, I decided that I could do that... Men of Misery".

"Courage" continued

Then there's a picture of John D. MacDonald, tapping away at his typewriter, pipe in mouth. He was prolific (his biography is entitled *Red Hot Typewriter*) and a master of story and style.

The photo reminds me to keep producing words.

Finally, I have a picture of Evan Hunter/Ed McBain, from the back of one of his novels, arms folded, staring out as if in challenge. He was even more prolific than MacDonald, writing both literary and genre novels.

If I'm not working hard enough, his glare reminds me to get going again.

3. Go to a bookstore and browse. Look at author photos and dust jackets. See what's come out lately. If you can, make it an independent bookstore, and *buy a book from them*. They are folks who love books and are struggling mightily right now. Show a little support, then go back to your keyboard and write.

4. Re-read some favorites. I have a shelf of novels I especially love. Sometimes I'll take one down at random and start reading. I get inspired again with the pure joy of what writing can be. Then I try to make some magic happen on my own page.

5. Remember what Satchel Paige once said: "Don't look back. Something may be gaining on you."

Good luck, and good writing.

James Scott Bell is on the board of the Southern California Chapter of MWA, and the author most recently of *The Art of War for Writers* (Writers Digest Books). His website is www.jamesscottbell.com

Each year we have two "major" male writers as main speakers—these have included Stephen Cannell, Joseph Wambaugh, James Patterson, Thomas Perry and Dean Koontz to name a few. These men are joined by 50+ other male writers—each of whom is seated separately at tables throughout the dining room. (We limit to fifty tables...and with 50+ we do double-up some of the men...we had a total of sixty-two this year.) Mysterious Galaxy provides books for sale by all of our authors...I strive each year to seek new authors so that our dedicated attendees can always meet new authors.



Michael Glen (former PR person for Edinburgh, Scotland) and myself (Joan Hansen, Founder) and, of course, THE Michael Connelly.

I take a microphone to each man who has one minute to "sell" himself and his books in a lively and often humorous talk as our 500+ attendees mark their program books beside the photo and bio of those who sound interesting. During the day we have those one-minute talks, presentations by our two major authors (or on occasion a panel of writers of similar genres), over an hour of book-buying-and-signing, twenty

minutes of "table talks" with the writer at the table, and the honoring of male high school students named by their teachers as their school's most outstanding young writer.

In 2006, we were presented with The Raven Award by Mystery Writers of America—an honor previously given to others including Alfred Hitchcock, Vincent Price, and Angela Lansbury.

Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list should contact me at jhansen36@juno.com in order to be invited to our 11th event on October 30, 2010.





*Southern California Mystery Writers
of America presents*

Tales from the Publishing Trenches: A Former NY Editor Speaks Out

Join MWA SoCal for a discussion
with

Kristen Weber

Former Senior Editor, Penguin Group
Moderated by Author Patricia Smiley

*Kristen will discuss the current
state of the publishing industry
and share an insider's view of
what's to come. A Q&A will follow.*

Saturday, January 23, 2010

**Tom Bergin's Tavern
840 S Fairfax Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90036
(323) 936-7151**

11:00 am - Registration and Drinks

11:30 am - Lunch

12:30 pm - Program Starts



**RSVP and pay at <http://www.socalmwa.com>
\$15 for MWA members • \$25 for non-members**

Transom Notes

Kris Neri will be promoting her latest, *High Crimes On The Magical Plane*, with a workshop "How to Inject the Paranormal into Your Writing" at [Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore](#) on Thursday, January 7, 7 pm (858) 268-4747. She'll also be at Mysteries to Die For in Thousand Oaks Friday, January 8, 1 pm (805) 374-0084; The Mystery Bookstore Los Angeles (Westwood Village), Saturday, January 9, 1:30 pm. (310) 209-0415; Book 'Em Mysteries in South Pasadena, Sunday, January 10, 2 pm 626-799-9600 1-800-4BOOKEM.

Sue Ann Jaffarian, author of the Odelia Grey mystery series and the Ghost of Granny Apples mystery series, has just signed a 3-book deal with Midnight Ink for a vampire mystery series. The first book, *Murder in Vein*, will be released September 2010.

Elizabeth Gunn has a new Southwest Minnesota procedural just out from Severn House, *The Ten-Mile Trials*.

Jeri Westerson will be promoting her latest, *Serpent in the Thorns* at the following locations: Hermosa Beach Library, Wednesday, January 20, 2010-10:30 am (310) 379-8475; The Dedication Ceremony to the New Sun City Library in Sun City, California. 28127 Bradley Road, Sun City, CA 92586-2276, Thursday, January 21, 2009-4pm; M is for Murder bookstore San Mateo, CA, Saturday, January 23, 2010-2 pm, 650-401-8077; Literary Salon with Janet Rudolph, Private Home, Berkeley, CA, Thursday, January 28, 2010 7pm, janet@mysteryreaders.org; American Business Women's Association Author's Day, San Pedro, CA, Sunday, February 28, 2010-Begins 10 am, includes luncheon, contact Rose Hickman (310) 539-2649 x 3 or (310) 901-8032.

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MARCH OF CRIME



MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA
Southern California Chapter
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Los Angeles, CA 90025

The March of Crime is the newsletter of the Southern California Chapter/Mystery Writers of America

Editor: Jeri Westerson

To submit material for *The March of Crime*, email the editor at TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com

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:

Discussion with

Kristen Weber

Former Senior Editor at Penguin Group

Moderated by Patricia Smiley

Tom Bergin's Tavern 840 S. Fairfax
Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90036

(323) 936-7151

Saturday, January 23, 2010

11:00 am—Registration and drinks

11:30 am—Lunch

12:30 pm—Program Starts

RSVP and pay at

<http://www.socalmwa.com>

\$15 for members

\$25 for non-members

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LAST WORD



Les Klinger, outgoing Chapter President, and Naomi Hirahara, incoming Chapter President, at the 2009 SoCal MWA Holiday Party at the Jonathan Club in Santa Monica.