

THE MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA — SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Rights Reversion Ruckus

He Who Defends Himself, Has a Fool for a Client

There was a tempest in the third week of April in the publishing world teapot. Simon & Schuster rewrote the boilerplate language in its standard author contract to change the definition of when a book is no longer in print.

Under the new terms, a book could be considered "in print" as long as it is available electronically for print on demand (POD) no matter how few copies are actually sold that way. In essence that means Simon & Schuster would own the rights to the book forever.

The Author's Guild, and a lot of authors and agents, went ballistic. In a letter to its members, the Guild suggested that authors ask their agents to exclude Simon & Schuster imprints from auctions for their manuscripts, unless they first agree to use the current industry standard contract terms.

Paul Aiken, executive director of the Authors Guild was quoted in a *NY Times* article, saying: "If a book is only available in print-on-demand, it certainly means the publisher isn't doing much to promote the book. We're not against the technology; we're just against the technology being used to lock up rights."

Simon & Schuster's VP for Corporate Communications, countered with the publisher's official statement: "We are embracing print on demand technology as an unprecedented opportunity for authors and publishers to keep their books alive and available and selling in the marketplace in a way that may not have been previously possible for many authors, and are confident in

the long term that it will be a benefit for all concerned."

Once again it seems that developments in technology and the business models arising to take advantage of those developments, are coming into conflict with currently accepted standards and practices. Copyright law and business practices in electronic media have been turned topsy-turvy in recent years by technological advances. The book publishing industry is not immune to that.

But, both the Authors Guild and Simon & Schuster have a point. Book publishing, the way it is currently practiced, is antiquated, inefficient, wasteful and not nearly as profitable for everybody concerned as it ought to be.

Publishers, like all companies, are looking after their own interest. Funny, writers have to do that too.

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ONLY ONE MORE ISSUE UNLESS THERE'S A NEW EDITOR

I will edit a combo-July/August issue of THE MARCH OF CRIME. Then, that's it, folks. The paperback of my last book is coming out in August and a new book in September. I have two more books due. I will be too busy the rest of the year and into next year to continue as editor. Who wants to take over? Let me know ASAP. No new editor means no newsletter, and that will be bad. I'll do what I can to help any new editor. — *Eric Stone, Editor*

editor@socalmwa.com

The President's Rap Sheet

On my return flight from Transylvania last weekend (I was there to finish researching my new book), I had ample time to reflect on the intersection of life and art. The Romanians seem to have made a conscious decision to exploit Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in every conceivable way. Not only are there postcards and souvenirs featuring vampires (my favorite was a depiction of a vampire biting an attractive woman, stating "Welcome to Transylvania...wish you were here!"), but there are invented connections.

For example, Castle Bran, built in 1212 to protect the

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Just try and describe the publishing industry's long-standing practices of acquisition, sell-in, pre-orders, production, return policies, publicity, etc. to any savvy modern businessperson. They'll probably think you're joking.

If the book publishing industry is going to survive, it is going to change. And POD technology is going to play a major role in that change. Those changes are going to be reflected in the deals that authors make. That's going to cause problems until contracts that everyone can live with are worked out.

Sure, publishing companies are going to try and get as much as possible out of their authors. It's no different than a car company trying to get the best price it can on manifold gaskets. That's their job—to make money. Simon & Schuster's attempt to change its contract boilerplate is simply the opening salvo.

Publishers, like all companies, are looking after their own interest. Funny, writers have to do that too.

The lesson to be learned from all this is that the world is not a simple place. Contracts are not simple documents, and they're evolving. **No writer should ever sign a contract that has not been thoroughly combed through by a lawyer or contract specialist working on their behalf. If they do, and they're not happy with the terms, it's their own fault.**

-Eric Stone

Here is the text of the Authors Guild press release:

SIMON & SCHUSTER APPEARS TO BE SEEKING A PERMANENT STAKE IN AUTHORS' COPY-RIGHTS

Contract Change May Herald Move to Retain Exclusive Rights to Books the Publisher Fails to Sell
NEW YORK-- Simon & Schuster, one of the largest book publishers in the U.S., has altered its standard contract with authors in an effort to retain control of books even after they have gone out of print. Until now, Simon & Schuster, like all other major trade publishers, has followed the traditional practice in which rights to a work revert to the author if the book falls out of print or if its sales are low.

The new contract would allow Simon & Schuster to consider a book in print, and under its exclusive con-

trol, so long as it's available in any form, including through its own in-house database -- even if no copies are available to be ordered by traditional bookstores.

With the new contract language, the publisher would be able to stop printing a book and prevent the author from publishing it with any other house. "A publisher is meant to publish, to get out there and sell our books," said Authors Guild president Roy Blount Jr. "A publishing house is not supposed to be a place where our books are permanently squirreled away."

All major trade publishers have been willing to acknowledge the requirement of some minimum level of economic activity in order for them to retain exclusive rights to a manuscript. Typically, such clauses obligate a publisher to sell a few hundred books a year. Simon & Schuster has been signaling, however, that it will no longer accept a minimum sales threshold.

"Other major publishers have not followed suit," said Guild executive director Paul Aiken. "We'll be watching for that, of course, since coordinated moves would have serious legal implications."

In an alert issued to its members today, the Authors Guild cautioned members to consider their options carefully:

1. Remember that if you sign a contract with Simon & Schuster that includes this clause, they'll say you're wed to them. Your book will live and die with this particular conglomerate.

2. Ask your agent to explore other options. Other publishers are not seeking an irrevocable grant of rights.

3. If you have a manuscript that may be auctioned, consider asking your agent to exclude Simon & Schuster imprints unless they agree before the auction to use industry standard terms.

The Authors Guild (www.authorsguild.org) is the nation's oldest and largest organization of published book authors.

Simon & Schuster's official reaction, from Adam Rothberg, VP for Corporate Communications:

We are surprised at the overreaction of the Authors Guild to Simon & Schuster's contract. We believe that our contract appropriately addresses the improved technology, increased availability, and higher quality

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NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE'S CAMPAIGN TO SAVE BOOK REVIEWS

At the end of April, after repeated threats to book coverage in newspapers nationwide, the National Book Critics Circle (NBCC) launched an ambitious Campaign to Save Book Reviews. So far, the response has been tremendous. [A petition](#) to help protect the book review at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, which recently eliminated the book review position held by Teresa Weaver, had garnered 5,653 signatures by May 29. Publishers and book critics, authors and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* readers all joined the fray, with novelist Clyde Edgerton pleading, "Please, please don't give in to interests beyond literature, especially Southern literature" and some readers threatening to cancel subscriptions.

Closer to home there was a lot of negative response to the cutbacks and folding of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* into the Sunday Opinion section. The Times' owner, the *Chicago Tribune* moved its book review section to Saturday as well as cut it back. Online stories ran in [New York](#) magazine and [Publishers Weekly](#); [Scott McLemee's](#) post on Inside Higher Ed spoke directly to academic presses and librarians, proclaiming "We are in trouble. We need your help." *Library Journal's* [Academic Newswire](#) also put in a call to librarians, asking them to fight disappearing book coverage. Op-eds have appeared in the [Guardian](#) and the [Huffington Post](#), dozens upon dozens of online responses have sprung up on blogs as varied as [Britannica Blog](#) and [Isak](#); and *Washington Post* syndicated columnist [Kathleen Parker](#) published a piece titled "America's Death March Toward Illiteracy" that inspired hundreds of emails. Observed Parker, **"Why do newspaper editors and publishers think that killing one of the few features that readers might—big word here—READ, is a smart move in an era of newspaper decline?"**

The campaign has been waged partly on the National Book Critic Circle's blog, [Critical Mass](#), which received double the number of hits during the crucial first week of the campaign. Those posting included authors Roxana Robinson, Andrei Codrescu, and Nadine Gordimer; book editors Marie Arana (*Washington Post Book World*), David L. Ulin (*Los Angeles Times Book Review*), and Susan Larson (*New Orleans Times-Picayune*); and Catherine Brady (president, Association of Writers and Writing Programs). Finally, the campaign will be the lede issue on BookExpo America's web site in June, just as the BEA convention launches, and anyone interested in fighting the good fight should look for an NBCC panel on the campaign, just scheduled as part of the BEA lineup.

The National Book Critics Circle, founded in 1974, is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization consisting of nearly 700 active book reviewers who are interested in honoring quality writing and communicating with one another about common concerns. For more information on the Campaign to Save Book Reviews, please contact John Freeman at jfreeman4@nyc.rr.com (646-246-8565) or Barbara Hoffert at hoffer@reedbusiness.com or 646-746-6806.

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of print on demand books, and reflects the fact that print on demand titles may now be readily purchased by consumers at both online and brick and mortar stores. We are embracing print on demand technology as an unprecedented opportunity for authors and publishers to keep their books alive and available

and selling in the marketplace in a way that may not have been previously possible for many authors, and are confident in the long term that that will be a benefit for all concerned. We would also like the author and agent community to know that, when necessary, we have always had good faith negotiations on the subject of reversions, and

will continue to on a book-by-book basis.

For further information:

Two stories in *Publishers Weekly* [May 18, 2007](#) and [May 21, 2007](#) *AP*, via the *International Herald Tribune*, [The New York Times](#).

DON'T GET BYTTEN: Back It Up

Your computer-savvy friend has told you this. Your agent and publisher have told you this. Your lawyer has said it. You've heard it on the radio, and on TV.

So why do I think you're going to listen to what I have to say?

Mostly because I'm going to make it as easy as possible for you.

Back up your data.

I know, I know-- it's a pain in the ass, what with copying all those files, and keeping the media, and marking stuff, and remembering where you put it, and remembering to do it...okay, yes, I know. It's not easy. I'm guilty as anyone when it comes to laziness.

So I'm going to give you some tips on how to make your file backups fairly painless, in the hopes that this will stimulate the behavior.

First off, ditch your floppy disks, if you have any left (or even know what a floppy drive *is*). Archaic, slow, bulky, with almost no storage space-- there is really very little in favor of floppy disks anymore.

And, from where I sit, the same can be said for CD-ROMs...and, to some extent, DVDs. Sure, both are much larger, in terms of storage capacity, and lighter in terms of weight, but they are also prone to damage easily, and burning your files to an optical disk can be annoying, too, depending on what software you're using for the job.

Let the technology make your life easier, instead of complicating matters.

Go get yourself a couple of flash drives (also known as flash stick/thumb drive/memory stick/USB drive/etc.); good ones can be had for \$50, and some can carry several gigs. I don't *ever* recommend buying the newest, best, state-of-the-art technology; and it's quite unlikely you'll need more than a gig per stick. Buy them at an office supply store, and not at an electronics or computer outlet-- they'll be much cheaper.

Take the first one and plug it directly into your computer. Drag-and-drop your entire "Writing" folder from your hard drive onto the icon representing the flash stick (usually called "Removable Drive" by Windows). Swap out the other flash stick. Repeat. Take one stick to your safe deposit box and leave it there. Keep the other nearby your computer.

Every week, insert the stick you keep near your computer, and make a new backup. If you ever have a computer crash, the most you will ever lose is one week's worth of work. Every six months, go to your safe deposit box and swap the sticks, leaving the most current backup in the safe, and taking the old one with you. Make a new backup as soon as you return to your computer.

If you ever fall victim to a fire/flood/burglary, the most you will ever lose is six months' worth of work (which, yes, sounds terrible, but is much better than losing *everything*, trust me).

Maybe the sticks really aren't large enough to hold all your data, or you're skeptical of their other negative trait: they're too small. Yeah, yeah-- in computers, smaller is better....but if you're carrying

around everything you've ever written, and it can fall out through a hole in your pants pocket, suddenly miniaturization doesn't

seem like such a nifty characteristic.

In that case, let me suggest a removable, portable, external hard drive. These things rock. You can find units that you can connect to your computer by either USB, PCMCIA, or FireWire ports; they will *fly* compared to the methods you used for your previous backups. While I don't usually tout specific vendors or platforms (I mean, hey, unless they pay me for an endorsement, right?), let me make an exception to make mention for the Apricorn EZ GIG Upgrade Kit. While it's intended mainly for upgrading your hard drive, the Apricorn system is inexpensive, does great backups and, most of all, is incredibly simple to install and use.

Some people use another backup technique which is easy, cheap, and quick: e-mail.

By e-mailing your manuscript to yourself, you acquire several benefits of backup:

- You get your data "off site," ensuring that it will remain accessible even if your local area is rendered uninhabitable by disaster.
- You have a copy you can access from almost anywhere, without having to carry hardcopy with you.

You eliminate the need for portable media (disks,

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I'm insanely paranoid, by nature, habit, and trade.

Transom Notes

Publications & Deals: In June, look for “A Trader’s Lot,” **Twist Phelan’s** story in *Wall Street Noir* (Akashic Press). www.twistphelan.com. *Road Kill*, the second in Phyllis Morreale-de la Garza’s Steed Wilson Mystery series (Silk Label Books) is about to be released. **Laura Levine’s** seventh Jane Austen mystery, *Death by Pantyhose*, is due out this month (Kensington). **Rosemary Martin’s** *Secret Agent Girl* (Signet) is due for publication June 5. **Sue Ann Jaffarian** has inked a 3-book deal with Midnight Ink for books 4-6 of her Odelia Grey series. www.sueannjaffarian.com. **Robert Weibezahl’s** short story, “Objet D’Art,” appeared in the March/April issue of *Crimespree* magazine. www.RobertWeibezahl.com. **John Morgan Wilson’s** short story, “Serious Money,” appears in the July issue of *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine*. www.johnmorganwilson.com. **Joanne Fluke’s** Hannah Swensen Mysteries will be joined by her new novella, *Candy For Christmas, Sugar and Spice* – Romance Collection of 4 Christmas stories--*12 Desserts of Christmas* (Kensington paperback). www.MurderSheBaked.com

Events: Beginning July 12, **Taffy Cannon** will teach “Writing the Mystery/Thriller” for nine weeks at UCSD Extension. tcannon@sandwich.net. Past MWA-So Cal President **Robert S. Levinson’s** play, “Transcript,” has its world premiere with three performances during the first International Mystery Writers’ Festival at River-Park Center, Owensboro, KY, June 12-17. Other authors in attendance will include Marlowe Award recipients, William Link, Blake Edwards and Sue Grafton, as well as MWA Grand Masters Stuart Kaminsky and Ira Levin. Bob’s latest short story, “A Prisoner of Memory,” appears in the July-August issue of *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. **Robert Weibezahl** will be the featured speaker at the monthly meeting of the Ventura County Writers Club, Tuesday, June 12, 7 pm at Borders in Thousand Oaks. On Saturday June 23 he’ll join Julie Carobini, Robin Gorley, Marilyn Meredith, Starr Reina, and Raven West for a Local Authors Day at Barnes and Noble in Ventura. 1-3 pm. www.RobertWeibezahl.com. **Debbie Mitsch** reports that OC SinC has organized a tour of the Orange County Register on Friday, June 15th from 11:00 a.m. -12:30 p.m. and the chapter invites MWA members to join them. RSVP to: martinandmitsch@aol.com.

Fresh Blood: *Active:* **Thomas Perry** (Studio City), **Sue Phillips** (writing as Gillian Doyle) (Long Beach), **Brett Battles** (Los Angeles), **Evan Kilgore** (Los Angeles), **Penny Rudolph** (Albuquerque, NM)--she requested SoCal. *Affiliate:* **Eric Howell Sharp** (Van Nuys), **Sharon Davenport Binder** (Oxnard), **Anthony Gavin** (Burbank), **Gina Micale** (Sierra Madre), **Debra L. Weber** (Los Angeles)

Compiled by Sheila Lowe

Speaker’s Bureau Workshop I: “How to Book and Present an Author’s Program”

Learn to get on literary groups' radar, to properly present information and to read excerpts of your work in an engaging and interesting way.

Tuesday, July 24, 7 to 9 p.m.
Palms – Rancho Park Branch Library
 2920 Overland Avenue
 Los Angeles, CA 90064

Featured panelists: *Joan Hansen*, literary events organizer extraordinaire; *Noel Alunit*, author of TALKING TO THE MOON, host of bookevents for Skylight Books, and a noted performance artist; *Jorge Ribeiro*, Toastmaster International Division Governor (District 52), instructor of English at Cal State L.A. and Pasadena City College, and budding mystery writer

Mystery Writer Idol!

The latter part of the program will be interactive. We need two volunteers. One to do a five-minute presentation on his/her book, and another to do a five-minute reading of his/her book. Their presentations will then be mercilessly critiqued by the panelists. Bring your thick skin. If you’re interested, contact Speaker’s Bureau chair Naomi Hirahara at speakers@socalmwa.com.

Seating is limited for this members-only event!

Reserve your seat by emailing Naomi at speakers@socalmwa.com.

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flash sticks, etc.) altogether; there is nothing you could misplace or lose.

E-mail also avails you of another great benefit, in terms of your intellectual property: you establish an exact, supportable copyright timestamp. If anyone tries to make a future claim on your work, you can prove when you created it.

However, I have to admit a dislike for the e-mail option, mostly because I'm insanely paranoid, by nature, habit, and trade:

- If you have any cause to desire privacy, e-mail is horrible: the entire technology is rife with possibilities for exposure. The people with access to your online data are almost countless...and surely undictable.

- Many e-mail providers have ridiculously-small size limitations, both per mail and per account. While e-mail might work for backing up a specific manuscript, it will become onerous and nigh impossible for an entire hard drive.

Relying on an e-mail service to secure your backups means, quite literally, abdicating the responsibility to protect that data. Do you know how secure that service is? How secure the server is? How financially secure the company, itself, is? I know for a fact that nobody else cares as much about my data as I do, so I'll rarely entrust it to others.

Hopefully, with a bit of the burden of backups eased from your shoulders, you'll be more likely to engage in this very smart practice!

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 Malisow

*Ben's first book, **1,001 Things To Do If You Dare**, was launched by Adams Media in April. His second, a book on counterterrorism from Chelsea House, is due out later this 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.*

Members' Blogs

Writers write, that's what they do. The internet has given them a lot more space in which to strut their stuff. Blogs, covering a very wide range of topics, are increasingly popular. Here's some to check out from your fellow MWA SoCal Members. *The latest blog entry titles are as of April 21, 2007.*

Paul Levine, Patty Smiley and Jacqueline Winspear all blog at <http://nakedauthors.com/>. Paul's most recent blog is titled "Keeping it Real in Hollywood." Patty's is "Where Have All the Book Critics Gone?" and Jacqueline's is "Just One ... Thing After Another."

Harley Jane Kozak's blog can be found at <http://thelipstickchronicles.typepad.com/>. Her latest is "Big Hug."

Doug Lyle answers writer's questions about forensics on his blog at <http://dplylemd.com/forcomm.html>. His latest is "Dwarfism and Gigantism in the Same Family."

R J Hillhouse blogs at <http://www.thespywhobilledme.com>, which is about outsourcing the war on terror, an area of her expertise. Her latest is "Kremlin-

ology & the Censored DNI Outsourcing Study.

Sheila Lowe's blog can be found at <http://mystery-writers.blogspot.com>. Her current entry is "Between the Lines, Notes From the Road."

Gregg Hurwitz blogs on his own website at <http://gregghurwitz.blogspot.com>. The latest is "Gary Ross on Screenwriting."

Eric Stone blogs on his website at <http://ericstone.com/blog.html>. His latest is "My Editor and a Cambodian Saturday in the Park."

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Measuring the Muse

How many hours does it take you to write a novel?"

After having published six novels, I've fielded lots of questions from people curious about the process of writing and publishing fiction. Yet, this particular question stumped me.

"How many *hours*?" I repeated, not certain I had heard correctly.

My interrogator, an earnest young man whom I'll call Bean Counter, unblinkingly nodded.

We were at a cocktail reception following a business conference that my husband Charlie was attending. Charlie and I encountered Bean Counter and made polite introductions followed by friendly chit chat. Conversation naturally turned to occupations.

I told Bean Counter, "I'm the spouse, here for the cocktails and hors d'oeuvres."

Charlie, of course, produced a postcard for my latest book—he's not only proud of me, he ceaselessly promotes my work. This produced a flurry of conversation. Then Charlie spotted an acquaintance and was swept into another group, leaving me while I made what I believed to be concluding remarks.

Bean Counter held my postcard between both hands and studied it with great interest. Then he looked up and asked that question.

Now, I haven't been in the novel-writing biz so long that I've forgotten what a mysterious thing it can be to the uninitiated. People want to know: when, why, what... And of course: how.

I've learned that none of the answers completely satisfy because there is no way to explain precisely how books happen.

Early on, when asked how long it took me to finish a book, I'd answer exhaustively. I'd describe how I wrote my first novel over three years while working full-time, then the next novel took this long, and the third... People often looked more confused than before they posed the question because I wasn't answering it at all.

Recently, I've adopted a different approach.

"A year," I say with a definitive nod. "Because that's what my contract says."

A glib response, but roundly the truth for my writing today. Many people are stunned by the challenging work schedule this suggests. Some appear deflated. The cold calculation of churning out an *oeuvre* by a *deadline* while under the pressure of a *contract* runs contrary to most views of the creative process.

I understand.

How can one corral the muse?

The truth is, those months devoted to taking a book from being a mere glimmer in my eye to a final work can be a wild roller coaster of a journey. There are grindingly unproductive days with little accomplished. There are marathons that stretch into the wee hours as I crunch to finish those last changes. And there are days in which everything just clicks and the hours melt by. The muse loves me and I love her and all hell may be breaking out in my life or the world, but in the world of my book, Heaven reigns.

Now, standing with Bean Counter, clutching my glass of chardonnay, I was the one with the deer-in-the-headlights gaze. No one had ever asked me to measure the muse so precisely.

When I didn't immediately respond to his query, he helpfully offered a suggestion.

"A thousand hours?"

A thousand hours? It seemed like a lot of time, yet not nearly enough. A standard nine-to-five job consumes about 2088 hours per year. Okay. But how do I quantify the work I do? Clearly the time spent laying down words counts. Editing those words counts. But what about the rest of it?

How about when I'm on the treadmill at the gym and the niggling plot point I've been struggling with suddenly becomes clear. Do I count that? Or how about when I wake up in the morning with a chapter fully formed in my head. Do I count that? Or how about when I'm sitting in a restaurant or airport and overhear a bit of conversation that I jot down because it would be perfect for two of my characters. Do I count that?

A standard nine-to-five job consumes about 2088 hours per year. Okay. But how do I quantify the work I do?

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June Luncheon:

How to Get a Job Writing for Television. But Why Would You Want to?

Panel:

Paul Levine (*moderator*) has worked as a newspaper reporter, a trial lawyer, a TV writer, and a novelist. Obviously, he cannot hold a job. He is the author of a series of thrillers featuring Steve Solomon and Victoria Lord, squabbling Miami lawyers who, even though they aren't married, argue every day starting with "Good Morning." His novel SOLOMON vs. LORD was nominated for the Macavity Award and the Thurber Prize for American humor. THE DEEP BLUE ALIBI was nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe mystery award and is currently up for the Thriller Award. TRIAL & ERROR is his latest novel. Levine describes his own work as "funnier than Dostoevsky."

Paul's IMDB entry is at <http://us.imdb.com/name/nm1074156/>. His website is www.paul-levine.com.

Ed Zuckerman is an author, journalist, and television writer-producer. In television, he has worked on *Law & Order* (for which he wrote or co-wrote the first broadcast episode and more than 30 others), *JAG*, *Century City*, *Killer Instinct*, and other shows. He has won one Emmy and two Edgars. He is the author of two nonfiction books: *SMALL FORTUNES* and *THE DAY AFTER WORLD WAR III*.

Ed's IMDB entry is at <http://us.imdb.com/name/nm0958418/>.

Bill Bryan is a film and television writer who has stolen vast sums from all of the major media companies: Warner Bros., Paramount, Universal, Disney, Sony, and Fox. He has written and produced many series, including the long-running comedies *Night Court* and *Coach*. He often lives with his family in Pacific Palisades, California. His first novel is *KEEP IT REAL*, a savagely funny look at reality television.

Bill's IMDB entry is at <http://us.imdb.com/name/nm0116899/>. His website is www.bill-bryan.com.

John Schulian is a co-creator of *Xena: Warrior Princess*. He has been a writer and producer on such hit TV series as *Miami Vice*, *Wiseguy* and *JAG*. He was previously a newspaper sports columnist in Chicago and Philadelphia, and remains a special contributor to *Sports Illustrated*. His sports writing has been collected in two books, *TWILIGHT OF THE LONGBALL GODS* and *WRITERS' FIGHTERS AND OTHER SWEET SCIENTISTS*.

John's IMDB entry is at <http://us.imdb.com/name/nm0776037/>.

**RESERVATION FORM: Sunday, June 24, 2007 / Taix Restaurant
1911 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles 90026 (parking on premises: \$2.50)**

Reception from 11 am / Luncheon 11:45 am sharp / Program from 12:30 pm
Advance reservations \$25 (member or guest); **Payment at the door: \$25**

Make Checks Payable to: MWA-SoCal; Remit to: MWA-SoCal / 12021 Wilshire Blvd. #506, Los Angeles, CA 90025

Or, reserve and pay (with PayPal) online at www.socalmwa.com

Member & Guest(s) Names _____

Phone _____ or E-mail _____

Please specify entrée for each attendee:

	MEMBER	GUEST
Chilled Salmon Salad		
Chicken Marsala		
Penne Pasta Monagasque (vegetarian)		

All meals include choice of soup, salad, bread, coffee, tea, sherbet.

The Crime Calendar

Murder in the Grove— June 8-9, Boise, ID, www.murderinthegrove.com

No Crime Unpublished—June 10, Los Angeles, CA www.sistersincrimela.com

Hardboiled Heroes & Cozy Cats—June 15-16, Dallas, TX, www.mwasw.org/conf.html

Book Passage Mystery Writers Conf.—June 28-July 1, Corte Madera, CA www.bookpassage.com

Deadly Ink—June 29-July 1, Parsippany, NJ, www.deadlyink.com

Thrillerfest—July 12-15, New York, NY, www.thrillerfest.org

Harrogate Crime Writing Festival—July 19-22, Harrogate, UK www.harrogatefestival.org.uk/crime/

Killer Nashville—August 17-19, Nashville, TN, www.killernashville.com

Bouchercon 38—Sept. 27-30, Anchorage, Alaska, www.bouchercon2007.com

The Great Manhattan Mystery Conclave—Sept. 28-30, Manhattan, KS, www.manhattanmysteries.com

West Hollywood Book Fair—Sept. 30, W. Hollywood, CA, www.westhollywoodbookfair.org/

Cape Fear Crime Festival—Oct. 26-28, Wilmington, NC, www.capefearcrimefestival.org/

Magna cum Murder—Oct. 26-28, Muncie, IN, www.magnacummurder.com

Men of Mystery—Nov. 3, Irvine, CA, jhansen36@juno.com

New England Crimebake—Nov. 9-11, Lowell, MA, www.mwane.org/crimebake/

Left Coast Crime—March 6-9, 2008, Denver, CO, www.lcc2008.com



OC Sisters in Crime & So Cal MWA Joint Party!

When: Sunday July 29th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Where: at OC SinC board member Carolyn Kimme-Smith's beautiful 'party' house.
630 Harbor Island Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660

Our Southern Sisters will serve smoked salmon and various other potluck consumables. They are also providing wine, beer, and soft drinks.

Please RSVP to patty@patriciasmiley.com. Use "Newport party" in the subject line.

(Continued from page 7)

Basically, when I'm working on a book, I'm *always* working on that book, whether I have some form of the text in front of me or I've left my office hours before. The book becomes my life. While the muse might reluctantly agree to the demands of a book contract, she will not remain within the confines of a standard measure of a work week.

To Bean Counter, I replied, "More hours than a thousand. A lot more."

He accepted my response, nodding as he again examined the post card.

Relieved, I sought out my husband and was about to make a break when Bean Counter looked up.

"You have an editor, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"How many hours does your editor spend on your books?"

-Dianne Emley

Dianne is the author of the bestselling thrillers featuring police detective Nan Vining. The paperback edition of the debut title, THE FIRST CUT, will be published in January 2008 along with the hardcover of the second in the series: CUT TO THE QUICK. Visit Dianne at her website: www.dianneemley.com.

(President's Rap from page 1)

city of Brasov, which *may* have been visited briefly by Vlad the Impaler, known also as Vlad Dracula, was beautifully restored by Queen Maria in the late 19th and early 20th century and occupied by her and her family. Vlad Dracula's claim to current fame is that Stoker adopted his name for his vampire-count. That's it, by the way—he liked the name (which means "devil" in Romanian). Many assert that Vlad the Impaler was the "model" for Stoker's Dracula. But Stoker never visited Romania, and he knew nothing about Romania or Vlad or the rest of the history of the country except what he read in some travel books.

Notwithstanding the tenuous relationship between the Castle and Stoker's work, the Castle is known worldwide as "Castle Dracula" (check out the www.castledracula.com website) and supports dozens of souvenir stands selling vampire masks, statues, fangs, and postcards. I brought home a statuette of Vlad with bloody fangs. Similarly, in the town of Sighishoara, a restaurant housed in the building called Casa Vlad Dracul (known to have been owned by Vlad Dracul, Vlad the Impaler's father—"Draculya" means "son of Dracul"—and probable birthplace of Vlad the Impaler) advertises itself with a statue of a vampire resembling Bela Lugosi.

What's the lesson here? That ideas are more powerful than reality, more attractive than history. Tourists have little interest in the historical Romania; it's

"Dracula" tours that draw them, visiting places that never existed, staying in *faux* venues like the Castle Dracula Hotel in the (real) Borgo Pass or the Golden Krone Hotel in Bistritza (named for the fictional hotel where Jonathan Harker stayed) and, at the latter, having the same meal as Harker records eating. Even the sophisticated city of Bucharest has its "Count Dracula Club," a restaurant featuring nightly visits from the Count himself, where visitors can order dishes named after characters and places in the story (including chicken molded into the shape of a rat) or, if a woman, have her throat sucked by the pseudo-Count.

Just as Sherlock Holmes now dominates the London neighborhood of Baker Street and Anne of Green Gables occupies the now-real Avonlea of Prince Edward Island, the fictional Dracula towers over Romania. Is this a good thing? In the short run, it brings much-needed money into the economy; in the long run, it threatens to cheapen and degrade a country with a proud history beginning hundreds of years before Bram Stoker thought to place his story there. For an author, however, the Romanian experience is exhilarating, for a very tangible reminder of the power of the pen!

P.S. I'm pleased to report that mysteries were well in evidence on the shelves of Romanian bookstores, and not just the major authors. I was pleased to see a copy of *The Faithful Spy* by Alex Berenson, with "2006 Edgar" in big letters on the cover!

— Les Klingner, Chapter President

THE MARCH OF CRIME



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