



SISTERS in CRIME  
**CROAK & DAGGER**  
 ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



# THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume X, Number 6 — November 2014

## †Expert Testimony†

We've all heard the dire predictions for the future of independent bookstores. Sisters in Crime has some more recent encouraging news. In 2009, the decline stabilized at about 1,400 independent bookstores. However, by May of 2014 it had climbed to 1,664, although there was no information about their average size of stores, then or now.

They gave four factors that may have helped this resurgence. First, Borders shifted its focus to CDs and DVDs and then went out of business. Second, there was a "buy local" campaign against many of the big box retailers, which also helped local bookstores. Third, adults seem to be reading more. Fourth, people began to realize these independent bookstores and the communities that they fostered were endangered and started supporting them more. These stores and their knowledgeable staff were the core of a community of readers that the electronic sellers could not match.

It seems like the losers now are not the independents, but the large chain bookstores. According to the American Booksellers Association, the number of independent bookstores grew from 1,651 in 2009 to 2,094 in 2014. These numbers don't match the ones above, but the trend is the same. Finally, over the past three years sales at the independent bookstores have grown by eight percent per year, which exceeds the rate of book sales in general.

A Pew survey of 6,224 Americans 16 and over found some interesting things. Young

adults (16-29) are more likely to have read a book in the last year than are older adults by 88 to 79 percent. Of the young adults who have read at least one book in the last year, the median number of books read was 10. Some 43 percent report reading a book (in any format) daily. They are also slightly more likely to have used a library than older adults by 50 to 47 percent, although they tend to be less familiar with the services their library provides. Surprisingly, more young adults (62 percent) agree that there is "a lot of useful information that is not available on the Internet," compared to only 53 percent of older adults who agree.

(For more details see <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/09/10/younger-americans-and-public-libraries/>)

*This is my last president's column. I have enjoyed being the leader of this fun group. I hope you have enjoyed these messages and that I have given you some useful information.*

--Jan Bray, C&D President

***Don't Miss It!***  
**Tuesday, November 25th, at 7 p.m.**

Former Croak & Dagger President and Albuquerque author Margaret Tessler and local author David P. Wagner will speak to us on winter-themed mysteries. Margaret's winter novel *Casting Shadows* is set in Cloudcroft. David's winter novel is entitled *Death in the Dolomites*. **\*NO DECEMBER MEETING\***

## Good News for Croak & Dagger Members and Friends

If I get enough good news, this could become a regular feature. –Ed.

### Croak & Dagger To Meet at New Venue

--In the face of difficulties with the parking lot of our longtime meeting venue in the Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation near Tramway and Montgomery, the C&D board voted on 17 November to move to a new meeting space, the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center (NDBMC), located on Carmel, a block west of Paseo del Norte via Wyoming Blvd. Classroom Seven on the second floor is easily accessible by stairs or lobby elevator and will give us a good sized space to continue to accommodate audiences of 25-40.

The Center is a more secure (busy, less isolated) venue and offers lighted parking, electronic bulletin board notices of our meetings, and conventional bulletin board space that may attract interested readers and writers. In addition, the location, a further drive for some members and friends, will be a boon to Valley or West Side residents, and to attendees or speakers from Santa Fe and other locations via easy access off I-25 from the Paseo or Alameda exits.

### Longmire Renewed for Fourth Season

--In case you didn't see this on social media or on the front page of the November 20<sup>th</sup> *Albuquerque Journal*, Netflix has agreed to underwrite the popular *Longmire* mystery series, based on the novels by Wyoming author Craig Johnson, that was cancelled by the A&E nitwork (that's not a typo—Ed.) earlier this year. Netflix plans to stream the 10 episodes of season four in 2015, but there is no word yet on streaming dates, the restart of production, or whether all the cast members will return.

### Mysteries More Popular Than Other Fiction?

--The Books section of a recent issue of the *Albuquerque Journal* (November 2<sup>nd</sup>) carried two features of interest to readers and authors like us:

The first feature is not so unusual. Under the Bestsellers column/Fiction, six out of the top ten bestsellers for that week were mysteries or thrillers. This is the weekly average for our favorite genre. I have seen weeks in which seven or eight mystery or thriller novels made the fiction top ten.

The second feature is unusual. Under a wire service story reprinted from the *Sacramento Bee* called "Pages Are Turning," 12 of the 20 novels previewed for fall were mysteries or thrillers. Since this kind of story doesn't appear very often, seeing these new releases profiled in the exact ratio of the 6/10ths of the bestseller list also augurs well for our favorite reading matter.

Among those 20 new books are volumes by such perennial favorites as Michael Connelly's *The Burning Room*, John Connolly's *The Wolf in Winter*, James Ellroy's *Perfidia*, Lindsay Hunter's *Ugly Girls*, Deon Meyer's *Cobra*, Bradford Morrow's *The Forgers*, Walter Mosley's *Rose Gold*, T. Jefferson Parker's *Full Measure*, and the especially intriguing sounding 960-page *The Black Lizard Book of Locked-Room Mysteries*, edited by New York mystery critic and expert Otto Penzler, a must-have for me. We can't buy every book, but my long-time faves Michael Connelly and T. Jefferson Parker will also get my money in time for Christmas.

Check some of these titles out at your local bookstore. I know I will. And don't forget to support your local authors, too.

### Author Research Tip

--Rocky Mountain MWA Chapter author Donnell Ann Bell reports, "If you're writing police procedurals like I am, I'd like to recommend a great book by Sgt. Adam Plantinga, *400 Things Cops*

*Know.* It's so well-written and the sergeant has been invaluable answering my questions. Readers are so impressed, his book is flying off the cyber shelves."

### **Elaine Abramson Honored**

--C&D member author Elaine Abramson had her new book, *From Fat to Fabulous, a Diet Guide for Restaurant Lovers*, endorsed by US Senator Claire McCaskill and Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry. In addition, the National League of American Pen Women nominated the book to the Pulitzer Prize Committee for consideration for the March 2015 prizes.

### **C&D Speakers, Member Honored**

--Santa Fe author Anne Hillerman was awarded the 2014 NM-AZ Award for Best Mystery/Suspense novel for her book *Spider Woman's Daughter* at the awards banquet on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

--At the same event, local thriller authors Joe Badal and Rob Kresge were among four writers presented with the 2014 Tony Hillerman Award for Best Fiction Book, for their novels *Ultimate Betrayal* and *Saving Lincoln*, respectively.

### **Author Lisa Gardner on How To Get Expert Information for Your Novel**

(As reported by Colorado mystery author Terry O'Dell in her blog *The Writer's Place*, October 2, 2014)

Continuing with my recaps of the Writers' Police Academy (WPA) sessions: Lisa Gardner was one of the keynote speakers, and she spoke about turning your research into a novel. First, she addressed the different kinds of research—and pointed out that it can be fun, and gave the WPA as an example.

Primary resources are excellent, if you can find people to interview. Secondary resources, such as reading true crime novels (not fiction!), textbooks, or Internet searches (but be careful to validate sources) can fill in areas where you can't get an interview. Then there are hands-on experiences, such as training and taking classes. Often your local community college will have courses you can take.

She suggests starting by contacting experts. You probably have family and friends who know someone who knows someone, and eventually you can find someone who can help you. I attended the Civilian Police Academy in Orlando and that provided a wealth of information and contacts. She also told us that "cold calling" is fine as long as you remember to be professional. Most agencies have media officers whose job it is to answer questions. She said for her research, she contacted the FBI, and each time, she had to go through all the channels all over again, but she learned to start the process months in advance. Also, when talking to these people, stress that you're writing *fiction*.

Once you've made your contact, schedule an official time to talk. Before you do anything, make sure you've done your homework. Show them that you're sincere about getting things right. Ask them for follow-up contact information as well. Can you call/email them directly, or, do you have to start with the media contact again. As a personal aside here, I've always found my contacts at law enforcement agencies to be helpful, and they all gave me personal contact information for follow up, which oftentimes was done at a local watering hole.

Be sure you thank your contacts, and if it's appropriate, include their higher-ups as well. As for permission to use their names in your acknowledgments, but be sure to let them know you'll be including an "all errors are mine" disclaimer.

She got down to some specifics for what to do once you've landed that interview. First, break the ice. Ask them if they can share their funniest, scariest, or favorite cases. Other questions you can ask include:

- What was your biggest surprise about/on the job?
- What are the best and worst parts of the job?
- If your expert reads crime novels, what does he or she think is the one thing most writers get wrong?
- How would he or she commit the perfect crime?

Lisa went on to give us hints for improving our fiction once we have the facts we needed:

In a good thriller, you want every character to be smart.

If you have the chance for hands-on experiences, dig deep. Embrace the experience. What are the smells? The weight of a gun in your hand? The sound of a punch connecting? What assumptions did you bring to the experience that were proved wrong? And include some "mundane" details to add authenticity.

Lastly, Lisa asked us to consider who we are as writers. Do we write science-based books or psychology-based books? Police procedurals or domestic suspense?

Then it's a matter of including the right details. Her advice: "Learn the iceberg, but write the tip."

And watch the pacing. Lisa quoted Lee Child. "Fast things should happen slow, and slow things should happen fast."

## **Science Shows Something Surprising About People Who Love to Write**

By Rachel Grate, September 15, 2014 in **Arts.Mic**

The benefits of writing go far beyond building up your vocabulary.

No matter the quality of your prose, the act of writing itself leads to strong physical and mental health benefits, like long-term improvements in mood, stress levels, and depressive symptoms. In a 2005 study on the emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing, researchers found that just 15 to 20 minutes of writing three to five times over the course of the four-month study was enough to make a difference.

By writing about traumatic, stressful or emotional events, participants were significantly more likely to have fewer illnesses and be less affected by trauma. Participants ultimately spent less time in the hospital, enjoyed lower blood pressure, and had better liver functionality than their counterparts.

It turns out writing can make physical wounds heal faster as well. In 2013, New Zealand researchers monitored the recovery of wounds from medically necessary biopsies on 49 healthy adults.

The adults wrote about their thoughts and feelings for just 20 minutes, three days in a row, two weeks before the biopsy. Eleven days later, 76% of the group that wrote had fully healed. Fifty-eight percent of the control group had not recovered. The study concluded that writing about distressing events helped participants make sense of the events and reduce distress.

Even those who suffer from specific diseases can improve their health through writing. Studies have shown that people with asthma who write have fewer attacks than those who don't; AIDS patients who write have higher T-cell counts. Cancer patients who write have more optimistic perspectives and improved quality of life.

So what is it about writing that makes it so great for you?

James Pennebaker has been conducting research for years on writing to heal at the University of Texas at Austin. "When people are given the opportunity to write about emotional upheavals, they often experience improved health," Pennebaker writes. "They go to the doctor less. They have changes in immune function."

Why? Pennebaker believes the act of expressive writing allows people to take a step back and evaluate their lives. Instead of obsessing unhealthily over an event, they can focus on moving forward. By doing so, stress levels go down and health correspondingly goes up.

You don't have to be a serious novelist or constantly reflecting on your life's most traumatic moments to get these great benefits. Even blogging or journaling is enough to see results. One study found that blogging might trigger dopamine release, similar to the effect you get from running or listening to music.

From long-term health improvements to short-term benefits like sleeping better, it's official: Writers are doing something right.

## **A Chat with Nora Roberts**

by Fred A. Aiken

I thought members of Croak & Dagger might be interested in what romance and mystery author Nora Roberts had to say about the craft of writing and her career in particular. Ms. Roberts is herself a member of Sisters in Crime.

At the Romance Writers of America Conference held in San Antonio during late July, Ms. Roberts had a chat with writers concerning her 34-year career and how she rose from beginning writer to one of the most acclaimed authors of our time. During her career, she has written 210 published novels (*no, that's not a misprint—Ed.*), of which 39 have been mysteries written under her J. D. Robb pen name. This prolific author averages six novels per year, an average of a novel every two months.

Her style in this type of chat is for her to stand in front of the audience and answer whatever questions her audience poses. She had no prepared remarks or script. No question was out of bounds and she answered frankly. During the chat, she continued to admonish the listeners that this is *her* writing process that has worked for her for three and one half decades and that no two writers ever have exactly the same process or the same level of success with their process.

When asked if she had any writing rules to share with new writers, she gave three:

- Stop whining and begin writing.
- Stop f#@!ing around and keep on writing.
- Stop making excuses and keep on writing.

She writes every day and writes only one book at a time. When asked how long it takes her to write a book, she replied “until it’s done.” To her, writing is an art, a discipline, and a habit. Writing is like exercising, she said. If you don’t exercise daily, your muscles lose their tone and it hurts to begin exercising again.

The most surprising and startling admission she made was that she is a pantser, began as one and continues to be one. She does not outline, write a synopsis, nor write character sketches. She keeps all the information in her head and if she can’t remember an item about her character’s past, she looks it up in one of her previous books. She does not go in person to her settings, but travels there on the Internet.

Ms. Roberts uses the three draft method of writing. She gets the basic story done in the first draft. During the second draft, she fixes any holes in the story and fluffs it out. The self-editing produces her final draft. She edits only on the third draft.

Ms. Roberts was asked what she likes to read. She does not read nonfiction. She reads any type of fiction, regardless of genre. Her feeling is that if you don’t like to read, why would you want to be a writer? Her advice is to write what you like to read for pleasure.

When asked why she writes romances, she said that romance can absorb themes from the other genres. After all, the story centers on two persons and the relationship between them. Her mysteries are not romances, but there are some romantic elements in them. If someone wants to read a Happily Ever After story, they may be disappointed; the best that Lt. Eve Dallas and her husband, Roark, can achieve is a “happy for now” ending.

Finally, Nora Roberts does not believe in writer’s block. Her advice to someone who thinks that they are suffering from writer’s block is to sit down and start writing.

## **Bouchercon 2014—A Newbie’s View**

By Patricia Smith Wood

Before this past week, I’d never attended Bouchercon. I’ve been to the Hillerman Conference three times, Left Coast Crime twice, Mystery Writers of America University (last year), Forensic University in St. Louis in 2007, and numerous other one-day writers conferences over the past fourteen years. But never Bouchercon.

I put it on my list of “must do someday” three or four years ago. Last year, a friend from my writers critique group and I decided to take the plunge and register for the Long Beach edition. Bouchercon is a conference for fans of mysteries, as well as the writers of mysteries. It’s probably the largest such conference held in this country. And sometimes it’s gone to Great Britain!

We flew out of Albuquerque on Tuesday around noon because we signed up to attend a “SinC into Great Writing Forensic Science Day” on Wednesday, sponsored by Sisters in Crime. What a terrific decision that turned out to be!

We spent the entire day with Jan Burke, Catriona McPherson (Sisters-in-Crime President for 2015), Hank Phillip Ryan (Sisters-in-Crime President 2013), and many other writers, along with forensic experts, a homicide detective, and an arson investigator. It was a mystery writer’s dream day! We even participated in a crime scene investigation—thoughtfully set up for us by the female homicide detective—after our superb luncheon. We had to sign in to the crime scene, just as real detectives and crime scene investigators would have done. We were briefed on the facts known at the time the police arrived at the scene, and we went on from there. That’s an experience none of us will forget.

When we returned to our hotel that evening, registration was in full swing for the conference. As it happened, the volunteers handing out the book bags didn’t show up for the 5 to 7 shift, and Charlene Dietz (my partner in crime for the trip) and I quickly offered to fill in.

That turned out to be another fun experience. The mountain of book bags, each stuffed with a couple of magazines and at least seven free books, reached to the ceiling in the corner of the room where

we worked. Everyone looked forward to receiving their bag of loot, and I was still jazzed from the forensic science workshop that day.

As a result, I invited everyone I encountered to attend my Author Focus session the next day at 4:30. Each of 36 authors (and I was one!) were given a 20-minute period to talk about our books or anything else we wanted to do. Several people promised they would attend, and most of them actually showed up. It was wonderful! I also made a point of attending the sessions of three other authors to see what they did for their programs. That helped me when my session time arrived.

Conference panels began on Thursday morning, and ran all that day, Friday, Saturday, and until about 11:30 Sunday morning. There were so many choices and so many wonderful people I wanted to see. Often I found two panels that I really wanted to see were happening at the same time. (They sometimes ran six per hour.—Ed.) Obviously attending them all was impossible, so I had to close my eyes and choose. I also volunteered to help out as a panel room assistant at three panels. I'm glad I did because that also became a learning experience.

I suppose some of the panel highlights (for me, at least) were an interview with Michael Connelly; the panel of writers and actors from the TV show *Major Crimes* on TNT; the panel that included Sue Grafton, Charlaine Harris, Sara Paretsky, and J.A. Jance; and a remarkably funny session called "How Well Do They Know Their Own Work?" It was a quiz given by Gar Anthony Haywood (a truly funny fellow) to Donna Andrews, Lee Goldberg, Brad Parks, and Alexandra Sokoloff. We were laughing throughout this session. All these authors are very funny. On Friday morning, Charlene and I had breakfast with New Mexico author Steve Brewer, while we listened to this year's crop of brand new authors give 30-second spiels about their books.

By the time we returned home Sunday night (after a delayed flight made us spend five and a half hours at LAX airport!) I, personally, was numb from taking in so much information and mingling with so many people! I'm very glad I went. The experience was wonderful. However, I think next time, I'll stick to smaller, more manageable (for me) conferences like the Hillerman in Santa Fe and Left Coast Crime. But you owe it to yourself to attend Bouchercon at least once, just for the amazing experience!

## **Anthony and Other Awards Presented at Bouchercon**

Here are the winners. Space precludes listing all the nominees.

### **Anthony Awards**

Best Mystery Novel: *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger

Best First Mystery: *Yesterday's Echo* by Matt Coyle

Best paperback Original: *As She Left It* by Catriona McPherson

Best Short Story: "The Caxton Private Lending Library & Book Depository" by John Connally in *Bibliomysteries*, published by The Mysterious Bookshop

Best Critical or Nonfiction Work: *The Hour of Peril: The Secret Plot To Murder Abraham Lincoln Before the Civil War* by Daniel Stashower

Best Children's or Young Adult Novel: *The Testing* by Joelle Charbonneau

Best Television Episode Teleplay of 2013: *The Blacklist*, Pilot, by Jon Bokenkamp

Best Audio Book: *The Cuckoo's Calling* by Robert Galbraith, read by Robert Glenister

## Barry Awards

Best Novel: *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger

Best First Mystery Novel: *Japantown* by Barry Lancet

Best Paperback Original: *I Hear the Sirens in the Streets* by Adrian McKinty

Best Thriller: *The Doll* by Taylor Stevens

## Macavity Awards

Best Mystery Novel: *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger

Best First Mystery Novel: *A Killing at Cotton Hill* by Terry Shames

Best Mystery-Related Nonfiction: *The Hour of Peril: The Secret Plot To Murder Abraham Lincoln Before the Civil War* by Daniel Stashower

Best Mystery Short Story: "The Care and Feeding of Houseplants" by Art Taylor

Sue Feder Historical Mystery Award: *Murder as a Fine Art* by David Morrell

## Reviews

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| Key:<br>PB=Paperback<br>TP=Trade Paperback<br>HC=Hardcover |
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### Rob's Random Shots

(*Full disclosure:* In the September Case Files, I reviewed novels by the other four authors who were nominated with me for the 2014 Macavity Sue Feder Memorial Award for Best Historical Mystery. By the time you read the case files in this issue, the winner will have been announced at Bouchercon in Long Beach, CA on November 13<sup>th</sup>. David Morrell of Santa Fe won for *Murder as a Fine Art*. The following novels I am reviewing for this issue were written by five authors who are on the Bouchercon panel I moderated on November 15<sup>th</sup>, entitled Historical Mysteries—Fictional Sleuths or Historical Persons Acting as Sleuths.)

#### November Case File Number One

*Mrs. Jeffries and the Inspector* by Emily Brightwell, published in 1993; I used the Kindle Edition.

This is the first volume in a long-running series (nearly 20 books) that is slyly humorous and thoroughly enjoyable. A reprehensible doctor has been poisoned and the endearingly

inept Inspector Gerald Witherspoon (picture the hangdog actor who portrays Inspector Japp in *Poirot*) is in over his head. He has gained a reputation as Victorian-era Scotland Yard's shining star, thanks to his household staff, headed by Mrs. Jeffries, a policeman's widow. Mrs. Jeffries solves Witherspoon's mysteries without ever letting anyone, Witherspoon included, know she and the staff are involved. Mrs. Jeffries helps Witherspoon to the solution, although the inspector has decided the murderer is Slocum's cook, who for unknown reasons left the employ of the Duke of Bedford to work for the doctor. It's up to Mrs. Jeffries to discover the true identity of the murderer. I'm glad I was exposed to this writer through my panel assignment and intend to read all I can in this series.

#### November Case File Number Two

*Gone West* (Volume 20 of the Daisy Dalrymple series) by Carola Dunn, Minotaur Press, 2014, 304 pp, HB

I could have picked any one of a number of the Daisy Dalrymple books from our local library branches, but I selected this one for title. Despite the author's note in the front of the book that the phrase "gone west" is British slang for "has died," I took a chance and I'm glad I did. In September 1926, Sybil Sutherby



contacts her old school friend Daisy Dalrymple Fletcher. Sybil is widowed and living with her daughter at a remote farmhouse in Derbyshire, where she works as the confidential secretary to reclusive novelist Humphrey Birtwhistle, who cranks out thrice-yearly briskly-selling Westerns under the pen name Eli Hawke. It seems that Humphrey has been ill, and Sybil has taken over writing the books only to have sales increase, along with advances. When Daisy arrives, she meets a household of quirky relatives and would-be suitors who are taking advantage of Birtwhistle's hospitality. I got an unexpected treat since the book says Birtwhistle had run away at an early age to the American West and the bride he brought back with him was a frontier schoolteacher, a great parallel to the mysteries I write.

Sybil is afraid that one of them is slowly poisoning her employer to keep him ill so that Sybil can continue profitably writing his books. When he dies under suspicious circumstances before Daisy can investigate, Sybil's fears appear confirmed. Daisy's husband, Scotland Yard detective Alec Fletcher, is unhappy that his wife is once again involved in a murder case. With plenty of suspects to vet, they have their work cut out for them. Daisy has been favorably compared to Jacqueline Winspear's early 20<sup>th</sup> century sleuth Maisie Dobbs.

### **November Case File Number Three**

*A Free Man of Color* by Barbara Hambly, the first of the Ben January series. I used the Kindle edition.

In 1833 New Orleans, in the midst of Mardi Gras, Benjamin January, a Creole physician and music teacher, is playing piano at the Salle d'Orleans when the evening's costume ball festivities are interrupted by murder. Ravishing Angelique Crozat, a notorious octoroon who travels in the city's finest company, has been strangled. With the authorities reluctant to become involved, Ben begins his own inquiry, which will take him through old French mansions, the seamy haunts of riverboatmen, and into the huts of voodoo-practicing slaves.

The author provides helpful information on how the genetic makeup of Old New Orleans

residents was determined by percentage of mixed ancestry, rather than skin color only. This contrasts with the rough discrimination practiced by the newly arrived Americans who have taken over the city. They are derisively referred to by local residents as "Kaintucks," as if they all hailed from the same place upriver.

Ben risks his freedom in slave territory by conducting his own investigation, which comes to an unexpected conclusion. He is helped by the least prejudiced/obnoxious of the American *arrivistes*, police Lieutenant Abendigo Shaw. They probably have a close continuing relationship over the rest of this unusual series.

### **November Case File Number Four**

Here I would review one of author Francine Mathews' Jane Austen as detective novels under the pen name Stephanie Barron. She majored in English lit in college, specializing in Jane Austen, but I didn't get to read any of those in time for this panel and this issue. I know her from having read every other novel she's written—20<sup>th</sup> Century female police detective on Nantucket Island, and spy novels from her four years working for the CIA, where I met her, but I have read and reviewed in this publication all three of her historical novels under her own name and was enthralled with them—*The Alibi Club*, set in 1940 Paris on the eve of the German occupation (the best historical spy novel I will ever read), *The Secret Agent*, concerning the still-unsolved early 1960s disappearance of Bangkok CIA Station Chief Jim Thompson, and, this year, *Jack 1939*, the adventures of young John F. Kennedy traveling in Europe during the early days of World War II. Please see back issues of the *Nooseletter* on the Croak and Dagger website for those reviews.

### **November Case File Number Five**

*Mistress of Lies* by Holly West, 2013, I used the Kindle edition

This is the first in a series (the second volume is already out) set in London in 1676, only a few years past *A Murder at Rosamund's Gate*, a *Lucy Campion Mystery* by Susanna Calkins set in the previous decade, that I

reviewed in the last *Nooseletter*. *Gate* was one of the five nominees for the Sue Feder Award. In this series, Isabel, Lady Wilde, former mistress of King Charles II, has made a good living disguised as fortune teller Mistress Ruby, counseling London's elite. It's a dangerous life among the charlatans, rogues and swindlers who lurk in the city's dark corners, but to Isabel, the risk is worth the reward.

Until Magistrate Sir Edmund Godfrey seeks Mistress Ruby's counsel and reveals his unwitting involvement in a plot to kill the king. When Isabel's diary containing dangerous details of his confession is stolen, she knows she must find it before anyone connects her to Mistress Ruby. Especially after Sir Edmund's corpse is discovered a few days later. Isabel is sure that whoever stole her diary is Sir Edmund's killer—and could be part of a conspiracy that leads all the way to the throne. As she delves deeper into the mystery, she and her helper and leg man Sam are beaten, threatened, and exposed to the misery of London's social underbelly and criminal classes. A good read; the sequel, *Mistress of Fortune*, is already in print. --Rob Kresge, [rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net), [www.robertkresge.com](http://www.robertkresge.com)

**The Front** by Patricia Cornwell, Berkeley, 2009  
304 pp, PB

This is the second book of the Winston Garano mystery series, set in contemporary Massachusetts. Win Garano is a State Police homicide investigator, working for a boss you hate from the get-go: Monique Lamont, Middlesex County District Attorney. She's completely wrapped up in herself, incapable of kindness or consideration, always looking for a scheme to advance her career by any means. She treats Win like a menial servant.

Monique has concocted a publicity stunt disguised as community crime prevention. She selected an unsolved case in Watertown for Win to investigate: A blind woman murdered in 1962. The woman was a British subject, which allows Monique to contact Scotland Yard (for international publicity). Monique commands

Win to work in partnership with the lead Watertown detective, who is in charge of their mobile crime lab.

The Watertown detective, nicknamed "Stump", is a fulltime police detective, but she also owns and operates a gourmet market. She confesses to Win that her true passion is the market established by her father: "I love being a cop, but the market loves me back".

Other key characters are Cal Tradd, Harvard student reporter for *The Crimson*, "who thinks he works for the *Washington Post*"; Raggedy Ann, an apparent drifter dressed like the doll, whom Win often spots skulking about furtively; and Win's grandmother Nana, a self-professed witch.

The story is fast-paced; nothing is quite as it seems. Monique has made, and continues to make, wrong assumptions and errors in judgment—to her cost. Stump warns Win to stay out of the case, and initially refuses to work with him (but he persists). He's a talented investigator who notices odd details about the case, and follows up to get the facts. The seemingly diverse plot threads build an entire "house of cards" which falls apart in a mildly suspenseful confrontation.

The author mistakenly identifies a specific U.S. naval vessel as a "World War Two destroyer", when in fact it was built in the 1970s. A cute bit of trivia included in the story: the Salem, MA police logo, "The Witch City," depicts a witch flying on a broom. --Susan Zates, [smzates@yahoo.com](mailto:smzates@yahoo.com)

### † *Nooseletter* Submissions †

*Croak & Dagger* members and friends are encouraged to contribute articles, reviews, and essays on aspects of mystery writing *and* reading for publication consideration. Information on relevant conferences or events is also welcome. Especially let us know if you have published a new book or story, or have an upcoming local author event. (Unbridled enthusiasm for your own mystery book is encouraged here.)

**Length:** Articles should average 500 words, but shorter items are also welcome.

**Deadlines:** Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the

15th of the month prior to publication: Feb 15, April 15, June 15, Aug 15, Oct 15, and Dec 15.

**The Living and the Dead:** As a general policy, articles and information should focus on living authors rather than dead ones, but that's not set in concrete shoes. Articles about specific historical development of the crime-mystery writing genre, for example, would be welcome.

**Submissions:** Please submit submissions via e-mail to Rob Kresge at [rkresge777@comcast.net](mailto:rkresge777@comcast.net), with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically. ♦ —Rob

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### Summary of Findings

The *Nooseletter* is the internal organ of the Croak & Dagger chapter, Albuquerque, of Sisters in Crime (SinC). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and editors. ♦

### Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday, November 25, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, January 27, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 7 p.m.

**Meetings are free to the public.**

As of January, meetings will be held every fourth Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., at the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center, 7521 Carmel Ave, NE, one traffic light north of Paseo del Norte, off Wyoming Blvd.

(Check our Web site, [www.croak-and-dagger.com](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com), for schedule changes and upcoming programs.)

Our January 2015 meeting will feature a return by a former C&D speaker, author Lynne Hinton, who will speak about her new series, the Divine Private Detective Agency, the first novel of which is entitled *Sister Eve, Private Eye*.

Our February speaker will be New Mexico author Harlen Campbell, whose works *Sea of Deception*, *Jennifer's Weave*, and *Monkey on a Chain* have been published by ABQ Press.

### The 2014 C&D Chapter Line Up

President – Jan Bray –

[ohbray@nmia.com](mailto:ohbray@nmia.com)

Vice President – Joan Saberhagen –

[joan@joanspicci.com](mailto:joan@joanspicci.com)

Secretary – Olin Bray –

[www.robertkresge.com](http://www.robertkresge.com)

Treasurer/Membership – Fred Aiken –

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Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. **The mission of Sisters in Crime shall be** "to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry."

**Our vision is:** "Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers."

**And our motto is:** "SinC into a good mystery!"

### Summary of the Board Meeting Minutes of Sisters in Crime Croak and Dagger Chapter, ABQ, NM, November 17, 2014

Board members present: President Jan Bray, Vice President Joan Saberhagen, Secretary Olin Bray, Treasurer Fred Aiken, Program Chair Rita Herther, and Membership Chair Pat Wood.

President Jan Bray called the meeting to order at 7:05. Minutes from the September 15 meeting were approved.

The Treasurer reported that as of November 17, our checking account balance was \$1,593.09 and our savings account balance was \$1005. At the last board meeting there was a motion to move \$1000

from our checking to our savings account and these balances reflect that transfer. The treasurer paid \$122 for a one year renewal of our P.O. Box.

Membership report: Our paid up membership for 2014 is now 53. About 15 people already have renewed and paid for 2015.

The next three programs (November, January, and February) will be a holiday panel with Margaret Tessler (*Casting Shadows*) and David P. Wagner (*Death in the Dolomites*); Lynne Hinton (*Sister Eve Private Eye: A Divine Private Detective Agency Mystery*); and Harlen Campbell (*Sea of Deception, Jennifer's Weave, and Monkey on a Chain*). **Remember we don't meet in December.**

Announcements: None

Old business: There has been a safety concern with our current meeting place, the Dwyer Police Substation, since the parking lot lights are not reset for the MST time change and since it is getting dark earlier. After many requests, the lights were not changed last year and have not been changed this year. Therefore, the board started looking for alternate locations. **The board unanimously adopted the following motion:** "Given the parking lot lighting problems and the lack of parking, we move that Croak and Dagger move its meeting location to the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center starting in January 2015." The NDBMC is just west of Wyoming a block north of Paseo del Norte.

The benefits of this move include: A much larger, well lit parking lot; a meeting room for 35 to 40 people that their staff will set up for us; a comparable distance for many of our members, although a few will have a drive a few more minutes; much easier access for possible West Side attendees; easier access for speakers from Santa Fe and other out-of-town speakers; and with the NDBMC bulletin boards more exposure for attendees and potential members from people who use the NDBMC for other activities.

New business: Now that we have decided on a meeting place for next year, we will order the bookmarks for next year.

The Albuquerque Little Theater will be doing *Anatomy of a Murder* from January 23 to February 8. We decided to go to the 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, February 1, followed by dinner for those who are interested. Rob Kresge will reserve a bloc of 20 tickets. People should sign up at either the November or January meeting or by email to Rob Kresge and pay by the January meeting (January 27). The dinner after the play will be at a place to be determined. When people sign up for the play, they should indicate if they are also interested in dinner.

The next board meeting will be at 7:00 at Joan Saberhagen's home on January 19, 2015.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05.



## Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?

\$20/year brings mystery to your life! The Albuquerque Croak & Dagger chapter welcomes mystery fans who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship, and sensational speakers.

Benefits of membership in the Croak & Dagger chapter include a subscription to our *Nooseletter*, close contact with local mystery writers, and fun events with other mystery fans.

You do *not* have to be a member of the national organization to join us. Come hear our next program speaker and meet the gang. We promise to bring mayhem and murder into your life.

Contact our membership chair at [contact@croak-and-dagger.com](mailto:contact@croak-and-dagger.com).