



THE MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA - SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER
SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2011

SOCAL MWA SUMMER BASH AT MYSTERIOUS GALAXY REDONDO BEACH

SoCal MWA's Summer Bash took place at the new, yet to be opened, Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore on August 6. MGB is planning for a soft opening of the new store in late August, with an official Grand Opening of the new Redondo Beach location in October. Special author events will take place throughout the month.



Rickey Young, Pamela Samuels-Young, Stephen Blackmoore, Matt Coyle (back to camera). Photo by Darrell James.



Mysterious Galaxy co-owner Terry Gilliam with SoCal MWA President Gary Phillips. Photo by Darrell James.



Jeri Westerson and husband Craig, who supplied his infamous homemade beer. Photo by Darrell James.

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THE PRESIDENT'S RAP SHEET GARY PHILLIPS

The other shoe dropped and Borders, the nation's second largest book store chain, is toast. In the mid-'90s when owned by Kmart, which also owned Waldenbooks, sales at 158 Borders super stores totaled \$979.1 million, nearly equal to the \$979.7 million at 961 Waldenbooks locations. Eventually Borders and Waldenbooks spun off as its own entity under the Borders Group banner. Borders added superstores for 14 consecutive years from 1992 through 2006. At its peak in 2003, the Borders Group operated some 1,249 stores nationwide. Today there are at least 3,000 claims filed against Borders for monies and/or merchandise owed with publishers such as Penguin Putnam Inc. seeking \$41 million, Harper Collins demanding close to \$26 million, and so on.

While there are those who see Borders demise as an opportunity for more independent bookstores to flourish, there are cautious voices as well. Emily Pullen back in February on the Skylight Book (one of our truly great indie bookstores in the Los Feliz area) blog noted the store's employees weren't exactly doing handstands because of the chain's then downsizing. She pointed out plenty of indie employees started in the chains and quoted the former president of the American Booksellers Association, Gayle Shanks, who suggested the biggest loss with Borders going will be the diversity of the marketplace – crucial to the

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

Editors: Natascha Jaffa
David J Sherman

Opinions expressed herein are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Mystery Writers of America, or of the Southern California Chapter.



Mystery Writers of America
Southern California Chapter
PO Box 55215
Sherman Oaks CA 91413
info@socalmwa.com
<http://www.socalmwa.com>

CHAPTER OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: GARY PHILLIPS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: DEBORAH ATKINSON
JAMES SCOTT BELL
RICHARD BREWER
TYLER DILTS
CHRISTA FAUST
DARRELL JAMES
GAY TOLTL KINMAN
PAMELA SAMUELS YOUNG
JERI WESTERSON

EX-OFFICIO: NAOMI HIRAHARA

NATIONAL OFFICE
Mystery Writers of America
1140 Broadway #1507
New York NY 10001
212.888.8171 / 212.888.8107 (fax)
mwa@mysterywriters.org
<http://www.mysterywriters.org>

YOUR EDITORS SPEAK NATASCHA JAFFA & DAVID J SHERMAN



This issue is my turn to introduce myself as one of the new editors of *The March of Crime*. My name is Natascha Jaffa (weird spelling, I know) and I have been a member of the chapter, and Mystery Writers of America, for about a year. I'm also a member of two chapters within Romance Writers of America, Las Vegas Romance Writers (because I live in Vegas) and The Kiss of Death Suspense chapter.

I've dedicated the last four years of my life making a career for myself in the publishing industry as a copy editor while I write my commercial suspense novels. I am unpublished at the moment, but I'm working hard to "cross the minefield" so to speak. I have a degree in psychology from Utah Valley University, but switched gears a year ago to work toward my bachelors degree in English Literature at Nevada State College.

If I'm not doing homework (there is A LOT of reading involved), I'm running, rock climbing or trying to convince myself that my snowboard would be safe on a plane to Utah. It hasn't happened yet.

I'm honored to be a part of this great chapter and to work with Dave to help edit the newsletter. Thanks for having me.

Natascha

GOT BOOKS?

MWA is a partner in Reader to Reader, a non-profit organization that arranges for books to be sent to different parts of the country. In this book drive project MWA: Reads, our chapter's assigned area, overseen by board member Gay Toltl Kinman, is the Dixie Regional Library System headquartered in Pontotoc, Mississippi, which covers eight libraries.

Please email contact@socalmwa.com if you have any books to give away. We will work out a central collection point.

THANK YOU

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vitality of the book business. Indie stores as we know are smaller and more selective in what they carry.

Downloads of books on Kindle outpace sales of hardbacks and paperbacks on amazon, yet there are recent studies stating sales of e-book readers will plateau by 2013, then decline thereafter. Who knows? What's clear is that we as storytellers still need to tell our stories and still need to get them before eyes and ears. As an organization, MWA has not had an adversarial relationship with chains or online sellers, though it's fair to say we've encouraged interchange with the indies who've hand-sold our books for many years. With that in mind, your humble local chapter was thrilled to inaugurate the soon-to-open LA area branch of Mysterious Galaxy in Redondo Beach on a recent Saturday. We welcome Terry, Maryelizabeth, Nicolle, Leanna, and all the others who have made Mysterious Galaxy the go to place in San Diego and I'm sure here, for your mystery and science fiction fix.

Many of us are putting more of our work out there in e format. That's a necessity of the times we live in. But we also know how important it is that bricks and mortar book stores continue to exist. As Jerry Seinfeld reportedly said, "A bookstore is one of the only pieces of evidence we have that people are still thinking."

There you go. I'm out.

Gary

THE CAST FROM THE READING OF EDGAR WINNER SAM BOBRICK'S PLAY THE PSYCHIC
AT THE WGA, WEST OFFICES ON TUESDAY, JULY 26.



From left: Melinda Peterson, Steven Paul Leiva (reading director), Cyrus Alexander, Jeff Cannata, Richard Horvotz, MWA President Gary Philips, Sam Bobrick (writer), Dana Green, Phil Proctor, and Bridget Flanery. Photo by Greg Mitchell.

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Diana James & Bobbie McCue. Photo by Darrell James.



Our esteemed President in a moment of reflection. Photo by Diana James.

DON'T FORGET

Please email us your articles and news by the **7th before publication date** to be included in the upcoming issue.

Email us at themarchofcrime@gmail.com by October 7th for the November/December issue.

Thanks for your help!

HELP YOUR CHAPTER

AT THE
WEST HOLLYWOOD BOOK FAIR
SEE PAGE 8

FRESH BLOOD

Active

Jennifer Ashley
Amy Britt

Affiliate

Ronald Barak
Jeff Boxer
Pamela DuMond
Sandra Galfas
Cynthia Hawthorne
Cheryl Pollack
Melody Reams

Associate

Maryelizabeth Hart (reinstated)



Mystery Writers of America, Inc. (MWA) was established in 1945 by a dozen or so like-minded mystery writers for the purpose of promoting and protecting the interests and welfare of mystery writers and to increase the esteem and literary recognition given to the genre.

STAY IN THE GAME

BY NATASCHA JAFFA

The publishing industry is constantly evolving and we as writers are expected to do our research to stay in the game. That research includes the publishing routes writers take upon themselves.

Self-publishing is a very personal choice. No one has the right to tell you how to publish your book, but do you know what you're getting into by leaving a traditional publisher on the sidelines?

If you're considering self-publishing, you have to research and you have to be meticulous. Otherwise, without the tools a traditional publisher or an agent offers (editing, copyediting, marketing, legal guidance, etc.), you may look like a fool. Your dedication to succeed is the deciding factor. Self-publishing is a great resource for new or advanced writers to get their work into the world. Without the stress and disappointment of finding an agent or waiting years for your book to hit shelves, you can take your career into your own hands. But there are a few things to consider before you take that final step.

Interviews from four authors will give you insight into the following questions when comparing a traditional publisher to self-publishing:

- 👁 How long does it take for my book to become available to readers?
- 👁 What are my royalty rates?
- 👁 What level of self-promotion is involved to sell my book?
- 👁 What level of editing is required to self-publish my book?
- 👁 How does self-publishing help already-published authors?

Sherri A. Dub, self-published author of her paranormal romance, *Goddess Cottage*, chose to take her career into her own hands because the slushpile was taking too long. She states, "I knew my book was ready, as it was requested, in full, by a major publishing house, but they chose to praise it and pass" (Dub Interview). This led Dub to utilize BookBaby.com and pay \$219.00 for an ISBN number, a cover and to format her novel. Dub's novel was made available on iBooks, Sony, Nook & Kindle on April 21, 2011 at \$1.99 with a second novel, *The Witch Ball*,



Photo by Tim Hipps, FMWRC Public Affairs, US Army
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/familymwr/5035955725/>

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CHANDLER'S LA: A RIDE INTO THE PAST

BY JERI WESTERSON

I'm an Angelino. That's what they call people born and bred in Los Angeles. And like most Angelinos, we haven't seen much of the city we've called home. Oh, we do our fair share of driving around in it. It's in our blood to be in our cars, after all, but we hardly ever stop at some of the more venerable spots, the tourist places.

But with a recent trip on the bus tour of Chandler's Los Angeles, a tour put together by Esotouric, and sponsored by the southern California chapter of MWA and the Orange County Chapter of Sisters in Crime, we saw what most Angelinos, or tourists, never see.

We began at Clifton's Cafeteria, an eatery that has been part of the LA landscape since 1931.

Most of us started with a little nosh, a breakfast or brunch and sat in their Redwood-forest-designed dining room before the four hour tour began.

Clifford Clifton, the brains behind the cafeteria chain, used to offer meals to the poor who were suffering through the Depression. The down and out were allowed to eat there for whatever they could afford to pay. According to our tour guide Richard Schave, who spoke to us in the upstairs "Red Room" in Clifton's, Clifford Clifton's philanthropy caught the attention of the corrupt politicians who were in bed with the corrupt police force in the city, and warned to stay out of the way, to stop speaking against the rampant corruption.

And speaking of corruption, Schave continued with his lecture, and told us about a possible model for Chandler's detective, Philip Marlowe, in the person of an incorruptible cop named Thomas James. He was demoted to beat cop after investigating gangster Albert Marco in 1926 and found out too much. Now a beat cop on a busy corner, he would talk about the city's corruption to anyone who would listen, and it is believed that Chandler found out about him and sought him out.

One of our tour guides, Joan, read a snippet from one of Chandler's essays, "The Simple Art of Murder" and then we boarded the bus to our first stop at the Barclay Hotel, known as the Van Nuys in Chandler's day.

Downtown LA is still host to the architectural rococo of the twenties and thirties, the first multi-storied office buildings with far more character than their companions of glass and steel erected beside them in the fifties and sixties. These old buildings—and we would see a lot of them on our tour—made of brick and cast concrete and plaster, were the mainstays of business, hotel, and apartment. Cornices, elaborate entrances, deco glass, amazing woodwork—we were treated to all of it as we slowly made our way to each stop in turn.



Photo by Stefano (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/scaccia/76257428/>)

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YOUR CHAPTER NEEDS YOUR HELP

Sign up for the SoCal MWA booth at the West Hollywood Book Fair. Two people per hour would be ideal. According to Richard Brewer, the man in the know, we will be sharing space with Mystery Ink, so there should be more traffic than in the past. This is not a direct promotional opportunity for your own books, but you'll have the chance to meet fans and spend time with colleagues. Lots of fun!

CONTACT

Richard Brewer, richiethebee@yahoo.com or contact@socalmwa.com

10TH ANNUAL WEST HOLLYWOOD BOOK FAIR

Sunday, October 2, 2011
10AM to 6PM

West Hollywood Library & West Hollywood Park
647 N. San Vicente Blvd.

FREE ADMISSION

The West Hollywood Book Fair is home to 12 STAGES + THE WRITING ROOM + 125 EXHIBITORS! The Book Fair and ALL Book Fair events are FREE!

We're looking for roughly 16 - 20 members (some people may do double duty.)

9-10 a.m. Set up (Gary and Rich)

10 - 11 a.m.

11 - 12

12 - 1

1 - 2

2 - 3

3 - 4

4 - 5

5 - 6

6 - 7 Breakdown

HAVE A GREAT TIME!

11 TIPS FOR DOING PHONE INTERVIEWS

BY KATH RUSSELL

Although phone interviews have become extremely common, they present a communications challenge because the acoustical setting is not the best and the lack of direct contact between interviewer and subject makes a natural rapport hard to achieve. However, a little preparation can go a long way toward making your radio interview a successful marketing experience that leads to increased book sales. If you plan ahead, you will be more self confident during the interview and come across as professional, interesting, spontaneous and assured.

1. Determine your key message points.

You are not doing this interview for your health; you want to interest more readers in your book. What differentiates your book for the other mysteries out there? Who should want to read your novel? Does the story relate to an historical event or current event that interests readers? What is your brand as an author? Is your work similar to the work of other successful authors? Are you breaking new ground in your genre? Focus on three or four main ideas, because too many concepts will water down your impact.



Photo by sanberdoo (<http://flic.kr/p/M9tg5>)

2. Prepare for the questions you will be asked. Some programs allow the author to participate in the development of questions, so preparing your answers should be easy. If the interviewer does not work that way or the program is live, don't panic. You are an author, so the questions you will field are about your book, your work if you have published before, your motivation to write, the writing process and the publishing business. Develop some questions that fit each of these categories, and prepare the answers. Weave your key messages into your answers. Remember, the interviewer wants a response that is not too long and not too short. In radio, the clipped Calvin Coolidge response is deadly.

During the interview, if you get a question for which you are not prepared, you can use a response you have developed anyway. This is an old politician's trick. Listeners tend not to notice that the answer doesn't exactly match the query.

3. Research your host and program. Know the background of the interviewer and the format of the program. Is the program fast-paced or leisurely? Scholarly or pop culture in tone? Listen to other interviews the host has done. What questions did she ask other authors?

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WRITE MIND: MY FAVORITE QUOTE

BY DENNIS PALUMBO

It's a growth industry—the hundreds of books, tapes and videos available on the craft of writing; the multitudes of conferences, seminars and workshops (some of which I've taught myself over the years); the teachers and coaches and gurus promising to reveal the secrets of the “can't-miss” premise, the “never-fails” plot structure, the “you-can't-help-but-love-'em” lead characters.

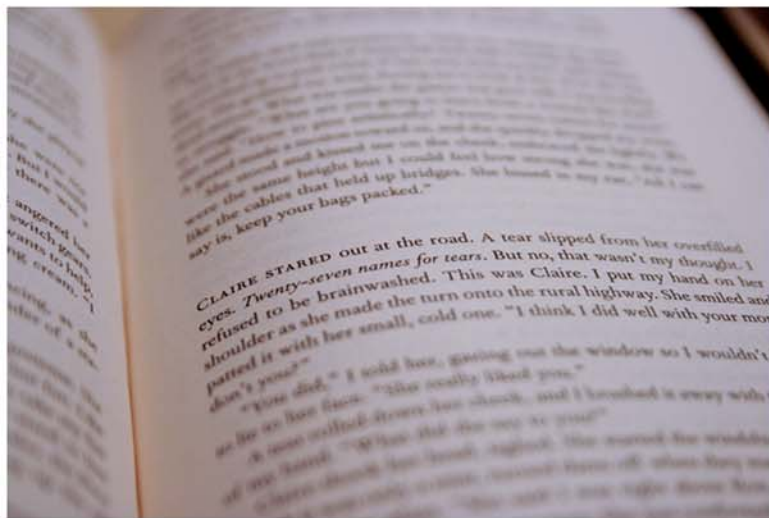


Photo by Amanda M Hatfield (<http://flic.kr/p/4xS43F>)

But in the cacophony of instruction and inspiration competing for the writer's ear, it seems to me a quote from Ray Bradbury emerges from the din. “There is only one type of story in the world—*your* story.”

In all the writing classes I've ever taught, it was always the first quote I put on the blackboard. And now, as a therapist, the essence of that quote is what underlies my support for patients struggling to write out of the depths of their own particular truths, no matter how painful or contradictory.

I recall an incident, years ago, when I was Screenwriter-In-Residence at San Francisco State University. I was working with a group of young writers-to-be, one of whom had just read a scene from his script, a political thriller, to the rest of the class. Unfortunately, the scene—in which the hero is trapped by bad guys in a dingy back alley—was flat and uninvolved, though the writer clearly had talent. Moreover, the writing itself seemed tentative... careful, somehow.

I asked the writer what would happen if, instead of his hero, he himself were the guy trapped in that alley.

“You mean, if that were me?” He suddenly became quite animated, as he described the sequence of scary, funny incidents that would befall him. A scene that was unique, and particular to a very specific sort of individual—a guy like himself. A human being.

“But this guy's gotta be a hero,” he said afterward. “Like in the movies.”

“He is,” I replied. “Your hero.”

The problem with this student's scene was his attempt to portray what a hero “should” be like. The writing seemed tentative as a result of the tension within him caused by the effort to exclude his own feelings, doubts, and impulses, as though they were inappropriate for a movie hero.

The irony—and the point of Bradbury's quote—is that all writing is autobiographical. Even the

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MIXING GENRES

BY LOUISA BACIO

I write romance. I know, shhh! So, what am I doing here? Well, most of my work also gets classified as suspense or thriller, and viola! You've got mixing genres.

Within the writing realm, the classification gets crazy.

On a personal note, I enjoy reading suspense and thrillers, so adding those elements into my own work comes natural. One of my favorite authors, Heather Graham, usually combines paranormal elements with romance, but her story lines also focus on a murder mystery.

Similar to movies that cross over genres—such as the romantic comedy or dark, sci-fi thriller—the blending of elements often can diversify a readership, and potentially open up a writer to a larger market.

To get more of a balanced roundup, local authors in Southern California offered various pieces of input on why they cross genres in their novels.

Jackie Diamond, who has sold 90 novels to date, said, “mixing genres adds interest and challenge both for the author and the reader. I’ve written romantic suspense for Harlequin Intrigue and suspense with romantic elements for other publishers including William Morrow and Five Star,” Diamond explained. “I’ve also woven suspense into some of my contemporary romances for Harlequin American. How’s that for confusing the issue?”

Kara Lennox, author of the Project Justice series, says the suspense/mystery within the story helps fuel her writing. “For me, the element of danger enhances the romance. When two people have a brush with death, the instinct is to reaffirm life, and, hey, what better way than sex? It works for me, as a reader and a writer,” Lennox explained. “In fact, I have a hard time filling the pages of a book unless there’s some kind of suspense or mystery going on. It helps with pacing; when there is a lull in the suspense plot, you ratchet up the romance. And vice versa.”

Whether the book gets classified as a future, fantasy or paranormal, or even a historic western, the suspense/thriller aspect adds another level to the complexity of the storyline. Even readers of steam-punk enjoy unraveling a good mystery.

Michigan-based writer Meg Mims calls her latest novel, *Double Crossing*, “‘True Grit’ on a train.” The book blends historical western “adventure” with elements of mystery/suspense and a “hint” of romance. “I think readers want to experience more within one book than a



Photo by Tim Parkinson (<http://flic.kr/p/4szjxm>)

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and a third novel, following suit later in the year. However, there are no royalty figures available as of yet for Dub as it can take between 60-70 days in order to receive payment from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Apple and Sony. The writer spends a good chunk of free time, when she isn't writing, promoting her first novel. "I do daily promotional work on Twitter, Goodreads.com and Facebook" (Dub interview), she states and lists Twitter as her greatest resource, reporting over one thousand followers. Dub feels she is doing well with over one hundred downloads of her novel and advises, "If you have a large writing group of peers who are encouraging you to do this and you have honed your craft, then I say go for it" (Dub interview). Even with this amount of success, Dub is still on the hunt for an agent and looks forward to pitching herself at future writing conferences. Sherri A. Dub can be reached through her website: www.sheropatra.com

Romance writer Sherri Smith, writing as R.M. Sotera, has numerous novellas traditionally published electronically. Her decision to self-publish came after she realized she had to evolve as the industry evolved. "In all honesty, it appears that building a name for oneself through e-publishing and self-publishing is a good step in securing the ultimate goal of a traditional publishing—if this is an author's goal" (Smith interview). Smith continues to query agents in the hope that one of her manuscripts will catch an agent's eye, but is currently succeeding electronically through eXtasy Books and Evernight Publishing. Smith reveals that even though she has gone through a traditional publisher for her work, the release date for her novellas, after the contract is signed, is only two to three months. According to Smith, e-published authors can be paid monthly, quarterly and semi-annually, depending on the publisher, but Smith reports that \$55.00 is the most she's made in one month through this route. The writer attributes the amount of money she personally makes to promotion. "I'm sure I could do better if I had the time needed for promotion, but with my full-time job and allotting writing time in my schedule, online promotion is a big problem for me" (Smith interview). Smith is one of the authors who have considered self-publishing, eager to get her name out there as any author is, but she goes on to state, "At this time it isn't feasible because I don't feel that I have the time to put the amount of leg-work needed into self promotion" (Smith interview). She can be contacted through her website: www.rmsotera.com

Self-published author and self-publishing guru Kris Tualla is another one of those authors who tried the traditional publishing route, but found that her books were not what the publishing houses were looking for. The main reason: her Norwegian heroes weren't Scottish. Thousands of writers are praised for their writing capability, but hit the "your book isn't sellable" wall. Tualla's answer: self-publishing. Spending over ten hours a day promoting her books while writing three to six hours on her next manuscripts, this writer has published her

books both in print and electronically. Tualla pulls in about \$75.00 a month with her books, spending between \$4.88-\$5.00 on the print-on-demands and absolutely nothing for her e-books. How'd she do it? CreateSpace from Amazon. With offers like free membership, flexible royalty models, free CreateSpace ISBN, and a print-on-demand option, CreateSpace is the "juggernaut" of self-publishing (Tualla interview) and perfect fit for Tualla. With an art degree in her background, Tualla created her brilliant cover designs herself. By studying



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traditional covers for those key elements, this writer took every aspect of her career into her own hands, but warned writers that, “No writer can edit themselves” (Tualla interview). Because of this, Tualla uses four separate readers for plot consistency, characterization, GMC and setting while using a completely different set of readers for copyediting. Before even considering releasing her manuscripts to the masses, the writer buys her own book for one last edit, folding down the corners of every page that has a missed mistake. Her first rule before self-publishing: create a well-written product (Tualla interview). Currently in the works with a traditional publisher for her sixth, seventh and eight novels (a trilogy), Tualla offers a 5-day self-publishing intensive for members of www.savvyauthors.com who want to learn the ins and outs of self-publishing. She can be reached through her website: www.kristualla.com.

And lastly, our very own multi-published crime author **Robert S. Levinson** has nine novels published to date. Taking six months to find an agent and a year to land a publisher, Levinson takes the brunt of his promotion upon himself, even with publishers Forge and Star/Gale at his back. This author reports that it generally takes between twelve and sixteen months for his novels to become available to the public and receives industry standard royalties of the cover price.

But how can self-publishing help already-published authors?

Even though Levinson still writes and submits to his publishers, he has taken his backlist (those books no longer available) and self-published them electronically on Amazon’s Kindle and other e-book outlets along with authors such as Carolyn Jewel, Kevin J. Anderson and L.L. Bartlett. Websites such as Smashwords and CreateSpace are helping traditionally published authors keep their titles available after the publisher has given back the rights to them. Once the author has those rights, it’s fair game.

If you’re still not sure self-publishing is right for you, consider one last route before uploading that file. Jessica Faust of BookEnds Literary Agency is just one of the thousands of literary agents who have opened their own e-publishing house. Beyond the Page Publishing is out to help both agented and unagented authors to publish electronically. They offer expert editing services, cover design, distribution through major e-book sellers, copyright application, pricing consultations, and marketing guidance. What the agent gets in return: 15% commission from your sales. All you have to do is submit your query to info@beyondthepagepub.com. Beyond the Page is a traditional publisher. However, they are strictly electronic. Other companies such as Carina Press and Sapphire Blue Publishing follow the same line and since they are strictly electronic, the guidelines are a little more relaxed and you’ll see sales a lot sooner than with a traditional publisher.

Whether you’re a new author or a veteran, writers all over the world are working to stay in the game by self-publishing. Either you can take your career into your own hands or wait another year to see your book on the shelf. The choice is up to you.

Natascha graduated with a degree from Utah Valley University in Psychology and is now seeking her bachelors in English Literature to start a career in editing. She is an active PRO member of RWA in the Las Vegas chapter and the Kiss of Death Mystery/Suspense chapter and a member of MWA. Natascha is co-editor of The March of Crime newsletter. She resides with her husband in Las Vegas, NV and is working toward publication for her commercial suspense. She can be reached through her website www.thelasvegaswriter.blogspot.com

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There was the Los Angeles Athletic club with its leather seating and dark wood, where Chandler liked to play bridge; the Oviatt building with its deco glass and metal entry, whose bottom floor used to be a chic haberdasher but is now the restaurant Cicada, with its original intricate woodwork and gold leaf ceiling. We drove by the Mayfair Hotel and by The Bryson that was featured in Chandler's book *High Window*.



Downtown LA at night from the roof of the LA Athletic Club. Photo by Mark Wallace
(<http://flic.kr/p/4t5Fxd>)

We made a stop at Scoop for tasty gelato (I had a scoop each of Jim Beam Vanilla and Salty Caramel), and once we had refreshed ourselves, it was back on the bus again to Musso and Frank's, sort of the west coast version of the Algonquin Roundtable. In fact, the owners created a round table for just that purpose. Displaced authors who came to Hollywood to pen screenplays — Faulkner, Hemmingway, Fitzgerald, as well as Chandler—gathered to commiserate and drink. The building used to be divided up into more shops, one of which stood in for Geiger's Bookstore in *The Big Sleep*.

We drove by Paramount Studios and the old Desilu Production facilities across from Lucy's El Adobe, all LA landmarks. We drove by Hollywood Boulevard and Cahuenga, now designated as Chandler Square in a building where it is believed Philip Marlowe leased an office on the sixth floor, and then finally by the apartment building in Los Feliz of the character Joe Brody from *The Big Sleep*.

We drove, we listened to appropriate snippets of Chandler's books from the docents, we saw cuts of the movies made of his novels, pictures of the people who influenced him. We heard of his attempted suicide, his despair after his wife of 31 years, Cissy, died. He worked with Billy Wilder in Hollywood as a screenwriter for the film *Double Indemnity*, succumbing to hissy fits and demands, and released his last book, *Playback*, eight months before his death in 1959.

It was all accomplished in a four hour tour that moved along at a good clip, with no moment to spare. A well worthwhile adventure into the past that in many ways is still alive in Chandler's city. You just have to know where to look for it.

Jeri Westerson writes the critically acclaimed Crispin Guest Medieval Noir series, inspired by works of Chandler and Hammett. Her newest, Troubled Bones, will be released from St. Martin's in October. www.jerwesterson.com

CHAPTER NEWS

Jeri Westerson writes the critically acclaimed Crispin Guest Medieval Noir series, inspired by works of Chandler and Hammett. Her newest, *Troubled Bones*, will be released from St. Martin's in October. www.jeriwesterson.com

#1 in **James Scott Bell's** zombie legal thriller series (written under the pen name K. Bennett), *Pay Me in Flesh*, has been released. Signing at Mysterious Galaxy's Redondo Beach store, October 15, 3 PM

Come join **Joanne Fluke** as she launches her new mystery cookbook, *Joanne Fluke's Lake Eden Cookbook*, on Sunday, September 25th from 2:30 PM to 4 PM and taste test some of the recipes in the book. The party's at Mysteries To Die For, 2940 E Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362. 805.374.0084. Driving directions at www.mysteriestodiefor.com. Joanne will also be signing at Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena on Saturday October 1st. Please check her website, www.murdershebaked.com, for the time and address of this and other signings.

LJ Roberts, a member of Dorothy-L, the online listserv for lovers of mystery, offered a contest for a pin design to commemorate the listserve. The pins are worn by members as they travel to various mystery fan conventions, including this year's Bouchercon. From 1995 to 2003, a lapel pin was created and worn, with pride, by many of the members. This year, the pin chosen by it's members to celebrate the twentieth year of the lists serv, was designed by **Jeri Westerson**. You can see the pin along with the others of years past here: sfp.to/r3cxCx and sfp.to/rcnJSX.

Gay Kinman's four children's short stories are up on Kindle Shorts for 99 cents each – “Lauren Macpherson and the Scottish Adventure”, “Lauren Macpherson and the Colorado Adventure”, “Lauren Macpherson and the Jumbled Cupboard Adventure”, and “Lauren Macpherson and the Ghostly Adventure”. The stories, all in *The Adventures of Lauren Macpherson*, on Kindle for \$2.99, features Lauren, 9, who has elective mutism.

The 12th Annual Men of Mystery, to be held at the Irvine MarriottHotel on Saturday, November 19th, will include 50 Gentlemen of the Genre—including many of our members—and will feature Lawrence Block. www.menofmystery.org

Paul Levine's adventures in self-publishing the backlist of his Jake Lassiter series was featured as part of a *Fortune* magazine cover story, “Reinvent Yourself”, in which Levine discusses the cooperation among authors on the Internet: “We're not competitors seeking to carve up a limited pie. We're trying to bake a bigger pie.” The article concludes: “Levine may

Do you have news you'd like to share with our Chapter? Be sure to send it to themarchofcrime@gmail.com by the 7th prior to publication. The next due date is October 7th for the November/December 2011 issue.

same career, but his job has radically changed. Whereas he used to spend 95% of his work life writing and 5% selling, he now spends 50% writing and 50% marketing, all online.”
sfp.to/ozf5AT

Karen Cote's self-titled website has been selected as the winner for the Coffee Time Romance & More Caramel Corner Award! The award was granted on July 3, 2011.
sfp.to/psDgwN

Thomas B. Sawyer has a great interview written by Morgan St. James of the Examiner.
sfp.to/oRIIEC

MWA is a partner in Reader to Reader, a non-profit organization that arranges for books to be sent to different parts of the country. In this book drive project MWA: Reads, our chapter's assigned area, overseen by board member **Gay Toltl Kinman**, is the Dixie Regional Library System headquartered in Pontotoc, Mississippi, which covers eight libraries. Please email contact@socalmwa.com if you have any books to give away. We will work out a central collection point.

Robert S. Levinson officially launches his ninth novel, *A Rhumba in Waltz Time*, with a reception Thursday, Sept. 8, 7: 30 PM at Skylight Books, Los Angeles. Southern California store visits follow Sept. 10 at Mysterious Galaxy, San Diego at 2 PM and Mystery Ink, Huntington Beach at 5 PM; Sept. 24 at Mysteries to Die For, Thousand Oaks at 12:30 PM, and Book'em Mysteries, South Pasadena at 4 PM; Oct. 1 at Book Carnival, Orange at 11 AM. Also set: Sept. 15-18, Bouchercon, St. Louis; Nov. 19, 11th annual Men of Mystery, Irvine. Lately added to a starred review in *Publishers Weekly* was this from *The Thrilling Detective*: “*A Rhumba in Waltz Time* (is) a superb Depression Era Hollywood Noir. (Chris) Blanchard is a tough protagonist who does not take prisoners... Readers will enjoy this 1930s thriller as the MGM major and minor leagues star system comes across in living color (even if the movies were mostly black and white)”. Meanwhile, a new short story by Bob, “Unexpected Truths,” will appear in the December issue of *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, due on newsstands in October. A non-fiction piece wrote about collecting autographs on the streets of Hollywood, “Lights! Camera! Levinson!”, recently appeared on the *Meanderings and Muses* blog:
sfp.to/mVXYSi

THE CRIME CALENDAR

September 15 - 18, 2011

Bouchercon 2011, St Louis MO
bouchercon2011.com

February 2012

Love is Murder, Chicago IL
www.loveismurder.net

September 23 - 25, 2011

Writers' Police Academy
Jamestown NC
writerspoliceacademy.com

Please note that the information provided here is done so as a service to our members. Some events may have fees. MWA and/or the Southern California Chapter of MWA do not endorse the events listed here unless specifically stated.

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Learn about the program's audience. How does it compare to the target audience for your book?

4. Check out your telephone equipment. Your home or office telephone is not an ideal recording instrument. It is important to avoid devices that produce static or dropouts. Do not use your cell phone; a land-based line is preferable. Avoid headsets or earpieces. Keep your hands away from cords or phone buttons that can produce rustles or bleeps during your interview.

5. Silence your immediate environment. Remove unnecessary papers and pens from your interview space. Make sure your chair is comfortable, promotes good posture and doesn't squeak. Silence any other devices on or near your desk such as your cell phone, fax machine or printer. Close windows and doors. Toss the cat out of your room. Also, check out what you are wearing. Starched shirts and clunky jewelry make noise.



Photo by Tobias Vemmenby (<http://flic.kr/p/4NotG8>)

6. Silence the wider environment. Inform others in the house that you will be giving an interview. Ask them not to enter the interview room and to keep noise to a minimum. If your dog barks, perhaps someone can take him for a walk. If you have a gardener, reschedule his yard work because the high pitched sound of his lawnmower or weed whacker can penetrate your walls.

7. Practice out loud. Practice helps you master the rhythm of your answers and will also help you eliminate those pesky 'uhs' we all use to punctuate our speech. It will also contribute to keeping your voice level even, because people tend to drop their volume if they have to think a lot

about their response. Practice also is important because you must not read your responses verbatim. You will sound stilted, wooden and boring if you do.

8. Make your voice strong and clear. This is not a telephone conversation with Aunt Pauline. You are using the same device you employ for personal calls, but you must not fall into the trap of using it in the same way. We sometimes mumble or lower our voice when we talk to intimates on the phone. Maintain your professional speaking voice and volume throughout the interview.

9. Visit the rest room. Be sure to empty that bladder before the interview. In my experience, bladders are unruly organs that have a nasty habit of distracting their owners at inopportune moments. Think about other physical issues. If you have been suffering from a persistent cough, taking a cough suppressant or indulging in a good gargle may do the trick. Oh, and please lose the chewing gum!

10. Use the interviewer's name. You are on a mission to deliver message points, but you

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student's attempt to write a hero "like in the movies" revealed an aspect of his autobiography; namely, his belief about how a hero needed to behave.

Like it or not, our writing reveals who we are.

The story doesn't matter. The genre doesn't matter. Even if you're writing a historical mystery, taking place two hundred years ago, your autobiography informs that novel: your own attitude toward the period, memories of every historical mystery you've ever read, the various research sources you select as appropriate or important. Even your concern about whether or not your novel is commercial is part of your experience writing it.

On the plus side, it's one of the paradoxes of writing that the more particular and personal a detail in character or story, the more powerfully its impact generalizes out to the audience. (The specifics of Rocky Balboa's life in the first Rocky film were shared by few in the audience, I'm sure, but everyone understood what he meant by "going the distance." Just as a reader didn't have to grow up in poverty in Dublin to understand what Frank McCourt was writing about in *Angela's Ashes*. Just as Joseph Wambaugh's many fans don't have to be cops to relate to the conflicted emotions and struggles of his troubled protagonists.)

I repeat: All writing is autobiographical. The more you can accept and acknowledge this, the greater the extent to which you can mine your own feelings and experiences to give shape and texture to your work.

Of course, to write from this place, the core of who we are, is damned hard. Often the results are just painful, ambiguous, unformed. Maybe there's something wrong with me, the writer thinks. Maybe I'm not enough...

That's why writing seminars and workshops flourish; why "how-to" books on writing are perennial sellers. Intentionally or not, they validate our belief in some "key" or technique that ensures success; some thing outside of ourselves that we need to learn, or to become.

And, yes, every writer needs to learn solid story construction, needs to develop craft. But the most important thing a writer needs is the awareness that he or she is enough. That one's feelings, enthusiasms, regrets, hopes, doubts, yearnings, loves and hates are, in fact, the raw materials of one's writing talent.

"There is only one type of story in the world—your story." Which means only you can tell it, no matter what form—political thriller, police procedural, historical mystery—it takes.

It reminds me of another quote I like, from Ralph Waldo Emerson, a pretty fair writer himself. He said, "To believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for everyone—that is genius."

Formerly a Hollywood screenwriter (My Favorite Year; Welcome Back, Kotter, etc.), Dennis Palumbo is now a licensed psychotherapist in private practice. His mystery fiction has appeared in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, The Strand, Written By, and elsewhere, and is collected in From Crime to Crime (Tallfellow Press). His mystery novel, Mirror Image (Poisoned Pen Press), is the first in a series featuring psychologist Daniel Rinaldi, a trauma expert who consults with the Pittsburgh Police. The sequel, Fever Dream, will appear in November. Info at www.dennispalumbo.com

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‘straight shot’ mystery or paranormal or what have you,” Mims said. “Readers are more sophisticated than ever, and tend to expect more punch for the money. Hence, the blended genres and authors scrambling to find the fine line between under-effective and overdoing it.”

Linda O. Johnston, who writes everything from cozy mysteries to romance, finds that the mystery often accelerates the story line. “Since I write for two publishing houses—cozy mysteries for Berkley Prime Crime and paranormal romance for Harlequin Nocturne—my stories have to match the genres, but I always add suspense or mystery to my romances, and romance to my mysteries. Why? Because the combination really ramps up the emotions of a story and draws the reader in,” Johnston divulged. “The romantic element can create

a break from the tension of the mystery or suspense or can heighten it if one of the lovers is in peril. The suspense angle in a romance can lead the lovers into each others’ arms more quickly as they mutually face the danger. Plus, there’s always suspense as to whether those characters will fall in love—and/or into bed!”

Author Tara Lain recently took mystery elements and brought them into her gay contemporary romance. “I write erotic romance. A special challenge of this genre is getting the multiple lovers onstage fast enough to create the romantic tension. I recently wrote my first romantic suspense. Add another layer of challenge,” Lain said. “In any mystery, the suspense has to grab you quickly, but in the case of romance, especially erotic romance, it can’t overwhelm the establishment of the love relationship. This places a huge burden on the author to create the perfect first scene—starting in exactly the right place, establishing the mystery and, at least, suggesting the hot romance to come.”

And the challenges continue to build. With her vast experience, Diamond tackles the quandary of the categories of romantic suspense or suspense with romantic elements. “To me, in romantic suspense, the love story and the mystery/thriller plot carry equal weight. That’s the case in my contemporary Gothic romance, *Touch Me in the Dark*. In fact, it contains three elements: paranormal (there’s a ghost), a murder mystery and a love story,” Diamond detailed. “In a suspense with romantic elements, such as *Danger Music*, the love story is important but less so than the murder mystery. Also, there doesn’t have to be a completely happy ending for the love story, which is an important distinction.”

Lennox also emphasizes the importance of that pivotal love story. “The difference between romantic suspense and suspense with romantic elements, in my mind, is a matter of emphasis. In the first, the focus is on the romance. Readers read those books for the relationship. In the



Photo by Julie Jordan Scott (<http://flic.kr/p/7ZjLqi>)

latter, the story is a thriller that just happens to have a romantic subplot,” Lennox said. “In romantic suspense, the story couldn’t exist without romance. In suspense with romantic elements, you could conceivably take out the romance and still have a story, but why would you?”

The not-so-hidden skeleton in the closet ends up being that crossing genres often benefits the writer. One genre doesn’t necessarily cover all. Those who want to diversify their readership may consider bringing in a touch of romance, especially if the usual target market is male and the author wants to attract more female readership. Others may be interested in branching out into fantasy, paranormal or young adult fiction. The market’s wide up with potential.

So you don’t have to be a mystery/thriller author to have a dead body.

And, let’s not even get into romantic horror.

Louisa Bacio is the author of three erotic novels and numerous short stories. She delves into the erotic paranormal in The Vampire, The Witch & The Werewolf: A New Orleans Threesome. For those who like a bit of historical context, check out her short story “Lilith: In her Garden,” in the Seducing the Myth anthology. In addition to writing and editing, Bacio teaches college courses in English, journalism, film studies and popular culture. Bacio also serves on the board for the Orange County Romance Writers of America. Stop for a visit at www.louisabacio.com

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are doing it through an interview, a conversation with another human being. Be warm, friendly, polite and personable. Radio is an intimate medium. Visualize the picture of the host you admired on her web site.

11. Visualize your audience. Sitting in your office or a studio has the disadvantage of cutting you off visually from your listeners. Visualize an auditorium full of people, a family listening in a living room or a couple listening to you on their car radio. These are the people who are going to buy your book!

Katharine Russell enjoyed an exciting career in the biotechnology industry, contributing over thirty-five years of marketing and communication management expertise to an array of clients and employers. She received her BA degree in history from Northwestern University, her MS in journalism from Boston University and her MBA in marketing from the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern. Most recently, she has completed a certificate in creative writing through the UCLA Writer’s Program. She has written and published extensively throughout her business career. Her columns have appeared in The Desert Sun and certain web e-zines and she has sold stories to various content providers. She divides her time between Palm Desert, CA and Baltimore, MD.

Thanks for helping make your chapter great