



The  
MARCH

of CRIME

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## SoCalMWA Party Homemade Gumbo & Home-Brewed Ale Party

**Saturday, October 1**



**Details coming soon!**

**[RESERVE YOUR SPOT AT THIS EVENT](#)**

SoCalMWA Event:  
Saturday, October 22

**Demystifying  
Writing  
Software**

**[More Info](#)**





## The President's Rap Sheet

### Craig Faustus Buck

I've become involved with a volunteer activity that has had an impact on my writing. Only time will tell how great an impact, but it has reminded me of the myriad opportunities around us that can provide grist for the mill. In this case, it's called the Neighborhood Justice Program (NJP), and for character ideas, foibles and details, it is a mother lode.

NJP is run by the L.A. City Attorney's office for the purpose of diverting non-violent misdemeanor first offenders out of the criminal justice system. This not only relieves strain on the courts (and City prosecutors), but gives first offenders a chance to make amends for their crimes without being saddled with a criminal record. The program is based on the philosophy of restorative justice in which criminals are made to understand the impact of their crimes on everyone involved (including themselves), and required to do what they can to repair or offset the harm they have caused.

For example, a shoplifter might have to go to an LAPD class that explores the cost to society of petty theft: how it raises prices for everyone, how it increases security costs for the stores, how it wastes police resources, etc. In addition, we might require them to put in some hours of community service, preferably in a situation that boosts their self-esteem and encourages empathy for others (working at a homeless shelter or a food program as opposed to picking up garbage along the highway). They might be asked to write a letter of apology to the shopkeeper or to their family, or a self-reflective essay on how their crime has affected their own life or how it felt to be handcuffed and taken to jail. We might also refer them to an agency that can provide counseling, parenting classes or job training. More info can be found in this [L.A. Times Op-ed piece](#) from a few weeks ago.

The object is not to punish, but to alter their path, to keep them from becoming career criminals by giving them one second chance to stay out of the criminal justice system. My job is to lead panels of citizen volunteers (usually three people) to forge agreements with participants to perform regimens of restorative tasks. If the person fulfills the agreement, the City Attorney drops all charges and the participant has a one-time shot at a clean slate. So far I've been observing, but by the time this rap goes to press, I will have facilitated my first panel. Even at this early stage, the program has been extremely gratifying on a personal level, as I've seen more than a dozen lives changed and dashed hopes restored.

[continued on pg 17](#)

## Chapter Officers

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## The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

As I was editing the newsletter this month, I was struck (again) by the high quality guests and meeting topics SoCalMWA offers. Many of you know I now reside in Northern California and I'm always a little bit sad when I edit the newsletter and see all of the great meetings I can't attend. To say nothing of the Gumbo Party in October. I'll be in Los Angeles that weekend but darned if Craig didn't schedule it for the one evening I have plans for that trip (Dolly Parton at the Hollywood Bowl--hard to miss, even for **Bill Fitzhugh's** fabulous gumbo).

So I'm always grateful when members take the time to write summaries of the meetings for those of us who, for one reason or another, can't make it. To that end, don't miss the excellent Event Wrap-Ups provided by **Jill Amadio** ([Prof. Don Johnson, Criminalist](#)) and **Terri Nolan** ([ATF Special Agent Stephanie Romo](#)) this month.

To round out the issue, we've got a discussion of BUGS (Back Up Guns) used by law enforcement in [Hollow Points](#) by **Gregory Von Dare** and **Diane Vallere** talks author branding in [Designer Pants and a Duct-Taped Hem](#).

Finally, if you're attending Bouchercon, [take a peek](#) at all the places SoCalMWA members will be. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you there.

Holly

# FRESH BLOOD

SoCalMWA welcomes its new and returning members:

Kathy Aarons  
Chad Bishop  
Vijaya Kumari  
Kristina Makansi  
Mary Menzel  
Eric James Miller  
Debra Mitsch  
Linda Nakamura  
Lissa Price  
Serita Stevens  
Duane Swierczynski



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

Editor: [Holly West](#)

September Contributors:  
Gregory Von Dare  
Diane Vallere  
Jill Amadio  
Terri Nolan  
Les Klinger

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

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to join (members only)

## OVER the TRANSOM

*Member News*

**Gay Toltl Kinman's** play *From Baskets to Jade* was performed and on video by CADT (Cine Arts Dance and Theatre) on <https://vimeo.com/channels/cadt>. The first ten minutes is a cold reading by the actors with book in hand as they have never seen the script before. The second ten minutes is a discussion with the author (Gay) and the two actors, Kori Beth and Philip Lawton; and the third ten minutes is the play after rehearsals.

**Stefanie Stolinsky's** novel, *HOT SHOT*, a comedy/mystery about a degenerate gambler who ends up working for the FBI, will be released November 1 from FierySeas publishers and is available for pre-order now.

**Barry Wiley** has had the first two novels of his *Adventures in Second Sight* series, *REVELATIONS OF THE IMPOSSIBLE PIDDINGTONS* and *SHADOW OF THE TIGER* reviewed on *Kings River Life* in the past month. Both reviews were very positive. And the first short story in the second collection of short stories featuring the Victorian thought reader, Stuart Cumberland, "Flight of the Purba," is scheduled to appear in coming weeks. The first collection, *TALES OF A THOUGHT READER*, is on Amazon in both print and ebook formats.

**Marilyn Meredith's** latest Deputy Tempe Crabtree mystery, *SELDOM TRAVELED*, is now available on Amazon. The tranquility of the mountain community of Bear Creek is disrupted by a runaway fugitive, a vicious murderer and a raging forest fire. Deputy Tempe Crabtree is threatened by all three.

**Gary Phillips** has short stories upcoming in *BLOOD ON THE BAYOU* from Down & Out Books; *THE HIGHWAY KIND: TALES OF FAST CARS, DESPERATE DRIVERS* and *DARK ROADS* from Mulholland Books; *CRIME + MUSIC: TWENTY STORIES OF MUSIC-THEMED NOIR* from Three Rooms Press; co-editor of 44 *CALIBER FUNK: TALES OF CRIME, SOUL AND PAYBACK* (including stories from **Holly West**, **Travis Richardson** and **Bob Levinson**) from Moonstone; and his first ever Sherlock Holmes story in *ECHOES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, STORIES INSPIRED BY THE HOLMES CANON* from Pegasus Books.



## OVER the TRANSOM

BODY ON THE BAYOU, the second in **Ellen Byron's** Cajun Country Mystery series, launches September 13th.

**Craig Faustus Buck's** noir crime novel GO DOWN HARD was selected by the judges as a finalist for Killer Nashville's Silver Falchion award. His short story, "Liar's Poker," has been purchased by *SpineTingler Magazine*.

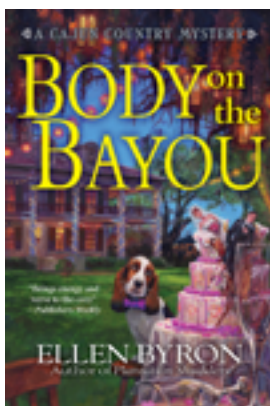
BEHIND CHOCOLATE BARS, the third book in **Kathy Aarons's** Chocolate Covered Mystery series by Berkeley Prime Crime, comes out October 4.

**Jeri Westerson** is launching her ninth Crispin Guest Medieval Noir Mystery, A MAIDEN WEEPING. Beginning August 6, she is giving away this one-of-a-kind Pandora-style bracelet with silver-plated medieval beads and charms, including a tiny portrait charm of Crispin himself. At the book launches simply add your email address to the free raffle tickets or send an email to [jerwesterson@gmail.com](mailto:jerwesterson@gmail.com). One winner will be chosen August 15!

CHASM, **Susan Cummins Miller's** latest Frankie MacFarlane novel, has been named a Finalist for the 2016 WILLA Award in Contemporary Fiction. The award will be presented on October 15, 2016, at the Women Writing the West Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Susan will read from the novel on Thursday night, October 13, at the Drury Inn, and sign copies there on Saturday evening.

**Shannon Baker** announces the first in the Kate Fox mystery series, STRIPPED BARE (Forge) releases Sept. 6. Called Longmire meets The Good Wife, the series features a woman sheriff in the Nebraska Sandhills.

**Robert S. Levinson** has placed another story with *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, "The Public Hero," in which a private detective's heroics become the basis for a major motion picture to be produced by former film studio mogul Jack L. Warner. It's the second story by Bob EQMM has acquired in recent months. The other, "Rosalie Marx is Missing," is a noir yarn set in Las Vegas. Publication dates for both are pending.





Member  
APPEARANCES

Saturday, September 17. 12 noon-3 p.m: **Jill Amadio** will talk and sign at Mysterious Galaxy bookstore to introduce the second book in her series, *DIGGING UP THE DEAD: A Tosca Trevant Mystery*. Cornishwoman Tosca, banished to Newport Beach by her London newspaper, stumbles upon and solves two murders involving Raymond Chandler's fictional rival Fuller Sanderson. Lost manuscripts, medieval musical instruments, and Tosca's Cornish cusswords rattle the local police with her own brand of amateur sleuthing. "Clever and fun," said Anne Perry. Mysterious Galaxy, 5943 Balboa Avenue, San Diego, CA 92111.

**Mike Befeler** will be giving a book talk and signing his recently released sports mystery, *COURT TROUBLE: A PLATFORM TENNIS MYSTERY*, at Mystery Ink, 8907 Warner Avenue #135, Huntington Beach, CA, on Saturday September 10, 2016, at 4 PM.

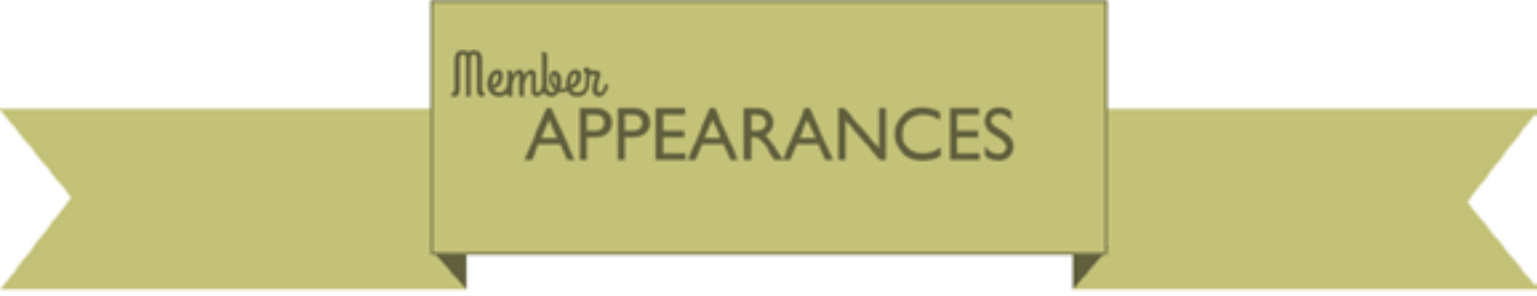
**Laura Levine** will be hosting her Better-Late-Than-Never Book Launch party for her fourteenth Jaine Austen mystery, *MURDER HAS NINE LIVES*. Saturday, September 10, 3-5 PM., Spitfire Grill, Santa Monica Airport. Please come and join the fun! Wine, munchies, free pencils!

William Kent Krueger and **Shannon Baker** will be hanging out and signing their new releases at Mysterious Galaxy on October 3 at 7:00 and at Book Carnival on October 4 at 7:30. They'd love for you to stop by and say hi.

**Sybil Johnson** and **Sarah M. Chen** will be signing books and speaking at the Wiseburn Library, 5335 West 135th Street, Hawthorne, CA 90745 on Thursday, September 8 from 6:30 - 8:00pm. They will discuss "The Light and Dark Sides of Crime Fiction."

**Nina Sadowsky** and **Glen Erik Hamilton** will join Alex Dolan at Los Angeles' The Last Bookstore on Friday October 7th at 7 p.m. for "Great Books, Dark Places," a discussion to launch Dolan's new novel, *THE EMPRESS OF TEMPERA*.

Do you have an upcoming  
appearance?  
Email your announcement to  
[TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com](mailto:TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com)  
by September 20 for inclusion in  
the October issue.



Member  
APPEARANCES

## BOUCHERCON 2016

### PANELS

**James Ziskin** will appear on the sex panel at Bouchercon. Thursday, September 15, 9-9:50am in Mardi Gras E. “Something for the Weekend: Sex in the Morning.”

**Nina Sadowsky** will join moderator **Lee Goldberg** and fellow panelists Alexandra Sokoloff, David Morell, Burt Weissbourd and **Phoef Sutton** at Bouchercon on Thursday September 15th at 12 pm, LaGalleries 6 for “One More Time: Novels and characters taking on another life on screen.”

**Connie di Marco** will be appearing on the panel “On the Street Where You Live” at Bouchercon on Thursday, September 15th at 12 noon, with authors Suzanne Solomon, Triss Stein, Deb Coonts, Frances Brody and Christina Freeburn.

**Travis Richardson** will moderate a panel titled: “Metropolitan Glide - Police” on Thursday, September 15, from 1:30–2:20 P.M. in the Mardi Gras room. Panelists include Mark Edwards, Michael Dymmoach, James L’Etolle, Alex Gray and R.T. Lawton.

**Ellen Byron** will be on the “Take Me Home: Setting” panel at Bouchercon, which will take place on Thursday, September 15th at 3:00 p.m. in Mardi Gras E.

**Sarah M. Chen** will appear on the “Murder Under the Sun” panel on Thursday, September 15 at 4:30pm in LaGalleries 1 with Mysti Berry (M), Jeffery Hess, C. Michele Dorsey, Michael Stanely and Annamaria Alfieri.

**Shannon Baker** will be on the “Everything You Can Think” panel at Bouchercon at 9:30 Friday, moderated by Jess Lourey and with other panelists Julie McElwain, Jason Starr, Emily Carpenter and Lisa Mannetti.

**Patty Smiley** will be discussing her upcoming police procedural, PACIFIC HOMICIDE (November 8 release) with **Eric Beetner** (M), Tom Pitts, Josh Stallings, Andrew Case and J.D. Knight on the “Uptown Funk: Gritty Urban Settings” panel on Friday, September 16, 11-11:50am.

**Craig Faustus Buck** will participate on the “Dirty Boulevard-Hard Boiled” panel with Rob Hart, Todd Robinson, Lisa Turner, Barbara N.S. Nickless and Susan Alice Bickford on Friday, September 16, 2:00-2:50 (LaGalleries 6).



Member  
APPEARANCES

## BOUCHERCON 2016

### PANELS

**Jeri Westerson** will appear on the “Yesterday: Historical Mystery Panel,” on Saturday, September 17, 10:30-11:20am, in Mardi Gras FG. Other panelists are John Billheimer (M), Susan Spann, Julie Mulhern, Kathleen Kent and Charles Finch.

**Holly West** will appear on “The Soap Opera Song: Lessons I Learned About Writing from the Soaps,” alongside fellow authors Laura Benedict (M), Reed Farrel Coleman, Joe Clifford, Charles Salzberg and Toni McGee Causey on Saturday, September 17 at 10:30am. At 12pm on Saturday, Holly will moderate “Look Through Any Window - Hollywood” with panelists Renee Patrick, **Melodie Johnson Howe**, Kathryn Leigh Scott and Diana Chambers.

**Glen Erik Hamilton** will appear on the “Bad Company: Living among (and trying to escape) the criminal element” panel, with Judy Clemens (M), Brian Panowich, **Elizabeth Little**, Allen Eskins and Mark Pryor on Saturday, September 17 at 1:30pm.

**Les Klinger** will be moderating a panel titled “Sherlock Holmes: Wherefore and Why” with Lois Gresh, Michael Robertson, **Bonnie MacBird** (author of ART IN THE BLOOD: A SHERLOCK HOLMES ADVENTURE and the upcoming UNQUIET SPIRITS, both from HarperCollins), Terence Faherty, and Laura Caldwell at 3 pm on Saturday, September 17.

**Kim Fay** and Gigi Pandian and will be on the Bouchercon panel, “Learning to be Lonely,” Saturday, September 17 at 3pm in Mardi Gras D. They will join fellow panelists, with moderator Hank Phillippi Ryan, in discussing tips, tricks and tales for surviving the locked room mystery of being a writer.

**Nancy Cole Silverman** will appear on the Mystery and Music Panel at 4:40pm on Saturday, September 17.

### OTHER APPEARANCES

**Craig Faustus Buck** will read at the afternoon Noir at the Bar, Wednesday 9/14, 4:30-6:00, in the conference hotel (LaGalleries 4&5).

**Sarah M. Chen** will appear at Bouchercon Noir Bar After Dark on Wednesday, September 14 at The Voodoo Lounge, 718 N. Rampart Street at 9pm. Participating authors include Johnny Shaw, Christa Faust, Todd Robinson, S.G. Redling, Martyn Waites, **Eric Beetner**, John Rector, Danny Gardner and Renee Asher Pickup.

**Gary Phillips** will participate the in group signings for BLOOD ON THE BAYOU and CRIME + MUSIC.





Member  
APPEARANCES

## BOUCHERCON 2016

### AWARD FINALISTS

**James Ziskin's** *STONE COLD DEAD* is a finalist for the Anthony Best Paperback Original and the Barry Best Paperback Original awards.

**Glen Erik Hamilton** is nominated for the Anthony, Macavity and Barry Best First Novel awards for *PAST CRIMES*.

**Holly West** is nominated for the Anthony Award for Best Short Story for her story, "Don't Fear the Ripper," (appears in the Anthony Award-nominated *PROTECTOR'S 2 HEROES* anthology and the upcoming *BIG BOOK OF JACK THE RIPPER*).

**Travis Richardson's** short story, "Quack and Dwight" (appears in the Anthony Award-nominated *JEWISH NOIR* anthology) is nominated for both the Macavity and Anthony Awards.

NOTE: [You can read Holly and Travis's stories here \(as well as those of the other nominees\).](#)



THE COUNTDOWN TO

2017

CALIFORNIA CRIME WRITERS CONFERENCE  
REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

Saturday & Sunday, June 10-11, 2017

[www.ccwconference.org](http://www.ccwconference.org)



[Click here for more info and to register](http://www.ccwconference.org)



## Hollow Points

*Gregory Von Dore*

### Bugs

The downside of pulling a gun on someone is that they may take it away from you. Or, it may slip from your bloody hands in the dark and go clattering across the floor. It may jam or misfire. Now what do you do? For law enforcement officers, undercover ops and private investigators, it's wise to have access to a second, maybe even a third gun. A reserve weapon is known as a back-up gun (BUG).

With the adoption of reliable, high-capacity semi-automatic pistols as standard duty arms, some police officers felt they no longer needed a BUG. Those who had been carrying several speed-loaders for their six-shot revolvers now had all that ammunition in one gun—typically 14-17 rounds in a modern 9mm pistol. And police tactics changed to take advantage of this extra ammo. Some might say that today's police are more likely to fire because they don't have to worry about running dry in a tight spot.



Most speedloaders, like this popular HKS version, are carried on the belt.

A speed-loader is an accessory that allows you to load all the rounds into a revolver at once, rather than one cartridge at a time. It is usually a ring of rubber or metal into which you press your bullets. To reload, you swing out the cylinder of the revolver, eject the spent cartridges and slide all the new ones into place, then you twist or pinch the back of the speed-loader and all the cartridges release. You snap the cylinder back into the frame and you're ready to fire again. No piece work.

It works very well if you're behind cover or firing at a distance. If you're under bodily attack, even this quickie reload may be too slow. By the way, a speed-loader is not the same as a "moon clip." A moon-clip is a thin metal crescent or ring into which bullets are snapped, but then the moon-clip stays attached to the bullets and is loaded (and unloaded) with them. Most revolvers must be modified to work with moon-clips. A better idea may be the "New York reload"—drawing and firing a BUG immediately, rather than attempting to reload the primary at all.

Let's imagine a squad where a BUG is permitted and individuals get to choose what they want to carry. In a world where a Glock 17 is probably the primary service weapon what options do we have for effective back-up? Probably three.

First, duplicate the service pistol in a more compact version. This allows you to carry and use a single grade and caliber of ammunition. And you don't have to reset your head for controls such as safety and magazine release. For those using the Glock 17, that BUG would probably be the smaller Glock G19. For those using the S&W .40, an M&P40C would work. And for those stalwarts carrying the Colt .45 M1911, the compact Colt Commander would provide a high level of

# Ladies of Intrigue

Featuring Remarkable Women Mystery Writers

**Sunday, October 2, 2016**

**Hotel Huntington Beach**

8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. – Registration: [www.mysteryink.com](http://www.mysteryink.com)

## Our 2016 Headliners

### Carolyn Hart



Carolyn Hart received the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Amelia Award from Malice Domestic. Past national president of Sisters in Crime, she was named the Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America in 2014. In this, her career event finale, she will be interviewed by N.Y. Times Best-Selling author, Rhys Bowen.

Rhys Bowen has been nominated for every major award in mystery writing, including the Edgar, and has won seven, including both the Agatha and the Anthony.



### Robin Burcell



Robin Burcell spent nearly three decades working in law enforcement as a police officer, hostage negotiator and as a FBI Academy-trained forensic artist. She is an award-winning author and is currently co-writing the Fargo series with best-selling author, Clive Cussler.

### Panelists:

Kathy Aarons, Lisa Brackmann, Ellen Byron, Kate Carlisle, Donis Casey, Hannah Dennison, Kate Dyer-Seeley, Earlene Fowler, Daryl Wood Gerber, Naomi Hirahara, Linda O. Johnston, Carlene O'Neil, Laurie Stevens, and Pamela Samuels Young

**REGISTRATION FORM: At Hotel Huntington Beach on Center Avenue  
Lunch Included/Free Parking - Early Bird Specials!**

Tickets before August 15<sup>th</sup>, \$55 SinC members, \$60 for non-members

Tickets after August 15<sup>th</sup>, \$60 SinC members, \$65 for non-members

Please send check and registration information to:

Mystery Ink, 8907 Warner Avenue, #135, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

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## Meeting Wrap-Up: Crime & Science Radio with Prof. Don Johnson

by Jill Amadio

Blood spatter patterns. Wound tissue. Bite marks. Skin discolorations. Think you know enough about scientific evidence collected at a crime scene to write your book? Think again. Forensic conclusions are undergoing major changes and will continue to do so, according to SoCalMWA's guest speaker, Professor Don Johnson. As a leading criminalist in crime scene investigation, reconstruction, and forensic biology, he cautioned that the latest technologies can challenge crime scene analyses and interpretation that we accept as gospel, especially when a murder scene is initially evaluated by those who are the first to arrive. Gunshot residue, for example, is considered not specific any more.

A detective might claim that a trail of blood may lead one way when, in fact, it can be proven to lead in the opposite direction, thus delaying a chase. A suspect's shirt was initially thought to be smeared with the victim's blood until forensic tests proved it belonged to the suspect himself. One case appeared to indicate that a blood bath had occurred on a bed in an empty hotel room until the 'victim' was determined to have suffered from acute hemorrhoids!

At SoCal MWA's Tam O'Shanter luncheon on August 7, Johnson was interviewed by [Crime & Science Radio](#) hosts **Doug Lyle, M.D.**, SoCalMWA's favorite go-to forensics consultant and Macavity and Benjamin Franklin Silver Award winning author, and **Jan Burke**, founder of the Crime Lab Project and prolific bestselling author of fourteen books.

Dr. Johnson told his rapt audience that some beliefs about DNA findings can throw law enforcement off track when evaluating evidence, and that new developments in DNA methods of testing are assisting investigators far more in crime solving. Nowadays, he noted, DNA tests can isolate the part of the body that the blood came from, such as blood spatters from an arterial wound as opposed to a chest wound pattern, and whether the spatters reveal the victim was moving when shot or stabbed.

Answering questions by Lyle and Burke, the criminalist said that assessing a crime scene outdoors is not as simple as it sounds and weather plays a big part with fragile evidence, enough to be misleading. Writers, he urges, should be as careful as possible when writing crime scenes, and use qualified consultants as much as possible.

"The biggest misconception authors have," he said, "is what scientists can and cannot do, and requires study in applied science. Estimating a time of death, for example, is far less reliable than imagined. Markers are often missed, or are proven undependable at a later stage."

Investigators sometimes ignore vital pieces of information that are glaring, with the most obvious facts the most deceptive, he said, quoting Holmes.

"Visualize the scenes you are writing. One detective being debriefed concluded initially that two men were standing together behind a door until he realized the space was too small for that to have happened."

Johnson's advice to writers: Read books such as *FORENSIC SCIENCE FOR DUMMIES*, by Doug Lyle; attend forums at the Forensic Sciences Institute or the American Academy of Forensic Science; research online; make sure you find out jurisprudence details, whether the town/region you are writing about has a coroner, a sheriff's coroner, or a medical examiner, for instance. Not all are medical doctors. In New Orleans, the coroner is an ob-gyn! In other towns local undertakers fill the position when necessary.

Johnson concluded by urging all to support local labs such as the non-profit Crime Lab Project founded by Jan Burke.

## Meeting Wrap-Up: Murder for Hire with ATF Special Agent Stephanie Romo

by **Terri Nolan**

When Antonio Quevado and Adelina Cristobal made an attempt to hire a hit man to murder Cristobal's nephew they had no idea the man was a confidential informant working with the ATF. The CI reported the transaction to his handler, Special Agent Stephanie Romo. Romo fascinated a rapt crowd of 48 people at the SoCalMWA-SinC/OC joint luncheon meeting on August 28 in Irvine, with her comprehensive retelling of the case.

Once notified, Romo had a mere 2 days to get an undercover agent in place and plan every detail, every scenario. Usually, the ATF has 1-2 years to put together a case—when the feds come, the case is made, but this situation was time critical. If the CI didn't come through with the right man for the murder job the pair might have hired a backup and the ATF would have a victim on their hands.

The ATF hooked up with the LAPD to get the right kind of undercover agent: one with the right look, the right kind of street Spanish. They wired up the CI and the UC. The first outing was a bust and Romo had to put a surveillance team on Quevado's house. When he showed up the CI and the UC made their move.

The team drove to Cristobal's location (a tactical squad was 4 blocks away). She was very specific: she wanted the victim tortured, she wanted photographic proof, she wanted the victim to know why he was being murdered (he was in his mid-30s with a family in Mexico and was involved with her 19-year-old daughter. He also owed her money), and she wanted his body dumped in Tijuana. She gave them a \$500 deposit. Shortly after the handshake, the tactical squad moved in and made the arrests.

Quevado lawyered-up immediately. Cristobal lied her way through the interrogation. But the ATF had video, audio, cell phone photo, and money evidence. The bad guys were cooked and they pled guilty to conspiracy to use interstate commerce (cell phone; because the towers cross state lines) in the commission of a murder for hire. Quevado got 7 years and Cristobal got 9.



L-R: Terri Nolan, ATF Special Agent Stephanie Romo, Gayle Carline. Photo by Pat Broeske.

Interesting facts a writer may want to know:

- \* Every CI has to be credible and reliable. Vetted. They have to hang with the bad guys without getting into trouble.
- \* Most CIs don't tell their spouses their side occupation. One quarrel with a vindictive spouse and a CI's cover is blown and a life is compromised.
- \* CIs are either working off a crime or they do it for the money—called a cash reward—the feds pay up to \$200 a day.
- \* If a CI's information is used to make a case their identity does not appear on any ATF paperwork such as affidavits. They are assigned an identifying number and they don't have to testify in court.
- \* A CI can deactivate his relationship with the federal government at any time and vice versa.
- \* A CI can be moved to a new location for their safety.

[continued on pg 19](#)

## Designer Pants and a Duct-Taped Hem

Guest Spotlight by **Diane Vallere**

(Originally appeared in *Southern Writers Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2016)

Sometimes I feel like a fraud.

On any given day, I can be found online talking about fashion while the hem of my pants is held up with duct tape. Fashion is part of my author brand, so the social media posts are a necessary part of marketing. And while I'm capable of repairing fallen hems, I'm not motivated to mend on a regular basis. Which means I'm not just a fraud, I'm a lazy fraud at that. Besides, who has time to hem when you're working on building an author brand?

Even though many writers have heard that building a brand is important to their careers, I probably spend a disproportionate amount of time thinking about the subject (perhaps it's not laziness keeping me from hemming my pants but other writing-related distractions?). Our brands are like the fingerprints left behind on a pair of freshly polished patent leather shoes, portraying the promise of what readers can expect from our collective body of work. They sell style and sizzle in just a few words and tease readers into wanting to find out more about our books while not alienating anybody in the process and OH MY GOD THE PRESSURE.

Branding is a challenge for most of us. Accurately depicting our brand will both attract and deter people from making selections from our bookshelves. Nobody can be all things to all people, but it's easier to hope that they'll find us and like what they see regardless of recurring themes and influences and witty catch phrases and slogans. Isn't it?

Duct-taped hems notwithstanding, I love clothes. I don't remember a time that I didn't. It would be hard to write anything without referencing fashion. My attempts to do so are not far from "See Dick Run," which has already been written to great acclaim. (I may be a lazy fraud, but I'm no plagiarist.) Like I said earlier, fashion is a part of my brand, even if I'm still waiting for my invitation to guest judge Project Runway.

Recently a friend and I were discussing the importance of brands. He's a freelance stylist for Vogue (no taped hems that day, but I think there was a safety pin in my shirt). We determined that a personal brand should finish a statement: "Diane Vallere [fill in the blank]." He suggested "pens fashionable fiction." I added it to my website and used it as a hash tag on Twitter. But then, that fraudulent feeling crept up on me.

Was I—in my duct-taped pants and safety-pinned shirt—worthy of that brand? And more importantly, was that audience the right one for my books? I didn't know. What I did know was that I was suddenly plagued by questions: Would fashion people discount me because my experience in the industry was so last year? Would mystery fans pass over my books because they don't care about clothes that much? And how would people know I'm (occasionally) funny?

All of a sudden, my new brand became work. No more dashing out of the house in comfy clothes—I had a rep to protect! I'd have to step up my game, attend more industry events, sleep out at Target to score the latest designer collaborations, finagle invites to private trunk shows, rub elbows with designers, and OH MY GOD THE PRESSURE.

Not. The. Right. Track. But then—light bulb. Fashion may be part of my brand, but so are the duct-taped hems. Because not a single one of my characters is perfect.

[continued on pg 19](#)

## You Oughta Be in Pictures

About 70 fans and friends joined **Sheila Lowe** in launching **OUTSIDE THE LINES**, the sixth outing in her Forensic Handwriting mystery series. With half the book set in the UK, it seemed appropriate to display some typically British foods (someone hid the tin of Spotted Dick behind the Bisto gravy). The poster displays scenes from the book.



**Lee Goldberg** had a great time playing cops-and-robbers at the and the 8th annual Writers Police Academy in Green Bay, Wisconsin in August. Other mystery writers attending the seminars on all aspects of law enforcement included Tod Goldberg, Robin Burcell, Tami Hoag, Boyd Morrison and Maxine Paetro.



L-R: Tod Goldberg, Robin Burcell, **Lee Goldberg**, Maxine Paetro and Boyd Morrison.



**Lee Goldberg** and Tod Goldberg on the firing range at Writers Police Academy.



## You Oughta Be in Pictures

More workspace pics!

**Jeri Westersons's** workspace  
(right).



### Diane Vallere's Workspace

1. Elvis mug (coffee)
2. Daily planner
3. Article on social media
4. Calculator
5. Magazine pages: inspiration for current proposal
6. BUZZ map from Palm Springs: research for current WSP
7. Planets in Transit: b/c WTF with this current Saturn Retro phase?
8. More Palm Springs research for WSP
9. Receipts for taxes
10. Notebook for 3<sup>rd</sup> project
11. Pen
12. Graduation Certificate from CPA
13. Computer
14. General mess in background

(Removed for the purposes of this photo: hanger, bowl of olives, grocery store circular, empty handbag.)

This is where **Diane Vallere** works (left).

## President's Rap - [continued from pg 2](#)

But why am I writing about this here? Because the crime writing bonus is huge. I have gotten to know a lot of budding petty criminals the likes of whom I would rarely meet in my daily life. The panels delve deeply into each participant's personal life, living situation, family relations, work, leisure activities, feelings, etc. I can't tell you how many times I've formed an opinion of a participant after reading his or her crime report, only to have that opinion turned on end after spending a half-hour hearing about their life and their experience of the crime. It's a constant reminder of the complexity of character motivation.

I'm strictly (and legally) bound to keep case details confidential, but there's nothing to stop me from adopting or adapting anonymous character traits, family situations, verbal eccentricities, criminal shortcomings, body language, etc. for my characters.

So if you're looking for character and dialect inspiration, for a vaccine against cardboard creations, get out of your normal milieu and volunteer at a women's shelter, or a food bank, or at your local police station, or for a group that fights human trafficking, or even at a prison (I have a friend who created and ran a dance class for maximum security convicts in Chino). There's a whole world out there that could use your help while helping you. You just need to raise your hand to do some good while at the same time enriching your writing.

Craig

## Hollow Points - [continued from pg 11](#)

comfort and confidence. Yet for some patrol officers already loaded down with equipment, this may not be an attractive option.

They might favor a true concealed carry gun. Something that's small and light, meant to be hidden and engineered to work in that context. This category can include classic snub-nose and hammerless revolvers, compact automatics and a new generation of concealment guns that truly break the mold.



The innovative Taurus "Curve" in .380 is meant for concealed carry.

For example, there's the Ruger LC9, a modern take on the classic Walther PPK. It's a small, sleek, hammerless pistol that's already chambered for 9mm. Check the modern S&W Bodyguard 380. Or consider the "Curve" from Taurus Arms. This radical new gun is smooth, sleek, rounded and can't get hung-up on clothing or anything else. It even has a spring clip to hold it on your belt with no separate holster needed. The gun is curved so that it hugs the body and can comfortably be worn next to the skin, against a T-shirt or camisole. It loads seven rounds of .380 ACP and has a laser sight (and bright, white LEDs) in front of the trigger guard. This gun has no traditional sights, but a "bore sight" marking on the rear of the pistol. It's meant for extreme close quarter use, so traditional sights would only get in the way.

Last of all is the deep carry backup. Your final hope, your desperate chance. The traditional place for this BUG is a secret pocket or an ankle holster. To stay on the safe side, we don't want to go lower than .25 caliber. This is the realm of the Beretta Jetfire. Seven shots. Less than five inches long and less than 10 ounces of weight.

Another new approach is embodied by the DoubleTap. Based on the Derringer concept, this small, aluminum-frame gun fires two large caliber rounds as fast as you can pull the trigger. It can be reloaded but the point is that those two .45 slugs will either resolve the situation in your favor, or it's hasta la vista, baby. The American-made DoubleTap is currently available as a .45 or 9mm with interchangeable, stainless steel barrels. In 9mm, the Double Tap fulfills an important requirement, that it share ammo with primary weapons such as the Glock, the SIG or the Beretta.

Next time, we'll look at the unique relationship between women and firearms, including some challenges posed by concealed carry for female peace officers, especially those working undercover.

*Photos are courtesy of Wikipedia, used with permission.*

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**Gregory Von Dare** comes from Chicago and was raised on crime, corruption and clout in the big city. He has written non-fiction books, magazine articles and radio scripts, as well as stories, plays and screenplays. He once worked as a pyro detonator and talent manager for Universal Studios Hollywood.

## Event Wrap-Up: ATF Agent - [continued from pg 14](#)

Interesting ATF/agent facts:

- \* When an agent works undercover their backstory has to be similar to their true one. It helps the agent keep the facts straight. Also, their fake name will be similar.
- \* Inside their ballistic vest is a place to write blood type and religion. Most agents consider it bad luck to do so. They leave it blank.
- \* They bring a chaplain on tactical ops. One, to give a blessing prior to the action, and two, to act as support for agents.
- \* They are required to work out at least 1 hour per day. An out of shape agent puts the team at risk.
- \* Training is an 8 month program in Glynco, Georgia.
- \* ATF loves working with local police departments. There is no better source for intelligence.
- \* They have Title 21 Seizure Authority.
- \* They have Title 3 Affidavits Electronic Surveillance Authority: a necessary law enforcement tool because criminals are using their phones to conduct business.

Other interesting facts:

- \* Murder for hire cases are rare. The ATF gets tips, but more often than not, the case falls apart. It's rare to get one prosecuted.
- \* Romo has never had a case go to trial. When the feds make an arrest the case is solid. It's better for the criminal to take the first deal offered as it will always be the best.
- \* Federal prison time is called Club Fed. It's easy time compared to state-run, overcrowded facilities. Inmates will serve 80% of their sentence, but serving longer is easier when the inmate gets a private cell, custom meals, and access to music, TV, and computers

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## Designer Pants and a Duct-Tape Hem - [continued from pg 15](#)

Writing a book is hard enough. Add in the time and energy needed to get it to market, either through indie or traditional publishing, and it's no wonder we're running around town in poorly hemmed pants (I can't be the only one, can I?). But thinking about author brands has led me to one conclusion: an author brand should fit. It should be comfortable (but not like pajamas). It should allow room for growth. It is the outfit we wear to a fancy Sunday brunch: nice enough to show we made an effort, but possibly with an elastic waist.

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After two decades working for a top luxury retailer, **Diane Vallere** traded fashion accessories for accessories to murder. *SILK STALKINGS*, the third in her National Bestselling and Lefty-Nominated Material Witness Mystery came out August 2, 2016. She also writes the bestselling *Costume Shop*, *Madison Night* and *Samantha Kidd Mystery Series*. Diane started her own detective agency at age ten and has maintained a passion for shoes, clues and clothes ever since.



In  
MEMORIAM

### **Don Cannon (1947-2016)**

On August 3, the mystery community lost a good friend and advocate in Don Cannon.

From **Les Klinger**:

Back in late 2009, I was slated to attend the 2010 Left Coast Crime, in Los Angeles. Don was in charge of programming (or at least in charge of programming me), and it was no surprise that he asked me to do a Sherlock Holmes panel. After looking at who was attending, I agreed—but suggested that the panel include not only Laurie King (she and I had already done many appearances together) but Jan Burke, Lee Child and Michael Connelly. Don objected at first—“Those are our guests of honor!” he protested. “Well,” I said, “that may be, but they’re all secretly Sherlockians. It’ll be a great panel.”

Don agreed, and it was a great panel. Jan and Lee and Michael would each get tossed a question and would say, “Well, I don’t know very much about Sherlock Holmes,” and then come out with a very erudite answer, revealing that they did indeed all know a good deal about Holmes.

After the panel, Laurie and I conceived the idea of asking these folks (and others) to write stories inspired by Holmes. The result was the 2011 anthology *A STUDY IN SHERLOCK*, which included stories by Jan and Lee (Michael was too busy at the time but he wrote a great story for our second volume, the Anthony-winning *IN THE COMPANY OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*).

Oh, and Michael and Jan went to the annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars, and Jan is now an invested member of the BSI, as are Laurie and I. Other LCC guests of honor have joined us too: John Lescroart wrote a story for *In the Company*; Jacqueline Winspear and Laura Lippman appeared in *A Study in Sherlock*, as did 2017 GOH’s Dana Stabenow and Colin Cotterill.

Now we have a third volume coming out in October, *ECHOES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*.

And we sued the Conan Doyle Estate Limited in 2013 over *In the Company*, a case that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court and freed Sherlock Holmes from copyright trolls.

All this because Don said yes. He was that kind of guy—unpretentious, behind the scenes, incredibly supportive, and a good friend. He will be missed.

# Crime CALENDAR



## DEMYSTIFYING WRITING SOFTWARE: WHAT'S OUT THERE & HOW TO USE IT

Saturday, October 22, 2pm  
Studio City Public Library

Learn about various programs to help you with your writing:  
novel writing, screenwriting and creative  
organization software.

Tech savvy? Hone your skills. Tech challenged? We'll help.  
Bring a charged-up laptop if you have one. Non-members welcome.

[For more details and to reserve your spot, click here.](#)

### Criminal Happenings in 2016

- September 15 - 18 - [Bouchercon, New Orleans, LA](#)
- October 1 - [SoCalMWA Homemade Gumbo & Home-Brewed Ale Party, Woodland Hills, CA](#)
- October 2 - [Ladies of Intrigue, Huntington Beach, CA](#)
- October 15 - [Vegas Valley Book Festival \(SoCalMWA Booth\), Las Vegas, NV](#)
- October 22 - [SoCalMWA Workshop: Demystifying Writing Software, Studio City, CA](#)
- November 6 - [SoCalMWA Luncheon, Los Angeles, CA \(details forthcoming\)](#)
- December 17- [SoCalMWA Holiday Party, Los Angeles, CA](#)

# The LAST WORD

“In most house sales, death is not a selling point. But in Hollywood it’s important for homes to have a lurid history of the famous living badly and dying even more badly in their mansions.”

--Melodie Johnson Howe, CITY OF MIRRORS