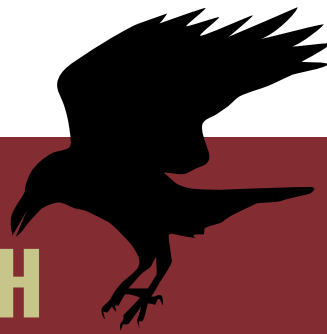


JUNE 2026

THE MARCH OF CRIME

SoCalMWA's monthly newsletter.



Representing at the Edgars®



MWA SoCal was well represented at the 80th Annual Edgar® Awards ceremonies in Manhattan last month.

Among the 300 editors, publishers, and authors attending the grand banquet were some of our members, including **Lee Goldberg**, whose *Rising Star* was a 2026 finalist for the Sue Grafton Prize.

Also attending were **John Wirth**, a nominee for his *Dark Wind* script, Chapter member **Michael Connelly**, and SoCal MWA president **Leslie J. Klinger**, who announced the Best Critical/Biographical award, presented the first inductees to the MWA Hall of Fame, and wrote about the Hall of Fame for the program.

Thanks to **Lee Goldberg** for sharing the photo.

Above, from left, **Laurie King**, Lee Matthew Goldberg (no relation) and **Lee Goldberg**. (photo/Jasmine Tomic)

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Questions We Must Ask



BY LESLIE S. KLINGER

I'm just back from a week-long trip to England, capped by a stopover in NYC for Thrillerfest, the annual gathering of the International Thriller Writers. ITW is a fine, vigorous organization that filled a need when it was born a few years ago—recognition and support for a vital part of the writing community that didn't feel it was being served by MWA.

As you know, we're celebrating the 80th anniversary of MWA. We need to be thoughtful about the next 80 years. We need to reexamine our membership, consider our inclusiveness, and rethink what we provide. Certainly, the core elements of MWA need not change. We aim to deliver networking, mentorship, instruction, and celebration of achievements. But as publishing changes and markets disappear and appear, we need to weigh whether our traditional standards and approaches should continue to apply.

For example, we need to reexamine the Edgars® eligibility rules. It's hard to remember that there was a time when the Board of Directors of MWA wrestled with whether writers of "paperbacks" should be allowed to become members. Today, as mass-market paperbacks are disappearing, is the Edgars® category of "paperback original" still meaningful? Should we—as ITW does—recognize audiobooks as a separate category? And if so, should we focus on the text or the production? If it's the text, perhaps it would only be audio originals—after all, we are a writer's organization, and that approach is consistent with our recognition of television scripts.

And what about the criteria of publication by an "approved" publisher? What is the rationale for limiting awards to books published by "approved" publishers? Shouldn't the purpose of the "approval" list be protection of the authors, not demarcation of worthiness of their books? Many books today are self-published, and while the sheer volume of self-published works creates problems, we did decide to admit authors of self-published books to membership. Why is their output not eligible for awards? Many smaller presses today are "hybrid"—publishing some traditionally (that is, with advances and royalty splits that favor the publisher) and some non-traditionally (with high royalties to authors who may bear some or none of the costs). These latter are of course not "approved" publishers because they do publish "self-published" works as well as traditional.

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In Praise of our People

BY BONNIE HEARN HILL

This year, I decided to read my way through the Edgars® winners. I'm enjoying the process so much that I devoted my Central California TV book club segment to four of the winning books, and I'm going to continue weaving in others as I read them.

One was, of course, *The Big Empty*, by **Robert Crais**, which won Best Novel. This book has it all, from powerful prose, to over-the-top characters (Love you, Elvis Cole), to a plot that doesn't seem at all linear until everything clicks into place, and I'm sitting there, saying, "How did he do that?"

That's an important question that the best crime fiction often makes you ask. Truly innovative books show us what's possible and what it's like to take chances and move off the beaten path into something unexpected while still satisfying readers' expectations.

Other Edgars® winners that I selected for my TV book club May picks were *Dead Money* by Jakob Kerr (Best First Novel By An American Author), *The Backwater* by Vikki Wakefield (Best Paperback Original), and *Edgar Allan Poe: A Life* by Richard Kopley (Best Critical/Biographical).

Poe is like vampires and the Mafia. They never really go away, and although you may think you've learned all you want to know about them, someone comes up with a different slant, and you're hooked again. At least, I am.

This reading marathon of mine has shown me time and again how fresh and, yes, exciting, the books our people--crime fiction writers--are creating. In a world where AI is promising beginning writers that they can write a novel in a day, these books remind us what is possible when talented writers take risks and find new ways to tell stories.

Bonnie

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.

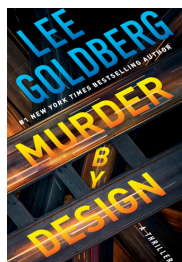
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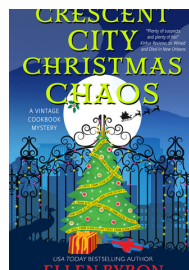
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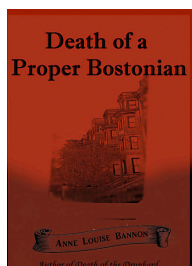
OVER THE TRANSOM, MEMBER NEWS



Murder By Design, the first in Lee Goldberg's new Edison Bixby series, was published on June 1 by Amazon Publishing/Thomas & Mercer and was a May Amazon First Reads title.



The trade paperback edition of *Crescent City Christmas Chaos*, book #4 in Ellen Byron's award-winning Vintage Cookbook Mysteries, was released in May.



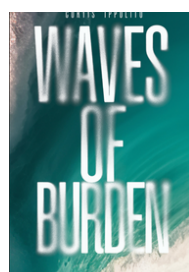
Anne Louise Bannon's *Death of a Proper Bostonian*, book #6 in the Old Los Angeles series, will be released on June 12. Physician Maddie Wilcox heads home for Boston in late summer 1873 and ends up searching for the person who killed her former brother-in-law. [Information](#).



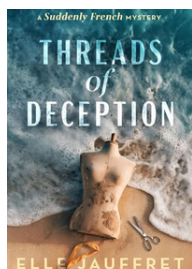
Topper Jones' third Thad Hanlon & Bri de la Guerra Mystery, *Pismo Beach Sniper*, will publish July 27 from The Wild Rose Press (Crimson Rose imprint). Click [here](#) for a book excerpt or to preorder.



Sheila Lowe's new latest Claudia Rose Forensic Handwriting suspense series, *Lies Between The Lines*, (book 10), will release June 17. On the same day, she'll be appearing on the Book Banter podcast with Dianne Burkhardt, and on June 25, the Books & Beer podcast with Valerie Biel. Preorder [here](#).

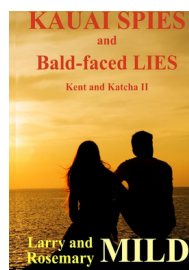


Curtis Ippolito's new novel, *Waves of Burden*, will publish June 24. It follows a reluctant father-to-be who must traverse San Diego County to recover his nomadic foster brother and the \$100k he stole from a small-time but ruthless criminal to keep them both alive. Gary Phillips describes *Waves of Burden* as "rugged, unflinching, and purely satisfying."



Elle Jauffret's mystery novel, *Threads of Deception*, was selected for inclusion in the VIP gift bags at the San Diego French Film Festival 2026.

She will be a featured author at the Carlsbad City Library Local Author Fair from 11 a.m.-3 p.m., June 6.



Larry and Rosemary Mild have published *Kauai Spies and Bald-faced Lies*, the sequel to *Kent and Katcha: Espionage, Spycraft, Romance*.

Visit the Milds [here](#).



In April, "Women of Mystery" Ellen Byron, left, and Georgia Jeffries and were guests of honor at the 33rd Annual Authors Luncheon hosted by the American Association of University Women in Fountain Valley.

President's Rap Sheet

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2](#)

There is, of course, more to MWA than awards. We need to continue developing better ways to deliver the core offerings of networking, mentorship, and instruction. Our "local groups" initiative should lead to enhanced networking opportunities. Virtual programming, especially programming offered by all of our Chapters, may lead to increased mentorship and instruction.

In short, as we celebrate our past, we need to shape our future. You need to have a hand in that—by speaking out and by volunteering to help. I promise that your reward will be a better organization for everyone.

Lee

CRIME CALENDAR

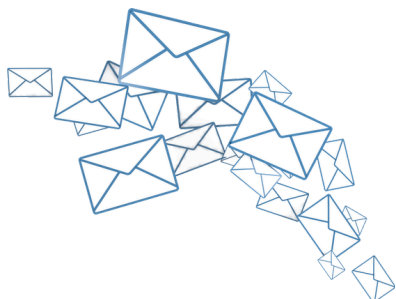


2026

June 21-26 [Santa Barbara Writers Conference](#), at the Mar Monte Santa Barbara. Six days of events: workshops, including Seven Deadly Sins of Novel Writing with instructor Gar Anthony Haywood, seminars, panels, consultants, and keynote speakers, including MWA/ SinC LA member **Rachel Howzell Hall**.

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

If you know of an event that belongs on the Crime Calendar, email themarchofcrime@gmail.com with the info.



THE LAST WORD



“Sometimes, there is a moment when everything that comes afterward—the excitement that fizzes up and bubbles over, the fear that threatens to overwhelm, even the pain—when every decision, every act feels as though it were pre-ordained.”

Dead Letters, Claudia Rose novel #8

by **Sheila Lowe**