

# MARCH OF CRIME

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA—SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

## BOUCHERCON, INDIANA, & BOOKS

By Jeri Westerson

With Bouchercon arriving and the subsequent release of my second medieval noir novel, *SERPENT IN THE THORNS*, I thought I'd combine a little book touring with my convention trip. I made the mistake, however, of booking these independent bookstores myself without first looking at a map of Indiana! But I'm from southern California and I'm used to driving, right?

Right. With my rental and my little GPS system, I was raring to go on my grand tour of Indiana. And I couldn't have picked a better time of year. Though it was pouring rain when I arrived, it cleared nicely and I was treated to some of the prettiest countryside I have ever seen. The fall colors had begun, and I soon discovered that Indiana is covered by woodlands, breaking up the flat terrain. And what isn't covered in woods seems to be covered with cornfields. With old barns in the middle of them. Pumpkins sat on Victorian porches. It was all very picturesque; the small town in the American imagination. My first stop was a tiny bookstore in

Madison, IN. After a two hour drive, I discovered I was walking into the movie "Clerks," complete with Silent Bob and an array of other characters who periodically came into the mostly used bookstore for the two hours I was there. This is not to say that I did not have a good time. I did, actually. We talked computer gaming and all matter of other ephemera before I climbed back into my rental for the two-hour sojourn back to my hotel. And to have a good laugh at myself.

After another trip to yet another tiny bookstore, the mantra of my trip became, "let my publicist book them." But these are the things you learn. And at least I was enjoying myself exploring the state.

But then it was time for Bouchercon and I relocated to the convention hotel. I have a lot of online friends that I only get to see in the flesh at these conventions so it was nice to reconnect. But the more conventions I go to, the more I tend to sit in on fewer panels. It's what happens in between the panels that seems to do me the most good, schmooze-wise. I like to sit with ordinary readers and librarians and get them interested in my book. That, to me, is a successful convention. Though my own panel, "More Noir Than You Are" with moderator Frankie Baily, and panelists Christa Faust, Victor Gischler, Charlie Newton, and me, was a funny, informative, standing-room-only event, where everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and books were sold and signed.

Sisters in Crime sponsored a Librarians' Tea, where authors and librarians could get together for yet another bookmark fest over tea and sandwiches. Charlene Harris moderated a panel of lively authors (S.J. Rozan, Nancy Pickard, Carolyn Hart, and Eve Sandstrom), waxing poetic about libraries and Librarians They Have Known. This was also a great opportunity to meet new people who may not have heard of my particular brand of mystery. We brought signed copies of our books and left them for the

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Minotaur authors: Left, Jeri Westerson, Louise Penny, Elizabeth Zelvin.

Continued Page 6 "Bouchercon"

## The President's Rap Sheet

Leslie S. Klinger



I love Bouchercon. I think that I love just about everything about it, but let me note a few of my favorite things:

Seeing so many people that I'm proud and amazed to call friends. Staying up really, really late in the bar talking. Drinking more than I normally do. Ending up hoarse every morning. Spending in-depth time with friends who live too far away to see often. Having dinner with a selection of the dearest friends every night. Being sad to say goodbye to friends every year. Reading all the tweets and Facebook posts and e-mails and blogs about these very same people. Feeling that the mystery community really is a community.

Going to panels to hear authors talk about things that I had no idea they'd

thought about. Going to panels to hear people talk about things that I'd never thought about. Racing back and forth between panels to catch a little of friends whose panels are in competing time slots.

Wandering around the dealer room repeatedly, looking for books that I didn't know that I needed and looking for any copies of my own books. Talking with dealers who are as passionate about books and collecting as I am.

Having people come up to me to tell me how much they love one of my books. Having people ask to take a picture with me. Who, me? Taking pictures of the people that mean a lot to me.

Staffing the MWA table and talking to people about joining. Explaining how many members aren't published writers but want to network. Explaining about the craft-oriented programs we put on. Explaining the friendships that develop from belonging. Explaining about our parties!

Meeting with other MWA Chapter Presidents to talk about making a Chapter work. Getting new ideas for programs, new ideas for sharing information, new ideas for opportunities to work together, with other Chapters and other organizations.

Planning to attend the next one.



## Killer Quotes

**"The Super Chief was on time, as it almost always is, and the subject was as easy to spot as a kangaroo in a dinner jacket."**

—Philip Marlowe in *Playback* by Raymond Chandler

**"Betty was a great shark of a woman. Men died in her wake."**

—Robert Mosley's *Black Betty*

## You Write, Girl!

WriteGirl ([www.writegirl.org](http://www.writegirl.org)) still seeks volunteers for our 2009-10 season of creative writing workshops and mentoring for at-risk teen girls. Please continue to circulate this announcement within your community. *The deadline for volunteer applications has now been extended to November 10th.* Claire Baker, Administrative Assistant, WriteGirl 213-253-2655

Help girls write their way to powerful futures!

WriteGirl is looking for mentors and volunteers for our 9th season of creative writing workshops and mentoring for teen girls. WriteGirl welcomes all women of diverse professional backgrounds to join our energetic community. Apply your professional skills, enrich a young woman's life – and let her enrich yours! Help with events, college support, book marketing, mentoring, public relations and more.

WHAT IS WRITEGIRL? Since 2001, WriteGirl has been helping girls discover confidence, self-esteem, communication skills and the power of their own unique voice. Through mentoring, writing workshops, public readings, performances, and publications, WriteGirl teens explore poetry, fiction, journalism, screenwriting, songwriting and more. Monthly workshops are held near downtown Los Angeles and weekly workshops take place across the greater Los Angeles region.

## CHAPTER NEWS

SoCal MWA member **Susan Cummins Miller's** fourth Frankie MacFarlane mystery, *HOODOO*, was named a Finalist for Women Writing the West's 2009 WILLA Award in Contemporary Fiction. Susan received her award on September 12 at the WWW Conference, held at UCLA. Earlier, *HOODOO* received the 2008 Bronze Award (Mystery) from *ForeWord Magazine* and was a Panelist's Pick for the *2008 Southwest Books of the Year*.

**Robert S. Levinson** is among authors with short stories in *Between the Dark and the Daylight: And 27 More of the Best Crime and Mystery Stories of the Year*, edited by Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg, due from Tyrus Books in November. Bob's Derringer Award-winning story, "The Quick Brown Fox," first appeared in the October '08 issue of *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*.

Member **Gayle Bartos-Pool** is teaching a free class entitled "How to Write Convincing Dialogue" on Tuesday evening, November 17th from 7 until 9 p.m., at the Burbank Central Library, 110 North Glenoaks Blvd., Burbank, CA. Please Note: This is not the regular Buena Vista Branch Library.

Members can contact **Mary Castillo** when they have new releases or book signings in Orange County. AnaheimLiteratureExaminer@Examiner.com

**Gay Toltl Kinman** was honored as a past president at the Special Libraries Association Southern California Chapter Awards meeting on Friday, October 30, at the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Pasadena.



# Renew!

This may be the last  
newsletter you receive.

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chapter news. Renew your  
membership now! Send  
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Fan Guest of Honor: Janet Rudolph  
Toastmaster: Bill Fitzhugh

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Phone: (213) 617-3300, Fax: (213) 617-3399

**Left Coast Crime**

**Los Angeles, CA. March 11-14, 2010**

So Cal MWA members who will be attending Left Coast Crime in Los Angeles in March 2010 are reminded to sign up as soon as possible for the Forensic Science Day offered by the convention. There are only a few places left, so please hurry!

The Forensic Science Day, Wednesday, March 10, will be a day of learning from experts currently working the field of forensic science and criminal justice, and will include a tour of the LA Regional Crime -- all for only \$100 -- far below the cost of most day-long forensic science courses. The proceeds from the class benefit the Crime Lab Project Foundation, which will donate them to California Forensic Science Institute at CSULA to help fund forensic science research. So you can have fun, learn more about forensic science, and help a good cause!

For more information and to register, please visit [http://www.leftcoastcrime.org/2010/forensic\\_science\\_day.htm](http://www.leftcoastcrime.org/2010/forensic_science_day.htm)

# To Outline Or Not Outline? Yes!

By James Scott Bell

So how do you write a *New York Times* bestseller?

You do an outline.

Or not.

Simple, isn't it?

Andrew Gross has been called the "high priest of outliners," and will do outlines of up to 80 pages before he begins writing. Gross, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Blue Zone* and *The Dark Tide*, learned his outlining craft from James Patterson. He says his outlines keep him from writer's block. "I always know what I need to write on any given day," he says.

He advises writers just starting out to learn the discipline. "I want to control the plot," he says. "I don't want the plot controlling me."

On the other hand, Lee Child says, "I don't even know what I'm going to write in the next paragraph."

Two approaches. Two successes.

So who's right?

Yes.

Some of you, perhaps most, are NOPs--No Outline People. You prefer the creative freedom to

frolic across the land, to and fro, smelling the flowers, writing whatever pleases you.

Others will admit to being OPs, Outline People, though how extensively they do it is an open question. Some are minimalists with outlines, others like the extended version.

Some are in between (NOOPs?) Bestselling author Michael Palmer fits there.

"I have had to shorten my outlines in terms of how much of each chapter I write and also in terms of how far into the book I outline," Palmer says. "I haven't found that elusive balance between how much to outline before I start writing, and how much writing to get done before moving ahead with more outline. Sure wish I had unlimited time and unlimited money. Then I could write a really boffo outline before I start to write."

Carla Neggers puts it this way. "When someone asks me if I'm an outliner or a seat-of-the-pants writer, I say yes. I don't have a set technique. It depends on the book. A synopsis is a jumping off point for me. I do best when I focus on what I call the forward momentum of the story versus forcing myself to write a certain way. If forward momentum means stopping and outlining, I stop and outline. If it means going back to Page 1 and rewriting, I go back to Page 1 and rewrite. If it means writing in a whoosh without pausing to revise...that's what I do. I'm disciplined as a writer but not regimented."

An outline is simply the organizing of your imagination. You have to do that at some point. NOPs usually do it at the end of a draft. OPs do it first.

## Fresh Blood

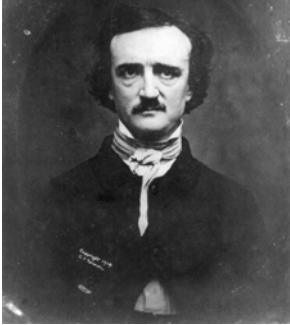
### Active

Mike McKinley, pka Michael Robertson (San Clemente, CA)

### Affiliate

Richard W. Morris

## YOUR EDITOR SPEAKS JERI WESTERSON



Should dead guys win awards?

It's a conundrum. Readers and viewers want to reward a good read or an exceptional performance. But awards, for the most part, help a writer's or actor's career. When you're dead, that career would pretty much seem

to be over.

Or is it?

It's hard to believe that James Dean only made three movies. Three. And now he's an American film icon. Though he didn't win any Oscars, he was the first to receive two posthumous Oscar nominations, but did win a posthumous Golden Globe.

Heath Ledger won his posthumous Oscar for his stint as the Joker, a career cut short too soon.

And Stieg Larsson, the Swedish author of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, won his awards at Bouchercon—not the first of his many awards—voted on by readers and fans. Larsson's tales were found and published after his death (his debut

was followed by *The Girl Who Played with Fire* and the upcoming *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.) His fourth in the series is unfinished and it was believed that there were to be ten all told.

Should awards be given to dead guys? Is it about fans or is it about careers? I guess only time will tell.

As always, got anything to say? Email me at [themarchofcrime@gmail.com](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com).

### Save the Date

**Saturday, November 7, 11am—2pm**  
Charlie Huston interviewed by the Mystery Bookstore's  
Bobby McCue

Tom Bergin's 840 S. Fairfax Ave., Los Angeles 23-936-7151

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

Choice of sandwiches/salad. Open cash bar. MWA members, \$15. Guests/non-MWA members, \$25.

**Sunday, Dec 13, 3pm—Holiday Party** at the Jonathan Club in Santa Monica Sunrise Room, 850 Palisades Beach Road, Santa Monica, CA 90403, (310) 393-9245, Directions: <http://www.jc.org/about/location.asp> RSVP: To Les Klinger's office: (310) 475-1444 by Sunday, December 6

## The Crime Calendar

Nov 7, 2009—Bodies and Buckeyes, Columbus, OH

<http://www.siccowriters.org/5.html>

November 13-15—New England Crimebake, Dedham, MA, GOH: Sue Grafton, [www.crimebake.org](http://www.crimebake.org)

Nov 21, 2009—Men of Mystery, Irvine, CA <http://www.menofmystery.org/>

Dec 5, 2009—Black Orchid Banquet, New York, NY <http://www.nerowolfe.org/>  
Annual banquet held by the members of the Wolfe Pack, devotees of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe series.



*Continued from Page 1 "Bouchercon"*

appreciative librarians to scoop up after the festivities.

But I was also nominated for two awards for my debut mystery and both were being presented at Bouchercon, so I was naturally interested in that bit of business. My novel *VEIL OF LIES* was nominated for a Macavity for the Sue Feder Memorial Historical Mystery Award...for which Rhys Bowen won this year for *A ROYAL PAIN*. The next night I attended the Shamus awards, for which *VEIL* was nominated for Best First PI Novel. When the nominations were read, not only was my name mispronounced, but my book was called *VEIL OF LISA!!!* If that's not a portent of things to come, I don't know what is. Needless to say, I didn't win that one either. Ian Vasquez for *IN THE HEAT* took home the prize, or would have had he been there. In fact, there were a lot of no-shows at the Slippery Noodle, the blues club which hosted the Shamus Awards, either due to deadlines, swine flu, or just the rotten economy. But a good time was still had, especially by Private Eye Writers of America founder Bob Randisi when he was surprised by being presented with a lifetime achievement award.

On Friday, I got a little creative with the schmoozing and sponsored a bar outside the dealer's room, along with other



Christa Faust and Duane Swierczynski, Barry Award Nominees for Best Paperback Original.

Minotaur authors Louise Penny and Elizabeth Zelvin, who serenaded us with her guitar while I handed out bribes...er...free drink tickets to anyone who cared to come over and let us talk about our books, and I dare say, I even sold a few that way, ham-fisted though it might be.

On the last day of Bouchercon I was treated to a



bazaar sight. Well, actually, it was a bazaar. Cooked up by J.A. Konrath, authors were invited to bring a boatload of books, and attendees got some tickets to pick up said books for free (this, in lieu of those heavy bookbags filled with books no one wants.) I didn't bother asking St. Martin's to cough up the minimum 50 books required to participate, mostly because I don't like being laughed at,

even in an email. So instead I watched from above like a benevolent deity.

With another Bouchercon over, I was headed out to more bookstores...and a middle school where I talked about *Life in the Middle Ages* to the entire 6<sup>th</sup> grade class! Talk about fearless. I couldn't bring my medieval weapons as I usually do when I have talks: zero tolerance in the schools, don't you know. But I did bring my helm and an inflatable flail (amazing the stuff you can get on the internet!) and that was a hit. I also got my chance to speak and sign at The Mystery Company and thank Jim Huang personally for putting on a bang-up Bouchercon. The store was small but the crowd was good-sized.

All in all, my trip to Indiana had its mixed blessings. It's nice to visit someplace new, find out about new authors, and reacquaint with old friends. Next year, San Francisco!

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*Jeri Westerson is the author of the Crispin Guest Medieval Noir series. [www.JeriWesterson.com](http://www.JeriWesterson.com)*

"Outline" continued from Page 4

NOPs have more heavy rewriting and editing to do with their drafts, but like the spontaneity. OPs put that time in up front, and are spontaneous with their outlining. They will tell you, too, that it's easier to change an outline than a full novel.

I always outline my first act extensively, then keep track of "signpost scenes," scenes I know I need to have at some point. In the early days I used index cards, a product of my screenwriting training. There are now software programs that do pretty much the same thing.

The only advice I can give here is that you try things out. If you've never liked outlining, why not invest a couple of weeks and try to whip one up? Even if it drives you batty, you'll learn a lot about the story bubbling inside you.

And you outliners, if during the writing a character refuses to obey you, let him have a few minutes to explain himself. Be prepared to tweak your outline as needed.

Any novel, if it is to live, has to be able to breathe a little. "Slowly, slowly, I am learning to listen to the book," Madeleine L'Engle once wrote. "If the book tells me to do something completely unexpected, I heed it; the book is usually right."

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*James Scott Bell is a bestselling suspense writer. This article is adapted from his forthcoming book **The Art of War for Writers** (Writers Digest Books, December). Visit his website, [jamesscottbell.com](http://jamesscottbell.com) and his blog, [killzoneauthors.blogspot.com](http://killzoneauthors.blogspot.com).*

## Transom Notes

**EXPOSE!** **Hannah Dennison's** third book in the Vicky Hill mysteries chronicling the adventures of an obituary reporter, will be released December 1 by Berkley Prime Crime. Book Launch Party (with a raffle and prizes!) will be at The Mystery Bookstore in Westwood on Saturday December 12 at 4 pm. [www.hannahdennison.com](http://www.hannahdennison.com)

**Thomas B. Sawyer** with his new book *NO PLACE TO RUN*, will be at the Mystery Bookstore in Westwood at 2 PM on Saturday, November 14.

**Jeri Westerson** will be signing her new release *SERPENT IN THE THORNS*, at: Saturday, November 7—writing workshop, "How to Make History Come Alive", 2 pm, Well Red Coyote 3190 W. State Route 89A Sedona, AZ 86336; Sunday, November 8—signing, 2 pm Poisoned Pen Bookstore 4014 N. Goldwater Blvd., Suite 101, Scottsdale, AZ 85251 (480) 947-2974; Monday, November 9—signing, 2 pm Mostly Books 6208 E Speedway Blvd. Tucson, AZ 85712-5129 (520) 571-0110; Monday, November 9—dialogue/interview and signing, 7 pm Clues Unlimited 3146 East Fort Lowell Road, Tucson, AZ 85716 (520)326-8533; Thursday, November 12—5:30 pm, San Diego Mystery Book Club Best Western Seven Seas, Mission Valley 411 Hotel Circle South, San Diego, CA; Saturday, November 14—9:30 am, Alta Vista Country Club, 777 E. Alta Vista Street, Placentia, CA 92870—\$45.00 per person—Registration: 9:30am-10:00am [info@soroptimistblh.org](mailto:info@soroptimistblh.org).

## In Case You Missed It



Brian Klein, Ass't U.S. Attorney, spoke to our Chapter on "Crimes of Our Times: Prosecution of Financial Crimes" for our last meeting.

Be part of a community of today's women writers .  
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# A Luncheon of Pulp Noir



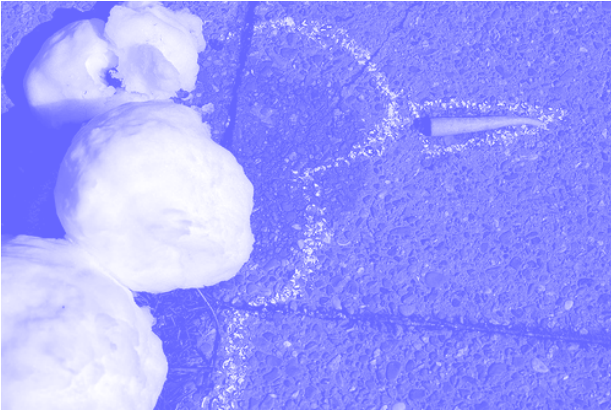
Interview with author **Charlie Huston** and  
Mystery Bookstore's Bobby McCue

Saturday, November 7, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tom Bergin's Tavern  
840 S. Fairfax Ave., Los Angeles

\$15 members; \$25 guests  
RSVP: [www.socalmwa.com](http://www.socalmwa.com)





***MWA HOLIDAY PARTY***  
***Raise a glass with your***  
***friends and enjoy the***  
***sunset over the ocean.***

**When:** Sunday, December 13, 2009  
4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

**Where:** The Jonathan Club at the Beach  
Sunrise Room  
850 Palisades Beach Road  
Santa Monica, CA 90403  
(310) 393-9245

Directions: <http://www.jc.org/about/location.asp>

**What:** Hors d'oeuvres and soft drinks.  
No-host alcoholic drinks \$8 each (cash only).

**Who:** Members may bring one guest.

**Cost:** FREE!

**Dress:** Festive! Business casual works too.

**Parking:** \$10 (cash only).

**RSVP:** To Les Klinger's office: (310) 475-1444  
by Sunday, December 6, 2009

**Rules:** Talking on cell phones prohibited inside the club.  
Gratuities to the staff are included.  
Bring your parking ticket with you.  
Alcoholic drinks and parking paid in cash.



## MARCH OF CRIME



MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA  
Southern California Chapter  
12021 Wilshire Blvd. #506  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

*The March of Crime* is the newsletter of the Southern California Chapter/Mystery Writers of America

Editor: Jeri Westerson

To submit material for *The March of Crime*, email the editor at [TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com](mailto:TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com)

To advertise in TMOC, visit our website at [www.SoCalMWA.com](http://www.SoCalMWA.com) for information.

Any opinions expressed herein are those of each author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Mystery Writers of America or the local chapter.

### Next Meeting:

#### A LUNCHEON OF PULP NOIR

**Interview with award-winning  
novelist Charlie Huston and  
Mystery Bookstore manager  
Bobby McCue**

Saturday, November 7

11 AM to 2 PM

Tom Bergin's

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Choice of sandwiches/salad.

Open cash bar.

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## Mystery Writers of America Southern California Chapter

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## LAST WORD



Bobby McCue of the Mystery Bookstore, left, and author Brett Battles are all smiles at Bouchercon Indianapolis. Battles won a Barry Award for his book, "The Deceived," in the category of Best Thriller.