

THE MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA — SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Police Report:

Did He Jump Or Was He Pushed?

Sorting zebras from horses is my job. I'm a crime scene investigator. I often examine suicide scenes to determine whether or not the death might really be a murder.

Many people leave suicide notes, some even leave suicide novels. It helps if it's handwritten, but the presence of a note alone isn't enough to convince me that the death is a suicide. Have there been previous attempts? Was there an obvious plan? Were precautions taken to avoid rescue? Did he give away possessions or leave instructions? Did he arrange to be alone? Have pets been killed? Sometimes a person kills a beloved pet first.

Sometimes they try to minimize the mess. I often see suicides in the bathtub. People turn the water on to wash blood down the drain. They might have good intentions, but if the body covers the drain it's been known to cause flooding.

Who had access to my dead man? Can I eliminate them as suspects? Was my dead man alone at the time? How was he found? Did rescue personnel have to force entry to gain access to him?

Were there any motives for murder? Can I eliminate an accidental death?

Many people who commit suicide first, so what are or aren't they wearing?

Maybe it's an accidental auto-erotic asphyxiation. These are distinguished from suicides by the presence of an escape mechanism that has failed. If ropes are used on the neck, we often see padding to prevent the neck from being marked. We often find sexually explicit material, or if relatives dis-

covered the body, there may be evidence that it's been tampered with.

Most hangings tend to be suicidal and involve common household items, such as extension cords or belts. I examine the victim's neck for an inverted "vee" abrasion that's caused by the article used to hang the man; this is the point where the noose pulls away from the neck, causing an in-

complete mark of encirclement. A key factor here is to look for post mortem lividity. When someone dies, the blood is no longer circulating. It settles into the lower regions of the body. If I find a man who has blood settled into his lower legs, but he's lying on his back, I know he's been moved.

I work a lot of gunshot wounds. Often the gun is beside the victim's

(Continued on page 10)

Since dead men don't normally shoot until you mess with them, I tend to put this job off as long as possible.

CONGRATULATIONS to our member, Naomi Hirahara, who won this year's Edgar for Best Paperback Original!

The President's Rap Sheet

The 2007 Edgar Awards banquet opened with a very funny video montage, showing a cartoon book-buyer facing the array of mystery sub-genres: hard-boiled, procedurals, cozies, religious mysteries, historicals, dog mysteries, cat mysteries, gardening mysteries, cooking mysteries, chick-lit, thrillers, critical/biographical, true crime, spy tales, medical mysteries, supernatural mysteries, and the like. Appropriately, the buyer decides to buy them all. This theme of community was echoed by MWA's new Grandmaster,

Stephen King, who rejected the labels foisted on him by critics and happily proclaimed that he is a "writer."

It's understandable why authors seek to affix a label to their output: Branding helps to sell books in an increasingly difficult market. It isn't just the authors either who want to have a ready audience for their next work. Publishers too, want to have another book just like the last one, only different. In Hollywood, I call this the desire to be the first to be second. This coming

(Continued on page 10)

Navigating the Jungle

Getting More Out of Amazon

If you're a published author, have you taken advantage of any or all of the promotional opportunities Amazon.com offers? I have, at least some of them, and here's my take on them.

My first Amazon Shorts story, "Kendra's Squirreliest Client," is now available at Amazon.com. What is it, and why did I decide to participate?

Well, Amazon Shorts is a program for published authors to help publicize your books (and encouraging people to buy them from Amazon, too!). If you have one or more books available on Amazon, you're eligible to submit a short piece to them (2,000 to 10,000 words, either fiction or nonfiction) for consideration. There's an editorial process involved, just as with submission of nearly any new work. If your story is accepted, it's then made available via Amazon for the grand price of \$.49 for each purchase. It's delivered electronically to readers, and the author shares the proceeds with Amazon. (Unsurprisingly, Amazon gets the larger portion.)

When someone brings up the web page with your Short on it, your backlist of books is also listed, so a potential reader can grab one or more of them, too, at regular Amazon pricing.

I first learned of the Amazon Shorts program at a presentation by Amazon folks to published authors at a Romance Writers of America conference. That is also where I learned about the Amazon Connect program. What's that? It's a forum on Amazon where authors can blog as often as they'd like, and each new blog is submitted, when posted, to readers who have bought their books from Amazon. The blogs also appear when a potential reader brings up a web page describing one of the author's books.

Also, we were told that a reader can sign up for what used to be called a "plog" -- a personalized web log that comes up when the reader visits Amazon and shows information especially pertinent to that reader,

including blogs of those authors whose books the reader has purchased. Amazon recently renamed its plog program "Amazon Daily" but it sounds like the same thing.

I left that Amazon presentation with my mind reeling with Connect, blogs, plogs and Shorts. I wanted to take advantage of them all.

I signed up for Connect right away, with no problem. My blogs appear instantly. My only regret is that I don't blog often enough.

I also wrote a short story for Shorts fairly soon. I saw the presentation in July, submitted it soon afterward, and waited, just as in any editorial process, I suppose.

Timing was the biggest drawback I've found with the Shorts program. After I submitted my story, it took a while to hear back that they wanted it (yay!) and probably an equally long time before it was made available (oh, well). "Kendra's Squirreliest Client" is listed as being a December 2006 release, but it wasn't actually available until about a month later.

So, am I now getting rich with sales of my Short? At around twenty cents a pop, nope! After months, I haven't gotten an accounting, which tells me that it isn't a best seller.

Am I glad I bothered? Sure! First, I enjoyed writing the story. Plus, it's another avenue for getting my name out there on Amazon, which certainly can't hurt.

My advice? If you've got a book or more on Amazon, get involved in its programs. Connect, and write a Short. They'll only cost you time. And who can resist a promotional opportunity that pays YOU to participate, like Shorts? Not I! How about you?

—Linda O. Johnston

Linda is the author of the Kendra Ballantyne Pet-Sitter mystery series. The fourth, MEOW IS FOR MURDER, is now available. So is Linda's Amazon Short, "Kendra's Squirreliest Client." Guess who that squirrely client is... Visit Linda at her website: www.LindaOJohnston.com and her blog at KillerHobbies.blogspot.com

Navigational Tools

If you want to participate in these Amazon programs, follow the links:

amazon-shorts@amazon.com

www.amazon.com/connect

www.amazon.com/gp/daily

Ask the Experts:

"Everyone says "hand-selling" is important to promoting a book. Why? Even if you can talk 100 stores into selling an average of 50 books each, that's only 5,000 books - hardly best seller territory."

Just like other aspects of promotion, if you look at this as a quid pro quo you'll make yourself nuts and miss the purpose of the mission. Hand selling isn't about selling the same way handfasting isn't about starving your fingers. Don't think of it as "selling." Think of it as the bookseller introducing you to people who otherwise would skate right by you on the roller rink of life.

Your fans and regular readers know you. They'll hear about a new book through the usual channels (ie you clogging their mailbox with announcements of the imminent arrival of your masterpiece and/or Michiko waxing enthusiastic about you on Tuesday). Handselling is when a book seller takes a new reader, someone who's never heard of you, and even if they have weren't planning to buy you, and says "you gotta read this".

Some years back Bob Maull at 23rd Avenue Books in Portland, Oregon, used to introduce me to what often became my favorite book of the year simply by putting it in my hand and saying "read this". It was always a book that I FIRST heard of at his store, and then heard of later when lots and lots of other people started talking about it (remember *Cold Mountain?* *Angela's Ashes?*).

Handselling is expanding your market, it's not your only market.

And handselling is also how the sales force at your publisher FIRST hears you are an author to be watched. When a book starts selling above the expected numbers you can bet the marketing and sales folks are all over that title.

How to get booksellers to handsell your book? Know your booksellers. That means you are in their store at times other than when your book comes out. You know their name, and they know yours. You're on their mailing list. You look at their staff favorites. You drop them an email when their store gets noticed in any of the trades. You pay attention. You're one of the people they like. Booksellers don't hand sell the best sellers. They don't have to. They hand sell the guys they want to see succeed. That's you, right?

Janet Reid, Agent, Imprint Agency

Sue Grafton has always attributed a lot of her success to the independent book store. Hand-selling definitely can get the word out about your book in the world of thousands of titles. When you are unknown, it is very hard to get a reader to pick your book to read. Making sure the bookseller reads and recommends your book can get your book read and recommended again and again. The more books the bookseller orders, the more likely your publisher will want you to keep writing those great tales and the more known you will become. So I believe every writer should get out to their local bookstores and make themselves as well as their books a fixture in the bookstore.

Debbie Mitsch, Publicist & Bookseller

Sleuthiness: Law, Crime and the Weather

Looking for information about Law and Crime? You'll find forensic information? It's at (<http://www.nolo.com/index.cfm>) helpful. Info Guys at <http://infoguys.com/> has the inside scoop on PIs, Corporate Spooks, and Explosives Detection. Picking a lock should be easy after reading the Guide to Lock Picking at <http://www.lysator.liu.se>

Need last on the Sahara, try the Absolutely, Positively Useless Information site at <http://home.bitworks.co.nz/trivia/index.htm>. From Art to Sports to Science, this site is a treasure trove of interesting, and amusing, trivia.

And to answer those burning questions such as when did it snow

—Patti Shinnars

DON'T GET BYTTEN: [Email Security](#)

You're just innocently using the Internet to research material about gory mass murderers and to publish works that stroke the prurient interest of people who will never experience the joy of disemboweling someone for themselves...you don't deserve any spam or viruses or anything like that.

So here's some advice. Just don't take it as surety for never getting another e-mail on how to beat erectile dysfunction; this is not a guarantee.

First; avoid anybody who offers a 100% security guarantee. There is no such thing. There is only managing risk, and reducing it to a level that is acceptable to the user. Anyone who says they can *completely* protect you is a charlatan and dangerous.

On to the techno-threats...

If you've got a web page, or have your e-mail posted online, be sure to obscure it.. Don't *ever* list your e-mail in the following common format: word@word.word

Here's why not: spammers use tiny, clever computer programs called "spiderbots." These spiderbots constantly surf the 'net, looking for anything in that configuration ("word@word.word"). Whenever they find one, they copy it and shoot it back to the spammer's database. The spammer will then include you on the list of chumps to receive the latest great deal about cheap drugs from Canada.

Of course, you still want to have your contact information out there, for the use of your adoring public, journalists who want to give you free publicity, or publishers who want to make you rich and famous.

So here's what you do: modify your e-mail address so that spiderbots get confused but people don't. Make that "most people." There are exceptionally stupid people out there who shouldn't be allowed near electrically-powered devices to begin with. And they certainly don't read, so you don't have to worry about their inability to purchase your books.

For instance, on my website www.benmalisow.com, I post my e-mail address as: [SLOW@\[deletethispart\]edodo.org](mailto:SLOW@[deletethispart]edodo.org), and then, right below that, I post this text: (delete the part that reads "[deletethispart]")

The average spiderbot is going to get befuddled by that, but *most* people are going to be able to figure out how to reach me.

I've seen other techniques, such as posting an ad-

dress this way: SLOW[AT]eDodo[DOT]org, but, from what I understand, the more sophisticated spiderbots have already begun to understand this dodge *and* translate it, correctly, into the spammer's database without a hiccup.

Another piece of advice: *don't* use an e-mail address you care too much about. The one I list above, the eDodo address, is not my home address, it's just a remailer; e-mails that are sent there go through a rigorous screening process before they are forwarded to my home address, where I can then decide if I ever want to receive anything further from that sender. Also, I can then tell where someone got my e-mail address, and discriminate between e-mails from people who got my e-mail from **me**, and those that got it off a website or some other promotion.

And, of course, having different e-mail accounts for various purposes is a smart way to avoid e-mail that gets too intrusive. With free accounts available from a myriad of reputable vendors (such as Yahoo! and MSN/Hotmail), there is no reason you can't make one called "Me@MassacreCon07" or whatever, for that purpose.

I think I'll save more advice for the next article. If you want to know about a specific security/computer concern, e-mail me. I'm sure you can figure out how.

— **Ben Malisow**

*Ben's first book, **1,001 Things To Do If You Dare**, was launched by Adams Media in April. His second, a book on counterterrorism from Chelsea House, is due out later this year. Ben has provided computer and information security services to DARPA, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI, among other customers. He holds an MBA, a CISSP and a CISM, among other alphabet-soup-flavored goodies.*

Complete Range of Editorial Services

Professional editor and published author offers complete editorial workout to new and experienced mystery writers.



Benefit from years of editorial experience at major publishing houses. Honest evaluation, sensitive critique, plot/character development, line editing, rewrites.

Helga Schier, Ph.D.: 310-828-8421, withpenandpaper@verizon.net

Transom Notes

DEALS & PUBLICATIONS: The second edition of *Heir Apparent*, the title that launched **Twist Phelan's** Pinnacle Peak legal mystery series, will be released by Poisoned Pen Press in May. www.twistphelan.com. *Kiss of Death*, the 4th book in **Linda Palmer's** mystery series for Berkley Prime Crime, hits stores on May 1st, and Linda has signed a new three-book contract to write a second mystery series for Berkley. www.lindapalmermysteries.com. **Judith Klerman Smith** sold her short story "Ding, Dong the Snitch is Dead" to *Mouth Full of Bullets*. **Michael Mallory's** kids story "The Science Fair Mystery" will appear in the Sunday L.A. Times (the comics section) on May 13. www.michaelmallory.com. **Joann Senger** has sold her short story, "The Pet Door" – they don't come back in the way they went out, to *Night to Dawn* magazine, for publication sometime this summer. Bowing to copyright issues, Joann is now writing as JoAnna Senger. **James Lincoln Warren** has sold "Heat of the Moment," a short story, to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, for June, 2007. www.swordquill.com. **Gay Toltl Kinman's** latest short stories include "Majestic 12" in *Mysterical-E*, Winter 2006-7, "Locked Car" in *Burst*, and "8 lbs" in *Apollo's Lyre* January 2007. Her story, "Body and Blood," appears in the *Never Safe Anthology*. www.gaykinman.com. **Bob Levinson's** *The James Dean Affair* just appeared in a Japanese edition, while one of his shorts from *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine* is reprinted in the *Deadly Bride* and *21 of the Year's Finest Crime and Mystery Stories*. www.robertslevinson.com. **Gary Phillips** is writing a crime graphic novel for the Vertigo line of DC Comics called "Cowboys," about the impending violent clash between a black and a white undercover law enforcer. www.gdphillips.com. **John Vorhaus** is in Bucharest for six months developing situation comedies for Romanian television. Yes, it's true, and he's blogging it at www.somnifer.typepad.com.

WHO'S WHERE & WHEN: **Taffy Cannon** is signing her latest book, *Blood Matters*, May 5 at 11am at Mysteries to Die For, Thousand Oaks; May 12 at 1pm at The Mystery Bookstore, Westwood; May 19 at 1pm at Book Carnival in Orange. www.taffycannon.com. **Dick Lochte's** novel, *Croaked!*, a thriller set in an L.A. men's magazine in the 1960s and based in part on his years at *Playboy*, has just been published and he'll be starting his California Dreamin' mini-tour at Dutton's Brentwood on May 8, at 7pm, followed by Book Carnival in Orange, May 12, 1pm; Mystery Bookstore in Westwood, May 19, 1pm; and Mysteries to Die For in Thousand Oaks, May 26, 1pm. **Bill Bryan** will be signing *Keep it Real* (Bleak House Books) on May 18 at 7pm at Dutton's Brentwood Books and May 19 at 2pm, Metropolis Books. www.bill-bryan.com. **Sheila Lowe** heads to the east coast the first week of May. She'll be giving talks and signing *Poison Pen* in CT, RI, NYC, PA, ending up at Malice Domestic. In the second half of the month she'll be appearing on Good Morning Phoenix, and speaking and signing in Tucson, Phoenix, and Sedona. www.claudiaroseseries.com. **Eric Stone** is speaking at the Palms-Rancho Park Library in West L.A. on May 22 at 6:30pm. www.ericstone.com. **Alan Cook** is slated to speak at the Torrance Public Library on June 13, at 7 p.m. www.alancook50megs.com.

OPPORTUNITIES: **John Morgan Wilson** is helping coordinate the **crime author panels** for the seventh annual **West Hollywood Book Fair**, to be held on Sunday, September 30. If you would like to be considered for a Crime Pavilion panel, please send John a brief e-mail with your most recent book titles, publisher, relevant awards, and sub-genre to: benjustice@aol.com. (No self-published or POD authors, please.) Write BOOK FAIR INQUIRY in the subject line. www.johnmorganwilson.com. **The Private Eye Writers of America** wants to remind you of the deadline for **submissions for the 2007 Shamus Awards**. Eligible works are works first published in the U.S. in 2006 and must feature as a main character a person PAID for investigative work but NOT employed for that work by a unit of government. Self-published works, e-books or works for which the author is not paid are not eligible. Submissions must be postmarked no later than May 11. For full submission guidelines and procedures, e-mail awards chair Ted Fitzgerald at tedfitz@msn.com.

FRESH BLOOD: *Active* - Terence Winter (Los Angeles), Adam Haynes (Los Angeles). *Affiliate* - Katie Lynch (Honolulu), Laura Mitchell (Oceanside—reinstatement), Lucas Crown (Claremont), Brian Lowe (Woodland Hills), Phyllis Morreale de la Garza (Willcox, AZ)

Compiled by Sheila Lowe

Your Chance to Tour for Elaine Viets

As the recent outpouring of messages of concern and well-wishes for Elaine Viets [who has suffered a stroke] have shown, Elaine has a lot of friends in the mystery community. It's no wonder -- she's not only a delightful person and beloved writer, she has given a lot of time and energy to helping others through her service in MWA, Sisters in Crime, and other groups.

She also has a new book coming out in May, MURDER WITH RESERVATIONS, and one of her biggest worries has been that due to the stroke, she won't be able to tour.

So we're offering her friends a chance to actively help her -- we're

going to "tour" for her!

Here's what to do

1) Send an e-mail to: 4elaineviets@gmail.com



2) Let us know what part of the country (or world) you are in and if you are:

- a) an author
- b) a bookseller
- c) a fan

3) Would you be willing to:

a) place a stack of Elaine's books on your table as you sign on your own tour

b) help set up an "Elaine Viets" party

at your store or a store near you (if you are not a store owner, PLEASE do NOT contact stores directly at this point!)

c) serve as a "stand-in" by host-

ing a scheduled signing on Elaine's tour.

d) place an image of Murder With Reservations with a note about this effort on your Web site or blog.

PJ Nunn, Elaine's publicist, is offering to reward the kindness of Elaine's author friends with public-ity help for their own books.

We will have more details for you soon!

I know this community is one that has many generous people in it, people who are willing to act on their concern for others. I look forward to hearing from you!

Please feel free to forward this message.

Jan Burke

You can read an interview with Elaine, conducted not long before her stroke, at [Taylor Bloom's author interviews blog](#).

The Usual Suspects



Arizona SoCalMWA Chapter members at drinks after the recent event in Scottsdale. L-R: Susan Cummins Miller, Tim Holland, Elizabeth Gunn, Annette Mahon, Deb Ledford



MWA @ Poisoned Pen in Scottsdale. Barbara Peters speaking on current trends in publishing.



Christopher Rice (L, above) in conversation with T. Jefferson Parker (R, above) at the downtown L.A. Public Library, our April event.



Bookstores

Another One Bites the Dust

Independent booksellers know that the two most common reasons for closure lie in the perils and high cost of commercial real estate and in the expiration of a lease and/or the retirement of the owners. Every business venture has risks, but one doesn't expect sabotage -- by the landlord.

Briefly put, The Poisoned Pen opened a branch in downtown Phoenix where there is no bookstore, independent or otherwise, in January 2005. The landlord, a Scottsdale neighbor, was renovating an old warehouse into a Soho-style large space. The idea was to create synergy among the Bentley Gallery, The Poisoned Pen, another Scottsdale neighbor, Arcadia Farms restaurant, and yet another, Framers' Workshop. The concept was to share the space in a way that would mutually pull customers from our brand named businesses into the whole project. We weren't so much looking to expand, as we were recruited. But it seemed to be a remarkable project.

Eighteen months into the lease, we learned after numerous inquiries about signage and other missing amenities, that -- when the city came and pulled the meters -- the gallery had never sought its Certificate of Occupancy (where was the \$3.6 million lender in all this?), nor had it rezoned some of the premises from residential to commercial.

As with any business that's dependent on cash flow, a four week interruption in activity is almost impossible to overcome. And although The Poisoned Pen bookshop itself had no code violations, because it was located inside the gallery space, and the gallery and the restaurant were heavily cited, inevitably the damage to the reputation of the project as a whole derailed the hoped-for synergy. That affected all the participant businesses in a wide variety of negative ways. Our business never recovered once we reopened.

We stayed on to honor the author event obligations we'd already set up and closed with the final one we had scheduled, on April 4.

A host of problems for downtown Phoenix have emerged as apparent from our experience:

There is a general lack of clear guidelines for historic renovations,.

Traffic flow is presently complicated by a light rail project.

There is no clear vision of how to develop downtown where major power players are making land grabs or continuing to pull business towards enormous outlying projects.

I am super unimpressed with the city's leadership, both elected and civil.

I will admit that our decision to open downtown was driven less by business than it was by excitement over a cultural opportunity. We were able to host many wonderful programs for the exchange of ideas with the Attorney General, political, media, and cultural figures, discussion clubs (art, lawyers, modern fiction), and to develop programs with the University, the Arizona Bar, and other organizations. Happily, those contacts will continue in a program we're calling "a bookstore without walls," meaning we can remain a roving downtown bookstore, taking authors, speakers, and books to specific venues as we have done vigorously from our Scottsdale location. So in the end, it's a new opportunity, if expensively acquired.

It won't be easy to recover the cost of the tenant improvements which of course rest with the landlord, but the core store in Scottsdale is doing very well. Naturally this is the year we must hope for maximum events and any other business enhancement opportunities. We've been very lucky so far in what has come our way including, ironically, the James Patterson Award on the very day I terminated the lease.

It was an incredibly high profile project, voted Best Destination in Phoenix many times, hosting major authors. It tickles me to recall that in November 2005 we had Scott Turow at the Central store to speak to the Arizona Bar and the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice (eight months before the city called the premises too dangerous to remain open and shut it down for the month of July 2006). Apparently the city was willing to spare all the lawyers. It gives new meaning to Richard III ("the first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers")...

-- *Barbara Peters*
The Poisoned Pen

May Luncheon: Agents Panel

Remind Me, Why Am I Forking Over 15%?

Come and hear an illustrious panel of three agents who represent writers of all stripes, moderated by an author who has a few agent stories of her own.

Panelists: **Betsy Amster** is president of Betsy Amster Literary Enterprises in Los Angeles. Before opening her agency in 1992, she spent ten years as an editor at Pantheon and Vintage and two years as editorial director of the Globe Pequot Press. A frequent instructor at The Loft, the acclaimed literary center in Minneapolis, Betsy has also run publishing workshops at the Squaw Valley Community of Writers and UCLA Extension's Writers' Program. She has been profiled in *Poets and Writers* and the *Los Angeles Times*. The agency's areas of interest include: literary fiction, quirky mysteries and thrillers, memoirs, and narrative nonfiction.

Ken Sherman is president of Ken Sherman & Associates in Beverly Hills that represents film, television and book writers as well as producers and directors. He began as a script reader at Columbia Pictures, entered the William Morris Agency's training program, became an agent, and for four years worked primarily with actors and directors in television. He opened his literary agency in 1994. He also sells film and television rights (and often life-rights) to books. His clients include David Guterson (*Snow Falling on Cedars*), John Updike, Anne Perry, and the estates of Luis Bunuel, Simon Wiesenthal, and John Hersey.

Paul S. Levine is a lawyer, literary agent, and owner of the Paul S. Levine Literary agency, which he started in 1998. He began his law career as an associate with the Law Offices of Stephen F. Rohde, specializing in entertainment law and litigation. He spent five years working for Warner Brothers Television in the Business and Legal Affairs Department and was Resident Counsel for Hearst Entertainment. He represents fiction and non-fiction authors, as well as screenwriters, and television writer-producers. His areas of interest are thrillers, mysteries, romance, women's and literary fiction. He also specializes in books that lend themselves to adaptation as feature films or television movies. He represents a wide range of film scripts, from romantic comedies to thrillers to historical epics.

Moderator: Dianne Emley is the author of the Detective Nan Vining thrillers. The first in the series, *The First Cut*, (Ballantine Hardcover, September 2006), a *Los Angeles Times* bestseller, was described by Publishers Weekly as "sizzling... hard-edged... fast-paced." *Cut to the Quick*, Emley's new novel, is coming in January 2008. Previously, Pocket Books published four books in Emley's series featuring investment counselor Iris Thorne, under the name: Dianne Pugh. Emley's books have been translated into five languages. Copies of *The First Cut* (in English) will be available for purchase and signing at the event.

**RESERVATION FORM: Sunday, May 20, 2007 / Taix Restaurant
1911 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles 90026 (parking on premises: \$2.50)**

Reception from 11 am / Luncheon 11:45 am sharp / Program from 12:30 pm

Advance reservations \$25 (member or guest); **Payment at the door: \$25**

Make Checks Payable to: MWA-SoCal; Remit to: MWA-SoCal / 12021 Wilshire Blvd. #506, Los Angeles, CA 90025

Or, reserve and pay (with PayPal) online at www.socalmwa.com

Member & Guest(s) Names _____

Phone _____ or E-mail _____

Please specify entrée for each attendee:

	MEMBER	GUEST
Chilled Salmon Salad		
Chicken Marsala		
Penne Pasta Monagasque (vegetarian)		

All meals include choice of soup, salad, bread, coffee, tea, sherbet.

The Crime Calendar

Malice Domestic - May 4-6, Arlington, VA, www.malicedomestic.org

Mayhem in the Midlands—May 24-27, Omaha, NE, www.omahapubliclibrary.org/mayhem/

Murder in the Grove— June 8-9, Boise, ID, www.murderinthegrove.com

No Crime Unpublished—June 10, Los Angeles, CA www.sistersincrimela.com

Hardboiled Heroes & Cozy Cats—June 15-16, Dallas, TX, www.mwasw.org/conf.html

Bloody Words—June 15-17, Victoria, British Columbia, bloodywords.com

Book Passage Mystery Writers Conf.—June 28-July 1, Corte Madera, CA www.bookpassage.com

Deadly Ink—June 29-July 1, Parsippany, NJ, www.deadlyink.com

Thrillerfest—July 12-15, New York, NY, www.thrillerfest.org

West Hollywood Book Fair—Sept., W. Hollywood, CA, www.westhollywoodbookfair.org/

Killer Nashville—Sept., Nashville, TN, www.killernashville.com

Bouchercon 38—Sept. 27-30, Anchorage, Alaska, www.bouchercon2007.com

Cape Fear Crime Festival—Oct., Wilmington, NC, www.capefearcrimefestival.org/

Magna cum Murder—Oct., Muncie, IN, www.magnacummurder.com

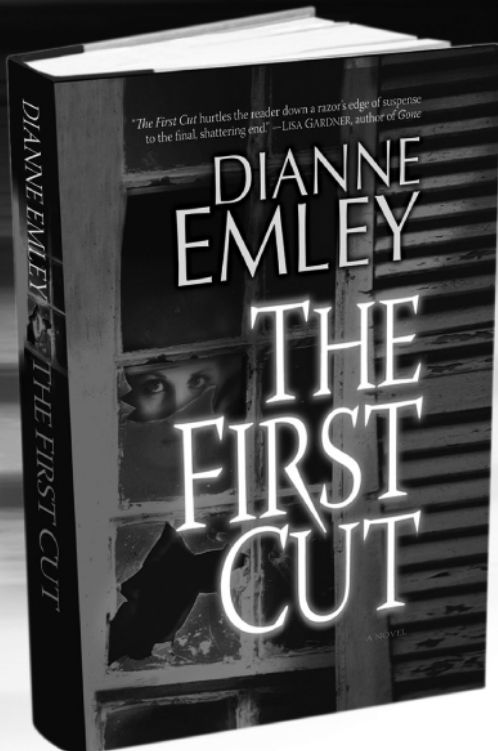
The Great Manhattan Mystery Conclave—Oct., Manhattan, KS, www.manhattanmysteries.com

Men of Mystery—Nov. 3, Irvine, CA, jhansen36@juno.com

New England Crimebake—Nov., Lowell, MA, www.mwane.org/crimebake/

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

Pasadena Detective Nan Vining survived a predator's attack.
Now she's haunted by visions of the dead.
But will they lead her to the killer . . .
or drive her over the edge?



"Should immediately establish Dianne Emley in the front ranks of thriller writers . . . A great read." —MICHAEL CONNELLY

"Gritty, intense, and hard-edged, *The First Cut* is first-rate." —TESS GERRITSEN

"Guaranteed to keep readers on the edge of their seats until the final page. Emley is a writer to watch." —*Tucson Citizen*

"Emley takes many risks . . . but each gamble pays off." —*Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*

"A gritty glimpse into law enforcement . . . Fast-paced." —*Pasadena Now*

Coming in hardcover January 2008, *Cut to the Quick*,
Dianne Emley's new novel featuring Detective Nan Vining!

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hand. Other times the victim is still tightly clutching the weapon. In the case of semi-automatic handguns, the pistol is often ready to fire again. Yes, dead men can shoot you. Their fingers can be stiff with rigor. That makes an exciting task. Since dead men don't normally shoot until you mess with them, I tend to put this job off as long as possible.

The first thing I do is take a long, hard look at the hands for blood. Then I look closely at the wound for powder burns or stippling that would indicate the gun was fired from close range. If it was, it may have drawback spatter inside the barrel. Since at this point my dead man is still holding his gun, I don't look too closely, yet.

Is the trajectory consistent with a

self-inflicted injury? Is my victim right-handed or left-handed? How long is the gun barrel? How long is my victim's arm? Where's the bullet let now? If I can find the bullet's path into a wall or window, does the angle match the victim's body position? I also look for blood spatter evidence that will give me an idea of velocity, distance and direction of travel. Are there multiple gunshot wounds? It is possible to shoot yourself several

It is possible to shoot yourself several times in the head before getting the job done. This can present a puzzle for investigators and I'm sure it's alarming for the victim too.

times in the head before getting the job done. This can present a puzzle for investigators and I'm sure it's alarming for the victim too.

Each scene is different, but the questions that investigators ask themselves are the same. The zebra stands out when the facts don't line up. Take the case of a man who reportedly was murdered when he

encountered a burglar. The victim's only injury was a bullet hole in his abdomen. He was wearing dress slacks with no shirt, and a knife was on the floor beside his hand. There were no latent prints or smudges on the knife. There was no smeared blood or spatter on the victim. There were no powder burns. But the hair on the back of his head was folded up slightly against the floor. That was suspicious. It was finally revealed that the victim had committed suicide. The murder was staged later for the insurance company. Before the police were called, the man's body was cleaned of spatter and powder burns, and the bloody shirt was removed, which folded his hair back against the carpet. This small clue was enough to spotlight our zebra.

—S

The author is an officer and writer with a major metropolitan police force. She cautions that this is a rough overview, she doesn't want to give away any trade secrets.

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summer of *Shrek 3*, *Spiderman 3*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean 3* illustrates the principle.

I also attended the ceremonies for the Los Angeles Times Book Prizes that recognize excellence in a variety of serious fields of literature. Importantly, mystery/thrillers are a category, too, recognized by the presenter, Lisa See, as some of the best fiction, the best literature, being published. The prize went to Michael Connelly, for *Echo Park*, but Michael was quick to state that it could equally justifiably have been given to any of the other four nominees.

The most interesting comments I heard at the event, however, were during a private conversation with 78-year-old Eric R. Kandel, Nobel laureate in 2000 for medicine and author of *In Search of Memory*,

a book about neuroscience that won the L.A. Times award in the science category. He held that the prize for writing, for communicating in essence, was not only just as important to him as the Nobel, but that so few scientists do it at all, much less well.

The urge to tell a story, whether it's a vampire romance/mystery or a tale of *noir*, a true crime exposé or a biography, is as old as language. Our members all feel that urge, and though writing is often characterized as a lonely or solitary calling, the Edgars banquet, with almost 700 attendees, gives us a strong sense of family. At the same time, events like the *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books (expected to draw over 130,000 people) should remind us that our mystery-writers family is a vital part of a larger community.

Les Klingler
Chapter President

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