

MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA—LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

POISONED BY D.P. LYLE & DAVID CIAMBRONE

Well, not exactly. But if they had wanted to take out a good portion of the So Cal MWA chapter, they certainly could have.

This was the program at the last chapter meeting on June 22 at the Sportsman's Lodge in Studio City. Called the "Gentle Art of Poison", Dr. Doug Lyle and Dr. David Ciambrome entertained and enlightened us on just how to off our victims in our latest novels.

We all know Dr. Lyle from his very informative books for mystery writers like *Murder and Mayhem* and *Forensics for Dummies*. Dr. Ciambrome is of the same ilk. He is a retired scientist, magician, oceanographer, archaeologist, and engineering professor, and still found time to write a book about poisons, called *Poisons Handbook for Writers* (L&L Dreamspell



Poison experts Doug Lyle and David Ciambrome offer their bitter pills at the June chapter meeting.

publishers). The duo proceeded to tell us about the various poisons one can find around the house. Starting in the kitchen, salt and baking soda in high doses can be fatal for those with heart conditions. In the bathroom it's aspirin and ibuprofen for those on doses of diuretics. And laxatives. (What a way to go.) Moving on to the garage we find pesticides, rat poison, borax,

antifreeze, to name a few. But the plant life around your yard is a dangerous jungle. Consider the oleander. Leaf, flower, and twig: all poisonous. Even the fumes from the burning wood are fatal.

Dr. Lyle gave a brief overview of tox screens that might be ordered should a patient arrive at a hospital distressed from unknown origins. But place your story in a small town where expensive tox screens for both living and recently dead are not undertaken, and your killer might get off scot free. Or at least delayed in being apprehended.

Some facts: 99% of poisons leave no clue. And cyanide works great. But when pressed how *he* would dispose of someone, Dr. Lyle confessed, "A gun. From a distance. And not tell anyone."

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MWA AND SINC IN THE OC

Please join us on Sunday, July 27, 2008 for the annual **MWA/SoCal and Sisters in Crime/Orange County Get-together**. Last year's event was stellar, so don't miss out on this opportunity to meet and network with OC writers and friends. This year's no-host event will be held at The District Lounge in historic downtown Orange from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. The District Lounge building dates back to the early 1920's and was the original post office for the City of Orange. Arrive early and enjoy the many neighborhood antique stores and boutiques, all within walking distance of the lounge.

THE DISTRICT LOUNGE
223 WEST CHAPMAN AVENUE
ORANGE CA 92866
714.639.7777

DIRECTIONS FROM THE 5 & 57 FREEWAY: exit at Chapman Avenue, Orange, go east to 223 W. Chapman Ave.

FROM THE 55 FREEWAY: exit at Chapman Avenue, Orange, go west to 223 W. Chapman Ave.

The President's Rap Sheet



The last few months, I had occasion to step out of the narrow world of mystery writers and see the big broad universe beyond. I attended Book Expo America (better known as BEA) and the American Library Association conventions, the former at the L.A. Convention Center, the latter at the Orange County Convention Center. I was a "newbie" at both, and I must admit that they were breathtaking!

MWA had a booth at BEA, a very large, magnificent booth, where mystery writers hung out, signed, and gave away (gasp!) books (including our latest MWA publication, *The Blue Religion*, edited by Michael Connelly). In addition to many who pre-agreed to appear at the MWA booth, we were lucky to have visitors like Lee Child, Michael Connelly, and others, who were making appearances at their publisher's booths but dropped by to sit, talk, and sign at the MWA booth.

SoCal writers were well in evidence, and I garnered thanks from the National Board for our Chapter's help in staffing the booth and arranging a very successful

cocktail party at the Downtown Edison that Friday night for out-of-town members and guests. Thanks especially to Patty Smiley for her work on this event!

The amazing thing about BEA, however, was not the MWA booth, but the sheer size and variety of the other 1,000 or so booths, many giving away advance reading copies of desirable books. A determined reader could easily have amassed hundreds of books to take home on virtually every subject (there's a reason why large wheeled bags were barred from the exhibit rooms!) In addition, if one had the patience to wait in line for an *autographed* book, one could have had a free book signed by Barbara Walters or Leonard Nimoy or Bill Shatner or Neal Stephenson or... the list went on and on. Denise Hamilton (with whom I share a passion for YA books) kept hauling me around to booth after booth, introducing me to new writers and piling books into my arms.

The ALA convention, although focused on books suitable for libraries, was equally

amazing in its scope and variety. Here there were also materials, seminars, and advertisements for dozens of programs designed to stimulate and enhance reading. MWA didn't have an official presence here (a budgetary decision), but Sisters in Crime did, and mysteries were naturally well-represented.

The sheer volume of the two events can be daunting, especially for a first-timer. I remember well my astonishment when I first read in the *Washington Post* that typically 150,000 books are published annually in the United States, 60,000 in the fourth quarter alone. Here was tangible evidence of that fact. How can any book rise to prominence, even visibility in a tide of that magnitude?

Here's where we come in: SoCal MWA continues to be dedicated to helping writers learn and improve the craft of writing, as well as getting their work published and marketed. Our programs, parties, and casual get-togethers are all about the same thing: Writers networking with writers, sharing their ideas and skills. I hope to see you soon at a Chapter function!

Killer Quote

Paul Levine gives us our first Killer Quote— "With summer bringing those searing desert winds, here's my favorite line....and I suspect the favorite of many other So Cal writers."

There was a desert wind blowing that night. It was one of those hot dry Santa Anas that come down through the mountain passes and curl your hair and make your nerves jump and your skin itch. On nights like that every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen. You can even get a full glass of beer at a cocktail lounge.

— "Red Wind"

By Raymond Chandler

LOWE JOINS UCR FACULTY

Sheila Lowe www.sheilalowe.com has been invited to join the faculty at UC Riverside in their CSI certificate program. They're offering four free introductory talks in Spend an Evening with the Experts. She'll speak on behavioral profiling through handwriting, using the handwritings of serial killers and other unpleasant types, and handwriting authentication.

July 9 - Handwriting analysis with Sheila Lowe, private consultant and expert witness.

July 16 Unidentified missing persons with David Van Norman, Deputy Coroner Investigator/Unidentified-Missing Persons Coordinator, San

Bernardino County Sheriff Department

July 23 Human remains recovery dog demonstration with Captain Tammie Belmonte and Bonney, Riverside County Animal Control Office

July 30 Criminal profiling and crime analysis with Dr. Phoebe Kelsoe, retired manager, Crime Analysis Unit, Special Investigations Bureau, Riverside County Sheriff's

(951) 827-5804, e-mail

investigate@ucx.ucr.edu

or visit www.extension.ucr.edu.

NEWS

Former So Cal member and current MWA Florida chapter member **Michael Haskins** wants his friends in southern California to know that he will be in the area doing a book signing. "I was hoping to get some members who remember their 'first' signing and the fear of no one showing up, to come by and say hi. Some, like Lee Goldberg, might even

remember me!" We will pass it along, Michael. Look for him On Thursday, July 17th, 7 p.m. at the Flintridge Bookstore in La Crescenta, CA. He will be in Thousand Oaks, CA at the Mysteries to Die For bookstore on July 12th and at the Mystery Bookstore in Brentwood (near UCLA) on the 19th with Michelle Gagnon.

A photo (right) from Aileen Baron from *Malice Domestic 2008. The Historical Mystery*



panel. Top row: Sharon Newman (Moderator), Dana Cameron, Sally Wright, Kate Gallison. Bottom row: Kathy Lynn Emerson, Aileen G. Baron.

CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY

From **Marilyn Meredith**, member of MWA No.Cal chapter. Here's some information about the **Public Safety Writers Association** conference that might be of interest to some of our members:

PSWA's (Public Safety Writers Association) annual conference is being held in Las Vegas, June 18-21, 2009 at the Suncoast Hotel and Casino. The conference is open to anyone writing crime and mystery fiction or non-fiction, technical writing for public safety magazines in print or online, or anyone interested in writing. Registered attendees may offer a suggestion for a presentation or panel. There is no-restriction as to who can serve on a panel.

Steve Scarborough, a Forensic Scientist with over 30 years experience in Law Enforcement with Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and the FBI, an accomplished technical writer and the author of several books, will give a presentation on "Writing Forensics Right." <http://www.steve-scarborough.com/>

Authors may bring their books for sale. PSWA will keep 10% to help defray the cost of the conference and for the scholarship fund. There is a price break for members and for non-members registering before September 30th.

Membership is open to anyone in any of the public safety fields or writing or interested in writing for or about them.

Fresh Blood

Active

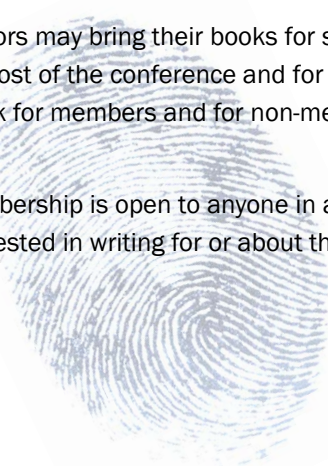
- Christopher Goffard (Irvine, CA)
- Heywood Gould (Santa Monica, CA)
- Andrew Peterson (Bradley, CA)
- Steven M. Thomas (Orange, CA)
- Daniel Petrie, Jr. (Encino, CA)
- Nina Revoyr (Los Angeles, CA)
- Betsy Thornton (Bisbee, AZ)

Affiliate

- David M. Bishop (Surprise, AZ)
- Ronald Cutler (Calabasas, CA)
- Kevin Hopps (Valley Village, CA)
- Camille Kimball (Phoenix, AZ)
- David E. Knop (Coronado, CA)
- Ken Roy Neal (Hollywood, CA)
- Marie Reindorp (Fallbrook, CA)
- Sally Richards (San Diego, CA)
- Lois Rose Rose (Los Angeles, CA)
- Dale Shults (Santa Monica, CA)
- Florine Sikking (Los Angeles, CA)
- M. Elizabeth Kelly (Los Angeles, CA)

Associate

- Betsy Amster (Los Angeles, CA)
- Pamela Mains (Henderson, NV)



SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE KINDLE

By Eric Stone

Recently, my publisher and agent have been looking into licensing the rights to publish my books for Amazon's Kindle. Several writer friends now have Kindles and have carried on enthusiastically about them. I'm not so sure.

One writer friend is currently reading a new book on a Kindle. The book was bought for less than the price of the hardback, or a trade paperback and there is every chance that the author received a much lower royalty on that sale than he would have on a traditional book sale. (And, if his contract is anything like mine, he probably only got half of the royalty (minus his agent's 15% of course), while the book's traditional publisher got the other half.) Good for my friend who saved money on the book and loves the Kindle. Good for Amazon who made most of the money. Good for the publisher who got half the royalty at virtually no cost to itself. Not so good for the author.

I've got some questions:

What are the royalties on Kindle sales? How often are statements issued? How often are they paid?

Is there any sort of advance payment?

Is Amazon's right to publish for the Kindle, exclusive? Is there a limit, time or otherwise, to that exclusivity? Kindle is a proprietary technology, so if they get exclusive rights to a book, it is very much as if we licensed the right to sell a book only to Barnes & Noble and not to Borders or any other bookstores. That seems like a bad idea. At the moment there isn't much competition for Kindle - although Sony makes an e-book reader - but in the future there will be.

If we, or our agent, upload the book ourselves (in essence, make

the sale ourselves), how is that affected by the existing contract with our traditional publisher - the one that says they get 50% of e-book sale proceeds (but, presumably only if they make that sale, because the contract only gives them "non-exclusive" rights to license subsidiary rights.

On the other hand, if we (my agent and I) are uploading the version of my books that my traditional publisher worked on - editing, formatting, cover art, etc. - then they probably are entitled to some percentage, even if they didn't make the "sale." But, probably it should be less than 50% since they aren't having to produce and distribute an actual book, and we're doing the work to upload the book, or the manuscript or whatever. If that is the case, what percent are they entitled to?

A lot of these issues are similar to those that led the screenwriters to go on strike last year. But, we book authors don't have the same sort of clout - very few of us have networks, advertisers and viewers dependent on our output.

At the moment, sales of e-books for the Kindle - and for Sony's reader - are pretty small. But they're growing. And as the technology improves, as more reading machines come on the market, as more books are available at lower prices, that market is going to grow - fast. And unless writers' contracts reflect these technological and market changes, writers are going to be on the losing end.

My standing instructions to the lawyer who reviews my contracts are: "As a writer, I realize that I'm going to get screwed. Just make sure that they use enough lube." The Kindle is going to require an additional application of grease to my contracts before I'm happy with it.

FORGOTTEN BOOKS

You probably remember **The Saint** from the 1960s TV show starring Roger Moore. And you might even recall him from the popular movies in the late thirties and early forties with the bone dry wit of George Sanders in the lead role. But do you remember the books on which they were based?

Author **Leslie Charteris** wrote the Saint books between 1928 and 1963, and there were hundreds of them. Later, he wrote with others and finally allowed others to author his creations.

The Saint, Simon Templar, seemed to have been a gentleman thief turned detective, but he wasn't too much of a gentleman to fear administering a bit of final justice of his own to the occasional crook. He lived on, not only in books, but in comic books, radio dramas, a stage play, and numerous movies, even as recently as 1997 with Val Vilmar in the title role.



NEW ADDRESS FOR NATIONAL MWA

MWA National's new address is:
Mystery Writers of America
1140 Broadway, Suite 1507
New York, NY 10001

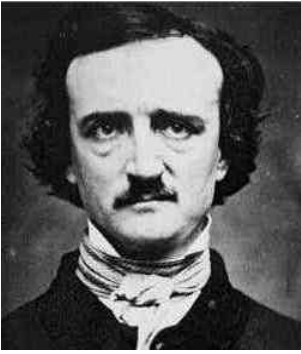
Phone, fax and email remain the same, but here they are again in case you need them:

Phone: 212.888.8171

Fax: 212.888.8107

Email: mwa@mysterywriters.org

Website: www.mysterywriters.org



Naw. This isn't me. It's Mr. Poe. Cheer him up and send something for the next newsletter.

YOUR EDITOR SPEAKS

Hi all. If you haven't already heard, you have a new editor for *The March of Crime*. I'm Jeri Westerson, a Los Angeles native and new author, looking forward to my debut medieval mystery VEIL OF LIES this November. If you don't want just my ramblings in this newsletter then you know what to do. Send me

articles, interviews, news, pictures, conference reports, and other southern California ephemera that we can include here.

Also, we've started a small insert of "Killer Quotes" from classic crime. Send us your fav quotes. And there is also another insert on your best

and most original promotional ideas. See the first one on page 6. You also might have noticed that I changed the format a weensy bit. Hope it meets with your approval. Please send any and all information to the **NEW** email address below:

TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com.

Send early. Send often!

The Crime Calendar

Mayhem in the Midlands—May 22-25, Omaha, NE, <http://www.omaha.lib.ne.us/mayhem/index.html>

Crimefest—June 5-8, Bristol, UK www.crimefest.com

Murder in the Grove—June 6-7, Boise, ID, www.murderinthegrove.com

Bloody Words—June 6-8, Toronto, Canada, bloodywords.com

International Mystery Writers Festival—June 12-22, Owensboro, KY <http://www.newmysteries.org/>

Hardboiled Heroes & Cozy Cats—June 13-14, Dallas, TX, <http://www.mwasw.org/>

Deadly Ink—June 20-22, Parsippany, NJ, www.deadlyink.com

Book Passage Mystery Writers Conf.—June 26-June 29, Corte Madera, CA <http://www.bookpassage.com/content.php?id=44>

Thrillerfest—July 9-10, New York, NY, <http://www.thrillerwriters.org/thrillerfest/>

West Hollywood Book Fair—Sept. 28, W. Hollywood, CA, www.westhollywoodbookfair.org/

Killer Nashville—Aug. 15-17, Nashville, TN, www.killernashville.com

Bouchercon 39—Oct. 9-12, Baltimore, MD, <http://www.charmedtodeath.com/>

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

Magna cum Murder—Oct. 24-26, Muncie, IN, www.magnacummurder.com

The Great Manhattan Mystery Conclave—Oct. 31—Nov. 2, Manhattan, KS, www.manhattanmysteries.com

New England Crimebake—Nov. 14-16, Lowell, MA, <http://crimebake.org/index.htm>

Tony Hillerman Writers Conference—Nov., Albuquerque, NM



JUST KEEP WRITING

By Pamela Samuels Young



For writers, coping with rejection comes with the territory. Though the way may be long, and even painful at times, persistence often pays off.

"I couldn't get arrested let alone published," says writer Jeri Westerson. But after 14 years and eleven completed manuscripts, her first novel, *Veil of Lies*, hits bookstores in October 2008.

Westerson has a binder full of rejection letters that she says range "from the ridiculous to the sublime." And once, about ten years ago, she even landed a deal, but the publisher went out of business before the book went to press. Now, she looks back on her years of rejection as "a blessing in disguise" because it forced her to become a better writer.

Westerson says her fortunes changed when she switched from writing historical novels to historical mysteries at the suggestion of a former agent. She also joined a critique group and advises other writers to do the same. "Get into a good critique group, people whom you trust, people who aren't close to you, who are

writers. They can give you honest feedback and you can learn to be more thick-skinned and take it. Things turned around for me when I took advice from my critique partners."

A background in graphic design also helped Westerson along her writing journey because she was used to dealing with clients who sometimes rejected or requested changes to her work. "You learned to not take it personally," she says.

Still, coping with rejection was never easy. "I wanted to give up plenty of times. I had spent a lot of money on paper, ink, postage, a few conferences, and time. What was the point of going on?"

But Westerson was determined to become a writer. So determined, in fact, that she found a job as a reporter and also wrote magazine articles and short stories. "I was so desperate to be paid for writing, to get some sort of validation that I was good at this," she says. "It proved to me that I could be paid for my writing and I think it helped me hone my style. But it wasn't the same as publishing a novel. I have to give the credit to my husband for standing by me and encouraging me for all those years."

Thriller writer Darrell James recently landed an agent after what he calls "a long and grueling process of submit . . . wait . . . deal with rejection . . . repeat."

James' short story, *Trust A Dead Man To Keep A Secret*, won the 2007 Deadly Ink award and his anthology, *Body Count: A Killer*

Collection, garnered both a 2007 Reviewers' Choice Award and a 2008 Eric Hoffer Award for Best New Writing.

Why was he finally successful in landing an agent after more than ten years of writing? "I became more experienced as time went on," James explains. "And second, I was willing to adjust. With each piece of learning, I was willing to rewrite my query, my synopsis, even the opening to the novel in order to make it the strongest presentation possible. Your first novel is not the place to be rigid."

J.A. Konrath, author of *Whiskey Sour*, takes determination to a new level. After penning ten manuscripts and racking up more than 500 rejection letters over a twelve-year period, he was rewarded with a six-figure, three-book deal.

"All writers get rejected," Konrath says. "It's part of the business. A rejection letter is proof you're working toward your goal."

Konrath has published more than sixty articles and short stories, as well as five novels, including his most recent, *Fuzzy Navel*. Two more novels, *Cherry Bomb* and *Afraid*, go on sale in 2009 under the pen name Jack Kilborn.

Just because he's a successful author doesn't mean an end to rejection. In fact, Konrath's rejections have now topped the 600 mark. "I still get stories rejected. When you're just starting out, quality is one of the main reasons for rejections. Work on improving your craft. But after you reach a certain point, the rejections are more about editor needs and good fits. Publishing is a business. If you want to sell stories, you need to understand what editors are buying."

Like the writers he represents, agent Paul Fedorko of Trident Media Group, also has to deal with rejection. "I go into denial," he says. "Then I realize that, like baseball, if you get a hit (not a homer), just a hit
Continued on Page 7

Pro-motions

Pamela Samuels Young has found that readings at beauty salons are a great way to promote her books. "It's the perfect captive audience," Pamela says. "The women like the idea of being entertained while they're getting their hair done. After hearing a short excerpt, they're ready to buy." Pamela prepared chap books for her thriller, *Murder on the Down Low*, and delivered them to local beauty salons. As a result, she has several book signings lined up.

"Keep Writing" Continued

about once every three times, you are pretty much a shoo-in for the Hall of Fame. That's what keeps me going. And just because an editor rejects it, doesn't mean it's not good, or shouldn't be published. It just means that that editor didn't 'see' it."

Fedorko offers the following advice to unpublished writers: "This is trite, but true—just keep writing and querying agents. At some point it will come together. And be serious about the work."

James agrees that it is essential to keep churning out new material. "I see a lot of beginning writers finish their first novel then sit around waiting for it to sell," he says. "There's a good chance the first one won't sell, then where are you? I recommend you have

a second one on the way as you're trying to sell the first, a third while you're trying to sell the second and first."

Westerson doesn't just echo James' advice, she follows it. "I have this habit of starting the next novel immediately upon finishing the last one," she says. "Since being involved in Sisters in Crime online, I learned that many authors of a series don't sell the first one, so I wrote the second one with the idea that it might become the first."

And that's exactly what happened. St. Martin's Minotaur imprint picked up her medieval noir, *Veil of Lies*, after rejecting the manuscript for the first book in Westerson's series 18 months earlier.

"This business is about persistence and luck," Konrath says. "The more you persist, the luckier you get. There's a word for a writer who never gives up . . . published."

Visit Konrath's blog, *A Newbie's Guide to Publishing*, at www.jakonrath.blogspot.com for loads of helpful information on the publishing industry.

*Pamela Samuels Young is the author of three legal thrillers, including her most recent novel, *Murder on the Down Low*.*



INTERVIEW WITH KRIS NERI

By Namoi Hirahara



This is part of an ongoing series on profiles of SoCal MWA's new board members.

For several years Kris Neri, with her flaming red hair, was a very visible, encouraging, and active member of the mystery community in Southern California. A former president of the Los Angeles chapter of Sisters in Crime, she taught mystery writing classes at UCLA Extension and collected Agatha, Anthony and Macavity Award

nominations for her Tracy Eaton mysteries. During this time, she also established herself as a skilled short story writer—penning more than 60 of them—and garnering multiple Derringer Awards and Pushcart Prize nominations.

In 2005 Kris and her husband Joe made a major life and job change. They moved from Los Angeles to the beautiful and serene resort area of Sedona to open an independent bookstore, The Well Red Coyote. In a relatively short time, The Well Red Coyote established a strong reputation and was voted Best Bookstore in Sedona in 2006 and 2007. Store events include not only books signings, book club meetings, and writing workshops, but also personal growth, alternative health and spiritual seminars, art demonstrations and live musical performances.

Although busy with the day-to-day operations of an independent bookstore, Kris has continued to have ties to her former home. She teaches online classes through UCLA Extension and is a board member of the Southern California chapter of MWA, which also represents members in other Southwestern states, including Arizona.

Why did you and your husband decide to jump into independent bookselling (especially in light of the increasing dominance of big-box retailers and Internet resellers)? And why in Sedona?

We'd been thinking about it for years. We're lifelong book lovers and lifelong independent bookstore lovers. We'd also been visiting Sedona for around 20 years and hoped to move there. Since we thought Sedona needed a really top-notch bookstore, it

all came together. Sedona's residents are quite independent-minded. They're the kind of people who'd rather shop in the locally-owned hardware store than to drive to the Home Depot in a neighboring town. And as a highly-literate people, they really prefer shopping in an independent bookstore. We hoped to build a vital community gathering spot, and we're thrilled by how well Sedona has embraced our vision. But Sedona also attracts about five million visitors a year, and loads of them love to connect with independent stores as well. Many of our visitors tell us how much shopping in our store has added to their trip. It's been enormously gratifying that so many people recognize what we've built in a few short years.

What mystery book trends are you seeing in your store?

In terms of format, we're

"Interview" continued

seeing a decline of hardcover mysteries, especially since the prices of many hardcover mysteries are climbing. Our strongest sales are cross-genre and non-traditional mysteries, such as literary and fantasy-mysteries.

Groundbreaking, atypical mysteries—new and different rules. Thriller sales remain strong, too. But most sub-genres are solid sellers for us.

What are you learning about the position of a bookseller that you didn't know before as an author?

I don't think I've learned much about booksellers, other than the fact that they work harder than I ever knew. But I've always thought they were an invaluable part of the success of most midlist authors. I've been enormously grateful for the support booksellers have given me as an author, and now that I see the job from the other side of the counter, I know how much effort that support entails.

However, as a new bookseller and an author myself, I am appalled by how badly some authors behave. We've had appearing authors brag to people at their signings about not reading, as if reading is uncool, and authors who advise audience members to buy books from Amazon. We've had authors show up hours late for scheduled appearances, who were at their hotels resting and just assumed people would wait, authors who came totally unprepared to present the workshops, and authors who've said to attendees, as people were walking out, "They want me to stop talk now, but I won't." We've also had a few authors bring copies of their own books and

try to sell them to our customers for cash, rather than the copies of their books that we ordered. I'm sorry to say all of those things have been done by nationally-published mystery authors. Considering how hard it is to get and stay published, I'm shocked by how careless some authors are about their sales.

Authors seem to be cutting back on book touring and signings. What advice can you give them to make the events that they do the most effective?

We haven't found that to be true. Most months we have more requests for events than the spaces we have. I'd advise authors to trust booksellers to know what works in their stores. Every market is different, and every bookseller knows her customers. With independent bookstores, one size does not fit all. I'd also advise authors to do whatever they can to bring people in, rather than merely relying on the stores, which is mostly what we see. Bookstores use all their resources to make an audience for every author who appears, but they can't always reach the author's own contacts. Believe me, booksellers remember those authors who help, and really put their support behind their books.

You also have been teaching mystery writing through UCLA Extension for several years. What are some of the common mistakes new writers often make?

Too much back story, told too early in the book, is one critical mistake. Newish

writers sometimes think that they have to provide the entire history the characters share, or we won't understand the tension between them. But unexplained tension provides a good hook. Also, the solution to the mystery often lies within that back story, so telling too much can completely blow the mystery. Another mistake I see is the mishandling and breaking of point of view. Some new writers simply can't grasp when they're head-hopping. Lastly, I'd say characters that aren't developed richly enough. We need characters that are every bit as layered and well textured as any other category of fiction, all with distinctive voices, but what I see too often are a cast of characters that are all loosely based on the writer of that manuscript, all of whom speak in the writer's voice.

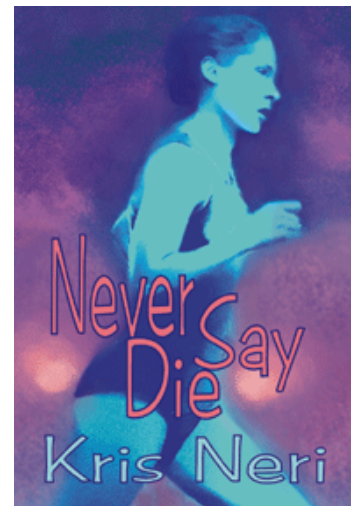
You're overseeing the Arizona SoCal meeting, aren't you?

I am! On Friday, August 1, we'll start with a reception at our store at 3 p.m., which is sponsored by the chapter. That's for members and the public, to give everyone a chance to mingle. Then at 6 p.m., we'll go to the Sedona

Public Library for a panel discussion, featuring Arizona authors Betty Webb, Donis Casey, Kerrie Drogan and Ben Small. Finally, we'll go out to dinner together. It should be a fun evening.

Kris's next title will be a collection of her short stories, *The Rose in the Snow: Tales of Mischief and Mayhem*, which will be released in Fall 2008. She is also the author of the standalone thriller, *Never Say Die*

The Well Red Coyote is located at 3190 W. Highway 89A, Suite #400, Sedona, AZ 86336. Web site is www.wellredcoyote.com.



Complete Range of Editorial Services

Professional editor and published author offers complete editorial workout to new and experienced mystery writers.



Benefit from years of editorial experience at major publishing houses. Honest evaluation, sensitive critique, plot/character development, line editing, rewrites.

Helga Schier, Ph.D.: 310-828-8421, withpenandpaper@verizon.net

DON'T GET BYTTEN

Sell Me the Damned Music, Already

By Ben Malisow

As writers, we live by intellectual property. If we didn't have the right to sell the fruit of our labors, we wouldn't be able to eat. Or pay rent. Or get the best new games for our Playstation 3 consoles. So we should all feel pretty glad that we live in a culture that respects artists enough to ensure that they are able to seek remuneration for their efforts, and protect their right to bargain with their own products.

I'm down with that. I'm quite pleased that I can sit at my keyboard, pound the keys like a monkey for a while, then get some money for the final result. I therefore understand that our nation needs a certain amount of legislation and enforcement to maintain that setup. I understand why we need copyright law, and trademarks, and why people and companies are very careful about guarding their property.

So I play by the rules, for the most part. I use a popular online service to buy the music I listen to on my portable player. When I was teaching, my students were always amazed that I didn't just download my music for free. I would explain to them why it was important that creators were allowed to control their own creations. I would tell them how four of my students (two in high school, two in college) had been busted for music piracy in the three years I'd been teaching.

They never paid attention—the odds were in their favor.

Still, I continue to gratefully shell out a buck per song, because I find it economical,

simple, and a small price to pay to support another artist.

I recently had a problem, though, with the second element of that list...the "simple" part.

When I logged onto the shopping function of my download service, it asked if I wanted to update my software to the newest version before I made my purchases. I declined the offer, and instead indicated that I wanted to just buy the music in my shopping cart.

It asked me again if I wanted to upgrade my software. I declined.

It asked again.

This had now become a matter of principle.

I closed the software and restarted it. Same thing. I rebooted my machine. Same.

It would not let me just buy the damn music.

I finally agreed, beaten, to install the new version of the stupid software. Then it asked me to log in. I tried to remember my login info, and had to use the function that let me recover my password. I had to go to my e-mail, wait for the message with my login info, reset the password, then log in again.

And here's the disconnect that some executives in the music distribution industry must not understand: I want to do the right thing. I want to pay for the music. But if you continue to make it difficult for me to do so, I will find another, easier route to get it.

In this case, I had used the service before, buying music on a number of occasions. This was not a new account I was

Continued on Back Page

Transom Notes

Jan Burke's "The Fallen," her newest short story, appears in the August 2008 issue of *Ellery Queen*. Her supernatural thriller, *The Messenger*, will be published by Simon & Schuster in January, 2009.

Naomi Hirahara's first middle-grade novel, *1001 Cranes* (Delacorte), will be launched on Saturday, August 16, at 4 p.m. at the Japanese American National Museum, 369 E. First St., in Los Angeles. This will be during the Nisei Week Japanese Festival, so there will various other activities taking place in the area: taiko drumming, flower arranging, etc. She'll also be doing events at Southern California mystery bookstores, so check her websites, www.naomihirahara.com, and www.1001cranesbook.com, frequently for updates. Naomi also recently signed a contract with St. Martin's/Thomas Dunne for the hardcover release of her fourth Mas Arai mystery, expected in the fall of 2009.

Jeri Westerson, who is anxiously awaiting her debut novel *Veil of Lies; A Medieval Noir*, from St. Martin's Minotaur this November, has just signed with SMP for the second in this medieval mystery series entitled *Serpent in the Thorns*, available sometime in 2009. www.JeriWesterson.com

Edward Wright's first standalone, *Damnation Falls*, will be published by St. Martin's Minotaur in August. Wright is author of the John Ray Horn series, set in 1940s Los Angeles, and his last book, *Red Sky Lament*, won Britain's Ellis Peters Historical Crime Award.

Gary C. King has a new book being published in September called *An Almost Perfect Murder*. It is a true crime from Pinnacle Books, a Kensington Publishing Corporation imprint. He's also working on a book about the Canadian pig farmer serial killer, Robert Pickton. It's called, *Butchered!* available in April 2009. (Pickton, readers will recall, is the pig farmer-turned-serial-killer believed responsible for the deaths of possibly as many as 49 women. There will actually be two editions of the book. In the U.S., it will be called *Butchered!* In Canada, it will be called *The Pig Farm Murders*, or something similar.)

Bruce Cook/Brant Randall has some book trailers. Here are links to two new trailers created for BEA. His first novel *Philippine Fever* was a USA BookNews Best Mystery finalist in 2007. *Philippine Fever* trailer at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-KQ6QMam90> His current novel *Blood Harvest*, written as Brant Randall, is set in 1920s New England and concerns Prohibition, moonshiners, immigrants, and the KKK. *Blood Harvest* trailer at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAJM6Nbbq9Q>

MARCH OF CRIME



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building. They have my credit card information on file, and I have a history of purchasing with them. I am also not a computer novice– I am comfortable with most software applications, and online transactions, and a variety of other electronic capabilities. And *still* it was a pain in the ass to buy the songs.

Consumers, by and large, want to do the right thing (adults, anyway). They understand it's in their best interest...and they really don't want to pay the consequences for getting caught doing something wrong. If you want to make money off consumers, it's not all that difficult– they are willing to pay a good price for a good product.

However, making the process arduous or frustrating is a sure way to lose business. As purchasers, we are very quick to pick a new way of spending our money if the old way is more difficult, expensive, or annoying.

Remember the power you have when you're shopping, especially online– you can always choose another vendor, if one exists...or just decide not to make the purchase at all.

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, a book on counterterrorism from Chelsea House, is due out next 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.*



EDDIE'S ENDNOTES

Supplement to The March of Crime Newsletter

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA—LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

ARIZONA CRIME WAVE

By Kris Neri



Arizona MWA Members...the SoCal chapter will converge on Sedona, Arizona for its annual **AZ Meeting, on Friday, August 1**, when some of Arizona's most illustrious mystery, suspense, and true crime authors will appear at the Sedona Public Library as part of its 50th anniversary celebration. This is a great chance to kick off a weekend in Sedona's beautiful red rock country and meet MWA members from all over the state.

The Arizona Crime Wave will begin with an informal reception, sponsored by the SoCal chapter, at The Well Red Coyote bookstore from 3 pm – where we'll meet and mingle with other members over wine and goodies.

Then at 6 pm, we'll gather at the library for a lively panel discussion that will cover all aspects of the mystery genre. Featured on this all-star line-up will be:

Tempe author, Donis Casey, the author of the award-winning Alafair Tucker mystery series. Set in historical Oklahoma and proudly proclaiming the independent spirit she learned growing up there, her titles include *The Drop Edge of Yonder*, *Hornswoggled* and *The Old Buzzard had it Coming*.

Anthem criminal defense attorney, Kerrie Droban, is the author of *In the Company of Darkness* and *The*

Watchman's Circle, which won the Daphne Du Maurier Award, and the true crime, *Running with the Devil: The True Story of ATF's Infiltration of Arizona Hell's Angels*.

Ben Small, a Tucson trial lawyer, is the author of *Alibi On Ice* and *The Olive Horseshoe*, which best-selling author Vince Flynn describes as "Fast and hard, with terrific characters and gripping suspense."

Betty Webb, Scottsdale author, journalist and book reviewer, writes the Lena Jones detective series – *Desert Run*, *Desert Shadows*, *Desert Wives*, *Desert Noir* and *Desert Cut* – which has garnered rave reviews from the NY Times, Chicago Tribune and other prestigious national publications.

Moderating the panel will be Kris Neri,

award-winning mystery author, co-owner of The Well Red Coyote bookstore, and SoCal board member.

After the presentation, members will gather in Sedona for a no-host dinner at Casa Bonita in West Sedona (89A & Coffee Pot). RSVP's appreciated for both the reception and the no-host dinner at books@wellredcoyote.com or 928-282-2284.

The Well Red Coyote is located at 3190 W. Highway 89A, and the Sedona Public Library is at 3250 White Bear Road, both in West Sedona, Arizona. For directions, see <http://www.wellredcoyote.com/directions.html>.

For Sedona and lodging information, visit <http://www.wellredcoyote.com/sedona.html>.



Gumbo Party!

Bill Fitzhugh is hosting a chapter Gumbo Party in his home, and all members and guests are invited. He is providing all the food and SoCalMWA is providing the beer, wine, water, and soft drinks. If you want anything harder than that, it's BYOB. Did I mention the event is free!

Saturday, August 23rd

6 pm

23062 Sylvan Street

Woodland Hills, CA 91367

RSVP mail@billfitzhugh.com

This flyer is a supplement to the Los Angeles Chapter Mystery Writers of America newsletter The March of Crime. All correspondence should be sent to the editor at TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com