



The MARCH

of CRIME

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SoCalMWA Tam Luncheon

Sunday, November 5
 12 p.m.
 (doors open at 11:30 a.m.)

BEYOND THE CANDLESTICK & LEADPIPE: WEAPONS ACCORDING TO THE EXPERTS

Criminals use weapons of all kinds and in all time periods, and the crime writer needs special knowledge about them in order to write with accuracy and tension. We've gathered a collection of weapons experts from cop to FBI bomb expert to swordswoman. Join us at the Tam O'Shanter for lunch and a panel discussion on the use of these weapons—and a little bit of demonstration and show and tell.



FBI Special Agent Thomas Leighton will moderate the panel, which includes historical weapons expert and novelist Janet Joyce Holden, novelist and retired law enforcement agent **David Putnam**, and Special Agent Bomb Technician Pat Race.

TAM O'SHANTER RESTAURANT

2980 Los Feliz Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90039
 Noon–2:30 p.m.

Paid valet or free street parking available.

You will place your food order at the Tam. No need to preorder. The menu choices will include vegetarian and gluten-free options.

You may pay at the door by cash or check, but PayPal is preferred.

[Click here for more information
 and to reserve your spot](#)

Arizona Event

Write-in w/ Sisters in Crime Desert Sleuths

November 11
 Scottsdale, AZ

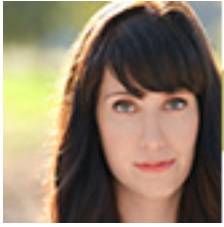
[More info](#)

Holiday Party

Presented w/ SinC/LA

December 3

[More info](#)



The President's Rap Sheet

Elizabeth Little

I don't know if it's due to the ever-earlier advent of the holiday season or if it's just plain wishful thinking, but twice today I've caught myself acting as if 2017 is already over. "Well," I reason, "it's already Halloween—which means it's basically already Thanksgiving—which means, really, it's also basically already Hannukah and Christmas and Kwanzaa and New Year's and I'm probably missing something else in there? Point is: Let's talk in January."

But here's some evergreen advice: Don't be like me. Don't write off the next two months. Because there's still plenty of time left in 2017. Time to work, time to write, time to meet new people and make new friends. All of which, it turns out, you'll be able to do at any one of our three upcoming SoCalMWA events.

If you, like me, are always on the lookout for advice on how to make sure your work is as realistic as possible, I hope you'll join us for our [luncheon and weapons panel this Sunday at the Tam O'Shanter](#). Not only will you learn about a wide variety of weapons, but you'll also have the opportunity to pose questions to world-class experts in the field. (I hear there might even be some show-and-tell.)

Meanwhile, for those of you might be participating in a certain well-known November novel-writing challenge—or for anyone who's just looking for a little motivation—later this month SoCalMWA is co-sponsoring a [Saturday write-in](#) with Sisters in Crime Desert Sleuths in Scottsdale, AZ. It's a great chance to meet members of the Arizona mystery-writing community—and the snacks are free. So if you're in the area, don't miss out!

And then, finally, we have our [annual holiday party](#). We had a good run at Chloe's Speakeasy in Glendale, but this year we decided to try something a little different—something a little more in keeping with the spirit of the season: We're teaming up with Sisters in Crime Los Angeles to host an afternoon of holiday festivities that also celebrates the strength and accomplishments of our mystery-writing community as a whole. It's going to be a great event—Food! Wine! Prizes! A fortune teller!—and it's totally free for you, our members. So I hope that many of you will be able to make the trip to Pasadena for what is sure to be one killer holiday party.

I hope everyone has a wonderful—and productive—month.

Elizabeth

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The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

Hello, friends. It's November, and you know what that means. Writers of all stripes will embark on that wild and crazy journey called NaNoWriMo.

I will not be participating this year, although I'm oh so tempted. There's something about the idea of hunkering down for thirty days and emerging with a terrible first draft that makes me giddy. But my problem has never been the ability to write terrible first drafts. I can do that in my sleep. It's the revisions that get me. Every. Single. Time. I lack the focus to finish a revised and polished manuscript in a timely manner.

I'll therefore be doing my own version of NaNoWriMo, which entails shutting out the world so I can finally finish my WIP. Don't wish me luck—tell me to get the heck off of Facebook and open up Scrivener.

If you're not up for writing a novel this month, perhaps a script is more your style. To that end, **Serita D. Stevens** [provides a primer](#) on the key differences between scripts and novels. And if you need a break between writing sprints, **Ellen Byron** [schools us](#) on the art of mindless creativity (which I happen to be very skilled at).

Holly

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

Editor: [Holly West](#)

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

**Join our SoCalMWA
Yahoo! Group**

Email SoCalMWA-subscribe@yahoo.com to join
(members only)

FRESH BLOOD

SoCalMWA welcomes its new and returning members:

Sandi Craig
Ryan Gattis
Sherrill Joseph
Apyrl Mohajer-Rahbari
Jillian Lauren Shriner



OVER the TRANSOM

DP Lyle's Shamus-nominated comedic thriller DEEP SIX will be out in paperback on November 14 with a new cover. The next in the series, A-LIST, will be released December 12. Details [here](#).

WRITTEN OFF, the seventh entry in **Sheila Lowe's** Forensic Handwriting mystery series, is set for release on November 7. [See related author appearances](#).

Lee Goldberg's new novel TRUE FICTION will be released in April 2018 by Amazon/Thomas & Mercer. It's about a bestselling thriller writer who goes on the run when his fictional plots become real . . . and he becomes the target of assassins.

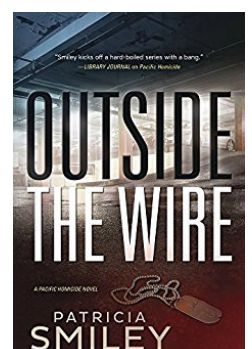
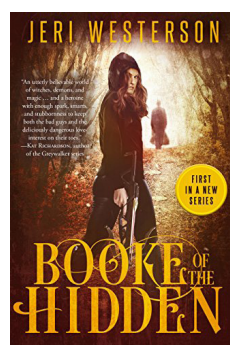
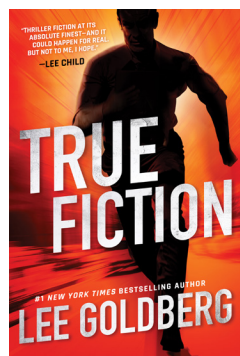
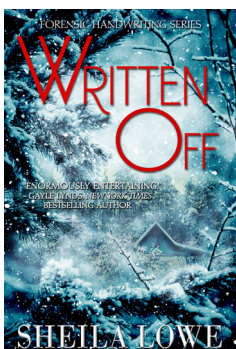
Jeri Westerson's BOOKE OF THE HIDDEN was released on October 31. [See related author appearances](#).

Veteran espionage novelist **Noel Hynd's** ASHES FROM A BURNING CORPSE is now available. Based on his father's writings and private collections, it's a fictional retelling of real-life true crime reporter Alan Hynd's investigation into the horrific 1943 murder of Sir Harry Oakes in the Bahamas. The Oakes case would send the writer to Nassau to cover a homicide littered with a cast of international characters and which, in its cover-up, became unique in the annals of true crime.

Martin Roy Hill's paranormal sci-fi mystery, "The Ghost Hunter," appeared in the October issue of *Alien Dimensions*. Futuristic paranormal investigator Ron Archer investigates the haunted wreck of the space ship New Tokyo Maru and inadvertently proves that life exists after death.

OUTSIDE THE WIRE, the second in **Patricia Smiley's** Davie Richards series, will be released on November 8. [See related author appearances](#).

The creepy crime flash piece "Stegmann's Basement" by **Peter DiChellis** appeared on Spelk Fiction in October. Additionally, *Flash Bang Mysteries* accepted Peter's humorous whodunit "Listen Up" for publication in January, and *Kzine* accepted Peter's crime-horror story "Dead Ringer" for publication in September.



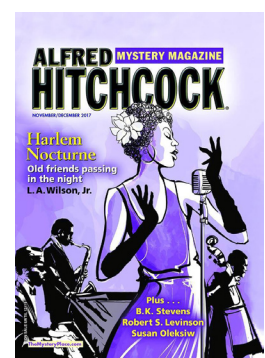
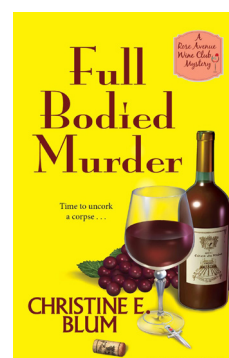
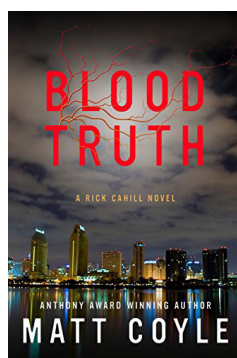
OVER the TRANSOM

Travis Richardson was listed in THE 2017 BEST AMERICAN MYSTERY STORIES as “Other Distinguished Stories of 2016” for his story “Cop In A Well.” Also, his short story “Hipster Pantsin” came out in CRIME SYNDICATE VOL. #3 last month.

Matt Coyle’s BLOOD TRUTH, the fourth in the Anthony Award-winning Rick Cahill series, will be released on December 5.

Christine E. Blum’s FULL BODIED MURDER (Kensington), the first novel in the Rose Avenue Wine Club Mysteries, launches on November 28. As the newest member of the Rose Avenue Wine Club, Halsey wants to expand her palate—not solve murders. But when a neighbor is found dead, it’s up to her to pair the culprit with a deadly crime . . .

Robert S. Levinson’s short story, “The House Across the Street,” appears in the November/December issue of *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, and is billboarded on the cover.



Member APPEARANCES

IT'S ALL IN THE STORY, a new short story anthology from the Southern California Writers Association edited by **DP Lyle**, was released on October 21. Join us for the launch party at Book Carnival on November 2. Details [here](#).

Sheila Lowe is hosting a launch party to celebrate the release of WRITTEN OFF, the seventh in her Forensic Handwriting series, on November 14 at Mimi's Café in Ventura. Anyone interested in making the drive, please RSVP sheila@sheilalowe.com. On November 19 she'll be signing books along with **Patricia Smiley** at Mystery Ink in Huntington Beach at 11 a.m. and at Book Carnival in Orange at 2 p.m. Sheila will also be appearing at the Camarillo Author Fair on November 12.

Jeri Westerson will be at the following locations to celebrate the release of her new book, BOOKE OF THE HIDDEN:

- November 1, 1–3 p.m.: Facebook Virtual Booke Launch. Discussion, video presentation, laughter, and giveaways.
- November 4, 4 p.m.: Official Launch at Vroman's Bookstore, 695 Colarado Blvd., Pasadena, CA
- November 5, 3:30 p.m.: Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore, 5943 Balboa Ave. #100, San Diego, CA
- November 11, 3 p.m.: Gatsby Bookstore, 5535 E. Spring St., Long Beach, CA
- November 12, 6:30 p.m.: Open Book, 19188 Soledad Canyon Rd., Sana Clarita, CA
- November 17, 7 p.m. (MST): Poisoned Pen Bookstore, Skyping with the Sci-Fi/Fantasy club. Signed books available for sale and some free goodies. 4014 N. Goldwater Blvd., Scottsdale, AZ
- November 18, 1 p.m.: Book Barn, 640 Clovis Ave., Clovis, CA 93612

Patricia Smiley will be at the following locations to celebrate the release of her new book, OUTSIDE THE WIRE.

- November 11, 10 a.m.: La Crescenta Woman's Club Author Luncheon. Patty will be talking books along with **Naomi Hirahara**, and Denise Hamilton. 4004 La Crescenta Ave., La Crescenta, info@lacrescentawomansclub.org
- November 18, 2 p.m.: Three to Thrill Book Party. Three authors: **Patricia Smiley**, **Les Klinger**, and **Bonnie MacBird**, readings, Q&A, wine and snacks, special guests. Free by limited space, [RSVP here](#). Contrapuntal Hall, 655 N. Bundy Dr., Los Angeles, CA
- November 19, 11 a.m.: Mystery Ink Bookstore, book signing with **Sheila Lowe**, 8907 Warner Ave. #135, Huntington Beach, CA, mysteryink.com
- November 19, 2 p.m.: Book Carnival, book signing with **Sheila Lowe**, 348 S. Tustin St., Orange, CA, annesbookcarnival.com
- December 3, 1 p.m., Book Passage, book signing with **Matt Coyle**, 51 Tamal Blvd., Corte Madera, CA, bookpassage.com

Member APPEARANCES

Nadine Nettmann, Sheila Sobel, and Elena Hartwell will discuss the art of writing at the La Habra Library on November 18 at 2 p.m.

Matt Coyle will launch BLOOD TRUTH, the fourth edition of the Anthony Award-winning Rick Cahill crime series on Saturday, November 18 at Mysterious Galaxy in San Diego. He'll also appear at The Poisoned Pen on November 28.

Ellen Byron is taking the book launch for A CAJUN CHRISTMAS KILLING, her fourth Cajun Country Mystery, on the road. Need an excuse to visit New Orleans? She be signing at Tulane University Bookstore at 1:30 p.m. on November 3. Then it's back to California for joint appearances with **Daryl Wood Gerber** and Wendall Thomas at Mystery Ink (1 p.m. November 11), and Daryl Wood Gerber and **Shannon Baker** at Book Carnival (3 p.m., November 12). Ellen and Daryl are also excited to announce they'll be at Vroman's Bookstore on December 4 at 7 p.m., with treats made from recipes found in their books.

TMOC Needs You!

TMOC is looking for articles (500–700 words) on subjects of interest to SoCalMWA members. This includes craft, marketing, and all aspects of publishing.

Content shouldn't be overtly promotional, but rather instructional or informational. Include a brief bio (100 words or less) and a headshot or cover image.

Send your questions and/or pitches to
themarchofcrime@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you!



DECEMBER 3, 2017

SINC/LA AND MWA SOCAL PRESENT

*One Killer Holiday
Party*

**FOOD · WINE · DESSERT
PHOTO BOOTH · FORTUNE TELLER · PRIZES**

In the spirit of the season, MWA SoCal and Sisters in Crime/LA are joining forces to throw a killer holiday bash in celebration of an amazing year for the Southern California mystery-writing community. Members and plus-ones only.

· CLICK TO RSVP ·

1 PM TO 4 PM

SOUTH PASADENA LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM

1115 EL CENTRO STREET

SOUTH PASADENA, CA 91030

We'll bring the mains—you bring the sides!

RSVP for potluck instructions.



The Difference Between Scripts & Novels

by **Serita D. Stevens**

Many people believe that a writer is a writer and that if you can write novels, you can write scripts, too. Some people can, but most cannot. Both need great stories, engaging characters, and page-turning scenes, but the style, form, and rules vary. The writer must understand the differences and know what you can and cannot do for books versus scripts.

- **Myth #1**—Screenplays are easier to write than novels. *False*. If you are doing it right, it takes just as long to develop the characters, conduct the research, and plan the plot and subplots for scripts as it does novels.
- **Myth #2**—Writers are paid handsomely for the rights to their books. *Often False*. Some writers refuse to sell the rights to their books because they want those large amounts, but independent producers—who you are mainly dealing with—can seldom afford this. These days, many options are essentially free, granted for \$1 for legal reasons. Even if you receive a few thousand dollars as an option, it is only against a purchase price, which may not be what you expect and might hamper what you receive later.
- **Myth #3**—Hollywood is waiting for your book. *False*. This can be true, but only if you can get the manuscript to the right people, and that's not easy to do. They mainly want books that have been major sellers with great word of mouth and from authors that have a large social media platform. Studios are looking for major blockbusters and/or sequels. Even having a top actor sign on will not guarantee a sale.
- **Myth #4**—Your work will be respected and you will be able to make changes in the script. You will get final approval of the story. *Usually false*, unless you already have a major following and have a great contract beforehand. Even if you've already written the first (or fifth) draft of the script yourself, studios want A-list writers who have sold millions for them already. The producer optioning your book will usually hire a scriptwriter who might change your story (more than you want or like) and they'll prepare the loglines to sell it.

Note: An option alone is not a guarantee of a sale. Items are often optioned and then dropped several times before a final deal is made, if ever. Obtaining the funds needed to produce a movie is difficult, especially if the story is historical or has expensive elements like car chases, flight or sea action, battle scenes, crowd scenes, science fiction, or other special effects. Additionally, few book writers take what will sell overseas (versus what sells domestically) into consideration, but often, the foreign market weighs heavily on the sale of a script. The entire process can take months or sometimes years.

Commonalities

- Both scripts and books need well-rounded characters with journeys and arcs we want to follow.
- Characters should be introduced with action. Physical description is not always necessary.
- Stakes must be high.
- Follow genre structural conventions. If combining genres, understand each and know which is primary, both for writing and marketing purposes.
- Beginning must be exciting, establish the problem, and hint at the stakes. Many readers, producers, and editors do not read past the first ten pages and can often tell by page one if you are a professional writer.
- Research must be authentic.
- Grammar and spelling must be correct.
- Titles must hint at genre and entice the reader/viewer.
- Proper formatting is crucial, especially for scripts.
- Polish your work thoroughly—know that not everything you write is gold.
- Understand how to write a synopsis/treatment. Outlining helps for both.

[continued on pg 13](#)

Don't Bother Me, I'm Not Writing

by Ellen Byron

First appeared as a post on misdemeanors.com.

I spend a lot of time when I'm not writing, writing. It may look like I'm getting dinner together or doing the laundry, but I've found that when I'm engaged in some mindless task—and if you ever ate at my house, you'd know my cooking is mindless—I have some of my most creative thoughts. It turns out I'm not alone in this.

Google “mindless creativity” and you'll get pages of articles proving this really is a thing. I found an article in *Nature* magazine about a study that showed “simply taking a break does not bring on inspiration—rather, creativity is fostered by tasks that allow the mind to wander.” A piece in *Inc. Magazine* was titled, “Want to be more creative? Do something mindless.” In a recent post on the *Chicks on the Case* blog, Lisa Q. Mathews shared this tidbit: Dame Agatha Christie herself claimed that she did some of her best plotting while doing the dishes.

Around the time I was thinking about this topic, the inimitable Dru of Dru's Musings posted a picture from work showing a table filled with cans of Play Doh. I asked her about this, and she said, “Playing with Play Doh breaks up the monotony of the day, allowing you to relax and set your mind free by escaping with something fun.” *Exactly*.



Photo by Dru

I'm now a fervent proponent of the Mindless Creativity Movement. Okay, there isn't a movement, I just made that up, but there should be because we often feel guilty when we step away from our computers to do a task or errand or even something fun like play with Play Doh, and we shouldn't. I've had so many brainstorms pushing a shopping cart through Target that I actually thanked them in the acknowledgments of my second book, *BODY ON THE BAYOU*. I'm not kidding. It reads, “And finally, a big thank-you to my local Target stores. I do some of my best thinking aimlessly wandering those jam-packed aisles.” I even wrote a blog post about the most mindless task of all. It's titled “[The Zen of Picking Up Dog Poo](#).”

One drag about mindless creativity is that our nearest and dearest often don't know it's going on. They see us cleaning out the pantry or organizing the recycle bin and think, “Oh yay, she's finally off the computer. I can talk to her.” I've lost some gems this way and snapped at the poor person who interrupted my creative process. When I shared an apartment with a particularly chatty roommate, I actually made a sign that read “Still Working” that I wore around my neck when I wasn't literally writing.

Another potential problem is the thin line between mindless creativity and procrastination. I have to be honest with myself and acknowledge when a midday trip to my favorite clothing store is the latter. But sometimes the two work hand in hand, and procrastination actually turns into mindless creativity. I ruined two pots when I chose to procrastinate by cooking, then had a brainstorm about my current book, *A CAJUN CHRISTMAS KILLING*, and ran back to the computer, totally forgetting about what I'd left on the stove.

So next time you're stuck on something, whatever it might be, try getting your mind off the project and onto a mindless task. Even if you don't have a breakthrough, at least your spice rack will be organized and your backyard poo-free.

Ellen Byron is the author of the Cajun Country Mysteries (Crooked Lane Books), the latest of which, *A CAJUN CHRISTMAS KILLING*, is now available.

You Oughta Be in Pictures
Gumbo Party



You Oughta Be in Pictures
Gumbo Party & Bouchercon



L - R: Nancy Cole Silverman, Kim Fay, Patricia Smiley



L - R: Phoef Sutton, Matt Goldman, Lee Goldberg



L - R: Phoef Sutton, Patricia Smiley



L - R: Lee Goldberg, Harley Jane Kozak

The Difference Between Scripts & Novels - [continued from pg 9](#)

Differences

Scripts	Novels
99–110 pages.	As long as needed per publisher guidelines.
One main POV.	Can have several POVs.
Flashbacks & voice-overs discouraged.	Flashbacks can work if placed properly & limited.
Team sport—notes come from all. Know how to take and understand them.	Notes are mainly from agent and/or editor.
Dialogue should be no more than 5 minutes.	Dialogue can be longer, within reason.
White space is crucial.	White space not necessary.
Less is more, be succinct. Leave stage dressing to designers.	Descriptions & backstory within reason.
Simplify & combine characters, condense time for more suspense.	As many characters as needed. Time extensions okay but be clear with time shifts.
Keep potential budget in mind, limit locations, characters, special effects, etc.	Budget not an issue.
Preferred if you're physically available for meetings. Networking essential as Hollywood is a relationship industry. Join professional organizations.	You can write wherever you are. Attending conferences and belonging to genre groups is helpful with networking.
Agents don't necessarily sell your work unless you are already a big money maker for them. There are several sites where you can list your scripts and pitch directly to execs. Managers more helpful to guide you.	Agents do sell your work and most publishing houses will not look at material without them. Managers are not always needed.
Know the 3- (or 6-) Act structure.	Act structure is looser in books.
Have a 1-2 sentence logline.	A short pitch helps but is not as essential as with scripts.

Serita D. Stevens is the author of *THE ULTIMATE WRITERS WORKBOOK FOR BOOKS AND SCRIPTS* (Motivational Press), available at www.seritastevens.com and wherever books are sold. She's written books, scripts, and adaptations in almost every genre, and she's taught writing at a variety of universities, colleges, and conferences. As a forensic nurse, she helps writers with their poison, medical, forensic, and investigative questions for their scenes. For more info: [IMDB](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1045444/). For questions, email seritadstevens@gmail.com.

Crime CALENDAR

ARIZONA WRITE-IN WITH SISTERS IN CRIME DESERT SLEUTHS

(Scottsdale, AZ)

Saturday, November 11
11 a.m.

Join us for some dedicated quality time to work on your manuscript. Our Write-In is the perfect opportunity to get to know Sisters in Crime Desert Sleuths and local SoCalMWA members and find a supportive community of aspiring and published authors. ALL WRITERS WELCOME! FREE.

Denny's Restaurant
3315 N. Scottsdale Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

[Click here for more information](#)



More Criminal Happenings

November 4 – [Murder and Mayhem Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI](#)

November 5 – [SoCalMWA Tam Luncheon, Los Angeles, CA](#)

November 11 – [SoCalMWA Arizona Write-In with Sisters in Crime Desert Sleuths](#)

December 3 – [SoCalMWA Holiday Party, Los Angeles, CA](#)

The LAST WORD

“The victim’s regal widow, Ms. Abigail Chadsworth, took the news coolly and well. ‘Although Lowell and I were married, we weren’t particularly close.’”

—Peter DiChellis, “Darkness, Darkness” (*Mystery Weekly Magazine*, July 2017)