



The
MARCH

of CRIME

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MWA University - San Diego

by Jackie Houchin

Mystery Writers of America University drew 61 novice-to-pro writers to San Diego for a full day of college level writing classes. The low-cost seminar, taught by a team of published writers and experienced teachers, focused on the craft of writing, from first idea to final editing.

After a light continental breakfast (boxed lunches were served mid day, snacks between sessions), MWA's Executive Vice President, Daniel J. Hale welcomed participants and then introduced each teacher in turn.



L - R: Jess Lourey, Daniel J. Hale & Hallie Ephron (photo by Jackie Houchin)

Next Meeting:

SoCal MWA's 1st Write-In
Friday, November 8
5 to 9pm

More information:
Page 13

After The Idea

Jess Lourey, mystery author and English professor, taught how to turn an idea into a finished manuscript using the 7-step Pyramid-on-Point method.

Lourey began by urging attendees to write a one-sentence summary of their current work and then to expand it to a full paragraph, including the "status quo" at the beginning of the book, the major conflicts, and the resolution.

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The PRESIDENT'S RAP SHEET

Jeri Westerson

You might have noticed that we haven't had one central place for our MWA meetings. Or that fewer of them have been luncheons. Well, that's partly been by design. I say "partly" because it is pretty difficult finding something in a central location that has decent parking. But on the other hand, I'm big into moving around so that members who live outside the immediate Los Angeles area can have a chance to go to our events and not drive half the day getting there. Luncheons are nice, but I know that also prevented many a member from attending because of the cost. Some of us are on tight budgets, and if you factor in the gas and the meal, we are talking a chunk of cash. And so this has translated into my policy of having meetings all over the southland.

So far this year, we've had events in San Diego, El Segundo, Studio City, and Orange County. And this will likely continue on into next year. I've heard from folks in those areas thanking us profusely for coming out to their neck of the woods. And we've had a variety of events to suit every palate, including those luncheons, which we will also continue to have.

Soon, our chapter ballots will be making their way to you. Yes, it's that time again. I'll be running for president again to continue what we started this year. Remember, only Active Status members may run for the board or vote. If you would like to nominate someone for the board of directors (or yourself), please send in the name to contact@socalmwa.com. If you can't think of anyone right now, there is a space to write in your nominee on the ballot.

In the meantime, our Arizona members have an event with Ann Hillerman on November 23. See this issue for details. And we are having our first ever NaNoWriMo "Write-In" event on November 8. And on December 14, we are having our Holiday Party. This year we're holding it at Golden Road Brewery just outside Glendale. We will be in their private pub all by our lonesome. It will be cozy but not crowded, and full of lots of great food and all the craft brew they have on offer, plus wine and other spirits that may tickle your fancy. And the best part is, it's hosted by your chapter. In other words, it's free! (That is, except the bar. You are on your own on that one, kids.) Again, since this is a party for us, I didn't feel members should pay. So do RSVP, free to our members and one guest. See details in this issue! I hope to see you all there.

Jeri
Your President

Chapter Officers

President: Jeri Westerson

VP: Craig Faustus Buck

Treasurer: Eric Beetner

Secretary: Terri Nolan

Board of Directors

Matt Coyle

Tammy Kaehler

Jessica Kaye

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Daryl Wood Gerber

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The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

Fall is my favorite time of year. There's something wonderful about curling up on the sofa with a good book, a mug of hot apple cider, and my little dog snuggled beside me. Except this year, I feel cheated. October came with 80+ degree temperatures and air conditioning is a cruel substitute for a cozy fire. I know we live in Southern California, but this is ridiculous.

Complaints aside, this is a good time to reflect on all that we've accomplished this year. To savor the satisfaction of a job well done before we start thinking about those projects we'd like to tackle in 2014. It'll be here before we know it.

For those of you participating in NaNoWriMo this month, I wish you success. I've tried it a couple of times and though I never quite reached the fifty-thousand word goal, it did teach me that writing a couple of thousand words a day isn't as hard as it sounds. The trick, or course, is to keep it up until you have a finished manuscript and to shine that puppy up until you can see your face in it. But then, you knew that already, didn't you?

Wishing you all a happy and healthy holiday season.

Holly

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

Editor: Holly West

Columnists:
Dennis Palumbo
Gregory Von Dare
John Morgan Wilson

Opinions expressed herein are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Mystery Writers of America Southern California Chapter.

Contact us at:
themarchofcrime@gmail.com

FRESH BLOOD

SoCal MWA welcomes its new and returning members:

Jeff Morgan (J.W. Morgan), Affiliate
John. C. Conway, Affiliate
Dennis Lehane, Active
Olivia Samms, Active
Charles Rosenberg, Active
Lisa Brackmann, Active, New Chapter
Catherine Snodgrass, Active, Reinstatement
Diane Vallere, Active
Kim Davis, Affiliate

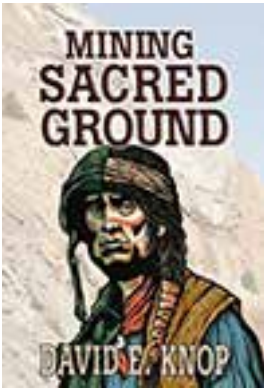
Save the Date

December 14

SoCal MWA
Holiday Party

Details on Page 7!

OVER the TRANSOM

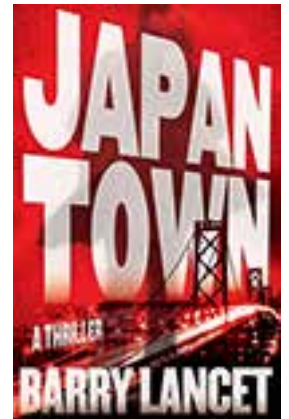


Member News

David E. Knop's MINING SACRED GROUND won third place at the highly competitive Public Safety Writer's Association (PSWA) Conference during July in Las Vegas. MINING SACRED GROUND combines Southwest tradition and the modern soldiers' code in the first of a series featuring former Marine and tribal policeman Peter Romero, a mix of Edward Abbey's frustrated idealist, George Hayduke, and Tony Hillerman's staunch traditionalist, Jim Chee. This novel and its follow-on, POISONED BY GOD'S FLESH, are available in ebook format at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, The Copia, Kobo, and iTunes.

Barry Lancet's debut thriller, JAPANTOWN, was published in September. It features San Francisco antique dealer Jim Brodie, who has recently inherited a stake in his father's Tokyo-based private investigation firm. With his array of Asian connections and fluency in Japanese, Brodie sets out to solve a seemingly perfect crime and at the same time learn whether his wife's tragic death was more than just an accident. When he unravels a web of intrigue stretching back centuries and connected to the murders in San Francisco, the Japantown killer retaliates with a new target: Brodie's daughter. Read an excerpt at barrylancet.com.

JAPANTOWN's TV rights have been optioned by J.J. Abrams and his production company, Bad Robot, in conjunction with Warner Bros.



Craig Faustus Buck's short story DEAD WRONG, which was published in Twisted Dreams Magazine in February, has been chosen to be included in the upcoming anthology UNDERCURRENTS OF FEAR by Static Movement Publishing. Craig's short story CUPPA JOE will also be included in the anthology IN THE BLOODSTREAM published by Mocha Memoirs Press.



Anji Nolan's LOVE IS IN THE AIR was released on September 30 by Crimson Romance. It features Royal Canadian Mounted Police Sergeant Jim Cromwell and airline pilot Captain Sophie Berg, who fall in love during an investigation into a drug running operation. When Sophie is kidnapped by one of the drug smugglers, Jim realizes just how important she's become in his life. Visit www.anjinolan.com for more info.

Do you have writing news to share with our chapter? Email it to TheMarchofCrime@gmail.com by December 20 for inclusion in the January/February issue.

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OVER the TRANSOM



Ed Kovacs's *BURNT BLACK* is #3 in the Cliff St. James detective series set in New Orleans. It will be released on November 19, 2013, by St. Martin's Minotaur. Kirkus has just given it a good review: www.kirkusreviews.com.

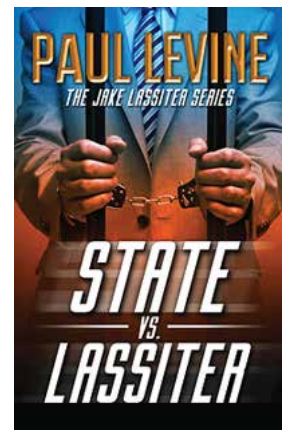
St. Martin's Minotaur has also contracted with Ed to launch a new thriller series with a private security contractor hero who takes on unofficial missions at the behest of a female US Secretary of State. The first book is called *RUSSIAN BRIDE* and will be published in 2014.

Gay Tolt Kinman and other authors will be signing a new anthology, *THE UNDEAD AND THE DETECTIVE*, published by Elm Books, at Book 'Em Mysteries, 1118 Mission in South Pasadena (828 799 9600) on Sunday, November 10 at 2 p.m. Kinman's story, *MAJESTIC 12* is about a professor who is trying to get tangible evidence that a space ship and beings crash landed near Roswell, New Mexico--and he does.

Gayle will also be signing her new book, *MURDER AND MAYHEM*, a collection of mystery short stories set on the Huntington's grounds and in the library, at the Huntington Library.

Her three previously published stories are now on Kindle Shorts: *BLOWN AWAY*—two blondes board a plane, but one is shot. Who was the sniper aiming for? *THE DARKENED HOUSE*—a thief, who is about to give up his illegal profession, hides out in an vacant house. At least he thought it was. *THE TRUCK STOP*—set in the Mojave Desert where the narrator looks for the place where his buddy drove his truck to be repaired, and was never seen again.

Paul Levine's *STATE VS. LASSITER*, the latest in the Jake Lassiter series, was released in September: Life is great for Jake at the start of the newest tale in this award-winning series. His law practice is booming, he's crazy about the new woman in his life, his one-time delinquent nephew Kip is getting A's in school... What can go wrong? How about a charge of first degree murder? Read an excerpt at paul-levine.com.



NOIR AT THE BAR L.A. Nov 10
3 - 11 pm
Mandrake
2692 S. La Cienega

WITH JAKE HINKSON
JOSH STALLINGS
PAUL D. MARKS
STEPHEN BLACKMOORE
MATT COYLE
ROB KROESE



The PRO SHOP

John Morgan Wilson

In each installment of The Pro Shop, John Morgan Wilson interviews a chapter member about crime writing and writing in general. In this issue: Jan Burke.

Jan Burke is the national bestselling author of fourteen books, including *DISTURBANCE*, the latest entry in Jan's Irene Kelly series and a sequel to *BONES*, which won the Edgar for Best Novel. Jan also wrote *THE MESSENGER*, a supernatural thriller. Her short fiction has appeared in *EQMM*, *AHMM*, and several anthologies. Jan is a past chapter president of So-Cal MWA, a lifetime member of Sisters in Crime, and was inducted this year as a Baker Street Irregular. She also founded the Crime Lab Project (<http://crimelabproject.wordpress.com/>) to support criminal forensic science. In March, Jan will teach an all-day writing workshop at Left Coast Crime (<http://www.leftcoastcrime.org/2014/>) with Jerrilyn Farmer.



Photo by Sheri McKinley
Photography

JMW: You majored in history at Cal State Long Beach but eventually became a full-time crime writer. What led you to a career in fiction, and the crime genre in particular?

JB: From the age of seven, I wanted to write. I was told it was impossible to earn a living at it, so I went into the lucrative field of history. Crime genre because I loved reading it.

JMW: What factors in when you're deciding what you'll work on next, in which format or genre, and whether the premise will sustain a good story?

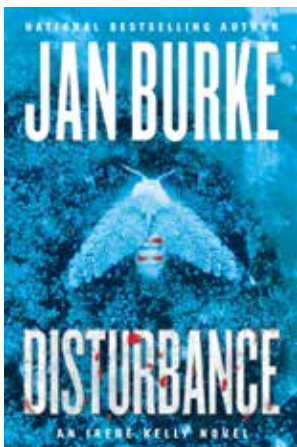
JB: Sometimes a story idea is one that will fly like an arrow to the heart of things – such ideas lend themselves to short stories. I start novels in a variety of ways, but often with characters and an underlying theme. I throw problems at them and encourage each of them to harass the other characters. Series or standalone is a matter of whether or not a story idea fits in the world of the series and those characters. Irene Kelly is not likely to invent robots that will diffuse a bomb in a landmark building in Uzbekistan. However, she can say a lot about what happens when you have to redefine yourself – such as when the newspaper where you've worked for years is shutting down. The villain in *Disturbance* fails, in part, because he doesn't adapt to change as well as she does. I know I've got a sustainable premise when it won't leave me alone.

JMW: Tell us about Crime and Science Radio (<http://www.suspensemagazine.com/Crime-andScienceRadio.html>), the Internet radio program you co-host with Doug (Dr. D.P.) Lyle.

JB: This is so fun! Suspense Magazine hosts our online show twice a month. We focus on forensic science, methods of investigation, police procedure, and criminal justice. We tie this into what's being written about these subjects. We interview experts and authors about the realities and how to research them. We put lots of links on the site for further research. You can listen to it from the website, or download it as a podcast from iTunes. It's free either way.

JMW: You're especially committed to the Crime Lab Project. Why?

Continued on page 12



cheers

IT'S A HOLIDAY PARTY!



Join us for a celebration
Saturday, December 14
6 to 9pm

Golden Road Brewing
5410 W. San Fernando Rd.
(Chloe's Pub)
Los Angeles, CA 90039



A wonderful buffet of salads,
appetizers, hearty entrees, & desserts
No host bar

FREE
Members and One Guest
RSVP contact@socalmwa.com



Hosted by SoCal MWA



Jeri Westerson & Bill Fitzhugh

Gumbo Party!



Laissez le bon temps rouler



Christa Faust ladles it out



**SoCal MWA thanks
Bill & Kendall Fitzhugh
for hosting the Gumbo Party!**

MWA University Wrap-up *continued from page 1*

The next steps up the widening upside down pyramid were a character bible, sketches of the setting, expanding each sentence in the original paragraph to a full page, roughly outlining the novel, and writing the novel.

Dramatic Structure & Plot

Book reviewer, writing instructor, and author, Hallie Ephron presented the 3-Act Structure. This dense study reviewed the three acts of storytelling: 1) the Introduction of characters, setting, goals, conflict & complications, 2) character/story development, escalating conflicts ending in crisis, 3) crisis peaks and is resolved, characters reflect on resolution.

Using the Wizard of Oz, she taught how to establish the goals of the protagonist, the villain, the antagonist (someone getting in the way of success), and the “ruby slippers” of the story (the thing they all need to get what they want).



Daniel Stashower & Pat Underwood (photo by Jackie Houchin)

Setting and Description

Edgar winner and teacher of creative writing, Daniel Stashower began his session by reading the iconic and much maligned “It was a dark and stormy night” descriptive example of how NOT to open a novel.

Continuing to read in a rich baritone from well written notes and real, as well as fabricated examples, Stashower showed how setting is more than time, place, and weather. It can illuminate characters and themes.

Character

Harley Jane Kozak brought humor, as well as her skills as a writer and actress to this session. With examples from books and films, Kozak explained her ten “ingredients” in the recipe for compelling characters.

1. Empathy
2. Something to make you like them (a pet?)
3. Flaws
4. Want: a strong desire for something
5. Active (never passive): change inner dialogues to conversations
6. Need (different from want): Scarlet O’Hara wanted Ashley but needed Rhett.
7. Emotional biography
8. Worthy opponent (Hannibal Lector?)
9. Allies (law enforcement buddies for amateurs) and sidekicks
10. Mentor (can be a memory)



Harley Jane Kozak & Hank Phillippi Ryan (photo by Jackie Houchin)

continued on page 10

MWA University Wrap-up *continued from page 9*

Writing as Re-Writing

Reed Farrel Coleman, author, instructor of English, and founding member of MWA-U, presented another densely-packed session on how to develop an editorial ear. A few of his points were: “Writing without editing is a common error among new authors. Fall in love with the act of writing rather than the words.”

“Read your manuscript aloud. Silent reading is ‘optical’ and the brain will auto-correct, but hearing it, you’ll notice mistakes.”

“Don’t try to write The Great American Novel in every sentence. It wears down readers. Not all writing has to be poetry, but it shouldn’t be so jumbled that it slows down the reader. Simplify the language. Clarity before art.”



Reed Farrel Coleman (photo by Jackie Houchin)

The Writing Life

Hank Phillippi Ryan, on-air investigative reporter and award-winning crime fiction author, reviewed the thirteen things she wished someone had told her about writing.

They included: the first draft will be terrible, the “slump” will come, you are NOT alone, listen to your inner voice, rejection is not always about your book, and don’t forget to celebrate. Nothing in the world takes the place of persistence. Writing is hard work – if it’s easy, you’re probably not doing a good job.

The writing life. Where else can you sit at a table with a friend and say, “I need to kill someone, can you help me?” and they do.

The MWA-U seminar offered a fantastic opportunity to hone craft, network, buy books (Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore), and have a good time. Attendees left inspired, instructed, cautioned, and challenged. Thank you, MWA.



When: November 16, 2013, 9am - 4pm

Where: Irvine Marriott Hotel

Headliners: Alexander McCall Smith and Scott Turow

Visit <http://menofmystery.org> for more information.

Meeting Wrap-up

September Meeting Wrap-up

by Eric Beetner

A full house gathered at the Studio City library on Saturday, Sept. 7 to hear MWA board member Dennis Palumbo sit down with novelists/screenwriters April Smith and Nicholas Meyer. The crowd was treated to from-the-trenches stories of the intersection between publishing and Hollywood from two seasoned vets.

Palumbo was an accomplished screenwriter before turning to novels, having written the feature film *My Favorite Year* and working as a staff writer for *Welcome Back Kotter*. He kicked things off with Smith, author of the Ana Grey mysteries and multiple teleplays including the adaptation of her own novel *Good Morning, Killer* for the TNT network. Smith recounted having to drop an entire subplot in her book to make it better for the screen, but said it was not painful to lose the material if it serves the script.

Meyer has had a long career in Hollywood both as screenwriter and director. He was nominated for an academy award for his script adapted from his own novel, *The Seven Percent Solution*. He also directed the infamous TV movie *The Day After*, as well as the cult classic *Time After Time*, and wrote script for films such as *Star Trek* numbers 2, 4 and 5. A wonderful raconteur, Meyer was quick with a quote and a story from his vast experience in the movie business.

He discussed adapting his own novel, the Sherlock Holmes meets Sigmund Freud *Seven Percent Solution*, into a screenplay saying he took the opportunity to fix a few things he wasn't quite happy with in the novel, and to change the ending since so many people were familiar with the best selling book. "If you take a mystery that people have read, then there's no mystery in the mystery."

The audience had dozens of questions and both host and guests answered everything about the slippery slope of adapting novels. Ultimately, they all agreed, it's a business and you can't be too precious about your novel.

April Smith said it succinctly: "Get it made. Bottom line." She said she has, "an obligation to make a translation that is true to the work" whether her own or Stephen King's (who she has adapted two short stories into screenplays).

Meyer agreed. "The only thing I care about is the finished product. You owe the movie, not the book."

A great afternoon with two exceptional guests and a gracious host. See you at the next one.

***The March of Crime* would like to thank this issue's contributors:
Jackie Houchin, John Morgan Wilson, and Eric Beetner.**

THE PRO SHOP *continued from page 6*

JB: I just couldn't stand by and watch the public deepen its belief that forensic science was modern magic, that it was being supported and used in the way people thought it was as they gathered around their television sets. DNA wasn't being used to solve rapes and murders (in many jurisdictions, it is still only being used to help convict after an arrest). Someone needed to talk about the reality. Labs are understaffed, under-equipped, and often housed in unsafe facilities. Coroners often have little or no training. At its best, forensic science really can do wonderful things. We need to better fund it and insist on high quality and better standards. My colleagues have been great about spreading the word.

JMW: You give a lot of your time to writing organizations and related causes. Why is it so important to be involved?

JB: Our writing community is known for its generosity and collegiality. That will only continue if those of us who have benefited from it pay it forward. My experience has been that I always end up with even more to pay forward: I've gained friendships, learned a lot, and I can't tell you how many new opportunities have come my way at least in part because of connections made through volunteer efforts. While one has to find balance with one's personal life and writing, you don't have to do much – just what you can.

JMW: What's next for you on the writing side?

JB: Finishing a thriller, have lots of short stories coming out over the next few months, several of which will feature characters from my books. After I finish the thriller, I'm going write another Irene Kelly story.

John Morgan Wilson is the author of ten mystery novels, including eight in the Benjamin Justice series. Simple Justice, which launched the series, was awarded an Edgar for Best First. John's short stories have appeared in EQMM, AHMM, and several anthologies. He is a former board member of MWA So Cal and a recipient of the chapter's Distinguished Service Award.

ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR CLOSE UP?

The GUEST SPOTLIGHT is a semi-regular feature in *The March of Crime*, to be included whenever we have room in an issue. Articles should be no longer than 800 words and of interest to our chapter members. You must also be a member of the SoCal MWA chapter. Got an idea? Pitch it to us at themarchofcrime@gmail.com.

SoCal MWA Presents:

**Anne Hillerman
in Conversation with
Susan Cummins Miller**

Saturday, November 23 -- 2 p.m.

The author of Spider Woman's Daughter discusses her new Joe Leaphorn/Jim Chee mystery and the Tony Hillerman legacy. Sponsored by the Southern California Chapter of Mystery Writers of America.

**Clues Unlimited Mystery Bookstore
3146 E Fort Lowell Rd, Tucson AZ**

Free and open to the public
For more info, call: 520-326-8533



Anne Hillerman

Crime CALENDAR

NOVEMBER MEETING

SoCal MWA's First Write-in
Come write with fellow writers!

Friday, November 8, 2013
5pm to 9pm

Andante Coffee Roasters
7623 Beverly Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90036
323-525-0355



MORE CRIMINAL HAPPENINGS

Nov 9: Murder and Mayem in Muskego

Nov 10: Noir at the Bar (more info p. 5)

Nov 16: Men of Mystery (more info p. 10)

Nov 23: Anne Hillerman in conversation with Susan Cummins Miller (more info p. 12)

Dec 14: SoCal MWA Holiday Party (more info p. 7)

The LAST WORD

“I know there are people who believe you should forgive and forget. For the record, I'd like to say I'm a big fan of forgiveness as long as I'm given the opportunity to get even first.”

V is for Vengeance by Sue Grafton