AUGUST 2026

THE MARCH OF CRIME

SoCalMWA's monthly newsletter.

MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Tucson Festival of Books Opens Self-nomination Portal

Indie Author. Has a nice ring to it. Different from *self-published author.*Like the way the phrase *indie film* has artistic credibility. Self-published titles today account for the vast majority of books published globally; 2.6 million released annually, making up over half of all e-books sold. Yet traditional publishing, book agenting, and marketing sectors still haven't caught up with this new and flourishing industry of creatives. At a recent gathering of MWA authors, one successful writer said, "As many copies as I've sold, I'm still slightly embarrassed to admit I'm self-published."

If the Tucson Festival of Books is any indication, that is shifting. The March 2027 event welcomes indie authors to its Indie Author Experience. Indie authors can apply by September 30 to be considered for an opportunity to engage with festival attendees at the festival's indie author pavilions, and a select few may also be chosen for presenting author panels at the 2027 festival on March 13 and 14. Indie Authors represent a variety of genres and formats, including self-published, small/independent presses, pay-to-publish, vanity presses, and/or e-book only/primarily.

Fee includes book-signing opportunities, networking with authors and readers, sales and marketing opportunities. Adult, YA/teen, and children's book authors are welcome with a space set up on the main mall of the University of Arizona campus during festival weekend and opportunities available on either Saturday or Sunday. Scheduling of the pavilions occurs after all book reviews have been completed, and panel authors have been identified.

Apply here. Application Deadline: September 30. No nominations will be accepted after this date.

Registration and Submission Fee: $50 (non-refundable) Payment of this fee does not guarantee a spot as an indie author in the festival.

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Comic-Con Is A Great Resource For Writers



BY LESLIE S. KLINGER

I just got back from San Diego Comic-Con, and it's worth repeating that this is an often-overlooked but great event for writers. In addition to numerous exhibitors (publishers and the Mysterious Galaxy bookstore) featuring authors signing their latest books, there are panels of interest to writers—many including writers—that are worth attending. An annual panel is the Writers' Coffeehouse, moderated this year by our own Chapter member **Jonathan Maberry** and including Chapter member **Elle Jaufret**. It's the Comic-Con version of an event that takes place monthly in San Diego (and also in Los Angeles, the latter organized by writer/publisher Lisa Kastner).

In short, the Writers' Coffeehouse is an open/no agenda gathering of writers, people on the path to becoming writers, agents and publishers in all genres. It's an opportunity to keep up with what's happening in the publishing world and to learn about the craft. This year's SDCC event also included Lisa Kastner and three other writers. Interestingly, four of the six panelists were full-time writers, that is, have no "day job," and the other two, like most of us, have occupations that pay the bills. One reminded the audience that with very few exceptions, most writers have other sources of income. Here are some of the questions and answers.

How should I focus my social media?
Keep it real. Book promotion should only be 10 to 20 percent of what you post. Talk about your life, your views, the movies you like, etc. Let your followers get to know you. You are the brand, not the books.

***How can I help market my books beyond social media*?**
Reach out to schools, libraries, local service clubs to become a speaker.

***How can I become an editor*?**
First, figure out what kind of editing you want to do. Copy-editing? Developmental editing (helping to shape the book)? Take an entry-level job at a big publisher, "interning" or being an editor's assistant.

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Introducing A.G. Britton, Our New Editor

BY BONNIE HEARN HILL

I love everything about writing, even when I hate it. I love talking about writing, and I especially love talking to other writers about it. That's one thing I've truly enjoyed about editing this newsletter.

Although I've been a member of SoCalMWA since my first novel was published, I've gotten to know more members in the past year than I did in the previous 20. I've also bought more member books and featured more of you on the KMPH Great Day Book Club, my monthly TV segment, than I might have if I hadn't been reading and editing your member news each month.

I had planned to continue the job through the end of the year, but I'm now in charge of programming and speakers for the San Joaquin Valley Bookfest that attracts more than 1,000 attendees. While I'm excited about that opportunity, I also want to leave this newsletter in capable and enthusiastic hands. I could not have imagined a better fit for this position than **A.G. Britton**, whose tales of her adventures as an editor for *Women's Wear Daily* and other major publications have had me screaming for the last two weeks, "That *has* to be a novel!"

I know you'll enjoy her warmth and energy as much as I do. A.G., please introduce yourself.
Bonnie

So Much For No New Projects

A thousand years ago (okay, 30 years ago), I got a call from Larry Flynt. Yes, that one. I was in New York, thriving as a journalist for publishing powerhouses: Conde Nast, Hearst, Murdoch. Flynt wanted me to come out to California to create and launch his first non-naked magazine for men. Everybody said, "Don't go. It'll be the end of your career." So I packed up the kids and went. *CODE* Magazine changed lives and won

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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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Join the SoCalMWA Discussion Group

groups.io/g/MWA-SOCAL
(members only)

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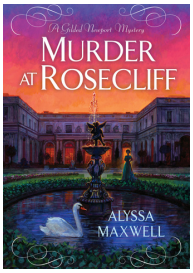
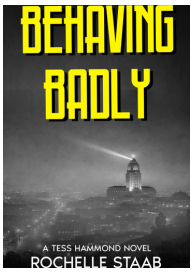
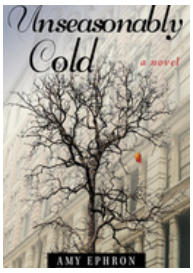
OVER THE TRANSOM, MEMBER NEWS



Lisa Manuel, writing as Alyssa Maxwell, is announcing the release of her fourteenth Gilded Newport Mystery, *Murder at Rosecliff*, on August 25, in hardcover, audio, and ebook.



Rochelle Staab, author of the noir historical mystery *Behaving Badly*, will talk about writing on The Sisters in Crime Writers' Podcast hosted by SINC Executive Director Julie Hennrikus for the week of July 29. It is available on YouTube, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, the SINC national website, and most podcast sites.



Amy Ephron will appeared in July at Godmothers in Summerland/Santa Barbara. Her new mystery, *Unseasonably Cold*, is set in 1939 New York on the eve of World War II.



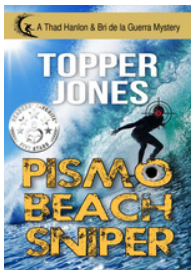
On August 15, at 1 p.m., **Laurie Stevens**, whose most recent book is *The Return*, will appear with Laurie Fagan at the Agoura Hills Library, 29901 Ladyface Court, Agoura Hills to discuss "Feeling The Heat." The discussion will focus on how the two authors "turn up the temperature" in their books.



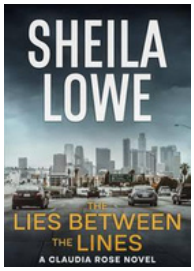
A Murderer's Guide to Mardi Gras, Book #5 in **Ellen Byron**'s award-winning Vintage Cookbook Mystery series, comes out on August 4. She and Nicole Maggi will appear at Book Carnival in Orange, CA at 2 p.m. on August 8. At 4:30 p.m., they will appear at Mystery Ink in Huntington Beach. Details here.



Terri Maue, author of the Zee & Rico Mystery series *Knife Edge* and *Dark Mirror*, was a guest on the MythBehaving podcast. Terri talked with the hosts about sacrificing to the technology god, characters who surprise us, and why her subconscious mind is a better writer than her conscious mind. Available on Podbean and Spotify.



Topper Jones's third Thad Hanlon & Bri de la Guerra Mystery, *Pismo Beach Sniper*, is now available in paperback and ebook. For more information, check his website.



Sheila Lowe, author of *The Lies Between the Lines*, will release a memoir about her professional life, *Case Files of a Handwriting Expert: 60 Years of Seeking the Truth.* The book, which will be released in August, will cover her involvement with the JonBenet Ramsey case, the Elvis files, Clark Rockefeller, and others.

Editor's Corner
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

every magazine award there was.
Just a week ago I said NO NEW PROJECTS. Then **Bonnie Hearn Hill** showed up via Gmail: "SoCalMWA's *The March of Crime* is seeking an editor." Bonnie has a Jackie O-ish bob, wears black, and is refreshingly direct. Because of her, and my obsession with the specific craft of mystery and suspense, I couldn't resist stepping up. Bonnie is irreplaceable. But I'll take a stab at it. Honored to be among you all. So much for no new projects.
A.G.

Pat Broeske Reviews Black Dahlia

In the current issue of *The Strand,* **Pat H. Broeske** checks in on L.A.'s most famous unsolved case (going on 80 years, come January), with her review of William J. Mann's book, *Black Dahlia: Murder, Monsters, and Madness in Midcentury Hollywood*.

The magazine's previous issue includes her review of Eli Frankel's book, *Sisters in Death: The Black Dahlia, the Prairie Heiress*, and *Their Hunter.*
Read her reviews here.



Launch events for **Curtis Ippolito**'s new novel, *Waves of Burden*, concluded July 7 with a celebration at Library Shop San Diego- Mission Hills, one of two bookstores owned by the SD Library Foundation, whose proceeds go to support critical library services.
Curtis was in conversation with **Matt Coyle** before a full room of attendees.

Ghostwriting Opportunity

If you're a published crime fiction writer, you're invited to apply for a position with Mary Stone Publishing. The publishing house is looking for an experienced, creative remote contract co-writer to collaborate on full-length crime fiction novels.

Duties
Working from detailed outlines, you'll write stories featuring memorable characters, suspenseful plots, unexpected twists, and authentic law enforcement elements while collaborating closely with Mary Stone's editorial team.

Requirements
The ideal candidate has a strong understanding of the crime fiction, mystery, thriller, and suspense genres and can consistently produce engaging, high-quality manuscripts that captivate readers. This is a long-term remote contract opportunity with ongoing assignments for writers who thrive in a collaborative, deadline-driven environment. According to the publisher, the job will give you the freedom to work on your own scheduleas long as deadlines are met, communication stays sharp, and quality remains top-notch.

Apply here. For more information, contact Bonnie Hearn Hill.

President's Rap Sheet
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

How can I protect the title of my book or keep someone from stealing the idea?
Titles can't be protected by copyright. Neither can ideas. However, stealing your "idea" means nothing. It's all about your voice, your characters, and how you tell the story, not the story itself.

Should I mail myself a copy of my own work to establish my copyright?
No. Copyright protection is automatic the minute that you "publish" your work (that is, you show it to someone else). Registration of your copyright with the US Copyright Office is not required to establish a copyright, but there are legal advantages to it, and it costs very little. While publishers usually will register your copyright, you should check, and you can easily do it yourself.

If I self-publish my book, have I forever closed the door to being traditionally published?
It's extremely rare for a traditional publisher to pick up a self-published work. If you've self-published a book or two in a series, it will be difficult to find a traditional publisher who wants to publish more in that series. What sells your prior books is your current book, and the traditional publisher wants that profit. However, successful self-publishing can show a traditional publisher that (a) you're a competent writer and can finish a project and (b) there's an audience, a readership, for your voice(s). There are solid examples of successful traditionally published writers who started out self-published.

What are the benefits of being traditionally published?
Historically, the biggest benefit was marketing, but that has changed over the last decade. Whether you're traditionally published or self-published, you're going to need to do a good deal of marketing on your own. What you gain from traditional publishing is more time to write more books. The publisher will handle getting the book edited, printed, and into stores. They'll take care of the cover design, the layout, the copy-editing, and the mechanics of producing a book. Many writers now combine both traditional and self-publishing. Some hybrid publishers can even work with you to produce both, though—beware!—such publishers are not "approved" publishers under MWA rules of Edgar® eligibility. These are just a selection of the topics discussed. I hope to see you next year at Comic-Con!
Les

CRIME CALENDAR



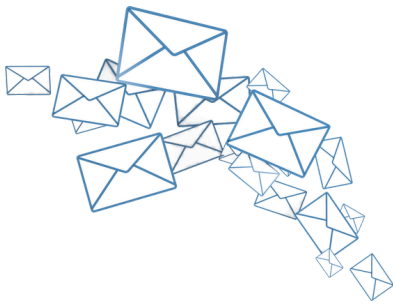
If you know of an event that belongs on the Crime Calendar, email themarchofcrime@gmail.com with the info.

2026

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

September 30, Deadline for Tucson Festival of Books self-nomination portal. See Page 1 for details and link.

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



THE LAST WORD



"I was sitting under a beach canopy in the spectator section of the Central Coast Surf Trials, watching the first heat of the semifinals, when I heard the sonic crack of a large firearm."

Pismo Beach Sniper
by **Topper Jones**