

THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

Sisters in Crime † Northern California Chapter

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Dear Sisters and Misters,

Our 30th anniversary celebration was a delight. We had a chance to mingle and renew old friendships with several members we don't see often. The highlights (besides the cake) were a wonderful game produced by our membership chair, Malena Eljumaily, and a stimulating talk from SinC national ex-president Catriona McPherson.

Sisters in Crime has come a long way from its beginnings thirty years ago, when Sara Paretsky held a meeting at Bouchercon in Baltimore in which she passionately laid out her reasons for wanting to found an organization to support women crime writers. Her salient point was that although more than 50 percent of crime writers were women, fewer than 10 percent of reviews were of women's crime fiction. Awards were given mostly to men crime writers. In other words, we were at best given crumbs; at worst, ignored.

I attended that meeting having no idea what to expect and walked out a firm supporter of the cause. I was not a crime writer at the time, but an avid reader. Sara's vision was that Sisters in Crime would be an organization that welcomed not only published authors but aspiring writers, readers, and publishing professionals. How our organization has grown since that first meeting! Although there is still work to do, women crime writers are reviewed and rewarded in much greater proportion than thirty years ago.

Left Coast Crime was a case in point this year. Women took the awards: Louise Penny for Best Mystery; Catriona McPherson, Best Historical; Ellen Byron, Best Humorous; and



CONTENTS

Page 1:	President's Message
Page 3:	Upcoming Events
Page 4:	In Case You Missed It
Page 5:	Memories of LCC 2017
Page 6:	Write What You Know
Page 8:	Modeling Life
Page 10:	New EC Member
Page 11:	Back in the GDR
Page 17:	For My Grandchildren
Page 19:	On the Van Gogh Trail
Page 23:	Member News
Page 25:	Question of the Quarter

President's Message, continued

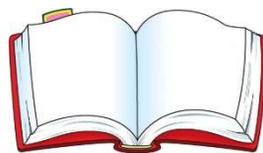
Alexia Gordon, Best Debut Mystery. It was a sweep!

The next two months are crammed with activity! See the calendar for specifics about the May 6 meeting, the June showcase (which is the third weekend in June due to conflicts), and our participation in the Bay Area Book Festival the first weekend in June. (We will be joining with the Sacramento chapter, Capitol Crimes, again this year.) In July our event planner, Heidi Noroozy, has set up a tour of San Quentin. Heidi says there are still a couple of spots available.

We have new board members, so be sure and check out the newsletter to find out who they are and what they do to make Norcal SinC a vibrant organization. One new member is taking the place of our secretary, Cheryl Arguile (aka Emily Brightwell), who is moving out of the area. We'll miss her and wish her luck!

Hope everyone is doing well and is excited about summer. We might even have some weeks without rain!

Sincerely,
Terry Shames
President, Norcal Sisters in Crime



Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming SinC Norcal Events

Saturday, May 6, 12:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m.

Capturing a Sense of Place: A Craft Workshop

Belvedere Tiburon Library, 1501 Tiburon Blvd., Tiburon

Setting is one of the three critical components in writing a story. In this writing craft workshop, participants will learn the twelve basic elements for describing scenes in short stories and novels. In a series of examples, we will explore the importance of the opening scene of a novel. Using creative and fun exercises, we will write the opening line and scene for several types of crime stories. The workshop will include a discussion of capturing a scene in dialogue and poetry. Roger C. Lubeck, Ph.D., president of It Is What It Is Press and Corporate Behavior Analysts, Ltd. will lead the workshop. A vice president of Redwood Writers, he has edited anthologies and published novels, short stories, poems and a play. His latest novel, *Ghosts in Horseshoe Canyon*, is a modern crime novel set in southern Utah. Roger is also developing screenplays for a TV comedy and a movie.

Saturday and Sunday, June 3-4, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Bay Area Book Festival

Downtown Berkeley

Norcal chapter authors who would like a 1.5-hour slot to sell and sign books in our SinC booth should contact our Event Coordinator at heidinoroozy@gmail.com.

Saturday, June 17, 12:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Author Showcase

Book Passage Event Room, 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera

Our Sisters and Mistresses who have recently released mystery novels will present readings, sign books, and give away books to lucky winners. Authors include: JoAnn S. Ainsworth, Susan Bickford, Janet Dawson, Janet Finsilver, Bette and J.J. Lamb, Lynda McDaniel, Judith Newton, Janice Peacock, Alec Peche, Priscilla Royal, Cindy Sample, Terry Shames, Sharon St. George, Nancy Tingley, Kirsten Weiss.

Thursday, July 6, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

San Quentin Prison Tour

San Quentin Prison

This is a tour of the actual prison led by Lt. Samuel Robinson of the CA Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The tour is limited to 25 attendees, age 18 and up. The deadline to sign up is May 30, so please contact our event coordinator at heidinoroozy@gmail.com to reserve your place.

Check our website and our Facebook page for more info regarding events venues and directions:

<http://www.sincnorcal.org> [Sisters in Crime Norcal Facebook page](#)

In Case You Missed It . . .

If you weren't able to attend our recent events, here's what you missed.



February Meeting: Our first 2017 event, where we caught up with fellow Sisters and Mistrs, met prospective new members, and learned about upcoming events from our Executive Committee.



March Meeting: Allison Gomez, Deputy Public Defender for Santa Clara County, enthralled us with her account of her experiences in the County courts.



Special Additional March Event: An enthusiastic group of Norcal members took a virtual tour of the Santa Clara County Crime Lab, led by criminalist Cordelia Willis.

April Meeting: Members turned out in force for a celebration of SinC's 30th anniversary – complete with cake, sparkling beverages, and an informative (and often hilarious) presentation from the inimitable Catriona McPherson.



Memories of Left Coast Crime 2017, Honolulu Havoc

The opening reception and the gorgeous Honolulu setting:



Hawaiian prayers



Toastmaster Laurie



Cindy and Heather



Honolulu sunset

Some of us were panelists:



Cindy (second from left)



Laurie and Terry



Peggy



Moderator Diana (far right)



Rhys

A few of our award nominees and winners:



Catriona



... and her Lefty



Mariella/Marla



Terry and Gigi (middle)

Write What You Know, or What You'd Like to Know

by Susan Shea



Writers get lots of advice, some good, some not so good, some offered in sound bites that beg for interpretation. When I was working on the first book in my first series, I took “write what you know” fairly literally: a non-profit executive based in San Francisco with a professional interest in art. Check, check, and check.



Rapeseed fields in summer

Somewhere during the writing and publishing of the first two books in the series, a couple I knew well picked up stakes and moved from northern California to France, which I thought was brave and perhaps a little foolish. I had been to Paris with them before and we all loved France, but still . . . When they invited me to come visit them in the little town in Burgundy where they had bought an old house, I said yes in a flash. I knew nothing of rural France, far away from the touristed areas I had loved on previous visits. My French was crummy (still is) and my only friends in France were Americans.

It was on that first trip that inspiration for my new French village mysteries hit me hard. My friend told me over coffee in her garden, under a pear tree, about a local romance that was tearing the village apart as people took sides. With little else to distract them, the villagers were gossiping like mad, and because my friend spoke adequate French, she was picking up most of the story. The problem was, these new neighbors expected her to take sides too, and she was reluctant since she was a newcomer trying hard to please everyone.

And there it was: Jane Austen’s insular world, set in contemporary France. Over time, at my agent’s prodding, it became a mystery. Add Miss Marple. And as I met the few non-French who were buying and fixing up properties nearby—English, American, Belgian—and heard their comments about renovations that dragged on or had to be undone, add a touch of *A Year in Provence*.

Voilà, the first book in my new series is about an American couple plopped down in a tiny French town with nothing but their artistic talents, their good will, and a couple of unruly dogs to serve as introduction to their new neighbors. Katherine, the protagonist, is based on Alice, an artist, a woman of a certain age who faces life with a mixture of high optimism and internal fretting. Alice

Write What You Know, or What You'd Like to Know, continued



Alice, the inspiration for Katherine, with Gracey, who appears as herself in the book

does sally forth into the world with her chin high, her desire for friendship intense, and her charmingly eccentric style as her calling card. From there, Katherine and Alice part company; however, Katherine keeps injecting herself into other people's business, competing for popularity, creating a shaky tower of relationships that is too vulnerable to survive a stiff breeze, never mind a mysterious death.

The interrelationships, the swirls of humor and divisiveness that exist in small, isolated places are the same in any language. Setting my story in France was a happy accident. I have had to work at the parts of this series that I didn't know, researching enough history of the area to make my fictional hamlet believable geographically, economically, socially, historically. My French being what it is, I still have to work at getting the few phrases I use right, not only in dictionary terms but in colloquial ones. I now have a French friend who teaches English to French business people and French to English speakers, and I will run the second book past her to see if I chose the right "shut up" to use in each character's scene. (Turns out there are many, many ways to say it.)

In December, I took a quick trip to the region to check in person what seasonal foods are in the markets (fat white carrots, roasts comprised of rabbit rolled inside veal, Burgundy's famous spice cake), how the French prepare (or don't) for Christmas, and what the weather feels like when you're tromping down cobbled streets in the rain. The first book was set in summer, which I knew well from a handful of visits to my friends, but who visits small rural towns in the dead of winter, when my second story takes place?

I am writing what I know in this series, just not what I knew when I started. I think I found the universal in the particular, the humor in the way people react to stress, the way in which insecurities prey on us. And now, I know a bit more about France, too!



A twisting stone staircase in an ancient chateau tower, lined with antique guns. Read the book to find out how this inspired me.

Susan Shea is the immediate past president of the Norcal chapter of Sisters in Crime, secretary of the national Sisters in Crime, and the author of two series—the Dani O'Rourke Mysteries and her new French village mysteries. *Love and Death in Burgundy* comes out May 2. Visit <http://susancshea.com/>



Modeling Life by Camille Minichino

For me, it's all about models—whether it's the standard particle model of physics, the fictional models of life we find in literature, or the miniature home models that operate nicely on a scale where one foot is mapped to the inch.

Apples and oranges, you might say. Or apples, oranges, and grapes.



But to me they're all part of our attempt to understand our world. Those atoms we learned about in high school (these days maybe preschool)—they're every bit a fiction as that Call-Me-Ishmael guy. They're a construct, a model to "explain" the universe and all that's in it.

The world of miniatures fits nicely into this picture. When I'm making a miniature scene or writing a novel, I'm creating a model of reality, a fictional world where things can be easier and often make more sense than in the life-size world.

On my crafts table is a room box, newly painted, waiting to be furnished. On my computer is my latest novel, newly drafted, waiting to be finished.

Editing. Adding a descriptive passage to emphasize a point in a scene I'm writing is like dropping that tiny string of pearls onto m'lady's dresser in my Victorian dollhouse mansion. Cutting a paragraph from a chapter in my novel translates into removing a too-large scatter rug that overpowers the rest of the kitchen furnishings in a modern dollhouse.

I change a verb for a more powerful statement; I change the draperies in the dollhouse dining room for the same reason.

For a miniature scene or room box, after I choose the colors and assemble the pieces, I leave the piece on my crafts table for a while, living with it, looking at it from different angles over the course of a week or so, to be sure all the elements fit together nicely. Only when a particular design has stood the test of time, do I glue all the parts in place.

Modeling Life, continued

I do the same for my novels, leaving each chapter or day's work to sit for a while. When I come back later, I see the flaws. I notice phrases or sentences or plot elements that don't work well together, and make the changes. Only then do I consider it "furnished" and metaphorically glue the words in place.

A word about dolls. The word is: they have no place in a dollhouse!



Unless you've enlisted a master dollmaker, to the tune of thousands of dollars, dolls, with their staring eyes and stiff limbs and even stiffer fabric clothing, tell the viewer that the dollhouse isn't real. With a doll desperately trying to bend itself into a chair, the house is uninhabitable and not real-looking. If you take a picture of a bedroom in a dollhouse, you will have no idea that it isn't life-size, unless you add a measuring stick. Or a doll. Otherwise I can look into the tiny living room and imagine I'm sitting there, in a most comfortable chair, next to a pile of books with the best stories. There's no broken spring, no liquid to spill. Each room is set up without a flaw or stain.

Bottom line: *I live there, not dolls.*

From Book to Dollhouse. I have the most fun when I can combine all my model-making pursuits. For my first mystery series, the Periodic Table Mysteries, I created a fictional physicist who lives above a funeral home. I also created the building in miniature: a viewing parlor on the main floor, an embalming room in the "basement," and my protagonist's apartment on the upper level.



Embalming Room



Mortuary

For the newest series, the Postmistress Mysteries, of course I built a miniature post office, complete with a wall of PO boxes and piles of packages to be delivered. A real life postmistress told me that a necessary accouterment was a mouse living in the corner. I obliged, with a tiny rubber mouse.

Which brings me to the next similarity between writing and miniaturizing.

Cheating. The mouse is no more a threat than a rodent that might appear in a chapter of my novel. They're both works of fiction.



PO Corner

When I put a roof on a dollhouse, I don't have to worry about the materials really being weatherproof. Dollhouse admirers assume all will be well if it rains. When I move my characters about in a novel, I'm not concerned about filling their cars with gas or giving them a rest stop on a long journey, unless it's crucial to the plot. I don't need to say, "She turned the knob to open the door." Readers assume that logistics and other mundane things are being taken care of.

Modeling Life, continued

In the world of dollhouses, as in the world of novels, there's no laundry to do, and a houseful of carpeting can be changed in a matter of minutes. In my dollhouses, all the plumbing works, as do all the appliances. In my mystery novels, the good guys always win and justice is always served.

What could be more satisfying?

Camille Minichino has a Ph.D. in physics from Fordham University and teaches science at Golden Gate University and writing throughout the Bay Area. She has published more than 20 novels, as well as many short stories and nonfiction articles. Under her own name, she has published the Periodic Table Mysteries featuring retired physicist Gloria Lamerino, as well as the standalone, *Killer in the Cloister*, featuring Sister Francesca, and the nonfiction book, *How to Live with an Engineer*. As Margaret Grace, she writes the Miniature Mysteries, featuring Geraldine Porter and her 11-year-old granddaughter, Maddie. As Ada Madison, she has published the Professor Sophie Knowles Mysteries. And as Jean Flowers, she has launched the new Postmistress Mysteries, with the third in the series due in 2017. Camille is a Past President of SinC Norcal. Visit <http://www.minichino.com/>

New Member of the SinC Norcal Executive Committee!

Mariella Krause (better known to readers as Marla Cooper) is the newest member of our Executive Committee, accepting the position of Secretary replacing Cheryl Arguile, who is moving out of the area. Here is Mariella's bio:

MARIELLA KRAUSE, Secretary: I am a real, live human being whose alter ego, Marla Cooper, writes the Kelsey McKenna Destination Wedding Mysteries. My debut novel, *Terror in Taffeta*, is a Lefty and Agatha Award finalist for Best First Mystery Novel, and book two, *Dying on the Vine*, is set in the California wine country. Freshly appointed as Secretary of Sisters in Crime's Norcal chapter, Mariella/Marla answers readily to pretty much anything that begins with an M. <http://marlacooper.wixsite.com/marla-cooper>



And from **CHERYL ARGUILE aka EMILY BRIGHTWELL:** I'm going to be relocating to Carson City, NV soon and while it's a nice move for me and my husband, I'm going to miss all the wonderful people here at SinC Norcal. You're an incredibly talented and interesting group and I'm going to miss everyone. I'm going to keep up with the organization via Facebook/emails, etc. and plan on dropping by a meeting or one of your events if I'm in the area.



Back in the GDR

by Heidi Noroozy

The train ride from Berlin is supposed to take only one hour, but today it lasts nearly three. I'm on my way to Leipzig, the city in Saxony that I once called home, to research settings for a new book. I've inadvertently timed my trip to coincide with a railway strike, so instead of riding the canceled Intercity Express, I cobble together a route on regional trains, with changes in Magdeburg, Dessau, and Halle.



The slow journey feels all too familiar. Back in the early 80s, when I studied German and Marxism at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, even the direct train from Berlin frequently stopped for hours in the middle of nowhere, while everyone speculated on whether rail fuel had become the latest *Mangelware* (shortage).



Today, when I arrive at my destination, the cloudy morning has turned into a sunny afternoon. Gone is the drab, crumbling city I remember, replaced by this sparkling jewel of a town, its once empty streets packed with tourists. The formerly soot-stained buildings are white now, their ornate gold trim liberated from coal dust layered on over the decades.

I spend the first two days reacquainting myself with the city. Despite the recent face-lift, much has remained unchanged. Narrow cobblestone streets. Not-so-secret passageways carved out of buildings and filled with shops and cafes offer quick shortcuts through the labyrinth of downtown streets. Not the best place to hide a fictional body, I muse, but an excellent way for a thief or murderer to escape pursuit.



Back in the GDR, continued

Some of my old haunts are still here: The Milchbar Pinguin near the market square, which still serves ice cream in glass dishes, drowned in fresh fruit, with a wafer on the side. The Thomaskirche: I used to sit at the back of this church and listen to rehearsals of the famous boys' choir, who've been singing here for 800 years. I'd imagine what it would have felt like to watch them perform under their long-ago director, Johann Sebastian Bach.



The Auerbachs Keller, where the devil played tricks on fictional students in Goethe's *Faust*, used to be the place where you could have a quiet chat over a glass of Hungarian wine and admire scenes from the play painted on the walls. It's jam-packed with tourists now.

Zum Arabischen Koffe Baum (At the Arabian Coffee Tree), one of the oldest coffee shops in Europe, still stands around the corner from Barfussgässchen (Barefoot Lane). A waiter tells me that the third floor used to be off-limits to civilians, commandeered by the Stasi as a listening post for spying on the establishment's artist clientele. I'm glad I didn't know that back in the day, when I used to stop by for a *Kaffeeklatsch* with friends.



Leipzig is still a city of avid readers, with a bookshop on nearly every corner. The retail space under the Old City Hall has three of them. I pop into the *Antiquariat* (second-hand shop) and buy a map from 1977. The modern one I purchased at the train station will help me navigate the city today, but it won't do much for the characters in my GDR novel. Like many cities in this part of Germany, Leipzig has renamed a lot of its streets in an attempt to obliterate its Socialist past.

I check out my alma mater on Augustusplatz (formerly known as Karl Marx Platz). The square that holds the main university buildings seems cluttered now, much of its once-open space occupied by a huge blue church. At first, its modern architecture seems out of place at the heart of Germany's second-oldest university, but it grows on me over time.



Back in the GDR, continued



I look up at the “Weisheitszahn”(Wisdom Tooth), a tall, tooth-shaped tower that once housed the university’s administration and is now owned by an American investment bank. Back in my day, I’d ride the elevator up to the fourteenth floor twice a week for Marxism class. Now you can go all the way up to the top and admire the view from the observation platform.

One morning, I wander down to my old neighborhood, just a mile or so southeast of the city center. I’m curious to see if my favorite watering hole is still there: Café Windmühle on Bayrischer Platz. It is indeed, though the former bar is now a café called Lukas Bäcker, part of a nationwide chain.



From the outside, the place looks much the same: a squat rectangle of yellowing stone bricks. I push open the door, half expecting to see round tables with plain white linens and hard wooden chairs; surly waitresses in black and white uniforms; bare brick walls and not a scrap of atmosphere. But that’s all gone now, replaced by walnut



tables and vinyl upholstery, friendly servers in regular clothes behind a sparkling glass-fronted counter. I order a coffee and raspberry torte. Both taste better than anything the Café Windmühle used to serve. But something’s missing. My African, Czech, Bulgarian, and Russian friends. The old gang who used to meet here after a long day at the library to discuss world affairs over a beer or two or four.



I stroll a few blocks farther down the street to where Windmühlenstrasse turns into Strasse des Achtzehnten Oktobers. The dormitories are still there. Soviet-style slab structures, eight stories high, on a tree-lined avenue. The saplings of thirty-five years ago have grown into tall, shady elms, and the buildings sport colorful facades they’d never have dared display back in GDR times. I stop in front of Number 29, my old address. The yellowing plastic awning over the front stairs is now clear glass. I look



up to the eighth floor. My room is there at the end, the window now surrounded by blue trim.

Back in the GDR, continued

The phone booth that once stood outside Number 29 is long gone. Everyone has a cell phone now. But I remember how the phone would sometimes malfunction, and you could place a call to anywhere in the world and get your coin back. A scene for my story starts to form in my mind.

A short walk down the street takes me to the Konsum supermarket, where we students bought our groceries. It's a Kaiser market now, the Konsum chain having gone the way of the Berlin Wall. Inside I close my eyes and shut out the overstuffed bins of fresh produce and colorful food packages. Instead, I see half-empty shelves, one filled with rye peasant bread from the state-run bakery. A meager supply of dry goods at the back. Rows of identical white paper sacks, unlabeled when the packing plant ran out of ink. You had to squeeze each one to guess its contents by texture: fine for flour, medium for sugar, coarse for rice.



My friend, Almuth Heuner, arrives one afternoon. A German mystery writer, translator, reviewer, and scholar, she's traveled halfway across Germany to help with my research. The following morning she introduces me to the man who will become my main source of information on all things Leipzig and GDR. Henner Kotte is the author of mysteries, short stories, true crime books, and plays. Like me, he's a graduate of the Karl Marx University. Unlike me, he's lived in Leipzig since the mid-80s and knows every inch of the city: past and present.

We meet at the Moritzbastei, the student club dug out of the last remaining section of the city's medieval fortifications. Once buried under the rubble from war, the site was excavated by students beginning in the 1970s. (Germany's current chancellor, Angela Merkel, was one of them.) The club opened during my second year in Leipzig, and since then has been a cultural center for concerts, movies, plays, and intense political discussions.



Henner is waiting for us at a sunny table in the middle of the sunken patio. He's a large man with a shock of reddish blonde hair and a thick Saxon accent. I have to listen closely to understand his dialect-tinged German. Over coffee, we discuss our plans for the day.

I've already thoroughly explored the city center with its cosmetic changes, so I ask if he knows of a neighborhood that still has the look and field of the old GDR.

Back in the GDR, continued



“Grünau,” he says without hesitation.



Grünau turns out to be a western neighborhood that transports me decades into the past. Rectangular skyscrapers of identical apartments, clustered around a grassy park, with shops lining the ground floor. A school on one side of the park. A medical center opposite. It’s a village within the city, where people had everything they needed right down the street and only had to leave it to go to work elsewhere in town. This neighborhood would have been brand new at the time my story is set. Already, I’m thinking about which characters will live here.



On the way back into town, we stop at the Leipzig Cotton Mill in Plagewitz/Lindenau. Now an artists’ colony, filled with studios and shops where the artists sell their work, it was still an operating mill back in the early eighties. Today is a holiday, so everything is closed, but I wander around and take pictures of the exterior.



Red brick edifices. Several round smokestacks. The tracks of a long-gone railroad tracing lines in the cobblestone street. In my mind, the empty road fills with workers in the blue coveralls I remember from my GDR days, carrying metal lunch boxes, hurrying to work. Maybe some of them live in Grünau.

The next day Almuth and I meet Henner for breakfast at Café Windmühle/Lukas Bäcker, and we discuss my book idea.

I start to ask about the secret police, but Henner interrupts, “Don’t make the story all about the Stasi. That’s all anyone writes about. They didn’t stand on every corner, you know.”

He’s both right and wrong, I think. The GDR years and the Stasi’s reign of terror are well chronicled. Memoirs, novels, movies. One Stasi-themed film, *The Lives of Others*, won an Oscar.

Still, I was there. I remember the paranoia, the suspicion, the fear people had of each other. The way no one would talk about certain subjects unless they’d first downed several stiff drinks. The Stasi may not have stood on every street corner, but they lived in everyone’s head.

Back in the GDR, continued

I also remember the good times: drinking jam-sweetened tea with Russian friends; riverboat rides on the Elbe; hiking in the pine-scented Thuringian Forest; buying fresh rolls, butter, and yogurt from the breakfast cart that rolled through residential neighborhoods in Eisenach, my mom's old hometown.



On my last day in Leipzig, I head for the "Runde Ecke" (Round Corner), a hulking building on Dittrichring, so named because of its round front. Once the regional headquarters of the Ministry for State Security (aka the Stasi), it became a staging ground for the Leipzig-born Peaceful Revolution that eventually brought down the Communist regime. Citizens held a candlelight vigil on the Runde Ecke's wide steps. Later, when they heard that the Stasi were destroying records, they stormed the building and saved the incriminating documents. These records

now form part of a museum.



Inside, I discover that they've left everything much as it was when the Stasi occupied this space, from the squeaky linoleum floor to the sickly greenish yellow paint on the walls. There's an agent's office with a typewriter atop a plain wooden desk, a huge map, and a wall of files. One exhibit is a cell that was moved here from the Stasi prison on Beethovenstrasse. I snap photos of both for later reference.



When I leave Leipzig, I make one final stop: the Nikolaikirche. Thirty-five years ago, the church was just another gray, stone building in the center of town. I never bothered to go inside. But close to a decade after my student days, it took center stage in the Peaceful Revolution. The movement started here, with demonstrations every Monday evening for more than a year. I'm stunned by the church's beautiful interior: leafy columns holding up a rose-colored roof.

I've now got a camera full of images, a book packed with notes, and Henner's email address. All that's left is to turn the settings I've recorded into a story.

Heidi Noroozy is SinC Norcal's event coordinator. She likes to write about places she's lived around the world, from Iran to East Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Her GDR-themed short story, "Trading Places," was published in the Secret Codes issue of *Nautilus*. Heidi's work has been translated into five languages, including German, French, and Polish.

For My Grandchildren

by Bourne Morris



For years my grandchildren gave me paintings and drawings they had done for me at Christmas. So, when my grandchildren were still all under the age of twelve, I decided to write a story just for them, and read it to them. I used their real names and gave them lead roles in a story about five children who discover a magic creature that only they could see.

The story opens with my grandchildren in a neighborhood pool when suddenly the sky darkens and all the other children in the pool and all the parents and lifeguards disappear. A voice is heard at the deep end and seems to belong to a floating toy dragon. At first alarmed and then enchanted, the children smuggle the toy dragon home and conceal him in the oldest child's bedroom. Once alone with the children, the toy tells them his story:

"I used to have a real dragon's body with scales and wings and claws the size of truck tires. But now, only my spirit remains, trapped in this stupid inflatable pool toy."

One of the children interrupts and suggests perhaps they really should take the toy dragon to the lost and found.

"The lost and found!" shrieked the toy dragon so loudly all the children jumped. "I've spent eternity being lost and found. Lost in a forest when I was a baby. Found by a wandering witch. Lost when the witch was slain by a Knight in Shining Armor trying to impress his girlfriend. Found by an elf who liked to ride me through the countryside. Then lost again when the ice age came and I had to hide in a cave to keep warm. Found again in a fairytale written by a really dull writer who only knew how to make me seem monstrous."

The toy dragon paused and let out a huge breath, this one with a glint of fire behind smoke. "What I need, what I have been looking for all these centuries, is a family. I need people imaginative enough to pay attention so I can perform wonderful magical events for them, so I can laugh and talk and play games with someone."

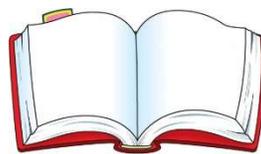
For My Grandchildren, continued

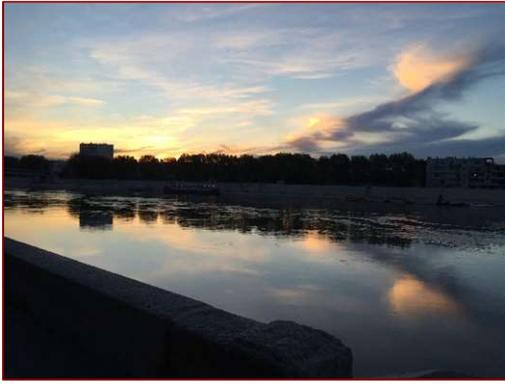
The rest of the book is about the adventures the children have with their toy dragon who, when they are alone with him, magically transforms to his original massive, fire-breathing self and flies them on his huge wings back to wonderful places where they have exciting adventures, encounter villains, and rescue innocents.

I think what made my book special for my grandchildren was the use of their real names and real personalities. It enabled me to make jokes about them and their parents. They especially liked the fact that their parents were excluded from the adventures and never able to see the dragon because he was invisible to all adults. I was also able to write compliments about the skills each child has and how they all saved the dragon as often as he saved them.

Ultimately, the book ended and the children outgrew the storytelling age. But it was a merry idea and I am glad I thought of it.

Nevada Professor Emeritus Bourne Morris is author of a trilogy of mysteries about campus violence. Her first, *The Red Queen's Run*, introduces Dr. Meredith "Red" Solaris, who becomes interim dean of journalism after the brutal death of her predecessor. The next two Red Queen mysteries focus on sexual assault on campus and violations of free speech. Bourne spent 26 year as professor at the University of Nevada, Reno Reynolds School of Journalism, where she taught marketing communications and media ethics. Before joining the Reynolds school, she spent twenty years in New York advertising, eventually becoming head of Ogilvy & Mather's agency in Los Angeles. She lives in Reno, Nevada with her husband and loves visiting their children and grandchildren. <http://www.bournemorris.com/>





On the Van Gogh Trail in Arles

by Diana Chambers



The morning after our arrival in Arles, I take a peek at the quiet early morning street and rooftops. Eager to explore, I leave my husband to his breakfast, content with my mission to sample a local croissant en route.



I am off to find another Van Gogh site, the Pont de Trinquetaille.



I head back inside the old town and find the sanitarium in which Van Gogh was confined. Here is the courtyard view of La Maison de Santé. Wandering inside the old structure, I feel Vincent's presence.



On the Van Gogh Train in Arles, continued

This carousel was built only ten years after his death.



Who wouldn't want mail delivered by this cheery postman?



I continue to a quiet canal and a bit beyond it, another Van Gogh site, Alyscamps, the old Roman burial ground.



I cross the railroad tracks in search of another scene, the old mill. Maybe this is it. Maybe not.



On the Van Gogh Train in Arles, continued

Re-entering the old city walls, I reach the Coliseum where a plaque marks the view point for Les Arènes d'Arles.



Struck by the blues and yellows I've seen everywhere in my wanderings, I realize how much this town influenced Vincent. Like him, I have fallen in love with Arles and pass through the cobbled lanes as if in a dream.



Returning to collect my husband, I take him to the hospital courtyard garden for a crepes lunch. Inside these old walls, I stumble upon a new and quirky library similar in spirit to that in Bologna. As I shake my head in awe at a librarian, she replies with a smile, "*Étonnante.*" Stunning, it is.



On the Van Gogh Train in Arles, continued

Far, far too soon, it is time to check out of our lovely hotel. (Why did I plan only a one-day trip?!)



To make the most of every moment, we walk back to the railway station along the Rhône, still searching for the Starry Night view plaque.

Near the Yellow House, we see the remnants of a WW2 bombed bridge . . . the seductively curving river . . . but not the actual site where Vincent stood and painted the timeless image that makes me delirious with emotion. Next time, I vow.



The quiet little train station awaits us. I love this town.

Diana Chambers is SinC Norcal's current Vice President and the author of two Nick Daley Series books: *Stinger* and *The Company She Keeps*.

Member News



New Releases

Audible France released *L'évadée*, the French language edition of Simon Wood's *The One That Got Away*. *Malfrats*, the French language version of *Lowlifes*, came out last month. Simon's *The Hooker* is also getting a French makeover and will be out in the summer under the title *Le Pute*.

Willow Glen Heist by Alec Peche, book #2 of the Damian Green series, on March 2 by GBSW Publishing

"To Hell with Women" by J.J. Lamb (retitled from "It Can Happen Anywhere") reprinted in the *Bad Business* anthology, PS Publishing, UK, with pulp/noir stories edited by the late Ed Gorman and PS editor Peter Crowther

"Doppelgangers" by Susan Bickford and "Crime on Hold" by Clare Ortalda in *Fish Out of Water: A Guppy Anthology*, published on March 24 by Wildside Press

Fields of Gold by Shelley Bates, writing steampunk as Shelley Adina, book #12 in the Magnificent Devices series, on April 24 by Moonshell Books, Inc.

A Head in Cambodia: A Jenna Murphy Mystery by Nancy Tingley (her first work of fiction) on March 13 by Swallow Press/Ohio University Press

Water Signs by Janet Dawson, book #12 in the Jeri Howard Mysteries, on April 7 by Perseverance Press

Mrs. Jeffries Rights a Wrong by Emily Brightwell, book #35 in the Victorian Mysteries, on May 3 by Berkley Prime Crime

Public Appearances

May 6, 1:00-4:00 p.m., Camille Minichino will appear at the Castro Valley Library Book Fair, 3600 Norbridge Ave., Castro Valley.

May 12 at 7:00 p.m., Judith Newton's Davis book launch for *Oink: A Food for Thought Mystery* will be held at Avid Reader, 617 2nd Street, Davis.

May 20, 3:00-4:00 p.m., Janet Dawson and Kirsten Weiss will appear at Orinda Books, 276 Village Square, Orinda.

Member News, continued



Public Appearances, continued

June 3, 5:00-7:30 p.m., Heather Haven will be one of the authors reading at a *Noir at the Bar* at Cornerstone Bar, 2367 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, spearheaded by Laurie King, during the Bay Area Book Festival.

New Contracts

Mary Feliz has signed a contract with Kensington Publishing for books 4, 5, and 6 in the Maggie McDonald Mystery series.

Jenny Carless has signed with literary agent Kristy Hunter of The Knight Agency.

Awards

The Necessary Murder of Nonie Blake by Terry Shames was chosen by RT Reviews as the best contemporary mystery of 2016.

Oink: A Food for Thought Mystery, which was released on April 18, was named one of the “funniest books coming this spring” by MediaBookBub.com.

Miscellaneous

Laura Boss had a flash fiction piece, “Café Blanc,” published on Akashic Books’ website “Mondays are Murder” feature: <http://www.akashicbooks.com/cafe-blanc-by-laura-boss/>

Ana Manwaring wrote the lead review in Janet Rudolph’s *Mystery Readers Journal*, current issue (Small Town Cops II) titled “Small Town Lies” for Terry Shames’ *The Necessary Murder of Nonie Blake*.

Question of the Quarter



Besides writing, what other talents/expertise do you have?

I play keyboards with two ukulele groups—Sons of the Beach is a huge jam on the beach with over 100 participants, and All in Good Time Orchestra is a formal, performing group with about 20 ukes, bass, guitar, drums, and me. Sons of the Beach has a cameo in the sixth book of my series, *Art, Wine & Bullets*, and figures prominently in my short story, “Miscalculation,” coming up in *Santa Cruz Noir*.
Vinnie Hansen

Painting. Singing. Cooking. Talent maybe. Cooking I do well and love to cook. Also love to sing and paint. Have taken lessons, but remain an amateur at both. ***Terry Shames***

I have expertise in spas (the massage and gym kind), hotels, interior design and construction! Also travel—I know about flights, airports and hotels. I lived overseas and averaged 250,000 miles a year for 12 years, traveling internationally. I can answer questions! ***Laura Boss***

Crack editor of nonfiction and especially good on structure (years of editing for a feminist journal and more years of editing my students’ papers). Speaking before large groups (years of 200-plus students in a classroom). I was once a very good cook (my memoir, *Tasting Home*, and my mystery, *Oink: A Food for Thought Mystery*, both come with recipes). Interior design is still a passion, always Santa Fe style with turquoise and yellow walls. ***Judith Newton***

After being a screenwriter for over 25 years (read my memoir, hint, hint), I’ve taught screenwriting in LA at UCLA and also at Book Passage. Would give private lessons, but I would charge a lot, or else take it out in chocolate chip cookies. ***Rita Lakin***

Shrinking heads! After 35 years in the psychology biz and a full head of gray hair, I feel as though I’m at the top of my game as a psychologist. I have confidence in my skills, feel like I’m the real me, not the me that used to pretend to know what she was doing. My credibility with cops is high after so many years (and so many books). All I have to do is pull my glasses down on my nose, peer over the top, and I can say darn near anything and get away with it. ***Ellen Kirschman***

I’ve been a professional writer for almost 40 years, but a great cook and baker even longer than that! I’m just about finished with my first cookbook—an innovative collection of recipes I can honestly say you can’t find anywhere else. ***Lynda McDaniel***



Question of the Quarter, continued

All things cyber crime and technical espionage (I've been on the front lines of digital forensics for ~20 years). *Robin Stuart*

I have degrees in math and physics (Ph.D) and am on the faculty of Golden Gate University in San Francisco. I can answer questions for writers in: math, physics, history of science, philosophy of science. I'm also a miniaturist. *Camille Minichino*

I've been teaching creative writing at Napa Valley College for 10 years. Some say I have a talent for it! Also, I'm a developmental editor and inspiration coach (copy editor, too). And some Sisters agree I write a good book review – odd, I hated doing that in grade school. My husband says I have a talent for making honey-do lists. *Ana Manwaring*

Well, I am a world-class procrastinator—does that count? I'm very practiced at digging up information, i.e., researching diverse subjects. In fact, pretty compulsive about it. I am a . . . cat whisperer (?). I make a dynamite rice-and-tuna casserole. Eeesh. I just ran through my entire repertoire that doesn't include writing and editing. Obviously, I need to expand my horizons a bit. *Ann Parker*

My surprising skill is that I know how to hammer in a nail, caulk and paint, use a drill—or even a crowbar. (My husband and I rehabbed several houses—sometimes while living in them, which I don't necessarily recommend, although it does save money.) Claire Marshall, the heroine of my trilogy, owns a small construction company, and I drew upon my experiences to describe some of hers. *Patricia Dusenbury*

I love to work in stained glass, mainly lamps and birdhouses. In fact, my new series takes place in a glass studio where a murder occurs. *Carole Price*

I'm an art historian with a specialty in South and Southeast Asian art. I also like to throw pots. *Nancy Tingley*

My other areas of expertise are acting on the live stage at my local community theater, hiking in the wilderness with my llamas, riding horseback, and sailing. *Sharon St. George*

BFA/MA in art/photography. Mechanical designer. Gunsmith, competitive shooter. Architecture—designed 16'x24'kitchen/dining room edition for our Carmichael home. *Jim Guigli*

I make the best carrot cake on the planet! I like to bake. I also like to garden and am proud of my roses. *Janet Dawson*



Question of the Quarter, continued

In my “real life” I am a medical writer, so I know a bit about diseases and disorders, including some obscure ones. I know more than you will ever want to know about the vaccines and the anti-vaccination movement, having written books on both topics. At one time, I was the quality director in a vegetable cannery and can tell you a dozen good ways to die in a cannery (as well as all the boring stuff about how veggies get into cans). *Tish Davidson*

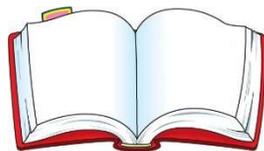
I can pack a carryon suitcase for six weeks on the road. The trick: navy, black, and scarves. The caveat: you will not be suitably attired for tea with the Queen. *Diana Chambers*

Besides fiction writing, I know a lot about financial fraud, software security and identity, database software, Las Vegas in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and am a talented technical writer. Also knowledgeable about film noir, screenwriting, story structure, and dialogue from a linguistics perspective. *Mysti Berry*

There’s a popular T-shirt that says: Books and Cats, Life is Good! I wholeheartedly agree, though I might edit it to say: Books, Cats and Yarn, Life is Good! I love knitting and actually manage to sell a few pieces each year. Knitting is a lot like reading for me—relaxing and fun and a little self-indulgent—meaning I’d rather do either than clean the house. I’m usually reading more than one book at any given time and have multiple knitting projects I’m working on. Also, and most importantly, both are best done in a cozy spot with a cat on one’s lap. *Malena Eljumaily*

I’m NOT a professional author, but I love to edit and have been privileged to be a beta reader for a couple of our authors. I’m available if you need me! *Margie Bunting*

If you have any suggestions for future **Questions of the Quarter**, please send them to
mbunting@sbcglobal.net



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 **Heidi Noroozy**, Event Coordinator (heidinoroozy@gmail.com), with meeting and venue suggestions and **Margie Bunting**, Newsletter Editor (mbunting@sbcglobal.net), with newsletter article suggestions and submissions

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