

August 2019



The
MARCH

of CRIME

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SoCal Mystery Writers of America & Orange County Sisters in Crime

JOINT MEETING & LUNCHEON
Sunday, August 25, 1 p.m.

The Irvine Water Ranch District
15500 Sand Canyon Ave.
Irvine, CA

Special Guest: Michael Brandman
interviewed by **Thomas B. Sawyer**

~ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ~



Michael Brandman is an acclaimed motion picture and television producer, screenwriter, and *New York Times* best selling author. His novels, *KILLING THE BLUES*, *FOOL ME TWICE*, and *DAMNED IF YOU DO*, based on characters created by the late Robert B. Parker in his Jesse Stone books, are all *New York Times* best sellers. He produces and co-writes with Tom Sell- eck the Jesse Stone TV movies and is currently in production with the 10th TV movie in the series. Brandman currently writes the Buddy Steel mysteries (*WILD CARD*) “...another irreverent, complex lawman.” —*Library Journal*

Edgar & Emmy-nominated screenwriter, novelist, playwright **Tom Sawyer** was Showrunner/Head Writer of the classic TV series, *Murder She Wrote*, for which he wrote 24 episodes. Showrunner and Writer/Producer on 15 series, he's sold/written numerous TV movies and series pilots. Tom authored the bestselling mystery/thrillers *THE SIXTEENTH MAN*, & *NO PLACE TO RUN*. His latest novel is *A MAJOR PRODUCTION!*, featuring NY P.I. Barney Moon, who doesn't drive and regards LA as an Alien Planet.

If you'd like to attend, please R.S.V.P to secretary@ocsistersincrime.org.





The President's Rap Sheet

Glen Erik Hamilton

We're into the final two weeks of summer vacation, which means our daughter is alternating between staying up all night at as many "sleep"-overs as we'll allow and preparing for middle school as if it were the Hunger Games. It's a good time. Like many grown-ups with a limited amount of vacation each year, I'm a little envious of all those free days students receive. Though not of middle school. Once was more than enough.

My jealousy might be slightly compounded by the fact that what vacation I do have is usually spent going to conferences (fun!) or working to meet deadlines (less so!). If screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan was correct in that being a writer means having homework every night of your life, then it follows that every holiday is a busman's holiday. Ain't never done, son.

But at the same time, I remember my own summer vacations as consisting of long, long periods of waiting. Waiting to come home from family trips to get back to hanging with my friends. Waiting for friends to come home from their family trips. In later years, waiting to get off work. Waiting for school to put an end to the stultifying boredom and the heat.

Writing certainly solves that problem. Whether making marginal progress on the ever-growing TBR pile or producing pages of my own, there is always something to do. I haven't been bored in a long time.

If you could use some additional fun this summer, our joint meeting with Sisters in Crime Orange County is Sunday August 25, with SoCalMWA's own **Thomas B. Sawyer** interviewing *NYT* Bestseller Michael Brandman. Come out to Irvine, enjoy lunch with members of both chapters, and maybe learn a little somethin' to boot.

Congratulations to our chapter's Macavity nominees! **Craig Faustus Buck** (Best Short Story, "Race to Judgment"), **Dianne Freeman** (Best Historical, *A LADY'S GUIDE TO ETIQUETTE AND MURDER*), **Naomi Hirahara** (Best Novel, *HIROSHIMA BOY*), **Les Klingler** (Best Nonfiction, *CLASSIC AMERICAN CRIME FICTION OF THE 1920s*), and **Barry Lancet** (Best Short Story, "Three-Star Sushi"). Good luck in Dallas!

Finally, it's time to consider transition plans. Several of our board members will be moving on after this year, and others may be juggling responsibilities to try new things. If you've considered getting involved with MWA or just have ideas to contribute, drop me a line. More on this topic in September's newsletter.

All Best, Glen

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The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

The temperature hit 109 degrees where I live in Northern California over the weekend, so my husband and I spent Sunday afternoon in an air-conditioned movie theater watching *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, Quentin Tarantino's new film. It made me nostalgic, not because I did much living during the sixties (I was one in 1969, when the film takes place), but because having lived in Los Angeles for nearly thirty years as an adult, I enjoyed taking a cinematic ride through the city I love.

Did I enjoy the movie itself? Yes-*ish*. I probably need another viewing in order to catch all the themes and references, but to me, the film's plot was a little too slow. And I couldn't quite relate to its protagonist, Rick Dalton, played by Leonardo DiCaprio. The character was well-drawn and tremendously well-played, which ironically, might be part of the problem: He's too superficial a person—and I believed he was a person—for me to really care what happened to him. Does that make sense? I hope it does. I don't review films (or books, for that matter) for a reason.

Recently, I listened to the audiobook of *HELTER SKELTER: THE TRUE STORY OF THE MANSON MURDERS*. It was the first time I'd heard the story in its entirety and I'm a little obsessed with it now. I hate to say that because I've grown increasingly uncomfortable with my interest in true crime. There is something odd, and perhaps wrong, about treating actual crimes as entertainment. Not that I'm on any crusade against it—far from it. But I do like to reflect on these things once in awhile.

But *HELTER SKELTER* is fascinating on many fronts, not the least of which is prosecutor and co-author Vincent Bugliosi's very thorough account of his prosecution of Charles Manson and the hurdles he faced in proving Manson's responsibility for the Tate/La Bianca murders even though Manson wasn't present when they were committed. I learned a few things about California's legal system that might eventually be useful in my writing.

Why am I suddenly talking about *HELTER SKELTER*? Because the house at 10050 Cielo Drive and the events surrounding the August 9, 1969 murders of Sharon Tate, Abigail Folger, Jay Sebring, Wojciech Frykowski, and Steven Parent serve as a sort of backdrop for *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*.

Though summer is in its final month and kids in these parts are gearing up for school to start back up, I fear I have at least a few more 100+ degree days to endure before the fall is in full swing. Whatever your situation may be, keep cool, and keep writing.

Holly

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

Editor: [Holly West](#)

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

**Join our SoCalMWA
Yahoo! Group**

Email SoCalMWA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to join
(members only)

FRESHBLOOD

SoCalMWA welcomes its new members



Mark Bruce

Mark Bruce practices family and criminal law in San Bernardino. A disabled Vietnam Era vet who passed the bar in 1987, he worked as a Public Defender in Orange and San Bernardino. He won the 2018 Black Orchid Novella Award for his story, “Minerva James and the Goddess of Justice,” which appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine* and anchors his first Minerva novel. *Writer’s Digest* published his short memoir “Lessons from the Young.” The California State Bar used his comic essays on the lawyer’s life for training materials.

Suzanne Haworth



Topper Jones

Christopher Gil Jones goes under the pseudonym Topper Jones for his detective novels featuring surfing crime-fighter Thaddeus Hanlon. Book one in the series—ALL THAT GLITTERS—is in final editing and will be available for agent/publisher consideration early this fall. In addition to his mainstream fiction, Jones is the coauthor of three textbooks, over fifty professional journal articles, and a teaching novel—ACCOSTING THE GOLDEN SPIRE, 3rd ed. To be close to family, he makes his home in the southwestern desert. But every chance he gets, he treks 450 miles to the Pacific Coast to enjoy the California sun and catch a few waves.

TMOC Needs You!

TMOC is looking for articles (500–700 words) on subjects of interest to SoCalMWA members. This includes craft, marketing, and all aspects of publishing.

Content shouldn’t be overtly promotional, but rather instructional or informational.

Include a brief bio (100 words or less) and a headshot or cover image.

Send your questions and/or pitches to themarchofcrime@gmail.com.

OVER the TRANSOM

From **Gary Phillips**, the Bronze Buckaroo rides again. Out now in paper and e-book, and free on Kindle Unlimited is THE ADVENTURES OF THE BRONZE BUCKAROO anthology. Portrayed by singer-actor Herb Jeffries, the Bronze Buckaroo, Bob Blake, appeared on screens in 1939 as the first African American singing cowboy who also found time to take on the bad guys. This is the first prose rendition of that character by the likes of Frankie Y. Bailey, Edgar winner John Lutz, and yours truly. Saddle up!

LOGAN'S LAND by **Serita D. Stevens** will be coming out from AKA books in August. This western romantic suspense has also been optioned for film.

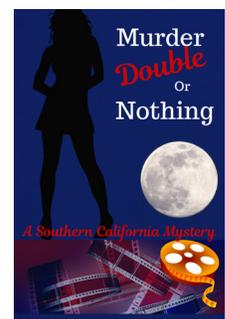
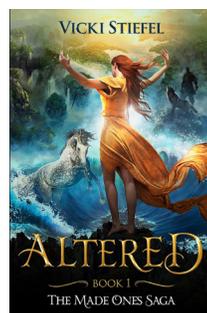
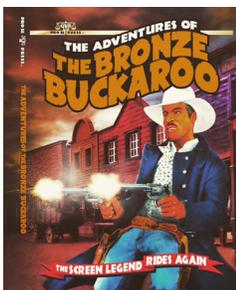
KRL News & Reviews features GAME TOWN, by **Janet Elizabeth Lynn** and **Will Zeilinger**, the fifth and final book of the Skylar Drake mystery series. "This was a fun and entertaining read that is guaranteed to keep you turning the pages until the final surprising reveal." [Read the whole review.](#)

Vicki Stiefel's new romantic science fantasy, ALTERED, the first book in her Made Ones Saga series, will be released August 12. When Kitlyn, a broken and dying circus equestrian, awakens on a parallel world in her own much-younger body, she is determined to thwart the Alchemics' Machiavellian plot, forcing her to make a choice that may cost her everything, including Rafe, the Eleutian warrior she's come to love. ALTERED is now available for preorder.

Rachel Howzell Hall's AND NOW SHE'S GONE, which features two complicated women in a dangerous cat and mouse game that explores the nature of secrets and how violence and fear can lead you to abandon everything in order to survive, to Kristin Sevick at Forge, by Jill Marsal at Marsal Lyon Literary Agency.

NEXT OF KIN, by **L.F. Robertson**, was released in the United States on July 30. It's the third book in Robertson's series about death penalty lawyer Janet Moodie. In it, Janet is called on to help defend Sunny Ferrante, a woman on death row for the murder-for-hire of her real estate developer husband.

Lida Sideris's latest novel, MURDER: DOUBLE OR NOTHING, releases on August 6. Published by Level Best Books, this is the third installment in the Southern California mystery series and stars newbie lawyer Corrie Locke. Corrie's back at the movie studio where she works, mostly minding her own business, when a fictional murder turns real... right before her very eyes. Soon, she's fending off federal agents, a mysterious assailant and a Hollywood movie legend while trying to catch a killer and keep her day job.



OVER the TRANSOM

Craig Faustus Buck's short story "Race to Judgment" (*Ellery Queen Magazine*), a noir tale of sibling rivalry, blind ambition, lust, betrayal, and murder awash in the mud of Mississippi delta politics, has been nominated for a Macavity Award. You can read it at CraigFaustusBuck.com.

The suspense story "Nobody's Safe" by **Peter DiChellis** appeared in crime 'zine Tough in July.

DEEP WATERS, the third novel in the award-winning Sammy Greene mystery/thriller series by **Linda Reid** and Deborah Shlian, is a semi-finalist for the Royal Palm Literary Award. An ancient shipwreck in azure Greek waters has concealed an astonishing truth. The drowning of an underwater cameraman, the murder of a highly respected academic—seemingly isolated tragedies? When reporter Sammy Greene and ex-cop Gus Pappajohn investigate, they uncover conflicts between pagans and saints, archaeologists and treasure hunters. From the marble steps of the Parthenon to the peaks of the hidden monasteries of Mount Athos, the two risk their lives in a desperate race to find the lost chapter of human history.

Member APPEARANCES

Serita Stevens will be speaking about books and scripts—the differences and similarities and writing both, along with Steve Istock of Calif Pictures (Paramount Based) and Joel Einsberg (Producer) at the Book Publicists of So Cal on August 8 at Sportsman's Lodge in Valley Village (Coldwater and Ventura). Doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:30 p.m. and program at 8 p.m. Dinner and program \$40, program alone \$15. Visit bookpublicists.org for more info.

Jeri Westerson will be on a Sisters in Crime panel on Thursday, August 8, at 6:30 p.m. at the Wiseburn Library. The panel will include authors **Matt Coyle** and **Patricia Smiley**. Books for sale. 5335 W 135th St, Hawthorne, CA.

Howard Michael Gould will be at the Barnes & Noble Studio City Bookstar (August 13), Chevalier's Books on Larchmont Blvd. in Los Angeles (September 5) and Barnes & Noble Thousand Oaks (September 11) to talk about his new Charlie Waldo mystery, *BELOW THE LINE*, and about the film version of his debut, *LAST LOOKS*, which recently completed filming. (Details on his [August 24 signing at Mystery Ink](#) on pg. 7).

Christina Hoag will be speaking on "Growing up Global: My Quest to Belong" at the Leading with Heart: Global Women's Summit in New York, Civic Hall, 118 W. 22nd St., 12th floor, on Friday, August 2, at 5:15 p.m. She will read a personal essay "Where are You From?" on Sunday, 4 p.m. August 11, at the Roar Shack Literary Reading Series, 826LA, 1714 W. Sunset Blvd., Echo Park, Los Angeles.

Member APPEARANCES

Saturday, August 10, 2 pm, **Karna Small Bodman**, a member of the MWA's Mid-Atlantic Chapter, is invited by Sisters in Crime to give a talk at the Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore in San Diego about her new thriller, TRUST BUT VERIFY. Having served six years in the Reagan White House, she will discuss "Turning White House Experience into International Thrillers." For additional information and registration contact: corneliafrey@gmail.com.

SoCal MWA President **Glen Erik Hamilton** will present his class from ThrillerFest 2019, "FIRST CLASS TICKET: YOUR SETTING IS YOUR HOOK," to California Writers Club Orange County, on Saturday August 10, at 2:00 p.m. at the El Modena Branch Orange Public Library, 380 S. Hewes Ave., Orange, CA. The club is open to the public, no charge for members and only \$7 for non-members. <http://www.calwritersorangecounty.org/>

Mystery Ink Book Signings:

Saturday, August 24, 3:00 p.m.: **Howard Michael Gould** will be discussing and signing *BELOW THE LINE*, the second book in his Charlie Waldo novels. Former LAPD detective Charlie Waldo is living in solitude deep in the woods, pathologically committed to owning no more than one hundred possessions, until his PI ex-girlfriend, Lorena, drags him back to civilization to solve a high-profile Hollywood murder. Now Waldo and Lorena have their hands full with the new client. Gould's first novel, *LAST LOOKS*, is currently in production as a film with Mel Gibson playing the main suspect for the murder of his wife.

Saturday, August 31, 2:00 p.m.: **T. Jefferson Parker** will be discussing and signing his new novel, *THE LAST GOOD GUY*. When Private Investigator Roland Ford is hired by a beautiful and enigmatic woman to find her missing younger sister, he senses that the case is not what it seems. While searching for the teen, he is soon swept up in a web of lies and secrets, and even his new client cannot be trusted. "T. Jefferson Parker does a masterly job of ratcheting up the tension, and the often-lyrical prose is a pleasure to read. This entry could well earn three-time Edgar Award-winner Parker a fourth Edgar." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

Podcast Alert!

[The Bastard Title](#), hosted by Angel Luis Colón, features in-depth interviews with writers, including many SoCalMWA members such as **S.W. Lauden, Steph Cha, Rachel Howzell Hall, Holly West, Gary Phillips, and Jordan Harper**. Give it a listen—these conversations are interesting and thought-provoking.

Member
APPEARANCES

SoCalMWA at Thrillerfest 2019



L-R: Reed Farrell Coleman, **Lee Goldberg**, James Grady
(SIX DAYS OF THE CONDOR)



L-R: **Lee Goldberg**, Joseph Finder, Stephen Hunter

Thrillerfest 2019 Debut Authors Breakfast



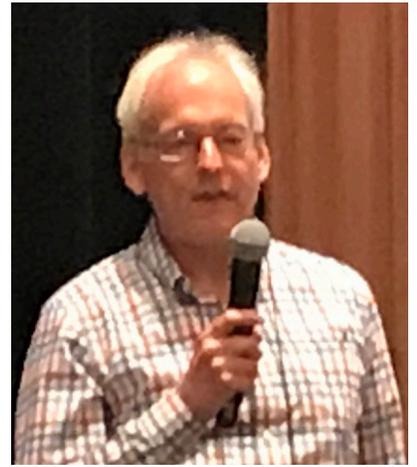
August Norman



John McMahon



Catharine Riggs



Carl Vonderau

Orange County Sisters in Crime

6th Annual

Ladies of Intrigue

A Remarkable Women Mystery Writers' Conference

Sunday, November 10, 2019

Mesa Verde Country Club

8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Our 2019 Headliner



Laurie R. King

Panelists:

Others to be Announced



Barbara DeMarco-Barrett



Rachel Howzell Hall



Mary Anna Evans



Kaira Rouda



Laurie Stevens



Betty Webb

Readers and mystery lovers alike will enjoy this day-long conference featuring female authors from the mystery-crime genre.



Hosted by Orange County Sisters in Crime (a non-profit organization)

Location: Mesa Verde Country Club, Costa Mesa, CA

Register at www.ocsistersincrime.org or mail registration to:

O.C. Sisters in Crime, P.O. Box 53132, Irvine, CA 92618

For additional information: contact Debbie at Mystery Ink, (714) 743-6127

Cinematic Techniques That Will Make You a Better Storyteller

by **Thomas B. Sawyer**

Part two of a three-part series on writing more compelling fiction.

MIDDLES: Finding and Creating Compelling Scenes

Let's start by thinking about dialogue. You've done your homework, you've outlined. You have a pretty solid idea of where you're going with it. But suddenly you come to a necessary scene that stumps you. Though you may know what it's supposed to accomplish in terms of an A-to-B goal, you cannot quite visualize how you're going to get it there.

One of the more useful techniques I've developed for "finding" a scene, for getting into a scene which I either don't know how to start, or one in which the "meat" is eluding me, is by writing the participating characters' lines in their entirety, with little or no attention to action or picture. In a way, it can be thought of as allowing the characters to write the scene for you. I've even done it by ad-libbing into a tape recorder, playing all of the roles.

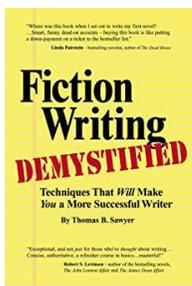
Rarely do I use *all* of what they say. Sometimes none of it survives the cut. But I've found that it's a great way to develop a scene that I'm unclear about—a scene that, because of its subject, or objective in terms of storytelling, and/or structure, needs to be there, but isn't automatically coming alive in my head. Often, the process will lead to business and/or a dynamic I hadn't anticipated—stuff that may add dimension to the scene.

Now, the action part. Once the dialogue begins to gel and I've gotten it all down, the next step for me in this particular process is cutting. Which may begin with finding places where the spoken words can be augmented—or better, supplanted—by action or business. Those looks or gestures or pauses during which a character can take a sip of coffee in place of a verbal response.

Or even better yet, finding material that can be eliminated. And of course the outside trims—snipping off the ends.

At the top, discovering how much I can get rid of—how deep into the scene I can be when it begins. This part usually surprises—not only about how little is really necessary to make a significant story point, but also how effective it can be to throw your audience momentarily off-balance. Disorienting readers or viewers, wondering what in hell you're up to is, incidentally, another convincing argument in favor of peeling back your exposition a layer at a time. Similarly, best-case, leaving them with their mouths agape at the far end of the scene.

Regarding descriptive passages, my suggestion is that unless your name is F. Scott Fitzgerald and/or you have more than a touch of the poet, keep yours brief. Sure, sometimes elaborately delineated physical characteristics, or the finer points of how a room is furnished have their place. Principally, of course, if you're writing period stories, or scenes in which research is key. Even there, however, I recommend economy. Say it in as few words as possible. Let your action and dialogue carry the scene. Almost invariably, less will turn out to be more.



Emmy and Edgar-nominated, **Tom Sawyer** was Head Writer, Showrunner, and Producer of the classic series, *Murder, She Wrote*, for which he wrote twenty-four episodes. He also wrote, directed, and produced the cult film-comedy *Alice Goodbody*, and was the co-librettist/lyricist of *Jack*, an opera about JFK. He's the Author of **FICTION WRITING DEMYSTIFIED** and his latest thriller is **A MAJOR PRODUCTION!**. Tom's memoir is **THE ADVENTURES OF THE REAL TOM SAWYER** and he's written a companion book called **9 BADASS SECRETS FOR PUTTING YOURSELF IN LUCK'S WAY**. More at ThomasBSawyer.com.

A banner with a light olive green background and a dark olive green border. The word "Crime" is written in a cursive font, and "CALENDAR" is in a bold, sans-serif font. The banner is flanked by two ribbon-like shapes on either side.

Crime
CALENDAR

August 1–4 – [The Writers Police Academy, Raleigh, NC](#)
August 22–25 – [Book Passage Mystery Writers Conference, Corte Madera, CA](#)
October 30 – [SinC Into Great Writing! Workshop 2019, Dallas, TX](#)
October 31–Nov 3 – [Bouchercon, Dallas, TX](#)
September 21 – [Men of Mystery, Long Beach, CA](#)
November 10 – [Ladies of Intrigue, Costa Mesa, CA](#)
November 8–10 – [New England Crime Bake, Boston, MA](#)

A banner with a light olive green background and a dark olive green border. The word "The" is written in a cursive font, and "LAST WORD" is in a bold, sans-serif font. The banner is flanked by two ribbon-like shapes on either side.

The
LAST WORD

“I see the way you look at girls,’ his mother had said. ‘Like they’re toys. Like you want to own them.’”

—August Norman, COME AND GET ME