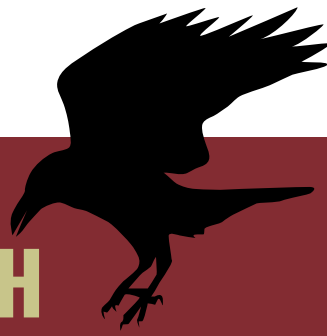


MARCH 2026

# THE MARCH OF CRIME

SoCalMWA's monthly newsletter.



## Book Publicity Reality Check

Three veteran book publicists offer a candid look at what it really takes to get attention—for both you and your book—in today's crowded marketplace. Learn what's working, what's not, what's worth your time, and what's best left to professionals. Don't miss this important presentation. Sunday March 22, 1 p.m. PT via [Zoom](#).

Megan Beatie, Megan Beatie Communications  
Kathleen Carter, Kathleen Carter Communications  
Kim Dower, Kim-from-LA

### About the presenters

**Megan Beatie** has more than 25 years of experience in publishing and is President and CEO of Megan Beatie Communications (MBC), a book publicity and marketing agency.

She has forged publicity campaigns for numerous bestselling authors and has represented authors in nearly every conceivable genre, including literary and commercial fiction, mysteries and thrillers, science fiction, fantasy, and graphic novels, as well as nonfiction books covering pop culture, film, entertainment, health, lifestyle, parenting, and relationships.

**Kathleen Carter** is the founder and CEO of Kathleen Carter Communications (KCC), a literary publicity and marketing agency that creates and implements strategic and customized campaigns for authors and publishers.

Kathleen started her career at Goldberg McDuffie Communications as an intern and worked her way up the ranks for more than a decade to become Vice President and Director of Publicity. During that time, she executed campaigns for many high-profile and bestselling authors.

As a literary publicist, **Kim Dower** tailors her company's campaigns to suit clients' needs and budgets. Her firm, Kim-from-L.A., provides everything from local and regional publicity to national book tours.

## What's inside

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# PRESIDENT'S RAP SHEET

## Making The Path Easier



BY LESLIE S. KLINGER

Writing a mystery seems easy.

*Mary finished her shower and stroked her cat, asleep on the bed. In her robe, she walked downstairs to the living room. She gasped when she saw the body lying among broken glass and a water-logged carpet.*

*The dog cowered in a corner, his paws over his head, whimpering pathetically. Mary knew immediately that the danger was past.*

“You bad dog! You broke the goldfish bowl!”

What’s wrong with that? Setting (homey), atmosphere (suspense), a dead body in the second sentence, an astute amateur detective—all the makings of a great story, by the book!

I remember puzzling friends with this puzzle when I was (a lot) younger. Fortunately, its reception didn’t encourage me to a life of writing crime fiction (though I write a lot about the genre). Some can, and some just can’t. I thought of this in the middle of writing a short bio of Mignon G. Eberhart (1899-1996), one of our Grand Masters and hailed as “America’s Agatha Christie.”

Eberhart was apparently a born storyteller. She never finished college (though she later got an honorary doctorate), writing short stories in her spare time while she worked in a library. Then she got married, at the age of 24, and three days after the wedding, by her account, she began her first novel. Her last (of 59 books!) was published in 1988, when she was 89.

Eberhart credited a book with turning her to crime fiction, though it was not a classic mystery nor the stories of Sherlock Holmes. Rather, it was a book on how to succeed as a writer. She read Michael Joseph’s *The Commercial Side of Literature* (with Grant Overton, 1926), in which Joseph advised, “If I had to nominate one type of novel or series of stories which provides the most promising openings for new writers I should unhesitatingly declare for the detective story.” I’m not sure that that is still sound advice—romantasy is looking awfully easy to market these days—but we can be grateful that Eberhart took that advice.

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## The March of Crime

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

Editor: Bonnie Hearn Hill

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.

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## It Takes A Village

BY BONNIE HEARN HILL

I got another one today, an email from a famous writer, reaching out to ask me about a book I wrote 16 years ago. She just wanted to chat, but I didn't have time because I already had a slew of emails from new best friends who wanted to promote various books by me and introduce me to their book clubs. Of course, they were in Nigeria, and my AI detector flagged those emails as not being written by humans, so I decided to pass.

If you get a chance, check out **Lee Goldberg's** Facebook posts sharing his hilarious conversations with scammers. While you might never fall for the over-the-top flattery and the requests for money, many do. Writing can be lonely and full of self-doubt. It really does take a village, and MWA gives us that village every writer needs.

Our panels, workshops, and (I hope) this newsletter give us an opportunity to support each other without the spammy flattery of the paid-for praise and the fake networkers.

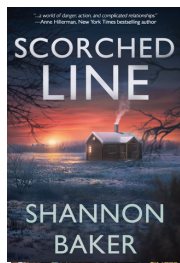
One of the best parts of my job as a TV book reviewer is getting to spread the word about books I love. We all have horror stories about being interviewed about our books where the interviewer can't read or pronounce our names, or (in the this-really-happened department) holds our book upside down. When I took on my job more than 20 years ago, my first commitment was actually to read the books I recommend. My second was to try to find books that might be new to my viewers.

I realize that people watching a TV morning show may not rush out and buy a book the moment they hear me talking about it. They may never rush out and buy that book, but I want to treat them as if they are going to. I want them to know those books, that those stories are out there, and that they matter.

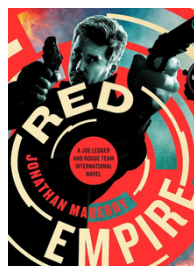
In this issue, **Dennis Palumbo** kicks off our Q&A column, and **Terri Maue** shares her thoughts on the art of misdirection. If you want to be interviewed about any aspect of writing/publishing, or if you want to submit an article on craft, promotion, or a related topic, please reach out. Let's be the village.

Bonnie

# OVER THE TRANSOM, MEMBER NEWS



The twelfth book in the Kate Fox series by **Shannon Baker** will release March 31 from Severn River Publishers. In *Scorched Line*, the past comes calling, and Kate has some difficult choices to make to protect the people she loves from...the people she loves.



*Red Empire*, the latest novel in *NY Times* bestseller **Jonathan Maberry's** bestselling weird-science Joe Ledger thriller series debuts March 10. The entire series is also in development for TV by Chad Stahelski. The book has earned a starred *Booklist* review and praise from *PW* and *Kirkus*!



**Gary Phillips** was in conversation with Dan White at the Sisters in Crime L.A. meeting March 8. Gary discussed his latest work including *Ash Dark as Night* featuring crime photographer Harry Ingram set during the Watts riots of 1965, and *Three Bullet Opera*, concerning the return of one of history's most notorious literary and screen villains, Dr. Mabuse!

**Ellen Byron's** short story, "The Steamboat House," featuring Charlotte Crozat, aka/ Grand-mere from Ellen's award-winning Cajun Country Mystery series, will be included in the Malice Domestic anthology, *Murder Most Senior*. Ellen is the 2026 convention toastmaster and will also be hosting the Debut Author Breakfast.

On March 7, **Sheila Lowe** got up at 3 a.m. to speak via Zoom to the British Institute of Graphology on "Revealing Human Personality Through Handwriting Patterns." (Maybe she should ask her character Claudia Rose for some advice).

Then she appeared at The California Writers Club at the Motion Picture & Television Fund, Saban Center in San Fernando Valley. She spoke about writing a memoir, and shared the story of writing *Growing from the Ashes*, her spiritual journey after the murder of her daughter in 2000.



*Black Cat Weekly*, Issue #231 (February 2026, Wildside Press) published the locked room mystery story "Inside a Locked Room" by **Peter DiChellis**: Detectives tackle the baffling case of a mystery writer stabbed to death while alone inside a locked room.



**Jeri Westerson** will be on a Sisters In Crime panel at the Artesia Library, March 14, at 11 a.m. She will have a booth and be on a panel at the Author Fair in Temecula, March 21, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at the Grace Mellman Library. Jeri's May release of *The Vampyre Client*, will have a LibraryThing giveaway and will also be available on Netgalley.



**Georgia Jeffries** will be in conversation with Paula Bernstein to celebrate Paula's latest book, *Remote Control*. The event will be held March 28, 2-4 p.m., at The Last Bookstore in Studio City.

**Topper Jones**, author of *All that Glitters* and *Oceano Beach Bedlam*, has just signed a contract with The Wild Rose Press for *Pismo Beach Sniper*, Book Three in the Thad Hanlon & Bri de la Guerra Mystery Series featuring the surfing detective and his sassy, martial-arts-obsessed partner.



**Christopher Farnsworth** had a signing in February for his new Jesse Stone novel, *Robert B. Parker's Big Shot*, at Diesel in Brentwood. Here he is with authors **Lee Goldberg** and **Stephanie Leder**.



## Q&A: New Audio Book In Dennis Palumbo's Rinaldi Series

The audio book of *Panic Attack*, the sixth of **Dennis Palumbo's** Daniel Rinaldi series, will be available April 8. Formerly a Hollywood screenwriter (*My Favorite Year*; *Welcome Back, Kotter*, etc.), Dennis is a licensed psychotherapist, specializing in creative people. He contributes articles and reviews to *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Lancet*, *Psychotherapy Networker* and various clinical journals. His mystery fiction has appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, *The Strand* and elsewhere, and is collected in *From Crime to Crime*. His series of mystery thrillers features Daniel Rinaldi, a psychologist who advises the Pittsburgh Police. Recently he served as Consulting Producer on the acclaimed Hulu TV series *The Patient*.

**Q: So, are all six in the Rinaldi series available as audio books now?**

A: Right. Of course, they're also available in hardcover, trade paperback, large print and as e-books. The only format that isn't available is where I come over to your place and read it aloud, but if the price is right...

**Q: Who is Daniel Rinaldi?**

A: He's a clinical psychologist and trauma expert who consults with the Pittsburgh Police. He specializes in treating victims of violent crime, those who've survived a carjacking, home invasion, rape, etc., but are still traumatized by these events. Having experienced such trauma himself (the death of his wife during a violent attempted robbery), Rinaldi's mission is to help other crime victims suffering from PTSD and similar symptoms.

**Q: Tell us about *Panic Attack*.**

A: When a deadly unknown sniper begins targeting people in the Pittsburgh area, seemingly at random, Rinaldi is brought in to treat those who've survived the murderous attempts...or the loved ones of those victims who unfortunately didn't. Unexpectedly, he himself ends up playing a crucial part in the investigation, which puts his own life at risk.

**Q: What gave you the idea for the book?**

A: A combination of things, really. Foremost is the proliferation of mass shootings in the country, and the panic such horrific events evoke in people in the surrounding areas, as well as the national media attention they inspire. Also, it seems clear that such crimes contribute to what a psychologist colleague of mine calls our current Age of Trauma. So these themes felt like a good fit for a Rinaldi story.

**Q: What are the challenges of writing a series character, especially one like this who's already nearly been killed?**

A: Yes, poor Daniel and his wife Barbara were mugged years before the events of the debut novel (*Mirror Image*) take place, a violent attack during which both were shot. And while his wife died at the scene, Rinaldi recovered after a long hospital stay, though thereafter was left with acute survival guilt. This is the root of his mission to help other victims of violent crime, including his motivation to get deeply (and often foolishly) involved in the investigations that brought those victims to him.

The challenges of writing Rinaldi for book after book, similar to the challenges of writing any sustaining series character, is keeping the protagonist's perspective fresh and motivations clear, yet allowing for him/her to change over time as new situations occur and new people come into their lives. In Rinaldi's case, it's particularly important to make his clinical work with patients believable, as well as the ways he ends up involved in solving the mystery.

**Q: What's next? More trouble for Daniel?**

A: If you can get hold of him, ask him. I've left him a half dozen phone messages and emails, asking what he's been up to lately, but the good doctor hasn't gotten back to me. I'm assuming he's been too busy to respond, or else his modest fame has gone to his head, and he's ghosted me. At this point, I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, but you never know with these therapist types. They can get pretty full of themselves.



## The Art Of Misdirection

BY TERRI MAUE

Skill at deception allows us mystery writers to tell the truth while fully realizing—indeed planning—that the reader will come away with a misleading impression. I love doing that, but as Mom used to say, “It’s all fun and games until someone gets hurt.”

I think this has never been more relevant than it is today. We live in a world of misdirection, from food that never lives up to the picture on the package, to clever catchphrases that sound great but tell us nothing.

It behooves us to recognize when we are being manipulated, so with apologies to my mystery writer colleagues, I’m sharing here my three main strategies.

1. **Create an emotional response.** When my protagonist is expecting trouble, her defenses are up. So, her attitude, her bias, might distort her perceptions, causing her to misinterpret what happens, and, I hope, take readers right along with her. Physical sensations, especially uncomfortable ones, are also effective ways to hijack readers’ attention. All they are thinking about is how they hope the character can escape the situation as quickly as possible. In their preoccupation, they—and the character—may gloss over important information.

2. **Use stereotypes but be subtle.** Stereotypes are great shortcuts because they allow readers to make assumptions; however, readers know this, so writers have to be subtle. A cluttered, overflowing desk could be described as a catch-all (an overflowing laundry basket?) for undone tasks. An empty desk could be presented as a vast unbroken sea inviting creative exploration. Playing on prejudices (a disorderly desk equals a disorderly mind?) can lead readers astray.

### Rap Sheet

#### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Along the way, Eberhart was instrumental in the founding of MWA and served in 1977 as its President. Eberhart believed that writers could and should help other writers, and that’s what MWA is all about. Our upcoming programs are tangible evidence of that thinking, with panels on practical publicity and research slated for March and April. We also feel strongly about networking and outreach, like our booths (and signings) at the Tucson Festival of Books and the *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books. I hope that you’ll participate in many of these events and that you find them useful! Good storytelling isn’t easy, but we hope we can make your path easier!

3. **Choose impactful verbs.** Readers are often quick to identify prejudicial nouns. Verbs are trickier. In this scene, my protagonist is opening a package of cookies. “Zee ripped a strip off the top of the box, tore open the inner wrapper, and yanked a cookie free.” These verbs show her agitation. Readers empathizing with her turmoil might forget how emotions can short-circuit rational analysis.

They might trust her possibly erroneous deductions and conclusions.

Or imagine if the scene read this way: “Zee peeled a strip off the top of the box, loosened the inner wrapper, and selected a cookie.” Now she sounds calmer, much more logical, but her thinking might still be wrong.

In mysteries, logic is the preeminent tool for discerning the truth. These strategies of subtle misdirection are akin to a magician’s trick, directing attention over here so readers don’t notice what’s going on over there.

The same tactics apply to the flood of information in everyday life. Noticing emotional responses, stereotypes, and verb choices can help us to critically analyze what is offered to us. And that can help us become that most valuable of all consumers, one who cannot be easily manipulated.

That’s a good thing, even if it does make us mystery writers work harder.

**Terri Maue** is a retired English professor, now pursuing her dream to write a mystery series. The first novel, *Knife Edge*, was published in 2023 by Camel Press. The second, *Dark Mirror*, was released in January 2026. The series features a satirical columnist who yearns to write investigative journalism, her smokin’ hot crime-reporter lover, and her highly intuitive—but don’t call her psychic—lifelong friend. Terri is at work now on the third book, *Blood Stone*.

# CRIME CALENDAR



If you know of an event that belongs on the Crime Calendar, email [themarchofcrime@gmail.com](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com) with the info.



## 2026

March 14 - Sunday March 15. SoCal MWA at the Tucson Festival of Books. Contact [Fred Andersen](#) for signing slots.

March 22. [Crowdcast](#) 1pm PST: Book Publicity Reality Check; what authors need to know. With publicists Megan Beatie of Megan Beatie Communications; Kathleen Carter of Kathleen Carter Communications, and Kim Dower of Kim-from-L.A.

April 18, and Sunday, April 19, SoCal MWA at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, on the USC campus in Los Angeles. To sign up, contact [Ona Russell](#).

April 25 at 1 p.m. Crime Scene: L.A. A Zoom conversation with Los Angeles Times crime writer Christopher Goffard. Details to follow.

May 17, 1pm. Researching L.A. An in-person panel conversation about ... research and Los Angeles. At The Book Jewel. Details to follow.

*For events without links, save the dates, and we'll send details as soon as they're available.*

# THE LAST WORD



“With his short, stocky build, enormous head, and a nest of unruly red hair, Druckett brought to mind a beer keg topped by a basketball wearing a fright wig.”

*Inside A Locked Room*

by Peter DiChellis