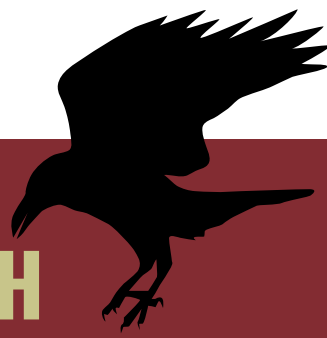


OCTOBER 2023

THE MARCH OF CRIME

SoCalMWA's monthly newsletter.



Annual Gumbo Party

RSVP BY OCTOBER 10

What's inside

Annual Gumbo Party p. 1

President's Rap Sheet p. 2

Editor's Corner p. 3

Shamus Awards p. 4

Over the Transom p. 5

Appearances & Events p. 6

Bouchercon Photos p. 7

Importance of Setting p. 8

Crime Calendar p. 10

The Last Word p. 10

COME CELEBRATE
WITH SoCalMWA!



OCTOBER 21

HOSTED BY
BILL & KENDALL
FITZHUGH



**RSVP
BY 10/10**

RSVP@SOCALMWA.COM



PRESIDENT'S RAP SHEET



Gumbo Time

BY TRAVIS RICHARDSON



Dear Members,

For those of you who went to Bouchercon, I hope you had a good time and had a drink on us. I also hope you did not catch COVID and if you did, the case was mild. I masked at least 75% of the time but still ended up with it. I'd like to give a shoutout to our own **Naomi Hirahara** for rocking the Toastmaster job and to **Holly West** for editing a standout collection of short stories for the Bouchercon Anthology.



Our biggest event of the year is on October 21 and we hope you can attend. **Bill Fitzhugh** will host our annual gumbo at his house in Woodland Hills. Bill cooks mouthwatering gumbo and etouffee from 4 industrial-sized pots and other Cajun delights. Also, **Jeri Westerson** and her husband Craig make a mysterious assortment of homebrews.

This is the SoCalMWA event that you don't want to miss. Please RSVP at rsvp@socalmwa.com by October 10. We will send out reminders as well.

Travis

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Life's New Lease

BY HOLLY WEST

Friends, I have a new lease on life. Let me explain.

Last Friday morning, I suffered a serious medical event that landed me in the hospital for most of that weekend. Thankfully, I've recovered completely, with no evident impairment. I'm so grateful for that.

But the incident was an eye-opener in so many ways. I will need to make a few behavioral changes that hopefully help prevent another—perhaps more devastating—event from happening. I've already begun that process and I'm feeling better.

Beyond that, I have renewed enthusiasm for life, including my work. Many of you know I've struggled to finish my third novel for years. In recent weeks, a few things have clicked into place, including, oddly enough, that medical emergency. It's been impossible for me to look at myself the same way. To look at life the same way.

All this to say, I'm making wonderful progress on my book and really enjoying it in a way I haven't for a long time. That feels good, but I must also be mindful of my stumbling blocks. It's not hard to work when things are going well. The challenge is to do the work even when it's not.

In my old age, I've become much more “woo” than I used to be. Make no mistake, I'm still the same atheist I've been for most of my adult life, but in recent years, I've found the need to tap into my more spiritual side—what I refer to as my “human spirit.” And my human spirit desperately wants to write stories without being so encumbered by all the noise in my head.

This isn't divine intervention. I work hard to quiet my soul so my words flow more freely. For me, this involves medication, talk therapy, daily journaling, frequent walks, and other activities that help me ground myself. I hope that all of you find your own quiet place, in your own way, so your words can flow more freely, too.

Holly

The March of Crime

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 the SoCalMWA
Discussion Group

groups.io/g/MWA-SOCAL
(members only)

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New York, NY 10001
t. 212.888.8171
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<http://mysterywriters.org>



Shamus Award Winners

SUBMITTED BY JOHN SHEPPHARD

The Private Eye Writers of America presents the winners of Shamus Awards for works first published in the U.S. in 2022.

BEST ORIGINAL HARDBACK P.I. NOVEL

The Wheel of the Doll by Jonathan Ames (Mulholland Books)

BEST ORIGINAL PAPERBACK P.I. NOVEL

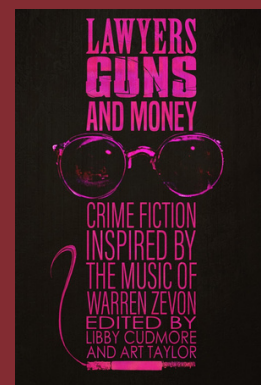
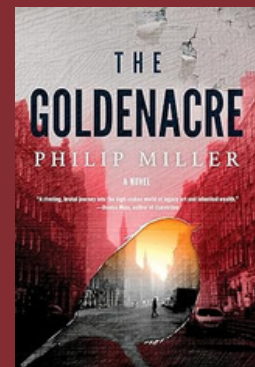
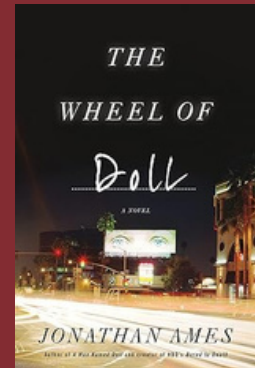
Dead-Bang Fall by J.R. Sanders (Level Best Books)

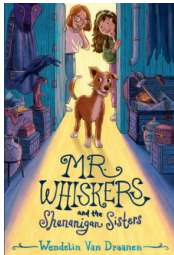
BEST FIRST P.I. NOVEL

The Goldenacre by Philip Miller (Soho Crime)

BEST P.I. SHORT STORY

“Charlie’s Medicine” by Libby Cudmore (Lawyers, Guns, and Money: Crime Fiction Inspired by the Music of Warren Zevon / Down & Out Books)

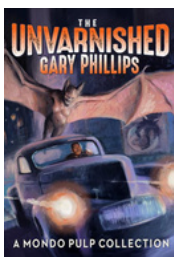




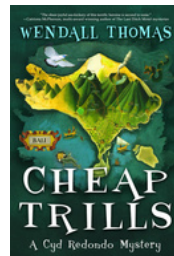
Wendelin Van Draanen, Edgar-winning author of the Sammy Keyes mysteries, has a new middle grade mystery—*Mr. Whiskers and the Shenanigan Sisters* (October, Knopf/Random House) Narrated by a scrappy stray dog as he navigates the streets of San Francisco as he helps two sisters find their dad-napped father. “A mystery both gripping and heartwarming.”—*Kirkus*



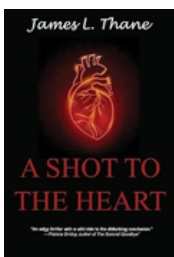
Martin Roy Hill's WWII thriller, *Codename Parsifal*, was released September 1 by 32-32 North. Three teams—American, German, and Russian—are on a collision course that leads them to the ideological heart of the Nazi SS. The audiobook for Hill's latest Linus Schag, NCIS, thriller, *Upriver*, narrated by Brian Dullaghan, was also released in September.



From Gary Phillips, *The Unvarnished Gary Phillips: A Mondo Pulp Collection*. Grindhouse meets blaxploitation by way of B movie drive-in fare. Phillips' most outlandish fictions, straddling the lines between bizarre, sci-fi, noir, and bronze-age Marvel comics. Phillips also revives in a new adventure “Phantasma,” a character created by a Black comics artist in 1940.



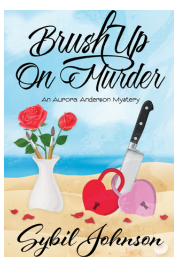
Cheap Trills, the fourth book in Wendall Thomas's Cyd Redondo screwball travel series, finds Cyd in Bali in the wake of the *Eat, Pray, Love* craze and releases October 30.



A Shot to the Heart, the eighth novel from **James L. Thane**, will be released by Moonshine Cove on October 31. The standalone suspense novel pits two beautiful, clever and determined women against each other—one a stone cold killer, the other seeking justice. Only one can prevail, but can either survive?



Andrew Neiderman's 97th V.C. Andrews novel, *Losing Spring*, book one of the Sutherland series, is out now. It's the first in a three-book series.



Sybil Johnson's sixth book in her Aurora Anderson Mystery series, *Brush Up On Murder*, will be out Oct 10.



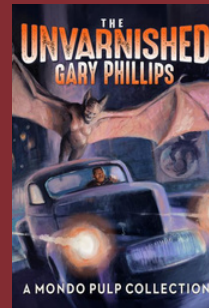
APPEARANCES & EVENTS

Lee Goldberg, Naomi Hirahara, Matthew Quirk, and Gregg Hurwitz will speak on October 21 at the 8th Annual Thriller, Mystery and Crime Author Luncheon at the [Corona Public Library](#), 650 South Main Street, Corona, CA. 12-2:30 PM. You can [buy tickets online](#) or at the Friends of the Library Bookshop. On October 24, Lee and his brother, Tod Goldberg, will discuss their new books, *Malibu Burning* and *Gangsters Don't Die*, at the [Palm Desert Library](#), 73300 Fred Waring Dr., Palm Desert, at 6:30 PM. [Free registration](#) is required.

Mike Befeler will participate in Men of Mystery on Saturday, November 4, at the Grand in Long Beach.

William Burton McCormick recently interviewed bestselling British author Peter James for "[Trace Evidence](#)," *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine's* blog. The interview will go live on October 18.

Jennifer J. Chow will be attending the inaugural [Ashland Mystery Festival](#) from October 20-22 in Ashland, OR; the festival will feature panels, workshops, and clues sprinkled around town. Organized by Ellie Alexander, guest authors include Angela Sanders, CJ Connor, Emmeline Duncan, Gigi Pandian, Kate Lansing, Kyra Davis, Tamara Berry, and Tara Lush.

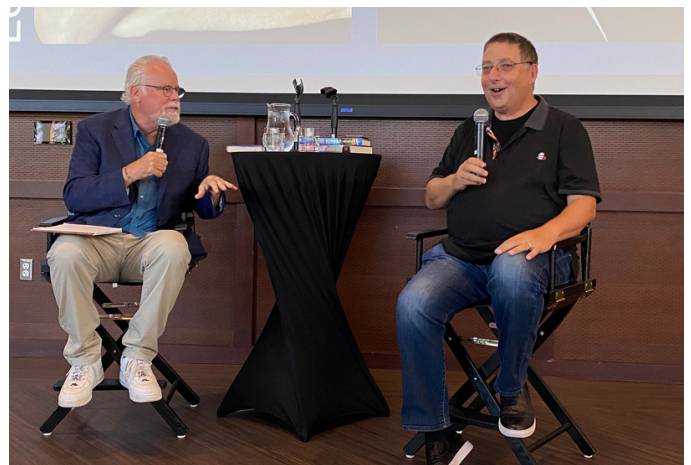


To celebrate the release of *The Unvarnished* Gary Phillips will be at Dark Delicacies in Burbank on Saturday, October 14 at 6 p.m. On Tuesday, October 27, he'll be in conversation with **Naomi Hirahara** at Vroman's in Pasadena at 7 p.m.

First Friday Author Signing with **Sharon Lynn** Friday, October 6, 6:30-8 p.m. Sharon will be signing copies of *Death Takes a Bath: A Cotswold Crimes Mystery* Book 1 at Bright Side Book Shop. Purchase a signed copy of a spooky mystery novel just in time for Halloween! 18 N San Francisco St., Flagstaff, Arizona.



Tori Eldridge continues her book tour for *The Ninja's Oath* at the Las Vegas Book Festival, October 21, and with Mystery Ink on October 28, 1 p.m. at the Fernhill Clubhouse with **Jonathan Maberry** in Huntington Beach.



Michael Connelly interviewed **Lee Goldberg** about his new novel *Malibu Burning* at the Agoura Hills Community Center on September 21, drawing an audience of 250 people, including the Mayor and several members of the City Council, for the lively discussion.



Bouchercon 2023



L-R: Steve Steinbeck, Lee Goldberg, Thomas Perry



L-R: Brett Battles, Tom Colgan, Mark Greaney



Jessica Kaye and Richard Brewer



Connie diMarco and Linda O. Johnston



Travis Richardson and Claire Johnson



Daryl Wood Gerber and Josh Stallings



L-R: Holly West, Faye Snowden, Jennifer J. Chow



THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

BY TONY PIAZZA

Whether it's the breathtaking vistas of the Austrian Alps in "The Sound of Music," "Stagecoach's" towering sandstone rock formations scattered around Monument Valley, or an exotic, tropical locale in a James Bond film, each plays an essential role in the telling of these stories. As a movie location augments an audience's enjoyment of a film, so do book settings excite a reader's interest in your stories. And where motion pictures have location managers seeking the perfect backdrop to reflect the mood of a story, authors must do the same to improve their narration. By combining travel, research, and imagination, authors can paint a convincing setting that thrusts their readers into a world they've created—and a compelling image is vital if you want your audience to return again and again to what you are writing.



Travel is helpful because it provides a book setting's authentic sights, tastes, and smells. A writer experiences the locale through travel, walking their protagonist's walk. Visiting the actual locations of your book can inspire the plot/or sub-plots of your story. As an example, I toured a Victorian-style hotel on Coronado Island. The Del, as it is known, is a beautiful seaside resort. After experiencing its magnificent interiors and lush gardens, I couldn't help but make it the setting of one of my books—and hearing the story of its resident ghost made my decision even more tempting.

Finally, imagination fills in the gaps. When you cannot find any record of a setting, it becomes essential for your creative mind to kick in and flesh out the rest. In another book, I needed a ghost town near a hotel where my character was lodging. Combining the elements of two actual ghost towns that I had visited and placing the result on a desert mountain a few miles away, I met the requirements of my story.

Research is necessary, especially if you're writing about a place that no longer exists or has changed with time. My detective series is set in the 1930s. I must rely on books or the internet to sketch a reliable setting. Office buildings had PBX machines, telephone booths could be found in drugstores, and train stations were transportation hubs. Famous restaurants may not exist anymore, like, for instance, the Hollywood Brown Derby, but photos, newsreels, and glimpses at menus from that era can provide priceless information to sell the authenticity of your story.



Continued on next page



THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING (continued)

In all cases, attempt to keep it real! Remember, your readers are sharp, and you will undoubtedly hear from them if you make a mistake—it's easy to do. The Griffith Observatory was built in 1935; my story was set a year earlier. I had considered using it when, thanks to some last-minute research, I discovered what could've been an embarrassing mistake.

Settings create a mood. What would be a horror story without an old dark house, howling wind, lightning, thunder, and pouring rain? Or, a romance set upon a beautiful lake, under a warm, cloudless sky, the smell of jasmine filling the air? Using your senses can prove invaluable when composing your prose. Many years ago, I took a shortcut through a dark alley in a dangerous part of a big city. I remember the ink-like blackness, the smell of rotten garbage, and the sound of my heels echoing along the walls of the dilapidating apartments on each side of the alleyway. Drawing pictures with words is the name of the game, and in that previous sentence, I created a description that was meant to relate a sense of uneasiness.



One last example I'd like to relate is Hearst Castle. During a visit around its lush grounds, it came to mind that this would be the perfect setting for murder—especially during a storm, as it is isolated on a hilltop and cut off from the outside world. Sometimes, even an innocent visit to a tourist locale could be turned into an award-winning novel.

My final advice is always to stay on your toes and make note of all your experiences. And when you write, always remember the three factors that can make your settings enjoyable: travel, research, and a healthy imagination.

Tony Piazza is a Central Coast mystery writer, film historian, presenter, and skilled storyteller well-known for his passion for writing and movies. He's authored six mystery novels (three of which have won awards), one adventure novel, and a memoir about the making of the Steve McQueen movie, "Bullitt." He is a member of Mystery Writers of America, SLO Night Writers, California Writer's Club, and Sisters in Crime.



CRIME CALENDER



October 21: SoCalMWA Gumbo Party, Woodland Hills

If you know of an event that belongs on the Crime Calendar, email themarchofcrime@gmail.com with the info.

THE LAST WORD



"When I first faced Detective Mitzi Roberts across a booth at Little Dom's in Silver Lake on a warm October day in 2017, I felt only the faintest tug of the undertow that was about to drag me into far deeper waters than I'd planned."

Behold the Monster: Confronting America's Most Prolific Serial Killer
by Jillian Lauren