

THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

Sisters in Crime  Northern California Chapter

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2016

Dear Sisters and Misters,

A long time ago, in what seems like another galaxy altogether, when I was first an aspiring mystery writer, I attended a Bouchercon in Baltimore. There, I tagged along with a writer who was going to a meeting called by Sara Paretsky in which she planned to present an idea she had for an organization to support women in the crime-writing field. At the meeting Paretsky talked about her frustration with the dominance of men in awards and reviews in crime fiction, despite the fact that more than half the authors of those books were women. She wanted to call the organization Sisters in Crime. I came away inspired and immediately signed up to become a member.

Fast forward to this galaxy, the year 2016, and Sisters in Crime has grown into a vital professional organization. The support it affords women, and men as well, in the crime-writing field is almost impossible to exaggerate. From fledgling writers to those with many publishing credits, countless women have been able to call on sisters for help with writing and publishing advice.

This year I have the honor of being the President of the Northern California Chapter of Sisters in Crime. I was first on the board four years ago as Event Coordinator, serving under President Helen Sandoval. For the past two years I served as Vice President under President Susan Shea.

Susan has left a wonderful legacy. With the previous president, Helen, she accomplished revision of the by-laws to bring the chapter up to date, and she worked with Sue Trowbridge and Maddy McEwen to make our website more accessible. She has promised as past president to continue to upgrade and improve the site. Serving on the national board,



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President's Message, continued

Susan steered our chapter to take advantage of the many ways in which the national organization supports individual chapters. For example, Susan arranged for us to host nationally acclaimed writer Jan Burke next month, on March 5, compliments of the national program to send well-known writers to give talks at individual chapters.

I can only hope to emulate Susan's strong leadership, but I take on the position with enthusiasm. My strength is in having a truly talented executive committee. During the past four years I have come to appreciate that members of Norcal are always willing to lend a hand to make the organization strong. From Malena Eljumaily, our tireless Membership Chair, to Ana Manwaring, whose competence as Treasurer is unsurpassed, to Diana Chambers, who seamlessly ran the Events Program for the past two years, to the board members who step in and say, "I'll do that!" when the need arises, we pull together to make a strong organization. When our long-time Secretary, Joan Imbeau, had to retire from the position, Cheryl Arguile and Heidi Noroozy immediately stepped in. When I told the committee that my hope was to revive the too-long-dormant newsletter, Margie Bunting volunteered, with immediate ideas and suggestions. If you are reading this, Margie is to be congratulated. Elin Barnes has taken on the job of Event Coordinator and has rushed into it with unparalleled enthusiasm. Maddy McEwen continues as our fantastic webmaster. Jenny Carless and Andy MacRae are Members-At-Large. I count on Diana Chambers as Vice President to both back me up and rein me in.

Please don't hesitate to call on any of us with questions or suggestions. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,
Terry Shames



It's All About YOU!

Make the most of your membership. Your Executive Committee members are working hard to present the most interesting, educational, useful and entertaining programs to our members. We invite your participation regarding ideas for speakers, events, and potential meeting locations, as well as articles for *The Stiletta*, our quarterly newsletter.

Please contact **Elin Barnes**, Event Coordinator, belinbs@gmail.com, with meeting ideas and **Margie Bunting**, Newsletter Editor, mbunting@sbcglobal.net, with newsletter article suggestions and submissions.

2016 SinC Norcal Executive Committee Members

Introduce Themselves



TERRY SHAMES, President: I write the best-selling Samuel Craddock series. *A Killing at Cotton Hill* won the Macavity Award for Best First Mystery; *The Last Death of Jack Harbin* was a Macavity finalist for 2014. I live in Berkeley with my husband and two rowdy terriers. I am proud of the great work Sisters in Crime has done on behalf of writers and am delighted to be SinC Norcal president this year. Visit my website at www.terryshames.com

DIANA CHAMBERS, Vice President: I was born with a book in one hand and a passport in the other. Maybe it was *A Tale of Two Cities*, but I was soon wandering the cobblestones of Paris. An Asian importing business led to LA, where I spent several years as a scriptwriter until my characters demanded their own novels. The first was *Stinger*, set in Pakistan and Afghanistan. For more on my work and travels, please visit www.dianachambers.com



MALENA ELJUMAILY, Membership Chair: I have been the Membership Chair since 2009. I am an avid mystery reader and especially love cozies. Though I did once write a mystery novel which resides in a drawer somewhere, I now concentrate on writing plays. Several of my short plays have been produced in Sonoma, Spokane and Brooklyn, among other places. I live and knit in beautiful Santa Rosa.

CHERYL ARGUILE (aka Emily Brightwell), Secretary: I was born in the Appalachian Mountains. In 1959 my family moved to California and I grew up in Pasadena. After I graduated from college, I decided to travel the world, but I only got as far as England, where I met the man who became my husband. We ended up back in the US, where I pursued my dream of becoming a writer. To date, I've written forty-four novels, the most successful of which are the "Mrs. Jeffries" Victorian mysteries.



ANA MANWARING, Treasurer: I write for the Petaluma Post, edit through JAM Manuscript Consulting, and teach creative writing and memoir at Napa Valley College. My work is included in many anthologies including award-winning *Sisters Born*, *Sisters Found*. I blog on writing and books at Building a Better Story, and I have completed *The Hydra Effect Book 1*, *Zihuatanejo* and *Book 2, Coyoacan*, of the JadeAnne Stone Mexico Adventures. Learn more at www.anamanwaring.com

Executive Committee Members, continued

ELIN BARNES, Event Coordinator: I was born in Spain, came to America to be a pilot, and ended up working as a flight instructor. Then I switched gears, got a BA in Philosophy, worked for a criminal appeals lawyer, and earned an MA in International Commerce. I truly found a home when the tech world lured me into Silicon Valley to work for companies such as AT&T, Google, Microsoft, TiVo, Samsung and, most recently, Apple, giving me endless ideas to write about.



SUSAN C. SHEA, Past President: My Dani O'Rourke mystery series featuring a professional fundraiser for a fictional SF museum was born of my love for art, my time as a fundraiser, and a slightly cynical view of the business world developed from years as a non-profit executive. *Mixed Up with Murder* (Feb. 2016) is third in the series. I am secretary of the national SinC Board and a member of MWA. My new series, set in a tiny French village, debuts in 2017 from Minotaur. I blog on 7 Criminal Minds and live in Marin County. www.susanshea.com

HEIDI NOROOZY, Member-at-Large and Backup Secretary: I'm a writer, translator, and once and future blogger. My fiction is set mainly in locations around the world and reflects my experiences as a globe trekker, from dipping my toes in the azure waters of the Caspian Sea to baking bread with Kurdish villagers in western Iran to searching for the perfect fondue in the Jura Mountains of Switzerland. My short stories have been translated into German, French, Polish, Slovenian and Estonian. www.heidinoroozy.com



MARGIE BUNTING, Newsletter Editor: Although not a published (or aspiring) author, I am a lifelong reader with a BA in French. Recently retired from a career in HR management, I keep busy socializing cats and kittens at the Humane Society, serving as VP of Education of my Toastmasters club, winning online sweepstakes, spending quality time with my also-retired spouse, and living vicariously through our two sons and daughter-in-law. Mike and I live in San Jose with our tuxedo cat.



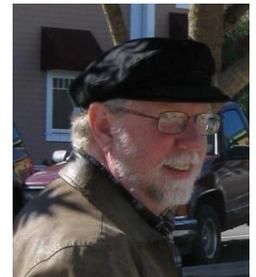
Executive Committee Members, continued

MADDY MCEWEN, Website: I am an ex-pat from the UK, bi-focaled and technically challenged. I and my Significant Other manage our four offspring, one major and three minors, two autistic, two neurotypical, plus a time-share with Alzheimer's. If there's any time left over, I have my nose in a book and my fingers on the keyboard. www.madelinemcewan.com



JENNY CARLESS, Member-at-Large: I write suspense that takes place across Africa and in the ivory poaching and wildlife trafficking underworld. I'm a safari addict, enthusiastic world traveler, amateur wildlife photographer, greyhound rescue volunteer, and nonfiction writer/communications consultant. I'm appreciative of the warm welcome I received when I joined SinC Norcal several years ago and am happy to help support this great organization. www.jennycarless.com

ANDREW MACRAE, Member-at-Large: A misplaced Midwesterner who rolled downhill to California with all the other loose nuts. I am the author of two published novels, *Murder Misdirected* and *Murder Miscalculated*, as well as numerous short stories and some poetry. I am also the editor of four published anthologies from Darkhouse Books: *The Anthology of Cozy-Noir*, *And All Our Yesterdays - Stories of Mysteries and Crime Through the Ages*, *Stories From the World of Tomorrow* and *Destination : Mystery!* Two more anthologies are due later this spring.



Left Coast Crime 2016, The Great Cactus Caper

February 25-28, 2016

Hyatt Regency, Phoenix, Arizona



If you haven't already registered, there's still time, although space in the host hotel is growing limited. Quite a few of our members will be participating in panels, and our friends in Desert Sleuths and Tucson SinC chapters will host a cocktail reception on Thursday evening, February 25, from 5:30 to 6:30. www.leftcoastcrime2016.com

Hope to see you there!

Message from our Outgoing President, Susan C. Shea

Fellow members,

Pop some champagne corks to celebrate finding a new editor for the Norcal SinC newsletter! Demonstrating her energy right off the bat, EC member Margie Bunting asked me to respond to a few questions from my perspective as the immediate past president of the chapter.

Q: What does SinC mean to you as an author and reader?

Everything! Sisters in Crime and the “misters” who share our support of the mission of the organization are friendly, generous, and loyal. I’ve seen members reach out to the shyest first-time event attendee, the least confident new writer, and the starry-eyed new author who just landed a fabulous contract with the same welcome. You never have to prove anything to become part of this cohort because people remember when they were getting started and have so much empathy. As a writer, it means a lot to be able to share your worries and hopes, and get solid advice from others who’ve been there. As a reader, it’s a wonderful way to meet authors you admire and get tips on books written by members. We have an awesomely talented chapter!



Q: What have you learned from your officer roles in the chapter?

First, that there are some staggeringly generous members in Norcal, people who show up at every meeting, who bring food and clean up the venue after, keep us in compliance with our non-profit charter, and volunteer for the hard jobs that keep SinC moving forward. Second, I think the last couple of years have confirmed for me that the SinC mission is the right one, that advocating for the success and acceptance at all levels of women crime fiction authors is important, and that it is succeeding even though there’s more work to do. It has also helped me contribute to the national board meetings during the last year as that group looks at the landscape from a larger perspective.

Q: What was your favorite 2015 SinC moment?

That’s hard. Maybe a tie: The survival training day in August, where I saw my poised and polished Sisters squirming into shelters made of dry leaves and dirt, while others rubbed sticks together to make fire – and some actually did! Or the silent film museum trip in March, where we saw an old Nancy Drew film and rare footage of San Francisco right before the 1906 earthquake.

Both of those adventures, by the way, were suggested by members, illustrating that SinC Norcal is a collection of active, supportive writers, readers, librarians, and others in the book business, all of whom can help make the chapter strong and vibrant.

Thank you for two years as your president!

Mark Your Calendar - Upcoming Event!

SinC Norcal March Meeting

Crime Fiction Author **Jan Burke** on “Forensic Science and the Writer”

Saturday, March 5, 2016, noon to 2:00 pm.

The Telegraph Gallery Suite at Oakstop Workspace,
1721 Broadway, Oakland (between 17th and 19th St., two doors
from the 19th St. BART escalator)
Parking garage 1-1/2 blocks west on 17th St.
Wheelchair accessible



Free for SinC Norcal members, \$10 for non-members

The critically acclaimed and nationally bestselling author of fourteen books, including the Edgar®-winning Best Novel, *Bones*, Jan Burke founded the Crime Lab Project in 2003 to increase awareness of the need to strengthen forensic science in the United States. Her presentation will include:

- ❖ Five things you think you know about forensic science but probably have wrong
- ❖ Five things you must know about forensic science as a writer and citizen
- ❖ Five ways forensic science can help you write a better book
- ❖ Five ways forensic science can ruin your book
- ❖ Five ways to learn more about forensic science, and about the Crime Lab Project and how it got started

The author will also talk about her writing career, why and how she started learning more about forensic science, and the Crime Lab Project and how it got started.

There will be a question-and-answer period at the end of the presentation.

Author Profile: Helen MacInnes

by Diana Chambers



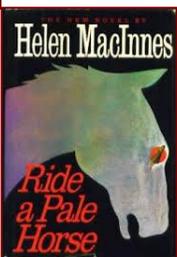
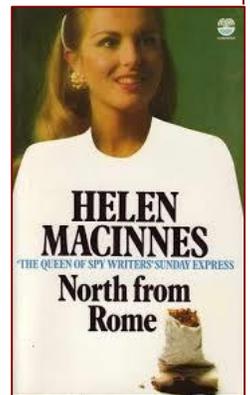
Way back when, an editor read one of my early efforts at international intrigue and called me a young Helen MacInnes. By young, I now realize he was being kind, for I resembled her only in an aspirational way. Over the years, I remained curious, but never got around to her books.

Her work spanned a tumultuous chunk of the twentieth century from WW2 through the Cold War, bestselling suspense novels set against the major political events of her day. The *New York Times* dubbed MacInnes “the queen of international espionage fiction.”

A formidable woman, she was born in 1907 and, as a translator, she and her Oxford professor husband, Gilbert Highet, traveled widely in Europe in the early thirties, viewing firsthand the rise of Nazism. At some point in those years he joined MI6 and served as an intelligence agent. The couple moved to New York in 1937, where he was part of a joint MI5, MI6, and SIS operation based in Rockefeller Center, to enlist America’s support in the war.

MacInnes used her proximity to the clandestine world to create an insider’s view of how it is. A great traveler and brilliant researcher, she had a sharp eye for the telling detail. Her ability to paint a scene and use setting to convey emotion is peerless.

The playwright in *North from Rome* is hiding outside a Tuscan villa, preparing to rescue his lover from a conspiracy of Communist-linked smugglers. “Around him, the cicadas had become a permanent background of sound, no longer heard. The violence of brilliant light and black shadow, the contrast of scarlet flowers against blue sky, the heavy scent of sun-warmed fruit, the jagged rhythm of the yellow butterflies were no longer seen or felt. Nothing existed, nothing, except the silent house and the moving hand of his watch. Nine minutes now...”



Her characters are often ordinary people who become entangled in larger geopolitical forces. In another Cold War novel, *Ride a Pale Horse*, a journalist at a Prague peace conference ends up carrying top-secret documents from a potential defector to Washington. However, there is a mole in the CIA.

Over her career, MacInnes wrote twenty-one espionage novels, of which four became movies. In one of them, *Assignment in Brittany*, a British man impersonates a French resistance fighter hospitalized in England to collect intelligence in a German-occupied Breton village. Just as the author was losing me that even the man’s mother is fooled, she confronts the hero in a sly twist – *he* is generous and brave, her son is not! *Continued*



Helen MacInnes Profile, continued

MacInnes has her flaws. Her work often feels overwritten with much annoying head-hopping, but her descriptions of the landscape are gorgeous and she uses the terrain to great effect in well-developed action scenes. Transporting a wireless transmitter, the British hero and his young guide pass through a hidden passage in the ramparts of Mont St. Michel...“And then the narrow slab of rock moved slowly aside. The cool clean breeze from the sea ended the feeling of suffocation. In front of them was a panel of night sky, and the gentle movement of small trees swaying like black-shawled women at a funeral.” They are outside the great wall and will soon reach the north shore of the island. But the tide is rising and Nazis are everywhere.

The world is a dangerous place and Helen MacInnes takes full advantage of it.



SISTERS 
IN CRIME
Northern California Chapter
