



The  
MARCH

of CRIME

## Inside this issue

[President's Rap p 2](#)

[Editor's Corner p 3](#)

[Over the Transom p 4](#)

[Member Appearances p 5](#)

[Crime Solving Tortoise p 6](#)

[You Oughta Be in Pics p 8](#)

[Crime Calendar p 9](#)

[Last Word p 9](#)

## Luncheon at the Tam O'Shanter

Sunday, May 20 at Noon

### Cyber Crimes & Misdemeanors



Who's that creeping around the internet? Do YOU know? Tracy Webb, Director of External Affairs for the US Attorney's Office, specializes in crimes related to technology: Internet predators, online dangers of social media and gaming, human trafficking, and malware schemes to exploit children. Ms. Webb will be in conversation with mystery author and SoCalMWA member **Ellen Byron** to dig deep to find out who's watching the watchers.



Tracy Webb



Ellen Byron

**TAM O'SHANTER RESTAURANT**  
2980 Los Feliz Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90039  
Noon–2:30 p.m.

[For more information and to reserve your place](#)



## The President's Rap Sheet

*Glen Erik Hamilton*

Juggling a manuscript deadline with what might be our chapter's busiest time of the year, I've been thinking a lot about distractions...

Quick, which sounds more fun:

- Redrafting that chapter for the third time, or searching Pinterest for photos of great home libraries, where you might be much happier while rewriting that chapter?
- Untangling that complex but necessary subplot, or doodling what your bestseller's cover might look like (complete with blurbs!)?
- Proofing your manuscript for typos, or imagining what you'll wear to your next—or very first!—book launch?

Of course those second options are more attractive. Writing is cruel, laborious work, not for the faint of heart. (If you're one of the blessed for whom writing is a joy every darn day: Please put on this blindfold and follow me to the short pier...)

But only writing is writing. Not only should we not confuse obvious diversions like those listed above with real writing, but related and even necessary tasks like research, character bios, and outlining also qualify as distractions. And don't get me started on marketing and social media. One rule of thumb: If you can't cut-and-paste it into your manuscript, it ain't writing.

Whenever I feel the lure of Twitter or Instagram, I try to remember the wisdom of some great philosophers of our age: The Kids in the Hall. For those unfamiliar, KITH is a Canadian comedy troupe with a popular TV series back in the early '90s. One of the Kids' recurring sketches focused on a garage band called "ARMADA". Or more correctly: "Rod Torfulson's ARMADA featuring Herman Menderchuk."

As you might guess from their name, the premise of the sketch was a creative team that could not get out of its own way. The band—already well below-average in talent—would bicker over everything, from top billing to their posters to their look. Anything to keep from actually practicing. The Armada sketches served as a way for the troupe to poke fun at itself and its own challenges working together.

Say it with me: "Don't be Armada." Don't mistake busyness with progress. Putting words on the page sometimes sucks, and that's okay. Let's suffer with our eyes wide open. We can sync up our awesome Pinterest boards after the rewrites are done.

Glen

## CHAPTER OFFICERS

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[Elizabeth Little](#)

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## The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

For the first time in years, I'm on deadline and it feels wonderful. It's not exactly a writing deadline, though.

Last summer, I pitched a project to Down & Out Books publisher Eric Campbell and to my delight, he loved the idea and agreed to publish it. It's a short story collection to benefit charity, and as editor, it's my job to manage the project. My first task was convincing a group of authors to donate stories, which was less difficult than it might seem because the crime fiction community is nothing if not generous. Since then, I've been editing stories and loving every minute of it. Editing my own work is somewhat of a slog but it turns out editing other people's work is quite a lot of fun.

The red pen (or in this case, Track Changes) is mightier than the sword.

My deadline for turning in the completed manuscript is June 1, so this month will be spent putting the final touches on it. The volume will be published in March 2019 and I can't wait for you all to read and enjoy the stories as much as I have.

You'll notice in this month's issue that our board members' websites are linked in the Chapter Officers box on [page two](#). Take a moment to visit their websites and see what these wonderful people are all about. We've got a talented chapter, and it starts at the top.

Have a wonderful May!

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](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com)

### Join our SoCalMWA Yahoo! Group

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

# FRESH BLOOD

SoCalMWA welcomes its new and returning members:

Mary Beth Garber  
Catharine Morreale  
Linda Robertson



## OVER the TRANSOM

**Jeri Westerson's** 11th Crispin Guest Medieval Noir mystery, *THE DEEPEST GRAVE*, was released in the UK on April 30. The US version will be released on August 1.

The fourth book in **Linda O. Johnston's** Barkery & Biscuits Mysteries, *PICK AND CHEWS*, is a May 2018 release from Midnight Ink. In it, veterinary technician Carrie Kennersly, who owns both a bakery for people treats and a barkery where she sells healthy dog treats she created, has to solve a murder to help her romantic interest, veterinarian Dr. Reed Storme, even though he's told her to back off from such things. And yes, there are dogs in it!

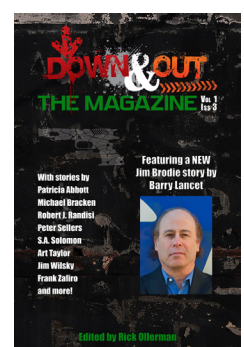
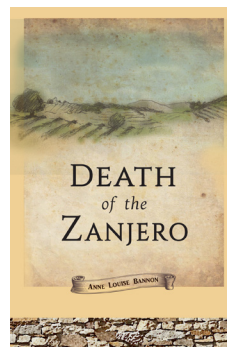
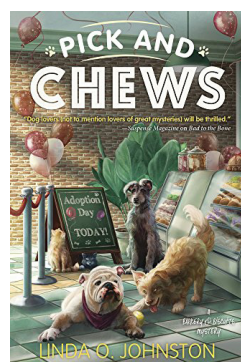
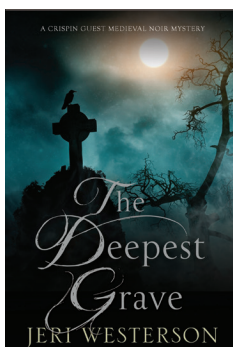
**Anne Louise Bannon** announces the release of her latest novel, *DEATH OF THE ZANJERO*. The first in a new series set in 1870 Los Angeles, it features winemaker Maddie Wilcox as she tries to find out who killed the most corrupt man in the pueblo.

**Paul D. Marks'** Shamus Award-Winning mystery-thriller *WHITE HEAT* is being re-released on May 21 by Down & Out Books. Pre-orders available at Amazon and D&O's site. Paul's short story "Windward," from *COAST TO COAST: PRIVATE EYES FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA*, co-edited by Paul, has been nominated for a Derringer in the novelette category. He's also happy to announce that three other stories in the collection were also nominated.

**Nadine Nettmann's** *UNCORKING A LIE* won a Silver IPPY Award in the Mystery/Cozy/Noir category of the Independent Publisher Book Awards.

**Barry Lancet's** "Three-Star Sushi," the first short story featuring his series character Jim Brodie, is the cover story in the latest issue of the mystery anthology *Down & Out: The Magazine*. While on vacation in Japan, Brodie is dragged into a mysterious kidnapping involving the daughter of an old family friend, one of Tokyo's top sushi chefs.

*MALICE DOMESTIC 13: MYSTERY MOST GEOGRAPHICAL* (Wildside Press) includes the private eye story "The Belle Hope" by **Peter DiChellis**. Additionally, Peter's You-Solve-It whodunit "The Action Hero Murder" appears in e-zine *Over My Dead Body!*





## OVER the TRANSOM

**Travis Richardson's** story "Final Testimony" published in Flash Fiction Offensive is a Derringer finalist in the flash fiction category. Read the full story [here](#).

**Georgia Jeffries'** article, "Reboot," appears in the April/May issue of *Written By* magazine (also available at [writtenby.com](http://writtenby.com)). The autobiographical piece profiles her journalistic adventures during an all-night LAPD Rampart patrol and the shooting that inspired her first CBS teleplay.

## Member APPEARANCES

**Jeri Westerson** will be one of many Mystery Writers of America authors at WORD PLAY: A Festival of Writing at Claremont High School on Saturday, May 19 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. 1601 N Indian Hill Blvd, Claremont, CA 91711. She'll be included in a panel of mystery authors, offering insight and information on crime fiction and the paranormal. "The primary objective of this event is to inspire students with a positive mindset about the power of written expression. Invitation to participate is broadly open to all CHS and San Antonio High School students, local authors, publishers, professors, and literary organizations. Your commitment to the festival will help create a vibrant event for young writers and for the greater Claremont community." **Ellen Byron, Jeri Westerson, Travis Richardson, Sarah Chen,** and **Christina Hoag** will also participate.

**Patricia Smiley** will discuss *OUTSIDE THE WIRE* on Thursday, May 17, at the California Yacht Club's Sunset Book Club in Marina del Rey.

**Christina Hoag** will present "Writing Outside Your Comfort Zone: Ways to Research What You Don't Know About" at Redondo Beach Public Library, 303 N. Pacific Coast Highway, Tuesday, May 9, 6:30 p.m.

Sisters in Crime Tucson is sponsoring "Learn to Write Short Stories with **Kate Thornton**" on Saturday, May 19, at the Viscount Hotel in Tucson from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The cost is \$20 for members, \$25 for visitors and includes lunch. For more information, see [tucsonsisistersincrime.org](http://tucsonsisistersincrime.org).

**Mike Befeler** will be presenting and signing at the Fountain Valley Library, 17635 Los Alamos, Fountain Valley, CA, at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, May 18, and at the Iacoboni Library, 4990 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, CA, at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13.

**Sheila Lowe** will be at the SinC table at Pasadena Lit Fest on May 20.

## How My Tortoise Helps Me Solve Crimes

By **Jeri Westerson**

No, this isn't the beginning of a new cozy series. And no, I'm not a detective in real life. Just a writer of mysteries. Medieval mysteries, if you want to get technical.



Harley is a twenty-year-old desert tortoise. We got her not too long after she came out of her egg from friends who have a mating pair. Desert tortoises are protected in California. You are only allowed to obtain them from someone who has a mating pair, and you may not sell them or release them into the wild (they have diseases that the wild tortoises don't have, and wild tortoises have bugs the domesticated ones do not.) And they also must be licensed. Harley grew from a superball-sized creature to a solid ten-pound, platter-sized reptile, who hibernates in the winter in a box in our closet and is her mobile self in the heat of summer in her "turtle run."

So what the heck does my tortoise have to do with crime-fighting? Well, as many of you know, writing is a solitary pursuit. An author spends six to ten hours (or more) confined in a small space, working away, without much human interaction. Sometimes this gets tiresome. But my tortoise has taught me some valuable lessons in being

a solitary creature. Tortoises in the wild have vast territories. In some instances, they may only encounter another tortoise every twenty years (and no one really knows how long turtles can live. Darwin brought back lots of tortoises from the Galapagos. One named Harriet c. 1830 – June 23, 2006, lived some 175 years [though she was older than that as she was already a grown tortoise when captured.] It's actually thought that, left to their own devices and barring disease or disaster, tortoises are practically immortal.)

Such solitary creatures are remarkably social. Yes, they have natural enemies but if you are a predator, it's too hard to get to a tortoise to eat it. They're too heavy for birds when they are old enough, and too cagey for mammalian predators. Only man seems to be able to literally crack that shell. So once she gets over your shadow passing over her head—and she draws in quickly when that happens—she's just as curious about you as you are about her. She doesn't exactly come when I call, but if she sees me or feels the vibration of my footsteps she comes a-runnin'. As best she can.

You see, a tortoise is like a good detective. It's all about tenacity. Like a tank, a tortoise decides it's better to just go over it than around it, like your Jack Reachers or Harry Boschs. And a tortoise takes the straight line when at all possible. There's no messing with it, though it's easy to deceive and pick her up and dump her in another location. She'll take a moment to assess, but then she's on her way again. Stubborn. Obstinate.

I've often sought her advice when I've gotten stuck in a plot. Her recommendation? Keep moving. And like any detective, when it gets too hot, too dangerous, find a shady spot to chill. Now as a rule, tortoises don't drink alcohol. But she'll drink water when she needs it. But I do know of a few detectives who absorb booze. Phillip Marlowe has been known to go on a bender. Ian Rankin's John Rebus imbibes more than his share. And don't forget Nick and Nora Charles.

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So what happens when something isn't working in the plot? My turtle's advice? Back up. She's good at backing up. A nice slow amble, a turn to see where she is, and then she goes over the route again. And when she encounters an obstacle, she uses all her means to get over it. She doesn't just use those long claws on her feet, but also the scaly sides of her arms to get a grip. And if you ever doubted it, tortoises do climb. She's just as wily as any caged-in shamus. So watch out.

What about character? What about the killer? I look into her sage little eye and try to figure out her expression, and she seems to be saying, "Look to yourself and your own experiences," that famous writing advice of "write what you know." It doesn't mean that all mystery writers are murderers. It means that we've had life experiences to draw upon. We've all had the feelings of envy, a desire for revenge, any number of emotions that a killer might have. It's good advice.

Finally, Harley offers the writer that companionship we seek. She's a quiet sort, and mostly keeps her opinions to herself. She doesn't bark, doesn't bite, but her quiet commentary is sometimes more pointed than the chatter of a critique group. Even though she carries her shell she isn't shy. She'll face you like the brave little reptile she is. And isn't that what detecting is all about? Not being afraid to face down the bad guys, making sure you're well-armored, and not moving until the right moment comes along?

Yup, my tortoise has taught me a lot. Remember, slow and steady wins the race. And maybe it can catch a killer, too.

\*\*\*

**Jeri Westerson's** tortoise is a crusty old thing with many years to go and a lot of good advice. She helps out her owner Jeri write her Crispin Guest Medieval Noir mysteries, her latest being *THE DEEPEST GRAVE*, coming in August, her eleventh Crispin Guest novel. Jeri writes historical novels and a paranormal series *BOOKE OF THE HIDDEN*. See excerpts, maps, discussion guides, and a series book trailer on her website [JeriWesterson.com](http://JeriWesterson.com) and [BOOKEoftheHIDDEN.com](http://BOOKEoftheHIDDEN.com).

### *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](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com).



*You Oughta Be in Pictures*  
March-April 2018



L - R: Christa Faust and **Kate Thornton**,  
Left Coast Crime 2018



Anaheim Public Library Foundation 23rd Annual  
Mystery Authors Luncheon. Back L-R: **Matt Coyle**,  
**Ginny Gardner** (organizer), **DP Lyle**. Front L-R: Robin  
Burcell, **Patricia Smiley**



**Wendall Thomas**



L-R: **Ellen Byron**, **Patricia Smiley**, **Sarah M. Chen**



L-R: **Evelyn Moore**, **Debbie Mitsch**



L-R: **S.W. Lauden**, **Matt Coyle**



L-R: **Lee Goldberg**, **Naomi Hirahara**



L-R: **Lee Goldberg**, **Phoef Sutton**,  
**Naomi Hirahara**



L-R: **Naomi Hirahara**, **Lee Goldberg**,  
**Stuart Woods**, **K.J. Howe**



Crime  
CALENDAR

More to Come!

May 20 – [Luncheon at the Tam, Los Angeles, CA](#)

July 10–14 – [Thrillerfest, New York, NY](#)

September 6–9 – [Bouchercon, St. Petersburg, FL](#)

November 4 – [Luncheon at the Tam, Los Angeles, CA](#)

The  
LAST WORD

“She liked me for myself. What a mind-blowing concept.”

—John Lansing, THE TEST