



THE MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA - SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER
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MWA MEETS ATF

BY DAN KELLY

Three members of MWA's Southern California chapter recently participated in a fascinating Citizens Academy run by the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

The program, which ran for seven weeks in late 2011, included presentations on all the things you might expect: history of the organization, tales of risky undercover operations, and strategies for successful prosecutions. But the experience shifted into overdrive on three successive weeks in which agents led the civilians in realistic simulations of actual ATF surveillance and assault techniques. This was then capped off by a memorable morning at the Bureau's private shooting range in which participants were allowed to blast away with an amazing array of machine guns, shotguns and handguns.



Stephen Jay Schwartz with the weapon of the day

Naomi Hirahara, author of the Mas Arai mystery series, and your correspondent, enrolled in the program after chapter president, Gary Phillips, was contacted by ATF information officer Christian Hoffman. Stephen Jay Schwartz, author of *Boulevard* and

[continued on page 4]

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

THE PRESIDENT'S RAP SHEET, 2
YOUR EDITORS SPEAK, 3
UPCOMING WORKSHOPS, 7
MURDER, 8
CHAPTER NEWS, 11