

September 2007

# **THE MARCH OF CRIME**

*MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA – SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER*



## **Exiting to Applause: Eric Stone**



*Eric Stone lives in the Silverlake region of Los Angeles. His website is: <http://www.ericstone.com>*

Eric Stone has not only served as a member of the SoCal MWA Board of Directors for the last two years, he has also served as the editor of *The March of Crime* for the last year. To dedicate more time to his writing and his upcoming book tour, he has decided to edit his last *TMOC*. Eric exits the stage to well-deserved applause and sincere thanks.

Eric's most recent book is *Grave Imports*, the second in his Ray Sharp series, a detective thriller set in Asia and based on true stories. It deals with the deadly world of the trading of looted Cambodian antiquities. His previous books include *Wrong Side of the Wall* – a true crime/sports biography, and *The Living Room of the Dead*, the first Ray Sharp book, based on the true story of Russian traffic in prostitutes to Asia.

Eric worked for many years as a journalist in the U.S. and Asia, covering everything from economics to crime, politics to sex. He once wrote an Advice to the Lovelorn column in a bilingual Chinese-English fashion magazine. He hopes to stay active in our MWA chapter. He has scheduled a grueling book tour, then will depart for extended time in Asia next year.

*-Randall Hicks (new editor)*

## **MWA's New Publisher Policy: National office to address questions in October issue**

In the May issue of *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree*, the national MWA Board of Directors presented its new publisher standards. These revised guidelines have resulted in the removal of some authors' publishers from the approved list, affecting authors seeking active status as well as Edgar eligibility. Further, some mystery conventions appear to be voluntarily following the same guidelines in determining which attendees will be given "author status" (to appear on panels, etc.).

Many members support the new guidelines, but the public mystery forums on the internet and elsewhere have been filled with critical comments regarding the new policy from others in opposition. This appears to be an issue which is not going away

on its own, and about which there is a great deal of emotion and confusion. For this reason I've asked for member questions. In turn, MWA national has stated it welcomes these inquiries and the chance to respond. Your questions, and MWA's answers, will appear in the next issue of *The March of Crime*. (MWA has indicated it may even elect to republish in the national newsletter to aid in addressing the issue to all members.)

This means there is still time to send in your questions (until Sept 18<sup>th</sup>) to: [editor@socalmwa.com](mailto:editor@socalmwa.com) or [randy@randall-hicks.com](mailto:randy@randall-hicks.com). It's preferred you sign your name to the email so it can be attributed to you, but anonymous questions by members will be accepted.

*-Randall Hicks*

## **September Luncheon:**

Amateur Detectives is the theme and you won't want to miss this great panel of writers: Harley Jane Kozak, Susan Kandel, Bob Levinson and Patricia Smiley! Crime fiction is replete with police officers or private investigators as crime-solving protagonists, but what currency can writers draw upon in plotting the actions of a civilian main character and not challenge the reader's "willing suspension of disbelief?" The panel will address the limitations and opportunities in the case of an amateur sleuth as a hero.

ROBERT S. LEVINSON (moderator) is the bestselling author of thrillers including *Where the Lies Begin*, *Ask a Dead Man*, *Hot Paint*, *The James Dean Affair*, and the forthcoming *In The Key of Death* as well as a three-time *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* Readers Award top ten finisher. He's currently in two short story anthologies, *The Deadly Bride* and *21 of the Year's Finest Crime and Mystery Stories* and *Hollywood and Crime*, while his play, *Transcript*, had its world premiere at the RiverPark Center in Owensboro, KY, in June. Bob, past president of the Southern California chapter, served four years on MWA's national board.

SUSAN KANDEL's debut novel *I DREAMED I MARRIED PERRY MASON* about biographer Cece Caruso was nominated for an Agatha and became a Los Angeles Times Bestseller. Her second, *NOT A GIRL DETECTIVE*, was selected as a "Best Novel" nominee by the Southern California Bookseller's Association. Her third in the series is *SHAMUS IN THE GREEN ROOM* and her fourth is *CHRISTIETOWN*.

HARLEY JANE KOZAK's debut novel, *DATING DEAD MEN*, about graphic artist and greeting card designer Wollie Shelley won many awards including the Agatha, Anthony, and Macavity and is followed by *DATING IS MURDER* and *DEAD EX*. Her short prose has appeared in Ms. Magazine, Soap Opera Digest, The Sun, The Santa Monica Review, and the anthologies *Mystery Muses* and *This is Chick Lit*. She is currently working on the fourth novel in the series.

PATRICIA SMILEY's debut novel *FALSE PROFITS* about Los Angeles management consultant Tucker Sinclair received a starred review from Booklist and was a Book Sense recommendation. Her follow-up novel *COVER YOUR ASSETS* was a RomanticTimes Top Pick. Both novels were Los Angeles Times Bestsellers. *SHORT CHANGE* is the third in the series. Her fourth novel is set for release in June of 2008.

### **RESERVATION FORM: Sunday, September 23, 2007 / Taix French Restaurant**

1911 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026

No host bar at 11:00 a.m., Luncheon at noon, Program at 1:00 p.m.

\$25 member or guest – if paid in advance my mail or online - \$30 at the door

Make checks payable to MWA-SoCal and send to 12021 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 506, Los Angeles, CA 90025

Or, reserve and pay (with PayPal) online at <http://www.socalmwa.com> (click on "reservations").

Member's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ or e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please specify entrée for each attendee

Member

Guest

Chilled Salmon Salad

Chicken Marsala

Penne Pasta Monegasque (vegetarian)

## PRESIDENT'S RAP

I'm just finishing up an anthology of essays, letters, and reviews that appeared in *The Bookman* from 1895 to 1933. *The Bookman* isn't well-remembered now, but in its day, the magazine was the literary forum for authors and readers. It had the first best-seller lists, extensive reviews, and lively opinions about all sorts of books. The term "Sherlockian" was coined by one of its editors, and it's great fun to read the contemporary speculations about Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles* as that greatest of mystery novels appeared in serial form.

I was especially struck, however, by several informal lists that appeared in the magazine. In 1895, A. P. Watt, the greatest literary agent of the day (whose clients included Henry James, H. Rider Haggard, Bret Harte, and Wilkie Collins, and later, the estates of G. K. Chesterton, Rudyard Kipling, H. G. Wells, R. Austin Freeman, Arthur Morrison, Baroness Orczy, William Butler Yeats, and W. Somerset Maugham), was asked to name his "big-ticket" clients, those for whom he could achieve the highest bids: "Mr. Brett Harte, Mr. [Walter] Besant, Mr. [H. Rider] Haggard, Anthony Hope; and among the other sex, Annie Swan, Olive Schreiner, Mrs. [William Kingdon] Clifford, Mrs. [Pearl] Craigie, and Mrs. Harrison (Lucas Mallet). Mr. Kipling, Dr. Doyle, Mr. [Samuel Rutherford] Crockett, and Mr. Stanley Weyman." With the exceptions of Harte, Haggard, Kipling, Doyle, and possibly Haggard, all of the rest are lost to obscurity.

Similarly, in 1912, Conan Doyle was interviewed in *The Bookman* by his friend Robert Barr (*The Triumphs of Eugene Valmont*) and asked to name a dozen great British writers (in answer to Samuel Dean Howells's charge that greatness among English writers was a thing of the past). Doyle rattled off "[J. M.]Barrie, Kipling, Mrs. Olive Schreiber, Sarah Grand, Miss [Beatrice] Harraden, Gilbert Parker, [Arthur] Quiller-Couch, Hall Caine, [Robert Louis] Stevenson, Stanley Wyman, Anthony Hope, Crockett, Rider Haggard, [Jerome K.] Jerome, [Israel] Zangwill, Clark Russell, George Moore."

Putting aside some spelling errors (Schreiner, not Schreiber, and Weyman, not Wyman), the coincidences on the two men's list are interesting, but even more interesting is Conan Doyle's addition of eight more names known only to scholars of the period.

*Sic transit gloria?* Or is most writing inevitably bound by its period, its time-frame? Interestingly, with the exception of Conan Doyle himself, not a one of the writers named by either source could be classed as a mystery writer. Mystery writing has its defenders, who see that at its best, it is "serious" literature, meaning – presumably – writing with serious intentions. Mystery writing also has its detractors – who cares who killed Roger Ackroyd? – who cares that it provides only entertainment and distraction.

George Orwell, in an essay in 1946, tried to analyze his urge to write: "All writers are vain, selfish, and lazy, and at the very bottom of their motives there lies a mystery. Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand. For all one knows that demon is simply the same instinct that makes a baby squall for attention. And yet it is also true that one can write nothing readable unless one constantly struggles to efface one's own personality. Good prose is like a windowpane."

The primary motives of authors, Orwell thought, were (1) sheer egotism, (2) aesthetic enthusiasm – the creation of beauty, (3) historical impulse (the recordation of events), and (4) political purpose – that is, an agenda. Orwell saw the latter as his strongest motivation. Surely most, if not all, mystery writers admit that their motivation is not economic. So, if it isn't the money and it isn't immortality – what's left? Perhaps, if we're honest with ourselves, it's simply the pleasure of telling a story, whether fiction or nonfiction, and hoping that someone will listen.

-Les Klinger

## **Transom Notes**

*Note to members: We can't know about your upcoming book or event unless you tell us! Send your announcements to [sheila@sheilalowe.com](mailto:sheila@sheilalowe.com). She will compile them and submit them to the editor.*

### **SoCalMWA Member Workshops and Events**

September 14-16 – It's a Crime! Creating Suspense in the Mystery Novel. This intensive workshop at The Villa Rosa, a inn in Santa Barbara, with **Melodie Johnson Howe**, author of the Edgar, Agatha and Anthony Award-nominated *The Mother Shadow* and other works, will explore how voice, characterization and a sense of place create emotional tension and conflict. Visit <http://www.sbwritersconference.com> for more information.

Thursday, September 17 at 7 pm -- **Gay Tolt Kinman** will lead a Mini-Mystery Writing Class. Students can expect an interactive, fun class using the elements that all mystery writers use in their stories, and they will be expected to come up with the plot. Held at The Mystery Bookstore in Westwood. Kinman has a library degree and a law degree. For more information go to: <http://www.gaykinman.com> (The remaining class sessions will be in October and November. On Thursday, October 11 at 7 pm -- **Linda O. Johnston** will talk about how to take an idea that's been done before and make it yours. Linda has successfully done this with mysteries about lawyers and mysteries about pets. Johnson is a practicing attorney and writer. On Thursday, November 8 at 7 pm -- **Joan Blacher Ph.D.** on Mysterious Settings. The setting is the backdrop for a mystery novel, and the world in which the action takes place. This workshop will cover developing a rich and vivid setting that creates a mood and plays an integral part in your story. Blacher is a psychologist and author of both fiction and non-fiction.

Thursday, Sept 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. – **Don Winslow** will sign and read from *The Winter of Frankie Machine* (just released in trade paperback) at Diesel, A Bookstore, 3890 Cross Creek Road, Malibu, 310-456-9961.

Saturday, September 29 -- **Pamela Samuels-Young** is leading a day-long seminar in Los Angeles on How to Write a Novel Despite Your Day Job. Contact her for information at <http://www.pamelasamuels-young.com>.

### **In other news...**

**Twist Phelan's** new book *False Fortune* (Poisoned Pen Press) is set for release in September, 2007. She also had a short story, "Crime Wave" in CrimeSpree Magazine, July/August, 2007 issue. <http://www.twistphelan.com>

**Randall Hicks's** second title in his Toby Dillon series, *Baby Crimes* (WordSlinger) is set for release in September, 2007, and also has a non-fiction book, *ADOPTION: The Ultimate Guide to Adopting Quickly and Safely* (Penguin/Perigee) is due in October. <http://www.BabyCrimes.com>.

**Phyllis Morreale-de la Garza** reports that she might have solved the mystery of what happened to Katie Bender, the Kansas murderess whose family ran a murder farm on the Kansas frontier in the 1870s. When 11 bodies were discovered in the Bender apple orchard, the Benders skipped and nobody knows what happened to them. Her book, *Death For Dinner, The Benders of Old Kansas*, brought a contact from a reader with a lead about two Benders she found in a historic cemetery in Colorado and the search was on. True West magazine is preparing an article on her findings. [phyllmorr@hotmail.com](mailto:phyllmorr@hotmail.com)

**TRANSOM NOTES (Cont'd)**

It may not be a mystery but **Jack Nerad's** new book has just hit the shelves. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Hybrids and Alternative Fuel Cars*, Jack's second title in *The Complete Idiot's Guide* series reflects his "day job" as Executive Editorial Director of Kelley Blue Book and kbb.com, the most-visited automotive Web site in the world. <http://www.jack.r.nerad@carwars.org>

UsWeekly.com has been featuring **Sheila Lowe's** signature analyses of Cameron Diaz, Jessica Simpson, and others. Some of these signatures are mysteries in themselves!

*-Compiled by Sheila Lowe*

## Fresh Blood

### ACTIVE

Hal Glatzer, pka Hannah Dobryn (Hilo, HI)  
Dorothy Howell (Rosamond, CA)  
Jeri Westerson (Menifee, CA)

### AFFILIATE

Stephen Blackmoore (Los Angeles, CA)  
Joe Porrazzo (Sahuarita, AZ)  
Julie M. Rivett (Los Alamitos, CA)

*Welcome to our  
new members!*

## Yes, I'm begging!

*The March of Crime* is at its best with articles from members, information about your new book coming out, and signings. Please submit your articles to me, hopefully with a 700 word limit, to [editor@socalmwa.com](mailto:editor@socalmwa.com) Information about signings and new books go to [sheila@sheilalowe.com](mailto:sheila@sheilalowe.com)

Thanks!

*-Randall Hicks*

## West Hollywood Book Fair is Approaching

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual West Hollywood Book Fair will be held Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup> at West Hollywood Park from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The park is located at 647 N. San Vicente and parking is available across the street at the Blue Whale. The Fair attracts over 20,000 readers each year and will include more than 300 authors and celebrities doing readings, panels and performances. This year SoCal MWA is sponsoring a panel (chaired by James Lincoln Warren) and has arranged for a table adjacent to Crime Time Books and Sisters in Crime

(near the Mystery and Suspense Pavilion). As usual, we'd like to "staff" the table with two members per hour, to talk up membership in SoCal MWA, and sign books. With sufficient notice, Crime Time hopes to arrange to have your books for sale. For information visit:

<http://www.westhollywoodbookfair.org>.

Gay Kinman will coordinate the table this year. Thanks, Gay! Questions? Email Gay: [gkinman@juno.com](mailto:gtkinman@juno.com).



## **Award Notables**

Congratulations to **Paul Levine** and **Denise Hamilton**, nominees for the Southern California Independent Booksellers Association award. The winners will be announced October 20<sup>th</sup>. Visit <http://www.scbabooks.org/scbabookaward.html>. Also, congratulations to Sisters in Crime member **Crista Faust** for her win from the International Association of Media Tie-In Writers for *Snakes on a Plane*.

## **The Crime Calendar**

Wrangling With Writing – Sept. 15-16, Tucson, Arizona <http://www.ssa.az.org/conference.htm>

Bouchercon – Sept. 27-30, Anchorage, Alaska <http://www.bouchercon2007.com>

Great Manhattan Mystery Conclave – Sept. 28-30, Manhattan, Kansas <http://www.manhattanmysteries.com>

West Hollywood Book Fair – Sept 30, West Hollywood, CA <http://www.westhollywoodbookfair.org/>

Cape Fear Crime Festival – October 26-28, Wilmington, NC <http://www.capefearcrimefestival.org/>

Magna Cum Murder – October 26-28, Muncie, Indiana <http://www.magnacummurder.com>

Men of Mystery – November 3, Irvine, CA Contact [jhansen36@juno.com](mailto:jhansen36@juno.com)

New England Crimebake – November 9-11, Lowell, MA <http://www.mwane.org/crimebake/>

Left Coast Crime – March 6-9, 2008, Denver, CO <http://www.lcc2008.com>

Las Vegas Writers Conference – April 17-19, 2008, Las Vegas, NV  
<http://www.lasvegaswritersconference.com>

## **COMPUTER SECURITY: *DON'T GET BYTTEN***

You hear about these “firewall” things. They’re all over computer ads, and marketed to computer users... heck, there was even a Harrison Ford movie that used the word as a title.

So what are they?

Like their physical-security counterparts, firewalls prevent stuff from going from one side of a partition to another. Unlike physical firewalls, information firewalls do not keep literal flames

from going to another room in your home... instead, they keep unwanted material outside your computer, and keep private material in.

How do they work? Well, picture your computer’s connection to the outside world (say, your Internet connection) as a line of holes, instead of just one big pipe. Each of those holes represents a logical “port,” an electronic perforation that lets

*(Cont’d on page 7)*

(Cont'd from page 6) data back and forth between your computer and whatever else it may be connected to. For most basic residential communication needs, there are only a few ports that need to be "open": the port that allows e-mail, for instance, or the port that allows your computer to view web pages, etc. There are, however, thousands of ports available to your computer.

One of the things a firewall does is plug all the unnecessary holes between your computer and any other communications devices. If you need to see the worldwide web, it allows that traffic. If you need to get e-mail, the firewall keeps that port open.

The other thing it should do is monitor the actual traffic through those few open ports. While it can't literally "read" the data flowing back and forth, it can recognize certain characteristics of that information, such as what size it is, where it is coming from, whether you solicited it, and so forth.

By examining certain traits related to the data, a firewall can often determine what is "good" information, and what is malicious code or hack attempts. It can tell when someone is trying to break in, and it can tell when someone has broken in surreptitiously, and is trying to smuggle data out of your system.

They come in both hardware and software formats, allowing firewalls to actually, literally prevent electronic data to pass from your computer outwards (in the case of hardware) or using sophisticated software to enforce logical rules (in the case of software).

All of this is the general idea of firewalls, anyway. The reality is far more annoying.

What firewalls really do is snoop on you. They often report to nobody but you, so you're really just snooping on yourself, but they act as automated nags, designed to tell you what you meant to tell yourself. And, in my experience, users eventually learn to handle the self-nagging tool in one of two ways: automatically ignoring it during every single alert it issues, or turning the damned thing off.

Having your computer tell you how to operate your computer is worse than annoying: it's counter to the whole notion of having a computer in the first place. Remember those cars that used to tell you, "The door is ajar"? We don't see them much, anymore, do we? The reason is that anybody stupid enough to need their car to tell them not to drive around with their door open shouldn't be operating a motor vehicle in the first place...and will probably

die soon (probably be falling out of a moving car). Everyone else - that is, repeat customers - was only annoyed by Talking Cars.

Same goes for firewalls. They are the talking cars of today. If you operate a large company with a substantial web presence, get a firewall. If you are a web-based business, get a firewall. If you are famous and have a website, get a firewall. Hire a professional to configure it so that it never bothers you when you are using your computer, and alerts the professional when it's under attack.

If you're a simple user at home, forget firewalls.

I turned off the one that came with my computer. At best, it was annoying - at worst, it kept me from doing what I wanted to do online.

*-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 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.

Questions, or suggestions for computer-related articles, can be directed to Ben at:

<http://www.benmalisow.com>.

**Don't forget the  
September meeting.**

**Good food,  
conversation,  
and get to know your fellow  
SoCal mystery writers!**

**What could be better?**



# TMOC

## MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA

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To submit material for *The March of Crime*,  
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[www.SoCalMWA.com](http://www.SoCalMWA.com) for information.

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