

THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

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A Letter from SinC NorCal Chapter Prez

Greetings, all and Happy New Year!

Holidays!! Eating!! Family and Traditions!! New and Old Friends!! Presents!! 2012 is almost over and another year begins!!

Welcome to Winter 2013!! How were the holidays? Did you gather around the table with family? Or wander off through snow filled landscapes or on sunny beaches? Any interesting tidbits that can be worked into a story? What is the traditional dish that your family can't do without on the holiday table? Is it an old favorite or an inside joke?

The holidays can be stressful and fun... and as writers there can be situations worth noting then using in our work. Did you travel? Gather around the home hearth? Host family or friends from out of town? Bring in the new year with a glass of bubbly? What's on your wish list? Any good stories there? This year we hosted my husband's entire family for Thanksgiving in our new home. The meal went off without a hitch - THANKFULLY!! After the meal, some of us took a walk around our new neighborhood. We came across flashing police lights and an officer in his police car. Safety cones sealed off an area in the road. It turned out to be a fallen tree limb and my family continued on their walk. But my mind was racing with possibilities, some of which I hope to season my stories.

What are your resolutions for 2013 year? Writing more, publishing more, and reading more? Or do you abstain from making resolutions?

What does this time of year mean to you? Can you turn it into your writing? How do we use it to thrill our readers and keep them coming back for more? Belonging to Sisters in Crime keeps me 'in the know' with publishing trends, helps me to be a better writer (and editor) and, most of all, my fellow 'sisters' are generous with their support, help and friendship. This is a great organization to be apart of and I look forward to seeing you all at our 2013 meetings and events.

Happy New Year!!

Helen Stavropoulos Sandoval

(aka H. S. Stavropoulos)

P.S. Remember to renew your membership in SinC NorCal!!



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Hot Off The Presses!

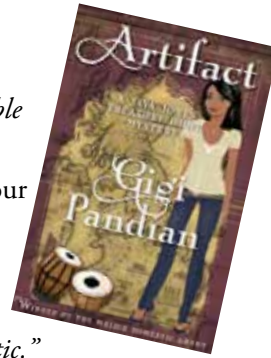
Gigi Pandian: ARTIFACT

Available from Amazon (Print & Kindle), Barnes and Noble (Print & Nook) & IndieBound (Print)

Suspense Magazine's Best of 2012 awards features two of our members: Our own Gigi Pandian's book *Artifact* won Suspense Magazine's Best Debut novel and is getting the recognition it deserves. Praise for *Artifact*:

"Pandian's new series may well captivate a generation of readers, combining the suspenseful, mysterious and romantic."

**** 4 stars, RT Book Reviews



Also, **Robin Burcell's** latest, **THE DARK HOUR**, got a great review.

Here's the link: <http://www.suspensemagazine.com/>

Coming in January 2013 **THE BLACK LIST**

the next riveting mystery featuring FBI Special Agent and forensic artist Sydney Fitzpatrick. Available in paperback from Harper.

Rhys Bowen: THE TWELVE CLUES OF CHRISTMAS

New York Times bestseller and Agatha and Anthony award-winning author Rhys Bowen, creator of the atmospheric Molly Murphy mysteries, set in turn-of-the-century New York City and the Royal Spyness mysteries, sparkling British comedies featuring penniless minor royal Lady Georgiana in the 1930s.

Her latest book, **The Twelve Clues of Christmas**, is on the New York Times bestseller list and is #2 hardcover mystery on bookspan.

Malena Eljumaily: SMOOTH MOVE

Not just a talented murderous cupcake maker, Malena is also an award-winning writer. Her story, **Smooth Move**, won 2nd place in the Redwood Writers Mystery Short Story Contest. I'm especially jazzed because the prize money was the first time I've ever been paid for my writing. You can read the story and the other winners on the website:

<http://redwoodwriters.org/contests/mystery-contest/>

J. J. Lamb: WHITE KNIGHT

J. J. Lamb, often seen at meetings with Bette Golden Lamb, sold a short story, **White Knight**, to the quarterly "Over My Dead Body - The Mystery Magazine Online." (<http://www.overmydeadbody.com/>). J.J. also has a PI novel currently under consideration for 2014 publication.

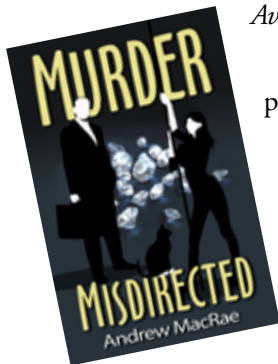
Andrew MacRae: MURDER MISDIRECTED

Available from Mainly Murder Press & Amazon (Print & Kindle).

Murder Misdirected, on the light noir side, is about a pickpocket who picks the wrong pocket one day and is now on the run from the police, the FBI and a mysterious and murderous criminal.

"You'll immediately love The Kid, the nicest pickpocket you'll ever meet. Smartly written, "Murder Misdirected" has all the ingredients of a great read."

(Camille Minichino - Ada Madison - SinC NorCal member & author of the Professor Sophie Knowles Mysteries)



A Reader's Perspective

from

Joan Imbeau



BOOKS, BOOKS everywhere at my house. Books in bookcases, books on the floor, piled up everywhere.

I have a great appetite to read, but don't have all the time I need. I've always wanted that book bag that says "So many books, too little time."

It is great fun for me to hang out with mystery authors and fans to hear about the latest books coming out. I want them all.

Now my problem is picking out the next book to read: I'm lured by *The Twelve Clues of Christmas* (Rhys Bowen), *The Probability of Murder* (Ada Madison), *Mission to Paris* (Alan Furst) and Agatha Christie (an autobiography). Also, a new series I have never heard of before. *"Thereby Hangs a Tail"* (Chet is a canine Sam Spade full of joie de verve, said Stephen King).

As I said... so many books, too little time!

JOAN may not be a mystery writer, but as SinC NorCal Board Secretary, she takes wonderful minutes! Thank you, Joan.





An excerpt from Rhys Bowen's *The Twelve Clues of Christmas*.



I was glad to board the Great Western Railway at Paddington Station and leave the depressing cold and grime of London behind. We had had to change trains in Exeter and then took a branch line. The little train had huffed and puffed its way beside a lively stream with snow-dusted hills on one side until it reached the small market town of Newton Abbott. The Hawse-Gorzley chauffeur was waiting with a splendid, if rather old, Bentley. As we set off through the country lanes the sun was sinking in a red ball behind the hills. Rooks were cawing as they flew home to their trees. On a great sweep of upland moor I saw a line of Dartmoor ponies silhouetted against the sunset.

We came around a bend and there it was, Tiddleton-Under-Lovey, nestled under a snow capped tor. Was that rocky crag the Lovey, I wondered. It didn't look very loving to me. Or was it perhaps the noisy little stream that passed under the humpback bridge as we approached the first houses? On one side of the village street was a small row of shops and a pub called the Hag and Hounds—complete with swinging pub sign depicting a witch on a broomstick with baying dogs below her. On the other side was a pond on which glided several graceful swans, and a village green. Behind this were some thatched cottages and the square tower of a church. Smoke curled up from chimneys and hung in the cold air. A farmer passed, riding a huge carthorse, the clip clop of its hooves echoing crisply in the evening air.

“Stone me, miss, it looks just like a ruddy picture postcard, don't it?” Queenie said, summing up my thoughts.

I wondered which of the cottages was to be occupied by my mother and Noel Coward. I wondered if my grandfather had consented to come and my heart leaped with hope. Christmas at an elegant house party and my loved ones nearby. What more could I want. Darkness fell abruptly as we drove between a pair of tall gateposts, topped with stone lions, and up a gravel drive. Lights shone out of a solid unadorned gray stone house, its severe façade half covered in ivy. This then was Gorzley Hall. It didn't exactly look like the site of an elegant house party—more Bennett residence than Pemberley, but who was I to judge by appearances?

We drew up at the front entrance and the chauffeur came around to open the door for me.

“My maid will help you with the bags,” I said, indicating to Queenie that she should stay, even though she was looking apprehensive, then I went up to the front door. It was a massive studded affair obviously designed to keep out past invaders. I rapped on the knocker and the door swung open. I waited for someone to come then stepped gingerly into a slate floored hallway.

“Hello?” I called.

On one side a staircase ascended to a gallery and I spied a pair of legs in old trousers up on a ladder. He was a stocky chap with shaggy gray hair, wearing a fisherman's jersey and old flannels and he was wrestling with a long garland of holly and ivy.

“Excuse me,” I called out.

He spun around in surprise and I saw that it wasn't a man at all but a big boned woman with cropped hair.

“Who are you?” she demanded, peering down at me.

My arrival wasn't exactly going as I had expected. “I'm Georgiana Rannocho,” I said. “If you could please go and tell Lady Hawse-Gorzley that I have arrived. She is expecting me.”

“I am Lady Hawse-Gorzley,” she said. “Been so dashed busy that I completely forgot you were coming today. Come up and grab the other end of this, will you? Damned thing won't stay put. It looked so simple in Country Life.”

I put down my train case and did as she requested. Together we secured the garland and she came down the ladder. “Sorry about that,” she said, wiping her hands on her old slacks. “I don't want you to think we're always this disorganized. Had a hell of a day here. Police tramping all over the place, not letting the servants get on with their work. That's why we're so behind. Must have the decorations up, y'know. First guests arriving day after tomorrow.”

Making the Most of Writers Conferences and Workshops

by Terry Shames



I've been to a number of conferences and workshops, and highly recommend them not just to further your career, but to meet fellow writers and have fun. There are many to choose from, but they basically come down to two types: Fan (or reader) conferences where adoring readers meet and mingle with their favorite authors. Or conferences focused on the art and techniques of writing. To get the most out of attendance, you need to decide which is better for your purposes.

At fan conventions you can mingle and enjoy a glass of wine with writers you admire, and who might even talk a little shop. And you can learn something from the panels in which authors talk about their work. Also, agents and publishers attend fan conferences. But if you are looking for tips to improve your writing skills and knowledge of the publishing industry, or to meet notable professionals who can help you, a writers' workshop/conference is for you.

Here's why: Both Fan and Writer's conferences/workshops often have "name" writers on panels or giving individual presentations, but workshop events and panels will be geared specifically to writers.

- When choosing a conference, firstly determine what your goal is — to mingle and relax or to get down to business; what is your budget? Conferences can be pricey, especially if you have to pay for airfare and accommodations. Then read the program carefully to decide if it fulfills your writing, publishing or promotion needs.
- If you have a manuscript you are hoping to sell, writers' conferences often include agents and/or publishers, and an opportunity to pitch to them. Some also offer a chance to have pages read by a professional who can give you feedback.

1) Preparation is everything:

- Know in advance which panels, meetings and presentations you want to attend. On arrival, recheck the program for last minutes changes of participants and venue. If you are interested in more than one panel or workshop at a given time, team up with someone to trade notes.
- Research the panels. Titles can be confusing and not accurately reflect the discussion topic.
- If you have a manuscript ready to go, practice your pitch, especially if you are hoping to meet an agent or publisher. Check the guest list and research the agent or publisher in advance so you know they represent the kind of novels you write. I once REALLY gave an elevator pitch to an agent—in an elevator. It worked because I had practiced.
- If you know someone will be there whom you want to meet, contact them in advance for a meeting. They may not be able to accommodate you, but no harm in asking!
- If you have arranged to have pages read, polish them! Make it easy for them to give you the best advice they can about your work,

2) Get the most out of the conference.

- Consider getting a roommate. Someone you can share room expenses AND compare notes and experiences with.
- Be open to new experiences. Attend a panel that's off-topic. Network! Introduce yourself to everyone, both famous people and fellow-attendees.
- If you find that a panel isn't meeting your expectations, don't be afraid to slip out. It's your time and money.
- Follow up. After the conference, look over your notes and email anyone you particularly enjoyed meeting. Friend them on Facebook or follow them on Twitter.
- Follow through. If you promised to do something for someone, do it. If someone agreed to help you, nudge them—nicely, of course.

And finally - don't go with an attitude. You'll find that you aren't the only one who is "on the brink" of being published—or who just got a contract. And you're not the only one who has had 1,000 rejections! You'll be in good company.

Here is a link to an article with a list of conferences and book festivals put together by best-selling author LJ Sellers (who, by the way, just signed an eleven-book deal with Thomas and Mercer): <http://tinyurl.com/a986bzf>

Good luck and happy conferencing!

Sisters in Crime board member Terry Shames grew up in Texas, where her debut novel, *A KILLING AT COTTON HILL*, is set. The novel will be released in July 2013. Terry lives in Berkeley, where she is working on her second novel in the series, *THE LAST DEATH*

NorCal SinC Photo Gallery



At the Fall Showcase event at Books Inc, seven authors read from their latest books... from L to R: Vinnie Hansen, Gigi Pandian, Sophie Littlefield, Kirsten Weiss, Pat Morin, Juliet Blackwell and Carole Price.



Our multi-talented Malena baked murderously delicious cupcakes - with edible daggers!



Queen of the Zombies Dana Fredsti enjoying the refreshments.



J. J. Lamb and Bette Golden Lamb

Renew Your Membership Today

The Northern California Chapter of Sisters in Crime is an energetic and vibrant group of mystery writers - published and almost published - who support, mentor, educate, exchange ideas and party together!

NorCal Sisters in Crime membership for 2013 is \$25, and \$40 for membership in SinC National. To renew with us, you can go to the website and use PayPal.

<http://www.sincnorcal.org/howtojoin.html>

Or you can send a check for \$25.00 made out to Sisters in Crime to:

Sisters in Crime, P.O. Box 3464, Santa Rosa, CA 95407

Know someone who is interested in writing—or reading—mysteries? Consider buying a [gift membership](#). You will get an acknowledgment in the newsletter and they will be part of the most exciting chapter of Sisters in Crime in America!

To renew with National, send your name, address, and a check (payable to Sisters in Crime) for \$40 to:

Beth Wasson, Executive Secretary

Sisters in Crime, P. O. Box 442124, Lawrence, KS 66044-8933

Diana Chambers - Letters from Asia

Introduction: November 24, 2012

I am about to embark on a literary adventure of a lifetime! During this 6-week trip I will be doing additional background research for a completed novel, *The Star of India*. Then I move on to “location scouting,” etc. for *Into the Fire*, the third in my Nick Daley thrillers, following *The Company She Keeps* - which I hope to introduce at the spring Sisters in Crime showcase.

Set in 1947 Hollywood and India, *The Star of India* is based on the life of actress Nancy Valentine. A meeting with the Cambridge-educated ruler of a small Indian principality leads her to a world of palaces, jewels and tiger hunts, but also one of conspiracy, intrigue and attempted murder. In these explosive last days of the British Raj, an American Maharani is viewed as a threat by all—especially Bhaiya’s elegant, powerful mother. Then his crown jewel, the fabled Moghul Ruby, disappears and this mystery will shadow Nancy until the present day.

Into the Fire continues the story of ex-CIA agent “E”—now Eve-Walker and former case officer Nick, also “retired.” Bruised by her CIA past, Eve adopts a three-year-old girl from China and settles near San Francisco. When Mimi disappears, Eve is forced to contact Nick and the two track Mimi’s maternal grandfather to his black market base in southern China. They rescue Mimi and flee down the Mekong, a dangerous river bordering China, Burma, Laos and Thailand—a region where the Shan has many allies.

Itinerary: Five countries in six weeks.

We start the trip with 2 days in Hong Kong to research *Into the Fire*. We then travel to Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) India, followed by a train ride to Cooch Behar, former royal principality in NE India: (*Research for The Star of India*). In December we travel to New Delhi, Jaipur, and the palace at Agra. Then onto Aurangabad, the Ajanta caves and the Ellora caves.

Our trip then extends to Kochi (the old Indian Ocean port of Cochin), Kerala, and the Spice Coast of SW India, followed by the Alleppy river/canal region then the Munnar hill station, tea plantation, elephant camp. Phew! Then a lovely relaxing couple of days at the beach before starting the last leg to do research for *Into the Fire* in Bangkok, Thailand, Ha Noi capital of Vietnam, then into Laos to Luang Prabang, and a Mekong River Cruise. A ferry will take us to Chiang Khong, in Thailand and onto Chiang Saen—Golden Triangle region—on a longboat to Burma and the Old City, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The final research for *Into the Fire* will be done in China: Kunming - the capital of Yunnan Province in China’s deep south, and border region of many “nationalities” linked to Southeast Asia. Winding down, we will visit the ancient village of Lijiang, and Dali (suggested by Lisa Brackman for “counter-culture, artistic vibe”). Last Stop on January 2 is Kunming, then we fly home via Beijing and Incheon to SFO. Phew!

I invite you to follow my journey as I write “Letters from Asia.” You can read it on the SinC NorCal Website.

