JULY 2026

THE MARCH OF CRIME

SoCalMWA's monthly newsletter.

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Summer Book Exchange Is Back



The SoCalMWA and Sisters in Crime Los Angeles Summer Book Exchange is back. Join Sisters in Crime from noon to 4 p.m, Saturday, July 25, at Terry Shames' home in Westchester. This is an opportunity to spend an afternoon talking about and picking out new books.

To register for the event, click on this link. Then complete the sign-up form, and indicate the covered dish you will bring.

The location and details will be emailed to each registrant in a confirmation email.



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Do We Care About An Author's Private Life?



BY LESLIE S. KLINGER

I've begun working on a new project, an annotated collection of one of the greatest writers of crime fiction of the 20th century, Cornell Woolrich, who also wrote as William Irish. Woolrich, who lived from 1903 to 1968, isn't a name most people recognize. He died before he could be honored by MWA as a Grand Master, yet he penned more than 100 short stories and more than 25 novels. Dozens of films and television shows were based on his fiction, most famously Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and Truffaut's *The Bride Wore Black*. Some put his influence alongside Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Erle Stanley Gardner.

Woolrich was the subject of the massive biography *First You Dream, Then You Die* by Francis M. Nevins, which won the Edgar® in 1989 for Best Critical/Biographical Work. In an effort to explain Woolrich's worldview, Nevins read every one of Woolrich's works and interviewed people who knew him, concluding that he was a self-hating, closeted gay man.

Woolrich certainly lived a reclusive life, but recent research and interviews with others suggest Nevins may well have been wrong in that conclusion. Reading this material made me ponder a more basic question: Why do we care? Do an author's secrets and private life change anything for the reader? Woolrich is clearly the most important author of what we now call *noir*, tales of people caught up in circumstances beyond their control, circling a figurative drain. He wrote brilliantly about depression, free will, despair, and darkness. Was he exorcising personal demons? Do we get more out of his stories if we know they are partially autobiographical?

I've considered similar questions about Howard Phillips Lovecraft, the horror master about whom I've written a great deal. Lovecraft seems unquestionably to have been anti-Semitic, racist, and isolationist. His sexuality has been the subject of considerable speculation, though he briefly married a Jewish woman. He was the only child of two parents who both died in an asylum.

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What We Talk About When We Talk About Writing

BY BONNIE HEARN HILL

At my first major book expo, I was terrified at the thought of appearing with "real" writers. My publisher hosted a California room where they gave away, well..., packets of fruit and nuts. The signing line stretched around the corner and into the hall, which impressed me until I realized the books I was signing were free. I don't remember what I talked about that day. What I do remember is the length of that line and the mingled aromas drifting over from the food writers handing out samples.

All these years later, I enjoy the buzz of an author event, and I've attended enough of them to have given some thought to what makes one memorable. What would you say? Humor? Vulnerability? Some indefinable X factor?

On June 27, I was in conversation with award-winning essayist and novelist Reyna Grande as part of her U.S. independent bookstore tour. When I asked Reyna what I should do to prepare, she said, "Nothing." She wanted our conversation to be spontaneous. That it was.

We've all attended events that lack that spontaneity. The presenters recite their stories as if they've done this many times because they have. They've lost their passion, and so has the audience. Talking about writing should be energizing. You've created something that didn't exist before, and people care enough about your words, your characters, and your imaginary world to spend an evening hearing you talk about them.

I've been fortunate to hear many outstanding presentations, including several by members of this organization. I almost always leave inspired and eager to get back to work. The best presenters make it look easy. So what makes a presentation work? I'd love to hear your thoughts.

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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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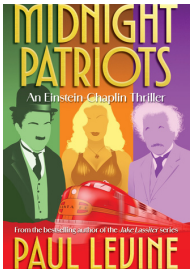
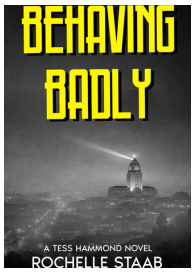
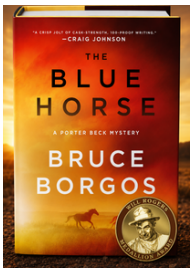
OVER THE TRANSOM, MEMBER NEWS



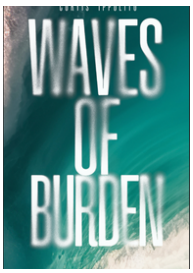
Midnight Patriots, the second in **Paul Levine**'s series featuring real-life friends Albert Einstein and Charlie Chaplin, was released in June. In the sequel to *Midnight Burning*, they must outwit Nazi assassins racing toward a deadly rendezvous aboard the Santa Fe Super Chief. Excerpt here.



Back from hiatus to earn a history degree, **Rochelle Staab** has released *Behaving Badly*, her fourth mystery novel and the first in the historical/noir Tess Hammond series. Set in 1932 Los Angeles, it moves from tunnel ambushes, to a downtown L.A. speakeasy, and a San Pedro Bay gambling ship.



The Blue Horse, the third installment of the Porter Beck series by Nevada author **Bruce Borgos**, has just been announced as a winner of the 2026 Will Rogers Medallion Award for Western Mystery. This is Bruce's third novel with Minotaur Books.



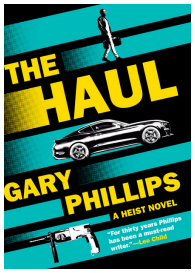
Curtis Ippolito celebrated the launch of *Waves of Burden* with two events in June. The first was with the San Diego Partners in Crime group with **Carl Vonderau** interviewing Curtis; the second event was held at Artifact Books in Encinitas with Curtis in conversation with Jim Ruland.

Editor's Corner
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

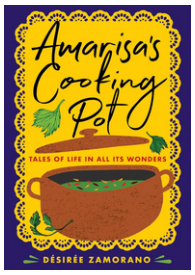
On July 2, I, along with three others in a local nonprofit, took over a major book festival here in California's San Joaquin Valley. Beginning in August, we'll be inviting presenters for next May's festival. I'm excited about the opportunity to bring authors together with new readers.

If you've given a presentation you're particularly proud of or attended one you'll never forget, I'd love to hear what made it work.

Bonnie



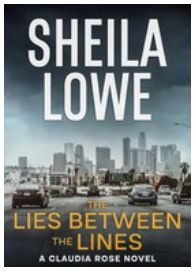
Gary Phillips will be in conversation with **Naomi Hirahara** (*Crown City*) for a book launch of his new heist novel *The Haul* at Village Well Books & Coffee, 6:30 p.m., July 7, 9900 Culver Blvd., Culver City. It received starred review and praise in *PW*, which wrote in part, "Readers will be rapt."



Désirée Zamorano's short story collection *Amarisa's Cooking Pot* has been published by the University of Nevada. Included are "President-Elect," from the *Killin' Time* Bouchercon Anthology, and "Caperucita Roja," an honorable mention in 2022's *Best of Mystery and Suspense*.



The new Acorn mystery series *You're Killing Me* starring Brooke Shields and Amalia Williamson, written and co-executive produced by MWA/SoCal members **Lee Goldberg** & **Phoef Sutton**, debuted in May as the biggest hit in viewership and new subscribers in the streamer's history and was immediately renewed for a second season.



On July 18, **Sheila Lowe** will be signing her new Claudia Rose novel, *The Lies Between the Lines*, with Judith Ayn, who will be signing *Dead Lawyers*. At 11 a.m., in Old World Village, at Studio 14 ,7561 Center Ave at Huntington Beach's Mystery Ink. At 2 p.m., at Book Carnival, 348 S. Tustin Street, Orange, CA.

Jonathan Maberry, a *New York Times* bestselling author and recent recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Horror Writers Association, has sold two creepy supernatural mysteries to the Weird Tales Presents imprint of Blackstone Publishing. They are "Monk," a noir-thriller, and "Dark Road Home."

Mark Bruce's story, "Minerva James and the Goddess of the Hearth," will be featured in the September/October issue of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*.

This is Minerva's fifth appearance in the magazine.

MEMBER NEWS

Elle Jauffret will sign books at In Bloom Bookery in Temecula from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on July 16.

She will join a "Storytelling & Pop Culture" author panel and book signing at Barnes & Noble at The Loma Theatre in San Diego, CA, at 2 p.m. on July 18.

She will also be a panelist at Comic-Con International in San Diego, CA, on July 23.



Congratulations to **Andrew** and **Annie** Kaplan.

They appeared, along with book covers and movie posters of some of Andrew's written works, on the May cover of *Sun City Magazine*.

Pub Fiction will be held at 7 p.m., July 12 at Knoll's Restaurant in Laguna Niguel. **Barbara DeMarco-Barrett**, Michael Scott Moore, Suzanne Redfearn, Jim Ruland, Candi Sary, and Sophie Stava will perform short readings from their work. Call.



Pasadena area members got together in June at Vroman's 1894 Wine Bar to talk storytelling, television making and publishing over drinks and surrounded by books.



Sheila Lowe has just signed with Vinci Books in the UK. They will be re-releasing all of her thirteen novels with new (and very different) covers and translating them into other languages.

Above are her Claudia Rose books.

President's Rap Sheet
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Knowing those things certainly suggests why Lovecraft wrote the weird tales that he did. I submit, however, that it doesn't improve the stories. Lovecraft's fears and bigotries are not mine, yet the stories strike universal chords precisely because they are about fear and alienation. So, too, I think, is it with Woolrich. His dark fiction resonates with readers not because they share his traumas and anxieties but because they have their own, just as compelling.

What's the message here for the writer? Write what you know, about yourself and about others, not because your readers will identify with you, but because they will use your insights to learn more about themselves. Isn't that why we read, and why writers write fiction? To experience other emotions, other lives and other worlds than our own? To imagine, "*What if*?"

I look forward to reading *your* stories!
Les

CRIME CALENDAR



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

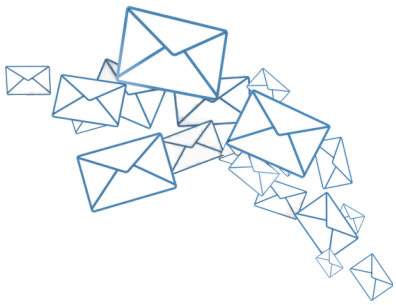
2026

July 12, Pub Fiction, Knoll's Restaurant, 29971 Alicia Parkway, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677. Call.

July 25 Summer Potluck and Book Exchange with Sisters In Crime. Sign up.

September 9, 7-10 p.m. Inventing The Page, with Meg Gardiner, Jordan Harper, and Tess Gerritsen. Details.

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



THE LAST WORD



"In the saddle atop the gray gelding, Porter Beck looked about as comfortable as a fish on a bicycle."

The Blue Horse

by **Bruce Borgos**