

THE MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA — SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

The Comic Side of Crime

The four fingers on his right hand are lopped off by an ax and the business end of a harpoon is stuck through one of his eyes. This bad mutha called Barracuda — who has F-*. *-K YOU in gold bling drilled onto his front teeth -- barely pauses to take stock of his deforming wounds as he dukes it out with the Punisher, Marvel's uber-slaughterer. Then later he's dropped live into shark thick waters along with other scumbags who've already been dispatched and chopped up by Frank Castle (the Punisher's real name) as king-sized chum. Amazingly Barracuda survives this to become the anti-hero star of his own mini-series wherein with the aid of a transvestite pal from his black ops days and a former porn star, he engineers the overthrow of a South American dictator

Not your daddy's comic books. Or maybe, in a way, they are.

In the '40s and '50s, titles with headline names and lurid covers like *Gangsters and Gun Molls*, *Crime Does Not Pay*, *Behind Prison Bars* and *Crimes by Women* abounded. With infamous entries like the cover of EC's *Crime Suspense Stories* #22 with a man holding the recently severed head of a woman

(recently vamped on as a cover for a Wolverine issue where ol' razor claws holds the decapitated head of arch rival Sabertooth). Where a couple of months before *Crime Suspense* had a cover of a hanged

man, noose around his neck, eyes rolled up in his head and bloated tongue filling his parted mouth. Naturally there was a backlash as the morals and minds of the youth were at stake.

To avoid censorship from without, comics publishers formed the Comics Code Authority from within as a self-regulating body. This family values climate did in EC titles, though publisher Bill Gaines poured some of that subversive talent into *Mad* magazine. World War II vet Mickey Spillane, who'd created a comic strip character called Mike Danger didn't, in the words of Bob Dylan, have to be a weatherman to tell which way the wind was blowing. He reworked his rejected PI strip in time for the burgeoning paperback market, and Mike Hammer

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The President's Rap Sheet

The recent news that *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* sold more copies faster than any book in history is a mixed message for authors. While it's heartening that so many actually bought the book, it's also sad to reflect that for a large proportion of the buyers, this will be one of the tiny handful of books that they'll buy during 2007. (The last Association of American Publishers statistics published showed sales of \$25.1 billion for all kinds of books in the year 2005. About \$85 per person.) One Bouchercon author said on a panel that he had to fight the urge to yell at sub-

way readers of the Rowling books, "There are other authors, you know!"

Many educators are excited at the perceived upswelling of reading among young people. It's far too early, of course, to tell whether the tidal wave of Harry Potter books will result in an expanded pool of readers (and book buyers), but if history is an indication, their success may eventually produce results. In the late 19th century, as the education of the British and American middle classes broadened and a large reading public

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was unleashed.

Today, the Code still exists but plenty of titles are issued without its seal. Mature-themed crime and mystery comic book pamphlets and graphic novels, the offspring of this bastard art form, can be found in direct market shops and Borders and Barnes and Noble. *Sin City*, before the stylized movie (and soon numbers two and three) existed as stylized, retro mini-series story arcs written and drawn by Frank Miller for Dark Horse Comics. Ed Brubaker, who history will always note as the man who killed off Captain America – at least until his resurrection – produces with artist Sean “no relation” Phillips the finely etched *Criminal* title. Brubaker and Phillips have crafted a shared universe, not of bulging muscled men and gravity-defying endowed women in spandex, but of small-time criminals on the hustle, bent cops and dopers looking for that one big score.

Conversely *Damned*, a mini-series by Cullen Bunn and artist Brian Hurtt for Oni Comics merges the horror genre with Prohibition-era hardboiled. In it is a time we mostly know but where demons head crime families, and a soldier named Eddie is cursed not to remain dead, and must always work off one debt or the other. Over at Moonstone,

such classic detectives and anti-heroes as Boston Blackie, Pat Novak for Hire, Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons (redone in a kind of Ving Rhamesian screen persona way), Lone Wolf (reimagined as a woman) and Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar have been given the comics and prose (the publisher has an upcoming anthology with some of these characters as well as other anthologies of short stories of The Phantom, pulp veterans the Avenger and the Spider, and Zorro) treatment.

From Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso’s multi-layered *100 Bullets* series, *Scalped*, by Jason Aaron and R.M. Guera about an undercover self-loathing Native American FBI agent named Dashiell Bad Horse battling corruption on the rez, to original hardcover graphic novels by writer-artists David Lapham (*Silverfish*) and David Lloyd’s *Kickback*, comics-style crime and mystery stories vie for their place alongside their more established text-only colleagues.

So check out a few as fans eagerly await the Barracuda vs. Punisher rematch. Yeow!

—Gary Phillips

Gary is writing an original crime graphic novel for DC/Vertigo Comics, and has a short story in Moonstone’s upcoming *Sex, Lies and Private Eyes* prose anthology.



Speakers Bureau Event Report

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING FOR THE SOBER AUTHOR

Go to the bar of any mystery convention and you don’t get the impression that these authors need help in speaking. But put a single author, especially a debut one, in front of an audience at a bookstore or library and you might get a different impression.

All people, whether the most experienced speaker or the wallflower, can always improve their speaking skills, as we learned on July 24 at the MWA’s Southern California chapter’s Speakers Bureau workshop, “How to Book and Present an Author’s Program.”

Held in the upstairs conference room of the Palms—Rancho Park Branch Library, the workshop featured experts in the speaking business: Joan Han-

sen, literary event organizer who won a Raven at last year’s Edgars Banquet for founding the Men of Mystery program in Orange County; Jorge Ribeiro, the outgoing Toastmaster International division governor and a college instructor; and Noel Alumit, host of book events for Skylight Books in Silver Lake and a noted performance artist.

Each approached the topic from a slightly different perspective, yet the main message was the same: be mindful of your audience, venue, and time; reveal something about yourself during your talk; and practice, practice, practice (probably a new concept for us

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who are used to speaking extemporaneously).

There are opportunities for authors to speak at a variety of venues. Joan Hansen suggested working with creative writing and journalism teachers to arrange for book events at schools. Your former high school would probably love to hear from an alumnus who is now a published author. The foundation officer of a community college is probably a good person to contact for fund-raising events. Libraries also have foundations. Events such as the LA Times Festival of Books involve vendors who would be open to booking authors in their booths. And, of course, there's informal networking, opportunities that this particular event provided.

Throughout the two-hour session, specific tips were given by both panelists and participants that may help you at your next speaking engagement:

- Bring a CD of music related to your book and play it before your reading/signing to set a certain mood.
- Purchase a music stand and bring it to various readings and events. The stand will make it easy for you to deal with your papers and presenting material.
- Share stories about your publishing journey.
- If you are scheduled to speak to high school and college students, make sure that you have an interesting PowerPoint presentation (nine slides is enough). This generation is more visually oriented.
- Make sure that the venue has your books before the event.

"The audience really wants to like you," said Alumit, regarding those who are especially fearful of speaking. But he also issued a warning from event coordinators: "They don't appreciate 'diva behavior.'" So always be gracious and polite.

In terms of selecting an excerpt to read, choose something that has a beginning, middle and end.

After these three made their presentations, two brave volunteers—SoCal MWA Speaker chair Patricia Smiley and Darryl James, who won honorable mention in the 2006 Reader Views Literary Awards for *Body Count: A Killer Collection!*,—participated in a Mystery Idol performance, making a brief speech

about her books and reading an excerpt of his work.

Both received enthusiastic scores of ten from the panelist-judges. An important piece of advice that was passed on was to make sure to always push your latest book, because the bookseller is eager to sell that one. "The most important thing is to write beautifully," concluded Alumit.

Kathryn Lilley, a Speakers Bureau committee member whose book, *Dying to Be Thin*, will debut in October, passed out a form for those who would like to be included in SoCal MWA's Speaker Bureau listing. (*The form is on the next page.*) If you are interested, fill out the form and e-mail it to [speak-ers@socalmwa.com](mailto:speakers@socalmwa.com) or send to P.O. Box 60614, Pasadena, CA 91116. This information will be featured on SoCal MWA's website; libraries and other literary groups will be contacted to refer to this listing.

As a debut original mystery series author, Kathryn made the following observations regarding author events

on her grog (group blog), Killer Hobbies (<http://killerhobbies.blogspot.com/>):

- Work with your contact ahead of the event to learn about the format, seating arrangements, and other logistics.
- Arrive early to get a sense of the venue.
- At the beginning of your presentation, acknowledge your host (this can be a library, bookstore, or conference).
- Personalize your presentation with anecdotes, and use humor as much as possible.
- Avoid "Um's."
- If you get nervous in front of an audience (and don't we all!), use a lectern to keep your hands steady. If one is not available, consider investing in a portable music stand to take with you to presentations.
- Make eye contact with your audience.
- Come up with a "paper strategy" to avoid fumbling with notes.

A podcast of this program will soon be on SoCal MWA's website, www.socalmwa.com.

—Naomi Hirahara





So Cal MWA's speaker listing information form

Thank you for your interest in participating in the MWA Speakers events! Please provide us with some information about you and your areas of interest.

Name:

E-mail contact information for interested parties:

Telephone contact (optional):

Regions that you are willing to travel to (please circle the appropriate regions):

South Bay Westside Orange County San Bernardino County Ventura County San Fernando Valley
San Gabriel Valley San Diego County Phoenix Las Vegas Hawaii

Other (please specify): _____

What are the panel topic(s) that you can present?

Do you require honoraria? (Circle one) Y N

If you require honoraria, please specify a minimum amount:

Email this form to speakers@socalmwa.com or send to P.O. Box 60614, Pasadena, CA 91116

Book Promotion on a Budget

Your book is finally on bookstore shelves, but Oprah hasn't called yet and your publisher hasn't come through with that 10-city book tour you requested. Don't fret, you're not alone.

Many new authors, including those with deals from major publishing houses, are surprised to learn that they are completely on their own when it comes to promoting their book. But even if you don't have big bucks to spend on book promotion, you can still wage an effective publicity campaign. You have to remember that you aren't just a writer. You're also a businessperson and your book is your product. The key to your product's success is attracting readers. Here are five tips for getting the word out, that won't break the bank.

Prepare a Budget and Stick to it. Determine how much you can afford to spend promoting your book during the next 12 months. At a minimum, your budget should include the following: marketing materials (bookmarks, posters, business cards and a press kit), travel costs, mailing costs, website hosting and maintenance fees, internet marketing fees and a publicist, if you can afford it.

Allocate your funds where you can get the most bang for your buck. I attend far more book fairs and book club conferences than conferences sponsored by writing organizations because they offer a greater opportunity to meet readers. If you have limited funds, it may make more sense to use the internet for national exposure rather than traveling to a few big cities and using all your money on plane fare and hotel costs. Also, make sure you comparison shop for your marketing materials. Many online printers offer deep discounts.

Rely on Your Friends. Make a list of every friend, family member and acquaintance you can think of, including those old college friends you haven't spoken to in years. People think it's cool to know an author, so a large majority of these folks will be more than glad to help you get the word out about your book. Ask your friends and family to send an email about your book to everyone they know and to invite their friends to your book signings. When you set up bookstore signings, plan to do targeted promotion (via email and flyers) in the area *weeks before* your arrival. Don't rely on the book store to promote your appearance.

Hit Those Book Clubs. When a book club selects your book to read, that means guaranteed sales. Ask everyone you know to recommend your book to anyone they know who is a member of a book club. You should also search Google and Myspace for book clubs and send them an email about your book. They will be thrilled to hear from an author. Offer to come to their meeting either in person or via telephone if they are out of the area. Book club members love telling others about books they enjoyed reading. Connecting with book clubs is a great way to generate word-of-mouth buzz about your book.

Speak and Write for Free. Use every opportunity you can to speak to groups large and small, even if your book is not the topic of your presentation. Libraries, churches, schools, professional organizations and non-profit groups are honored to have a published author in their midst. Don't worry if you can't sell your book at the event. You will be surprised at how many people will buy your book later. Radio shows are desperate for interesting non-fiction topics. Come up with a good non-fiction hook that may also allow you to plug your book. I recently taped a public television show dealing with workplace issues. My publicist pitched me for the show because I practice employment law and one of my legal thrillers centers around a sexual harassment case. Many internet websites, community newspapers and professional organizations are looking for people to write articles on a variety of topics. This is also a great way to get your name out there.

Use the Internet. A website with an excerpt of your book is a must. A MySpace page and a blog are two other great promotional tools for your book. The internet has a zillion other resources for promoting your book, and many of them are free. There are internet radio shows, book review sites and sites where you can attract new readers by hosting a contest to win a copy of your book. There are also sites that will send out email blasts about your books to thousands of readers. The fees can range from \$25 to several hundred dollars. You should also compile your own email list and send out occasional email blasts about your appearances.

--Pamela Samuels-Young

Attorney Pamela Samuels-Young is the author of the legal thrillers Every Reasonable Doubt and In Firm Pursuit, an Essence magazine bestseller. www.pamelasamuels-young.com.

Transom Notes

New Releases, Publications & Deals: **Rick Copp**'s new hardback is *Fingerprints and Facelifts: an LA Dolls Mystery*, the first in a series from Kensington. www.rickcopp.com. July was a big month for tireless chapter board member, **Patricia Smiley**. Her third Tucker Sinclair novel, *Short Change*, was released by NAL/Penguin, followed by the audio version, produced by Books on Tape. The second book in the series, *Cover Your Assets*, is now out in paperback (Warner Books). www.patriciasmiley.com; www.nakedauthors.com (blog). *Mccafferty's Nine* is the latest title in **Elizabeth Gunn**'s Jake Hines series. She's also been writing Flash Fiction in an effort to expand her fan base. www.elizabethgunn.com. **Edward Wright**, author of the 1940s-noir John Ray Horn series, has sold his first standalone, *Damnation Falls*, to St. Martin's Minotaur for publication in 2008. **Patricia Smiley**'s short story, "Party's Over," is scheduled for the December issue of Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine. **Aileen Barron** announces the release of her new archeological mystery, *The Gold of Thrace* (Poisoned Pen Press), in hardcover, and the trade paperback version of *The Torch of Tangier*. She's got a full schedule of events with signings throughout August and September. www.aileengbaron.com. **Gregg Hurwitz**'s *The Crime Writer* was launched at the end of July. Gregg will be signing around town in August. www.gregghurwitz.net. The third book of **Debby Atkinson**'s Hawaiian series is *Fire Prayer* (Poisoned Pen Press), scheduled for release in August. www.debbyatkinson.com. Las Vegas member **Sarah Lee Marks** has signed with Stephens Press, who will publish her first mystery, *Artist's Proof*, under the pen name Lander Marks in 2008. *Forensics and Fiction: Clever, Intriguing, and Downright Odd Questions From Crime Writers* is the latest from **D. P. Lyle**, MD. Ask your clever questions and get an answer at www.dplylemd.com. or at the book launch party on August 25, 11am at The Mystery Bookstore in Westwood. *Baby Crimes*, **Randy Hicks**' second Toby Dillon mystery (WordSlinger) will be released in August, closely followed by a non-fiction book in October: *Adoption: The Essential Guide to Adopting Quickly and Safely* (Penguin). www.randall-hicks.com. **Alan Cook**'s suspense novel, *Honeymoon for Three*, was published in June by AuthorHouse. <http://alancook.50megs.com>. **Eric Stone**'s first book in his Ray Sharp series, *The Living Room of the Dead*, is coming out in trade paperback from Bleak House Books in August, followed by the simultaneous hardcover and trade paper release of *Grave Imports*, the second book in the series, at the end of September. www.ericstone.com. **Paul D. Marks** has a short story, *Born Under a Bad Sign*, in the *Noir Blues* issue of *Hardluck Stories* at www.HardluckStories.com. **Gay Totl Kinman**'s short stories include *The Sorrento Setup*, in the *Crime and Suspense Anthology I 2005-6: Selected Tales from Crime and Suspense Ezine's First Fifteen Months*. and *London Spy* a short story that's a prequel to spy novel *Death in Covent Garden* recently went on sale on Amazon for 49 cents. www.amazon.com. Gay has also recently written book reviews for *Crimespree Magazine* and *Mysterious Women*, as well as an annotated bibliography, *The Children's Hour: The Ethnic Detective*, *Mystery Readers Journal*, Part II, Summer 2007. <http://gaykinman.com>.

Events & Signings: **Harley Jane Kozak, Patty Smiley and Sue Ann Jaffarian** are on a panel called "Stop! You're Killing Me" on Saturday August 11, Burbank Library, 300 N. Buena Vista, 2-4pm. **Aileen Baron, Gay Totl Kinman, Eric Stone and Bruce Cook** are on a panel called "Murder Abroad" on Tuesday August 14, 6:30pm at the Los Feliz branch of the L.A. Public Library, 1874 Hillhurst Ave. **Bruce Cook and Robert Fate** will be at the Palms-Rancho Park Library, 2920 Overland Ave., Tuesday August 21, 6:30pm. **Pamela Samuels-Young** will be at the Los Angeles Black Book Expo on August 22, 10-4 at Exposition Park's Inter-generational Community Center. www.pamelasamuels-young.com. **Bill Fitzhugh, Sue Ann Jaffarian and Laura Levine**, feature in "Deadly Summer Reads" on Saturday August 25, 2pm at the Culver City Julian Dixon Library, 4975 Overland Ave. **Pamela Samuels-Young** is offering a seminar, *How to Write A Novel Despite Your Day Job* on September 29 in Los Angeles. www.pamelasamuels-young.com. **Gay Totl Kinman** is the instructor for *Children's Picture Book Writing*, a class offered through the City of Alhambra Summer Leisure Classes at Joslyn Center in Story Park, September 15, 10-12 am www.cityofalhambra.org

Compiled by Sheila Lowe

FRESH BLOOD

Active members

Richard Tyler Jordan (Los Angeles)
Sean McGrady (Los Angeles)
Carol Mendelsohn (Universal City)
Christopher Rice (West Hollywood)

Affiliates members

Dr. James H. Bracy (Northridge)
Helen Cothran (Poway, CA)
William Douglas (Llano, CA)
Carson Flanders (Arcadia, CA)
Dr. Elaine C. Hatfield (Honolulu)
Frances Hoffman, writing as Anne
Moore (West Hollywood)

AWARD NOMINATIONS

Congratulations and good luck to our members who have been nominated for the following awards.

The Shamus:

Ken Kuhlken, Best P.I. Novel—*The Do-Re-Me*.

The Anthony:

Robert Fate, Best Paperback Original—*Baby Shark*.

Naomi Hirahara, Best Paperback Original—*Snakeskin Shamisen*.

A THOUSAND BUCKS TO HELP YOU OVER THE HUMP

Have you recently been dropped by your publisher? Has your series been cancelled? Were you orphaned when your publisher went under?

For authors in need, Mystery Writers of America offers one-time grants of \$1,000 under our Rebound Grants Program. Up to six grants are awarded each year. It may not sound like much money, but sometimes a struggling writer can save a career with just that little extra boost. One author (name withheld) said: "Thank you! This helped more than you know. I was able to pay the bills and get back to writing."

Here's what to do: If you are an Active Category (published) member of MWA, and your dues are paid for 2007-2008, [go the MWA website](#) and log in to the page on Rebound Grants. (If you've forgotten the password, contact the National office.) You will find all the rules clearly laid out. Basically, you will tell us why you need the grant and how you will use it in your career. The deadline for submissions is **Tuesday, September 4, 2007**, sent via U.S. mail to the Rebound Grants Committee. Requests will be logged in, all contact information removed, and then submitted blind (anonymously) to the committee. Good luck!

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DON'T GET BYTTEN: Spam, Scams, and Slams

Y'know, I was feeling pretty good about my length. Really. I am a pretty confident guy. No worries in that department.

But then they started asking me how I felt about my girth.

Girth?

Who comes up with that stuff?

Really, really good marketers.

I am, of course, talking about spammers, the colloquial name for e-mail direct marketers. If you have spent any time near a computer, a television, a book, or a movie, that was used/written/produced in the last 20 years, you have heard the term, and probably been inundated with the stuff.

SPAM advertises many different types of products and services, but there does seem to be a theme that links many of them: a preponderance of illicit, quasi-licit, or Frowned Upon activities. These include, but are not limited to, prohibited prescription pharmaceuticals, penny stocks, nonsense folk remedies, porn, and dating services...which, of course, can all go together, in some Date From Hell configuration, if you plan things properly.

Suffice it to say, mundane items that are easily marketed elsewhere are not usually the subject of spam. You will rarely find an e-mail from xxpproduce1778-gh@mashomingo.jp hawking "Best Rutabaga EVER!!!!" in your Inbox.

Unless someone is doing something dreadful with the rutabaga. In which case, I don't want to know about it, 'cause that's not what I meant. So please don't send any evidence proving me wrong to this publication, or my private e-mail.

Why do spammers do this? Well, the same reason anyone does anything: because it works.

Most distribution professionals will tell you that even blind marketing will result in a 3% sales rate (three out of every hundred people who are contacted about a product or service will eventually purchase that product or service). These are GREAT numbers, when you consider that a CD can contain ten million e-mail addresses. A quick Yahoo! search of "e-mail addresses CD" turns up just such an offer, as the very first result on the page: a CD chock full of e-mail ad-

resses, for a mere eighty-five bucks.

Three percent of ten million is a LOT.

Okay-- I'll do the math. It's 300,000.

(I hope you appreciate this-- I'm a writer, and you forced me to do math.)

Anyway, 300,000 people is a wonderful market. For the sake of argument, let's say that e-mail marketing is only half as effective as other types of marketing: a 1.5% sell-through rate. Let's even assume half the CD has bogus or dead e-mail addresses. And let's say that another 50% of the responders are just certifiably insane.

That still leaves 37,500 people who want to buy your stuff.

(NOTE: Neither the author, nor SoCalMWA, nor this newsletter, endorses authors who use spam to promote their books! In fact, we find spammers to be disgusting lowlife slime, who

Why do spammers do this? Well, ... because it works.

would be better suited to write ad copy for Pol Pot than literature. So there.)

So every time some yokel buys something offered via spam, they encourage spamming and spammers. It will never end until it becomes unprofitable. Which means it might never end.

SCAMS are another way e-mail can become annoying. Truthfully, however, I do not feel nearly as much sympathy for scam victims, as they were almost always hoisted on their own petards. Petardim? Petarda? Whatever-- they were usually guilty of being greedy and/or stupid.

For instance, while I was typing that sentence, I received a scam e-mail in my Inbox. The Subject Line was "**You've received a greeting ecard from a Friend!**" and the sender was (supposedly) "sny@health.missouri.edu," While I am sure that everyone at the fictional Missouri Medical School wants to be my friend, I am quite positive that they all know me well enough to know that I would never open an anonymous link inside a demented e-mail from some fly-by-night "greeting ecard" company.

The best part is the contents of this e-mail. (See box on next page.)

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Because, yeah, greeting card giant Hallmark can't afford a greeting card weblink featuring their very own eponymous URL, www.hallmark.com. Everyone knows that. That's why they use that generic "24.23.94.212" IP address, like in the announcement they sent me.

In fact, I checked on that IP, using a quick WHOIS lookup at Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com/whois/index.jsp), just for giggles. It's registered to some unknown person or outfit who wants to keep their information private (gee, I wonder why), and are traced only as far as being a Comcast account, supposedly in Tennessee.

And no, I will not click the link just so you can find out what kind of stupid scam they're trying to perpetrate. I don't get paid enough for this column to do that. Eric! Give me more money! Oh, wait--we don't get any money?

This sucks.

Anyway, scammers use the Internet and e-mail for the same reason spammers do: because you can reach a lot of people, really quickly, for very cheap. Many of those people are suckers. Many of them are lonely. Many of them don't understand the intricacies of modern communications equipment. Many of them weren't all that bright to begin with.

Scammers exploit these groups mercilessly. You can say you heard it here first.

SLAMS: For the last portion of this column, let me create a new usage for a word to describe how some otherwise-legitimate entities use misleading, incorrect, or fraudulent information, via electronic means, to influence your disposable income.

For instance, let me use the very ironic instance of Network Solutions as an example. Now, as far as providing Internet-related services, NetSol is pretty much the big kid on the block. For a long time, they were

granted a government-authorized monopoly on distributing and registering Internet domain names; in some ways and arenas, they still maintain this lock on the market. They also offer website hosting and design services, among many other cybergoodies.

I don't really mind NetSol's trust status. They have pretty much provided me a good product at reasonable prices, whenever I've used them. I don't use them as a host for my website, but I continue to register my domain names through them.

Enter the irony.

NetSol also maintains the WHOIS database, the pile of information related to each and every domain name and IP address on the Internet. You can go to the link I mentioned earlier, plug in any IP address or URL, and WHOIS will tell you something about the person or company that owns that address, where they're located, what their contact information is, etc. Anyone who wants to register a website or get on the Internet is required, by government mandate, to provide that information to WHOIS (you provide this information when you surf the web, by

proxy: your Internet Service Provider assigns you an IP address for the duration of your connection, and reports its own information to WHOIS, in place of yours).

Now, here's where it gets funny: NetSol offers an additional service, on top of registering your domain name, called Private Registration, where you can anonymize your WHOIS information.

Let me break it down a bit...

I've got a website, www.benmalisow.com (I have now satisfied my Shameless Plug quota for this column). I had to give NetSol \$35 to own that address for one year. I also had to give them some important information, such as my phone number, an address, my name, etc. This info had to be real, too, as it was used for billing my credit card. NetSol puts this information into their WHOIS database, for the whole world to see.

Re: You've received a greeting ecard from a friend.

Hi. Friend has sent you a greeting ecard.

See your card as often as you wish during the next 15 days.

SEEING YOUR CARD

If your email software creates links to Web pages, click on your card's direct www address below while you are connected to the Internet: <http://24.23.94.212/?5ed2175ee0c2a4c1c8a8aa50bb1c2>

Or copy and paste it into your browser's "Location" box (where Internet addresses go).

We hope you enjoy your awesome card.

Wishing you the best,

Mailer-Daemon,

hallmark.com

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Unless, that is, you pay NetSol an extra fee to keep the information hidden.

I find that hysterical.

Do I want to give out my private contact information to strangers? On the Internet? HELL, no! As a security professional, I am paranoid by habit, nature, and trade. Of course, I know other ways of keeping my info out of WHOIS (my website hosting service does that for me, at the moment), but that's not the point.

Now, *here's* where the slam comes in.

Why would you want to keep your contact information out of WHOIS? Well, to keep it out of the hands of creeps who want to exploit you in some way. There is a very small (but real) chance some criminal could try to make use of that info. And there is a very large chance (let's call it 100%, because it is) that the WHOIS information is constantly being mined by people less dangerous than creeps, but even more annoying: marketers.

That's right. Where did you think spammers were getting a bunch of their e-mail addresses?

Okay, so, NetSol wants to sell you their Private Registration service (and other registrars offer the same function, often called something like Anonymizer, etc.) so that you can avoid being targeted by salespeople.

Ready for this? See where it's going?

The punchline: I've had my NetSol account for years. The only sales pitches that ever came to me through the WHOIS database were from....

NetSol.

That's right.

Not only do they e-mail me about every month to sell me a bunch of extra goodies I don't need, but they *called* me, on my cell phone, last year, *while I was at work*.

They got in touch with me specifically to offer me the Private Registration service, *so that I wouldn't be harassed by salespeople*.

Okay, that kind of thing usually pisses me off, but in this case, I was so amused by the irony that I was

laughing. I was teaching a high school computer class, and tried to simultaneously explain my hysteria to my students and the salesperson who called me. I failed drastically.

Or, I was inadvertently successful: both my students and NetSol's sales force ended up being very scared of me, because they now think I'm crazy.

Spam, scams, and slams are kind of funny, and kind of annoying, and part of modern life, take it or leave it. Like all other forms of commerce and communication, they are only going to get more and

more sophisticated.

Which is pretty amazing, when you think about it. Those things work really well in their current form.

For instance, you

Do I want to give out my private contact information to strangers? On the Internet? HELL, no! As a security professional, I am paranoid by habit, nature, and trade... we should be worried about the next level of spam capability that may evolve...who knows what that will look like?

Spooky.

may have recognized the very e-mails that I used to craft the joke at the beginning of this column. Then again, you may not have: spammers are getting quite adept at targeting their products and services to specific demographics...while I have talked to some women in the IT security field who receive spam for "male enhancement" formulae, others say they have never seen it...and I, myself, have never gotten spam for products and services that purport to increase my bust size, although I am assured that these exist.

So the spammers are already doing a passable job of gender-specificity. Instead of being glad that we don't have to get twice as much spam, we should be somewhat worried about the next level of spam capability that may evolve...who knows what that will look like?

Spooky.

—Ben Malisow

Ben has provided computer and information security services to DARPA, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI, among other customers.
www.benmalisow.com

The Crime Calendar

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

Yosemite Writers Conference—August 24-26, Yosemite, CA, www.yosemitewriters.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Las Vegas Writers Conference —April 17-19, 2008, Las Vegas, NV www.lasvegaswritersconference.com

Members' Blogs & Other Useful Spaces

The internet has given our members, and other writers a lot of new outlets for their work. Here are some of our member's blogs, and some places to check out.

Debby Atkinson blogs on Mondays at <http://typem4murder.blogspot.com>

Paul Levine, Patty Smiley and Jacqueline Winspear all blog at <http://nakedauthors.com/>.

Harley Jane Kozak's blog can be found at <http://thelipstickchronicles.typepad.com/>

Doug Lyle answers writer's questions about forensics on his blog at <http://dplylemd.com/forcomm.html/>

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

Sheila Lowe's blog can be found at <http://mystery-writers.blogspot.com>.

Gregg Hurwitz blogs on his own website at <http://>

gregghurwitz.blogspot.com.

Eric Stone blogs on his website at <http://ericstone.com/blog.html>.

Gwen Freeman is blogging at www.mystery-writers.blogspot.com.

There are also a number of other places on the web where writers can make themselves known. Several MWA members, and others, can be found these days on My Space at www.myspace.com. But there are an increasing number of sites that are specific to people with an interest in crime writing or reading. One useful site is www.crimespace.ning.com. Like My Space, it's a social networking site, but more highly targeted. Another, for authors is Book Tour. www.booktour.com. It lists authors, books and events. If it catches on, it will be a good place to publicize your events to your readers.

Armchair Travel:

Unable to Make it to BEA or an MWA Meeting? Podcasting Is Here

I've gone podcast crazy and I don't even own an iPod. What's a podcast? It's a digital media file that can be downloaded from the Internet into either an iPod, MP3 player, or a personal computer. Think radio or television but on demand.

I have a simple Hewlett Packard laptop with Windows Media and it does the trick. What's really wonderful is that even if you can't attend certain publishing functions, you can at least listen in.

Right now, for example, I'm slowly going through podcasts from this last Book Expo in New York City (www.bookexpocast.com). M.J. Rose speaks at length about her new upcoming book, *The Reincarnationist*. There's a fascinating panel about myspace.com which include myspace executives as well as authors who have learned the best way to exploit its networking

power. You can learn about the ethical issues that book reviewers face from the stalwarts of the industry. Or best yet, hear from Seattle librarian Nancy Pearl, other librarians, and editors about new books coming out this and next year. (Amazing to hear an editor almost break down in tears in describing an especially moving memoir. What a wonderful business we're in!) In this podcast, our own Southern California MWA board member Theresa Schwegel and her upcoming book, *Person of Interest*, are "buzzed" by her publisher.

For those who might be interested in what happens at romance conferences and conventions, check out Romance Novel TV (www.romancenovel.tv). (There seems to be a slight overlap between the romance and mystery genres as Romance Writers of America president talks about fire-

arms workshop at the latest RWA conference.) This is not just audio, but also video. You can both watch and hear Janet Evanovich being interviewed in three installments.

And finally, you can tune into past MWA meetings at your desk or armchair. To gain access to some of the audio files of the Southern California chapter's meetings, go to our website, www.socalmwa.com. Go to the Members Only section and type in the following:

User ID: MysteryWriter

Password: SoCalMWA

The New York chapter also makes its podcasts to any MWA member through its website, www.mwanyc.org. If you're interested in getting their access password, etc., e-mail Ken Isaacson at KJI-isaacson@gmail.com.

Happy listening!

—Naomi Hirahara

(President's Rap from page 1)

emerged, publications such as the *Strand Magazine*, *Collier's Weekly*, and countless newspapers rode tremendous waves of popularity. Those journals were the vehicles for the great success of authors such as Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain and lead to enhanced book sales as the readers' appetites were whetted. Books began to be marketed to the masses, and the "best seller" came into being.

Should this matter to the author? If books aren't commercially viable, most publishers won't publish them. We all have a strong sense that creative decisions are made more and more by the marketing departments of the major publishers, and fewer and fewer publishers are prepared to take a chance on a

book that doesn't have immediately recognizable strong sales potential. Series authors face mounting pressure to produce books "just like the last one, only better" (assuming that the last one sold well). Stand-alone authors are told to emulate someone else's successful work, to write another Dan Brown or Robert Ludlum or James Patterson book.

And where does MWA stand? As always, in the corner of the authors, trying to help you write what you want and get it published. As the first half of our SoCal MWA "season" wraps up, I'm proud of the programming we've presented and the outreach we've made to the community. I'm also proud of the opportunities we've created for our members to network and support each other. Stay tuned for the rest of the year, we've got great things in store.

—Les Klingner, Chapter President

September Luncheon:

HOW THE PROS MAKE THE AMS BELIEVABLE

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.

Moderator: Robert S. Levinson

is the bestselling author of thrillers including *Where a Dead Man, Hot Dean Affair*, and *The Key of Death*. He's currently in two short story anthologies, *The Deadly Bride* and *Finest Crime and and Hollywood* 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.



author of thrillers *the Lies Begin, Ask Paint, The James* the forthcoming *In He's* currently in anthologies, *The 21 of the Year's Mystery Stories and Crime*, while

Susan Kandel's debut novel *I Dreamed I Mason* about biographer was nominated for an became a Los Angeles ler. Her second, *Not A Girl* selected as a Best Novel the Southern California



Married Perry Cece Caruso Agatha and Times Bestsel-Detective, was nominee by 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 de-Shelley won many including the Agatha, Macavity and is fol-*Dating is Murder* and Her short prose has *Ms. Magazine, Soap* *gest, The Sun, The Monica Review*, and gies *Mystery Muses Chick Lit*. She is currently working on the fourth novel in the series.



signer Wollie awards in-Anthony, and lowed by *Dead Ex*. appeared in *Opera Di-Santa* the antholo-and *This is*

Patricia Smiley's

debut novel *False Profits* about Los Angeles manage-ment consultant received a starred *Booklist* and was a ommendation. Her *Cover Your Assets Times* Top Pick. *Los Angeles Times Short Change* is series. Her fourth release in June of 2008.



Angela manage-Tucker Sinclair review from Book Sense rec-follow-up novel was a *Romantic-Both* novels were Bestsellers. the third in the novel is set for

RESERVATION FORM: Sunday, September 23, 2007 / Taix Restaurant

1911 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles 90026 (parking on premises: \$2.50)

Reception from 11 am / Luncheon 11:45 am sharp / Program from 12:30 pm

Advance reservations \$25 (member or guest); **Payment at the door: \$25**

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

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

Member & Guest(s) Names _____

Phone _____ or E-mail _____

Please specify entrée for each attendee:

Chilled Salmon Salad

Chicken Marsala

Penne Pasta Monagasque (vegetarian)

All meals include choice of soup, salad,

MEMBER	GUEST

THE MARCH OF CRIME



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To advertise in *TMOC*, visit our website at www.SoCalMWA.com for information.

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