

April 2016



The  
MARCH

of CRIME

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## SoCalMWA Luncheon Sunday, May 22

### FROM PAGE TO SCREEN: Adapting Novels Into Screenplays



With  
**Terrill Lee Lankford**  
**Jordan Harper**  
**Elissa Matsueda**  
**Richard Lange**

**Moderated by Eric Beetner**  
([click here for speaker bios](#))

Join us for this discussion of the unique skills required and the pitfalls encountered as writers adapt novels or short stories for the screen, big and small.

**Tam O'Shanter Restaurant**  
2980 Los Feliz Blvd, Los Angeles  
Noon - 2:30pm  
(Doors open at 11:30am)

Valet or street parking available

You'll place your food order at the Tam. No need to preorder. The menu choices will include their famous Prime Rib, plus vegetarian and gluten-free options.

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

*Save the Date!*

[Visit the 2016  
Crime Calendar](#)



## The President's Rap Sheet

*Craig Faustus Buck*

Eighty percent of our members live in Southern California, and the other twenty percent are split between Arizona, Nevada (south of the 36th parallel, which includes Las Vegas), and Hawaii (whose members are further split among the islands). Prudence dictates that most of our luncheons, parties and other events take place in Southern California.

For example, we recently had a terrific chapter luncheon at the Tam O'Shanter near Glendale with ATF Special Agent and self-described "media babe" Meredith Davis. Due to a conflict we were condemned to a smaller room than we're used to, but with our usual aplomb, we cozied up (no pun intended) and made it work. Firearms were the topic of the day (she was planning to cover explosives as well, but she ran out of time). We also have our annual home-made gumbo and home-brewed ale party at Bill Fitzhugh's home in Woodland Hills (October 1 this year) and our holiday party at Golden Road Brewery in L.A. (December 17). If you're from out of state or out of the area, I hope you can find a way to join us at one or both of these last two events (both free). They usually draw 80-100 members and are great venues for meeting new friends and enjoying the great warmth of the crime writing community.

I wish all of our members could partake in the active social life of our SoCal community. In an attempt to forge a more cohesive whole from such a geographically disparate chapter, I've been making an effort to encourage members in the far corners of the chapter to organize their own local events that the chapter can subsidize.

Here in Southern California we've had events as far south as San Diego and as far north as Valencia. On August 28th we're sponsoring a free luncheon in Irvine, in cahoots with Sisters in Crime OC, where ATF will be giving a presentation on murder for hire. (I'm pretty sure the media babe will be among the Special Agents in attendance).

In Arizona, we hosted a chapter happy hour at Left Coast Crime in Phoenix and also at the Tucson Festival of Books. It was a great way for our Arizona members to meet SoCalMWA authors from other regions, and many new friendships were formed. We're planning to do the same in Honolulu at Left Coast Crime next year.

If you live in a part of the chapter that's far removed from most of our social activity, and have any interest in organizing a local event of some sort, please [contact me](#) to see how your chapter can help.

Craig

## Chapter Officers

**President:** Craig Faustus Buck  
**VP:** Sue Ann Jaffarian  
**Treasurer:** Eric Beetner  
**Secretary:** Terri Nolan

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## The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

As editor of your SoCalMWA newsletter, I'm always trying to think of ways to make this publication of more use to our members. This month's effort includes a listing of members who are eligible for 2016 award nominations (specifically, the Anthony Awards given out at Bouchercon).

The purpose of this list is two-fold: obviously, it's good to know which books are eligible when considering nominations for the various awards our industry gives out. But second, it's a helpful way to keep track of the books our members have published in a given year and a great resource for discovering new writers and books.

This list is composed of works submitted in response to my call for content. It is, by no means, definitive. Remember, I rely on your submissions in compiling lists like this. Help me help you! Keep an eye out for my "Call for Content" around the 20th of each month and [send me your relevant information](#).

Thank you to all of this month's contributors.

Holly

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

Editor: [Holly West](#)

April Contributors:  
Gregory Von Dare  
Ellen Byron  
Pat H. Broeske

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.

Contact us at:  
[themarchofcrime@gmail.com](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com)

# FRESH BLOOD

SoCalMWA welcomes its new and returning members:

Eva Batonne  
Lyndon J. Li  
Kwei Quartey  
Lida Sideris  
Heather Smart  
Ben Winters



Like us on Facebook

Join our **SoCalMWA  
Yahoo! group**  
for chapter news & info

Email  
[SoCalMWA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:SoCalMWA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)  
to join (members only)

## OVER the TRANSOM

## Member News

**Gay Tolt Kinman** has penned a one-act biographical play, *Nicholas Owen: Finder of Secret Places*. Her ten-minute play, *Revenge*, about a best-selling author who finally gets even with a critic who trashed her first novel, is now available on Kindle. Her romantic short story, “A Handsome Man,” is about a woman who encounters a handsome man and thinks about the encounter—and about her marriage. Her short mystery story, “Leaving Las Vegas,” is about a woman who goes undercover for the FBI to learn about a Mafia accountant in Las Vegas--whose son is going to marry her niece. But how close will she be to wearing cement shoes? Both stories on Kindle from Mysterious Women.

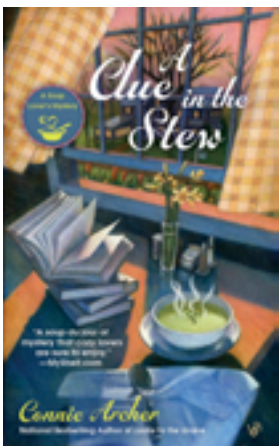
**Gary Phillips’** Nate Hollis, a thirty-something private eye who debuted in “Angeltown” for DC Comics, and who has since crossed over into prose--the short story collection *HOLLIS, P.I.* and the upcoming *HOLLIS FOR HIRE*--has been optioned for TV by Third Coast Company.

**Shannon Baker** is excited for the cover reveal of *STRIPPED BARE*, the first in the Kate Fox series by Forge. It is available for [pre-order](#) and will hit the ground on September 6.

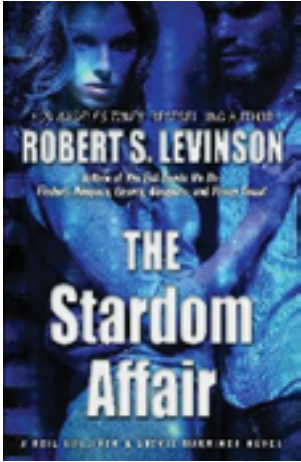
**Glen Erik Hamilton’s** *PAST CRIMES* has been nominated for Best First Novel at the 2016 Barry Awards.

*THE LAST REFUGE*, the second installment in **Martin Roy Hill’s** Peter Brandt Thrillers, was released March 1. In a terrible friendly fire incident during 1991’s Operation Desert Storm, a U.S. helicopter massacres a small convoy of American MPs. Among the dead: a mysterious American civilian engineer discovered by the soldiers behind enemy lines. Two years later, more people die in an attempt to hide the truth about the incident. Peter Brandt, the war-scarred journalist hero of *EMPTY PLACES*, returns in this story of greed, betrayal, and government secrets. Can Peter expose the truth without becoming another victim of the wartime tragedy?

*A CLUE IN THE STEW*, the fifth book in **Connie Archer’s** Soup Lover’s series, will be published on April 5: The village of Snowflake, Vermont is buzzing with excitement. Hilary Stone, the famous author of *Murder Comes Calling*, is planning a visit. Even the discovery of the body of an unidentified woman strangled in the woods hasn’t dampened the spirits of Snowflake’s avid mystery fans--that is, until the villagers learn the murder mimics the popular novel. Could the killer be a deranged fan hoping for attention? Or is a copycat killer on the loose?



## OVER the TRANSOM



The paperback edition of **Rachel Howzell Hall's** SKIES OF ASH (Forge) will be published on April 19.

**Craig Faustus Buck's** short story, "Aftermath," a tale of stone money and murder in the Micronesian island of Yap, was chosen by both editors of *Flash Bang Mysteries* (due out this month) as their Editors' Choice for the Spring 2016 issue. "Aftermath" was also a finalist for the Derringer Award in the flash fiction category. Craig will be a presenter at this year's Edgar Awards.

**Ellen Byron's** debut novel, PLANTATION SHUDDERS, is nominated for an Agatha Best First Novel Award.

THE MASK OF MIDNIGHT by **Laurie Stevens** won the first place Clue Award in the legal/medical/police procedural category. This third novel in the Gabriel McRay series is now competing for the Grand prize.

**Robert S. Levinson's** thirteenth crime-thriller, THE STARDOM AFFAIR, is scheduled for publication April 20. It marks the return after a decade's absence of L.A. newspaper columnist Neil Gulliver and Stevie Marriner, the "Sex Queen of the Soaps," this time caught up in an Internet tangle of unbridled show business-style sex, drugs and violence.

**Travis S. Richardson's** short story, "Quack and Dwight," which first appeared in the JEWISH NOIR anthology, was a finalist for the Derringer Award in the novelette category.

Do you have writing news to share with our chapter?  
Email it to [TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com](mailto:TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com)  
by April 20 for inclusion in the May issue.



## Member APPEARANCES



**Michael Thomas Barry** will launch his new book, *IN THE COMPANY OF EVIL: THIRTY YEARS OF CALIFORNIA CRIME 1950-1980*, with a book signing on Sunday, April 17, 2-4 p.m. at Dark Delicacies Bookshop in Burbank. For more information visit [www.darkdel.com](http://www.darkdel.com).

**D.P. Lyle, MD**, will speak about “Persuasive Crime in Fiction” at the California Writers Club on April 9 at 11am: Orange County Public Library and History Center, 407 E. Chapman Avenue, Orange, CA. [More info here](#). Also on April 9, he’ll be signing his book, *FORENSICS FOR DUMMIES* at Book Carnival, 348 S. Tustin Street, Orange, CA at 3pm. Doug will also be featured in the [Thrill Seeker Radio Interview](#) on [Authors on the Air](#) on April 26 at 10am PST.

**Jill Amadio** will be presenting a talk and signing her new book, *DIGGING UP THE DEAD*, at the Dana Point Library on April 11 and at Book Carnival on April 16. She’ll also be signing at the LATFOB.

**Jeri Westerson** will be at the following locations: Sunday ONLY, April 10 — LA Times Festival of Books on the USC campus. Signing at Mystery Ink Bookstore noon to 1, then Mystery Writers of America booth 1-2 pm, then the Sisters in Crime LA booth 2-4 pm. They are all in the same location under a lovely tree, but at different times, so you can’t miss her. Booth #367 / Saturday, April 16, 3:30pm — Sisters in Crime San Diego is starting up a chapter again and they’ve asked Jeri to be their inaugural speaker. So she’ll be talking about the “Art of Self-Publishing: How to Be a Hybrid Author.” It’s free to the public so please join her at The Ink Spot (meeting rooms of San Diego’s Writer’s Ink) NTC at Liberty Station 2730 Historic Decatur Rd, Barracks 16, Suite 202, San Diego, CA. Plenty of shops, galleries and brew pubs. / Saturday, April 23, 1 to 5 pm — Author Day at the San Bernardino Libraray. Authors of every stripe will be on hand with their books for sale. Come peruse the variety of books, chat with authors, and learn about new good reads. Free to the public. Norman F. Feldheim Central Library, 555 West 6th St., San Bernardino, CA 92410 / Sunday, April 24, 2 to 4 pm — Sisters in Crime Orange County. Jeri will be giving a talk on “Crossing the Genres from History to Mystery and Beyond.” Irvine Ranch Water District Community Affairs meeting room on the far left side of the parking lot, when you enter the parking lot from Sand Canyon Road. Irvine Ranch Water District 15500 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine, CA 92618-3102 / Saturday, April 30, 11 am to 1 pm Pacific Time; 7 to 9 pm UK time; Australia the next day from 6 to 8 am. — Facebook Virtual Book Launch for *A MAIDEN WEEPING* for Jeri’s UK friends. Book releases April 28 in England and this book launch is open to all on Facebook. She will have a video presentation, giveaways, conversation, and plenty of laughs. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/events/1231573866856122/>.

**Craig Faustus Buck** will be speaking at the Anaheim Friends of the Library Annual Mystery Luncheon on Sunday, April 3 and will be signing at the LATFOB on Saturday, April 9, from Noon-1:00 at Mystery Ink, 1:00-2:00 at SoCalMWA 3:00-4:00 at Mysterious Galaxy and 4:00-5:30 at SinCLA.



## Member APPEARANCES

**Rachel Howzell Hall** will appear at Literary Orange, Mystery & Malice, April 2, 9:50am, Irvine Marriott (near the John Wayne Airport), 18000 Von Karman Avenue, Irvine, CA. She'll participate in the Association of Writers & Writing Program's conference panel, "Women of Color Write Crime," Friday, April 1, Noon at the JW Marriott in LA. On April 9 at 4pm, she'll appear at the LA Times Festival of Book panel: "Crime Fiction: Agents & Alibis" in Salvatori Computer Science Center 10. Finally, she'll appear at the Walnut Creek Library Foundation Authors Gala on Saturday, April 16 at 6pm, 1644 N. Broadway, Walnut Creek, CA.

To support her new Kate Reilly Mystery, RED FLAGS (releasing April 5), **Tammy Kaehler** will sign copies of her book for librarians at the Ingram reception for PLA in Denver, April 7. After that, she'll sign copies at multiple booths at the LATFOB on Saturday, April 9, then be at Mysterious Galaxy at 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 10, to talk racing and writing. After spending the weekend of April 15-17 at the Grand Prix of Long Beach (featured in the new book!), she'll host a Poisoned Pen Press Party at Mystery Ink on Saturday, April 23 at 2 p.m. with **S.K. Rizzolo, Dennis Palumbo** and Ken Kuhlken. Finally, she'll be one of the featured speakers at the Fourth Annual ESO Book Lovers Luncheon in Ventura, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, April 28.

**Tyler Dilts, Paul D. Marks** and Reece Hirsch will be appearing at Mysterious Galaxy in San Diego on Saturday April 2nd at 4pm. 5943 Balboa Avenue, San Diego, CA 92111 – 858-268-4747.

**Sheila Lowe** will be signing at the LATFOB on Sunday, April 10 at Booth #376, Mystery Ink from 11am - 12pm, SinCLA from 1-2pm and at Mysterious Galaxy from 2-3pm.

**Gay Toltl Kinman** and **Gayle Bartos-Pool** strutted their books at the Literary Evening, a fundraiser for the Friends of La Crescenta Library and the Library's Summer Reading Program at the La Crescenta Women's Club on Saturday, March 12 from 6-9. Other fiction, non-fiction and local authors read from their works and sold their books. The two were included in an article in the Crescenta Valley Weekly on March 17, "A Literary Evening Offers the Write Stuff."

Join **Jan Burke** and **DP Lyle** for Crime & Science Radio. Upcoming schedule:

4-9-16: Crime and Science Radio: Building a Better Law Enforcement: An Interview with Chief Scott LaChasse, Burbank Police Department

4-23-16: Crime and Science Radio: Things That Go Boom in the Night: An Interview with Weapons and Explosives Expert and Author John Gilstrap

**SoCalMWA****2016 Anthony-Award Eligible Titles**

For your convenience, TMOC has compiled a list of 2016 Anthony-Award eligible titles written by our talented members. To be eligible for consideration, a book, short story or audiobook must have been published or produced for the first time during the 2015 calendar year.

If you've registered for this year's conference in New Orleans or the previous year's conference in Raleigh, you should already have received your ballot. Ballots are due April 30, so you still have plenty of time to consider your nominations. If you've misplaced your ballot, do an email search with the subject line: 2016 Bouchercon Anthony Ballot.

Please note that this list is only based on titles that were submitted to TMOC via email and therefore is not comprehensive. Titles are listed alphabetically by author.

**BEST NOVEL**

Mike Befeler, MURDER ON THE SWITZERLAND TRAIL  
Mike Befeler, MYSTERY OF THE DINNER PLAYHOUSE  
Lisa Brackmann, DRAGON DAY  
Matt Coyle, NIGHT TREMORS  
Corey Lynn Fayman, DESERT CITY DIVA  
Dianne Emley, KILLING SECRETS  
Rachel Howzell Hall, SKIES OF ASH  
Sybil Johnson, PAINT THE TOWN DEAD  
Robert S. Levinson, THE EVIL DEEDS WE DO  
Susan Cummins Miller, CHASM

**BEST FIRST NOVEL**

Craig Faustus Buck, GO DOWN HARD  
Ellen Byron, PLANTATION SHUDDERS  
Glen Erik Hamilton, PAST CRIMES  
Lawrence H. Levy, SECOND STREET STATION  
Ellen Frank Matthews, A MATCH TO DIE FOR

**BEST PAPERBACK ORIGINAL**

Shannon Baker, TATTERED LEGACY  
Joel Fox, THE MARK ON EVE  
Phyllis Humphrey and Carolann Camillo, EYEWITNESS  
Paul D. Marks, VORTEX  
Phoef Sutton, CRUSH  
James W. Ziskin, STONE COLD DEAD



**SoCalMWA****2016 Anthony-Award Eligible Titles**

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**BEST SHORT STORY**

Craig Faustus Buck, "Heavy Debt," *Mondays are Murder*, Akashic Books

Sarah M. Chen, "The Donut Dealer," *All Due Respect, Issue #6*

Gary Phillips, "Errands," JEWISH NOIR

Paul D. Marks, "Fade Out," *Mondays are Murder*, Akashic Books

Paul D. Marks, "My Enemies Have Sweet Voices," COAST TO COAST: MURDER FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

Travis Richardson, "Quack and Dwight," JEWISH NOIR

Jeri Westerson, "Dark Chamber: A Crispin Guest Medieval Noir Short Story," *Kings River Life Magazine*

Holly West, "Don't Fear the Ripper," PROTECTORS 2: HEROES

**BEST ANTHOLOGY OR COLLECTION**

DAY OF THE DESTROYERS, edited by Gary Phillips

COAST TO COAST: MURDER FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA, edited by Paul D. Marks and Andrew McAleer

Rosemary & Larry Mild, MURDER, FANTASY AND WEIRD TALES: EIGHTEEN SHORT STORIES

**BEST CRIME FICTION AUDIOBOOK**

Ellen Byron, PLANTATION SHUDDERS, narrated by Meredith Mitchell

Haley Walsh, FOXE TAIL, narrated by Joel Leslie

Haley Walsh, FOXE HUNT, narrated by Joel Leslie

Haley Walsh, OUT-FOXED, narrated by Joel Leslie

TMOC relies on SoCalMWA's members  
to submit their announcements.

We want to hear from you!

Email [TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com](mailto:TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com)  
by April 20 for inclusion in the May issue.



## Hollow Points

Gregory Von Dore

### Cold Warriors

Part of the humor of the Cold War years, beside the dark jokes of *Dr. Strangelove*, was watching the Soviets avidly copy American inventions and innovations, even while they denounced us as decadent and depraved. Actually, they copied almost anything worldwide and then claimed, rather stridently, that they developed it first. This applied to cars and trucks—their were dreadful, by the way—and aircraft. It certainly applied to firearms. As we noted a few months ago, even the Russians' beloved AK-47 was not much more than a reworked German selective-fire *Sturmgewehr 44*, an assault rifle the Soviets feared and envied in World War II. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, comrade.



*The Soviet Makarov is a close copy of the Walther PP. Courtesy of WikiMedia, used with permission.*

In the 1950s, Russian Generals realized they were using outdated military weapons from WWII and set out to modernize their arsenal of rifles, pistols and submachine guns—or assault rifles—for the anticipated show-down with NATO in northern Europe. In some cases they succeeded, but the big rubles were going into atomic weapons, so firearms were seen, not as passé, but certainly of lesser importance.

The Russian Mosin-Nagant infantry rifle was meant to be replaced by the AK-47, but it never was. The M-N began as a hybrid of proposals by Captain Sergei Ivanovich Mosin and Belgian weapons designer Léon Nagant. Both designs owed much to the Mauser '98 and features from both proposals were eventually combined to produce a satisfactory military rifle. These guns were manufactured in staggering numbers for the Red Army in WWII and continued to be used widely in the Eastern Block, even after the AK-47 became the weapon of choice for Russian troops in the 1960s.

Russian client states such as East Germany, Viet Nam, Bulgaria, Cuba and so on, fielded the M-N throughout the Cold War and after. The rifle was available in at least eight variants, with the key difference being the length of the barrel. All of them had a 90 degree bolt action with a straight handle and took 7.62 x 54mm Russian ammunition. The M-N had a five shot internal magazine and was loaded from above, bolt open, with a spring clip holding five rounds or one cartridge at a time.

## What SoCalMWA Means to Me

Guest Spotlight by **Ellen Byron**

Three years ago, I had never heard of Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, Bouchercon, or any mystery writers' organization, convention or conference. On Sunday, February 28, I flew home from Left Coast Crime with a nominee plaque for Best Humorous Mystery. And on Thursday, April 28, I fly to the Malice Domestic Convention as a nominee for the Agatha Best First Novel award. None of this would ever have happened without the support and encouragement of SoCal MWA.

In 2013, I was in the midst of both professional and personal crises. Careerwise, after years spent in sitcom writers' room – fun, but rough places - I had a bad case of burnout. On the home front, we were dealing with a health crisis. Then a close friend invited me to join a writers' group that she had just launched. After debating what to work on, I decided to try writing what I loved reading – a mystery. I worried that I wasn't up to the challenge, but the manuscript I developed won a grant for unpublished writers at the Malice Domestic Convention. That's where I first learned about Mystery Writers of America.

When I returned to Los Angeles after the convention, I stuck a timid toe in the MWA, where I was immediately welcomed by **Craig Faustus Buck** and **Jeri Westerson**. Since then, my list of mystery world friends just keeps growing. Thanks to my involvement in both groups, I no longer do that thing where I pretend to be on the phone so I don't look so lonely at conferences. I've been on panels with phenomenal authors, and enjoyed delicious and educational lunches at the Tam o' Shanter. I've celebrated the holidays with SoCalMWA at Chloe's, a charming hideaway secreted behind the Golden Road Brewery bar. And oh, those Bill Fitzhugh gumbo parties. Between us, I'd probably join SoCalMWA for the gumbo party alone.

I know that MWA's national organization offers many wonderful opportunities and I look forward to experiencing them one day. But for now, I'm happy enjoying the benefits of my local chapter. SoCalMWA members set the bar high as both people and writers, and inspire me on a daily basis. On the return flight from Left Coast Crime, there were at least half a dozen fellow authors on the flight, and I got such joy from thinking, I know these people. They are my friends. I will always be grateful for how the members of this terrific organization welcomed me into their tribe.



**Ellen Byron** is the author of *PLANTATION SHUDDERS: A CAJUN COUNTRY MYSTERY*, nominated for an Agatha Best First Novel Award and a Lefty Award nominee. The second book in the series, *BODY ON THE BAYOU*, will be published on September 13, 2016 by Crooked Lane Books.

## Event Wrap-up: The ATF's Meredith Davis Talks Firepower, Legal & Illegal, at March Meeting

by Pat H. Broeske

Meredith K. Davis, public information officer for the Los Angeles Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, was guest speaker at the March luncheon meeting. She came armed with sobering statistics, surveillance footage of a major sting, an arsenal of weapons, and a sense of humor.

Davis, who introduced herself as the local ATF “media babe,” has been with the agency for more than 10 years, having previously been a Federal Air Marshal out of Newark, N.J., and a Border Patrol Agent in Laredo, TX.

Some of the thirty-plus attendees who gathered at the Tam O'Shanter were already familiar with her face – and name. It was Special Agent Davis who faced the TV cameras, and talked with print reporters, in the aftermath of the San Bernardino mass shooting that left 14 dead and 21 wounded. Google her: she's the one who provided the details about the weapons utilized by the suspects.

As Davis reminded her SoCalMWA listeners, it was the ATF weapons trace that led to the identity of the man who reportedly purchased the assault rifles used in last December's attack. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Davis offered up ATF and weaponry facts, a bit of ATF history, and showed footage of a 2010 sting involving an undercover agent and seven would-be adversaries.

The sting took place in a parking garage – a location chosen by the undercover agent, and the ATF. Though he appeared to be alone, the agent had plenty of back-up; fellow officers were close by, watching every move. **“There were layers of agents on the scene for protection,”** said Davis, who cautioned, **“Please, don't write about agents going off on their own, to catch someone. Or going to a location that they haven't picked.”**

Committed to reducing violent crime, the ATF has 2,500 working special agents. (Of that number, about three per cent are women – the highest such percentage among government law enforcement agencies.) In California there are 100 special agents and 25 industry operations investigators. The L.A. Field Division covers nine counties.

The ATF, part of the U.S. Department of Justice, often leverages partnerships with local and state agencies – i.e., a Los Angeles case might involve LAPD or the LA County Sheriff's Dept. Multi-agency cases often involve use of the federal Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organization (RICO) Act. As an example of a successful case that employed RICO, Davis cited Operation Joker's Wild, a 2009 investigation into a street gang that led to the indictments of 102 defendants and solved 17 shootings.

The history of the ATF can be traced to the late 1700s – and the first tax laws – but it was under the Prohibition era's federal agent Eliot Ness and his band of “Untouchables,” that the modern-day agency had its origins. When Ness and his boys were chasing bad guys, machine guns were the weapon of choice. Today, it's handguns (pistols and revolvers) and long guns (rifles and shotguns).



*ATF Agent Meredith Davis with  
SoCalMWA President Craig Faustus Buck.  
Photo by Pat H. Broeske.*

[Continued on page 14](#)

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

Just as American officers during the Cold War were issued .45 caliber Colt semi-automatic pistols, their Russian counterparts were given Tokarev TT-33 pistols that made good use of the same John Browning designs. Originally, the Tokarev was meant to replace the older Nagant M1895 revolver, but Russian officers carried the Nagant pistol well into the 1960s. To have a TT-33 was a mark of status and meant that someone was either a Party member or had serious connections. The TT-33 shot a 7.62×25mm Tokarev cartridge, although the Chinese produced a 9mm Parabellum version that was popular worldwide because, like the AK-47, it was simple, tough as concrete and never jammed.

Another example of this copycatnik behavior showed in the Makarov semi-auto pistol. Glance at it briefly and you might think it was a Walther PP, chambered for 9mm, but you'd be wrong. This gun would be carried by Red Grant, not James Bond. The Makarov was designed to be the successor to the Tokarev. It was smaller and fired the powerful 9 x 18mm Makarov cartridge. Maroon plastic grips with a raised Soviet star lent a melodramatic touch but also served to quickly identify the pistol. One big drawback for the Makarov was that it did not fire 9mm Parabellum ammunition, so the user had to bring all their bullets with them. No scrounging from the European locals.



*Lightweight, simple and deadly, the Russian RPG-7 is a world-class weapon. Courtesy of WikiMedia, used with permission.*

One true home-grown product was the Russian PKM machine gun. Introduced in 1969 and still in use throughout the Russian military today, the PKM had, more or less, the firing mechanism of the AK-47. It is made from stamped metal parts like the Kalashnikov and can be belt-fed from an external box of 250 rounds, or an attached box of 100 rounds, much like the American SAW. The PKM and its many variants worldwide shoot the Eastern Block 7.62 x 54mmR cartridge, supplied only by the Russians.

Finally, a few words about something that's not really a gun at all but is iconic to the Cold War and recognizable everywhere today. The Russians really let the genie out of the bottle when they mass-produced the RPG-7. This Rocket Propelled Grenade is a fearsome weapon. Lightweight and simple, the RPG is meant to vanquish a battle tank. One fighter can carry a half-dozen rockets with ease and tanks, trucks, personnel carriers, small buildings, even aircraft are quickly destroyed by one hit of this go-anywhere killer. Pound for pound, it's probably the deadliest hand-fired weapon on Earth. But would it surprise you to learn that even this iconic Russian device is actually a copy of the German Luftwaffe's *Panzerfaust*, an anti-tank rocket from WWII?

Next time we'll look at American and NATO weapons in the Cold War Era. And I bet that if you think about it, you can visualize Slim Pickens bull-riding that H-Bomb down toward the Siberian tundra at the end of *Strangelove*. Yeee-Haww!

*\*The East German peoples' car, the Trabant, was perhaps the worst automobile ever made in large numbers. The shabby Trabby featured a lawn-mower engine and body panels of a composite material similar to Masonite. They didn't do well in the rain. The West German peoples' car, the VolksWagen looked and ran like a Rolls-Royce in comparison.*

**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.



## ATF Luncheon - [continued from page 12](#)

There are 70,000 federally financed gun dealers, nationwide. As Davis pointed out, that's more than the number of McDonald's, Subway and Starbucks franchises, combined. "Remember, firearms are not inherently illegal," she added. Laws regarding the purchase of firearms vary by state. For instance, in California there is required paperwork when a firearm changes hands privately. Not so in Texas.

With a nod to the San Bernardino case, she discussed how a weapons trace is executed, as well as how such a trace can be stymied – if serial numbers are etched or drilled off. She also addressed "the phenomenon" of unfinished lower receivers, also known as an "80%" – handmade guns – that are popular among hobbyists, as well as survivalists. They may be custom made, but that doesn't exempt them from serial numbers, if they meet the ATF definition of a "firearm."

For writers who want to get it right, that definition – and lots more regarding firearms, weapons tracing, ballistics evaluations, explosives and more – is available on the ATF website, at [atf.gov](http://atf.gov).

And mark those calendars: ATF agents will be the guests at the August 28 annual joint meeting of SoCalMWA and Sisters in Crime Orange County, to be held in Irvine. Details are forthcoming.



*ATF display. Photo by Nancy Raven Smith.*

### **Pitch Your Ideas**

TMOC is looking for informative articles written by our members. Email us at [themarchofcrime@gmail.com](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com) with your pitches.

A banner with a light olive green background and a darker olive green ribbon-like border. The word "Crime" is written in a cursive font, and "CALENDAR" is in a bold, sans-serif font.

Crime  
CALENDAR

**Criminal Happenings in 2016**

April 9 - 10 - [Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, Los Angeles, CA](#)  
April 28 - [The Edgars Banquet, New York, NY](#)  
April 29 - May 1 - [Malice Domestic, Bethesda, MD](#)  
May 22 - [SoCalMWA Luncheon: Adapting Novels Into Screenplays](#)  
July 5 - 9 - [Thrillerfest XI, New York, NY](#)  
July 28 - 31 - [Book Passage Mystery Writers Conference, Corte Madera, CA](#)  
August 28 - [SoCalMWA & SinC OC Joint Meeting, Irvine, CA](#) (details forthcoming)  
September 15 - 18 - [Bouchercon, New Orleans, LA](#)  
October 1 - [Homemade Gumbo & Home-brewed Ale Party, Woodland Hills, CA](#)  
December 17- [SoCalMWA Holiday Party, Los Angeles, CA](#)

A banner with a light olive green background and a darker olive green ribbon-like border. The word "The" is written in a cursive font, and "LAST WORD" is in a bold, sans-serif font.

The  
LAST WORD

“A little voice inside of me screamed: *This isn't your problem, Ben. The money isn't worth it.* But another voice, the side of me that stood for law and order and craved to be a cape-wearing-crime-fighting crusader said yes... out loud.”

--Travis Richardson, “Quack and Dwight,” JEWISH NOIR