

# THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

a publication of the

## Sisters in Crime Northern California Chapter

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Summer 2012

### *A Message from our President*

Summer is here!!

We lost an hour of sleep after the Spring springing forward stuff, but Summer is worth it. The sun's brightness warms us, the breezes tickle rather than bite, and the light is golden and lingers into hours that only months ago cloaked us in darkness. What do we do with all the light? Write!! Edit, read, find an agent, send out submissions, wander the alleys of our imaginations or the aisles of favorite bookstores for that wonderful book, be creative, and always write. I want to add your books to my to-be-read pile!!

SinCNorCal soared with events in our first half of the year (Thank you, Terry Shames and Susan Shea) - with a bay cruise on a clear and glorious day, chocolate tasting with Janet Rudolph and Frank Price (raise your hand if that delectable treat found its way into your books as it did in mine), and the Spring Showcase at fabulous Orinda Books where we were hosted by Kathy Kerr!! A gem of a book store that I will return to again and again.

As a treat this year I purchased all the new BBC productions of Jane Austen's works. While never as wonderful as the books, one thing struck me; how much Austen's heroines walk. There is a lot of time for imagination, working out characters, re-thinking scenes in those walks. Of course, I don't have an English countryside to wander in, but still walking suits me to recharge my creativity and fuel my writing.

What about you? What recharges your batteries? Is it walking? Traveling? Perhaps it's reading a great book by a fellow Sister or Brother in SinCNorCal. Whatever it is, there is more light to do it because it's Summer.

*Helen Stavropoulos Sandoval*

(aka H. S. Stavropoulos)

P.S. SinCNorCal takes our usual hiatus for July, but August brings us back. Check the WebSite for upcoming events for the rest of the year. See you at our next event!



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## Writing in Multiple Genres

*Multi-talented, award-winning SinC writer Patricia Morin discusses the different creative processes for novels, short stories and plays.*

Although short stories, novels, and plays all integrate character, setting, plot, and conflict, I've experienced that the skills needed to succeed in these three forms of literature are uniquely different.

I believe there are many novelists who are unable to be succinct enough to write a short story. Also, there are many short story writers who are unable to stretch themselves, inevitably losing their way, as they attempt to complete a novel. There are even fewer writers capable of using direct speech to capture an audience's attention to an immediate situation in a limited physical space where a central theme or conflict unfolds.

In my experience, the distinction in these three types of literature boils down to one word: focus.

When learning about how to write plays, I read Stewart Spencer's (*The Playwright's Guide Book*). He stated: "Prose gets to the inner workings of a person's mind. It can analyze a gesture, expand on it . . . and then reveal alternatives meanings. Theater can only show the moment of penetrating and profound understanding." For me, it was the lure of the power of the spoken word that drew me to writing plays. As a retired Psychotherapist, the spoken word had been my livelihood.

The most important focus in a play is the character. As my teacher, and workshop coordinator, Will Dunne, (*The Dramatist Writer's Companion Tool*) stated regularly, "The character is the scene. The character is the story." Being a shrink, I was at home with this kind of thinking.

The setting, the time period, and the problem in plays can be depicted as the curtain opens. In the opening scene of *Piano Lesson*, by August Wilson, the audience sees old Salvation Army furniture in a very small apartment. The kitchen has ripped dishtowels. An African American man dressed in shabby clothes, is sitting at the messy kitchen table. An old upright piano with masks carved in the legs stands in the scant parlor. All that information is disclosed within one minute. The audience is left to learn what interaction this character has with his family, friends, students, self, and the soon-to-be-divulged problem.

The short story, on the other hand, focuses on a single event that affects a character, their environment, themselves, or others. Short stories show - don't tell - the action. The reader is given brief description about setting, time, and personal histories, and left to discover the motivations and, unlike the play, the reader can evaluate what is transpiring in the character's mind. On stage, it is the acting out of the emotion and interaction of characters that are clear. I started, with many other writers, writing short stories. It is in my nature to be more direct, and short stories seemed a more natural avenue for me.



*continued one Page 3*

## AUGUST MEETING

**Gigi Pandian**, SinC Sister and author of soon-to-be-published *Artifact*, will talk about her journey to self-publishing; the advantages & disadvantages of traditional publishing; the costs, logistics, and formatting choices for self-publishing, including helpful resources.

Please bring a dish to share at this potluck lunch.

**Saturday, August 4, Noon**

**Terry Shames home:  
2737 Claremont Blvd.  
Berkeley**

BEFORE YOU COME...

Gigi wrote up a list of 5 things to consider when making the decision about whether to self-publish. The list should also give you a sense of some of the things she'll be talking about at the August meeting:

<http://gigipandian.blogspot.com/2012/07/5-things-you-really-need-to-know-before.html>

## Congrats to...

Playwright **PAT MORIN** for sweeping the awards at Fringe of Marin – the Critic's Choice and Fringe of Marin, for her 10-minute, one-act humor-fantasy play **THE GATEKEEPER**.

Redwood Writers & The 6th Street Playhouse collaborated in the 2012 10 Minute Play festival, and our very own **MALENA ELJUMAILY'S** play **SPECIAL DELIVERY** was the winner!

**What a talented group of writers we all are!**

# Congratulations to our SinC NorCal Superstars!

Looking for something good to read this summer? Why not delve into one of the award winning mysteries penned by our very own members.

**The Agatha Award for Best Historical Mystery**  
**NAUGHTY IN NICE (a Royal Spyness Mystery) by RHYS BOWEN**

"Since I fell and broke my pelvis before Malice Domestic conference had begun, winning this award was a lovely surprise and cheered me so much, especially when I was told I got a standing ovation. At least this is one teapot I'll never forget!"

**The Golden Nugget Award - 2012 Left Coast Crime**  
**CITY OF SECRETS (the second book in the Miranda Corbie Series) by KELLI STANLEY**

"I was very, very honored to be nominated for the Golden Nugget. Winning it is still dream-like; I feel like I was wrapped up in a cloud of love. A big thank you to all the Sisters and Masters!"

**NCPA (Northern California Publishers & Authors) 2012 Best Fiction Award.**  
**DYING FOR A DANCE (the second book in the series) by CINDY SAMPLE.**



PAT MORIN - continued from Page 2

As we know, a novel's focus, for the most part, is wider and deeper. All aspects of the protagonist are explored, their ideals, their friends, their past, their problem. The plot can take many turns, and the antagonist (and other characters) can thwart the protagonist's journey to a solution. We travel the rocky road with the characters. We feel their pain, and see them change. As Stewart states in *The Playwright's Guidebook*: "We lift the veil off level after level after level."

For me, writing the novel is a long rocky road with the constant threat of dead ends. It's an arduous task of describing personalities and plots, with the abiding concern of keeping the reader engaged. But many writers see the craft in a broader focus. They love the detail telling, and draw you in to accompanying their characters down a life's path. It's a more natural way for them to write.

When the idea for my play, *The Gatekeeper*, came into my mind (originally from the thought of past lives—thinking on my own buried past lives—turned into buried emotions), I only saw the gatekeeper. He was in the astral plane, doing some time in limbo and wanting to get upstairs. He was proud of his cemetery of buried emotions. My main focus was only him. Then he is confronted with a woman who blames him for burying the wrong emotion, and she wants it back. For me, the rest of the story involved their interaction. A cape to add to his black outfit, an all black outfit for her, and few cemetery stones with feeling etched on them was all I needed to complete the story.

But when writing the short story, "*Homeless*," my main attraction, as I waited for a light at Jackson and Polk, was what was happening to a homeless man on the bench. Then I created a woman in a car who also felt homeless. She had just moved into the city and found solace, for less than a minute, in the world of the homeless man watching a red light. My focus was on more than the homeless man and the woman. The story needed to be unfolded, described in part, in her head. However, the story focused on one event.

Now, I'm forging my way through the world of many personalities, their back-stories, their goals. Centered around a temporary employment agency for seniors, I'm getting introduced to many characters; characters that I'll be walking down many roads with, and taking buses with, for quite awhile. *P.M.*

# Oh, The Fun We Had (...and are stilling having!)

## Events from the 2012 SinC Photo Album

### APRIL Chocolate & Mysteries - a delicious combination!



Read Janet's blog at:  
<http://dyingforchocolate.blogspot.com>

Led by Janet and Frank Rudolph, this delicious event featured Frank sharing his vast knowledge of the history, geography, social importance and characteristics of chocolate. A happy group tasted eight varieties of chocolate and enjoyed and a 'nip' of chocolate vodka to wash it all down! Janet - an entertaining and insightful speaker - talked about writing 'theme' mysteries. A big "Thank You" to Pat & Larry Morin for hosting the event in their beautiful home with amazing views of San Francisco Bay.

### March/April - Left Coast Crime, Mining for Murder



△ After the Trivia Breakfast, James Rollins autographs books.



SinC sisters & members of the 'The Lady Killers' blog group at breakfast: from the left: Rita Lakin, Peggy Lucke, Priscilla Royal, Mysti Berry, Ann Parker, Susan Shea, Camille Minichino



◁ SinC members Bette Lamb (r) and Larry Morin (l) - a suspect - talk to the police inspector of the mystery at the Banquet.



## Killer Cocktail Corner



### THE FUDGE SLIDE

#### Ingredients

- 1 oz Baileys Irish Cream
- 1 oz Kahlua Coffee Liqueur
- 1 oz Chocolate Vodka

#### To make

Mix ingredients together over ice in a cocktail shaker. Shake - Strain - Pour - Drink Repeat.

27.8% alcohol!

225 calories!!!

The dollhouse Camille Minichino donated to the LCC live auction. Note the crime scene, lower left.

## *Oh, The Fun We Had (continued)*

### **June - Spring Writers Showcase, Orinda Books**

Here's a comment from Kathy Kerr, our Orinda Books contact. "The SinC event at Orinda Books was terrific. The authors were entertaining and it was very well attended. Wow!"

Congratulations and a big "Thank You" to everyone who helped make this

*Pat Driscoll reads from her latest novel Shedding Light on Murder.*



*SinC NorCal President, Helen Stavropoulos Sandoval and Kathy Kerr from Orinda Books event coordinator..*



### THANK YOU TO OUR PARTICIPATING WRITERS

- ♦ Robert Baty ♦ Rhys Bowen ♦ Lisa Brackmann
- ♦ Pat Driscoll ♦ Dana Fredsti ♦ Jonnie Jacobs
- ♦ Bette & JJ Lamb ♦ Andrew MacRae
- ♦ Camille Minichino ♦ Kirsten Weiss ♦
- ♦ Simon Wood ♦

*Photo credit: Barbara Bernstein*



*Terry Shames (L) presents the SinC grant award to Janet Albright. Terry serves on the SinC NorCal Board and is Program Coordinator.*

On behalf of Sisters in Crime NorCal Chapter, **Terry Shames**, presented a \$1,000 **We Love Libraries** grant check to Janet Albright, Associate Dean of Library Services for Shasta College in Redding, California.

Janet thanked SinCNorCal and said the grant is greatly appreciated will be used to support the popular bestseller collection, whose shelves regularly contain books by SinC authors. The library, open to both students and the general public, has been the victim of recent funding cuts.

The presentation took place at the May meeting of **Writers Forum**, a nonprofit organization for writers established in Redding, California in 1983. After the presentation, Terry Shames presented a program on changes in the publishing industry titled **Do Your Homework** to a full house of more than 40 writers.

# AN INVITATION FROM MWA

*All sibs are invited for this one-of-a-kind event!*

Date: Saturday, July 28th, 12-2 PM

MWA NorCal is proud to announce our big event of the summer: a stellar panel of legal professionals ready to discuss the mysteries and intricacies of the legal process from every angle of the courtroom! This is an incredible chance to meet key professionals who have experience in criminal law—  
bring your questions for this very special MWA Courtroom!

You will meet:

- ✦ **Susan M. Breall**, a judge in San Francisco Superior Court.
- ✦ **Vilaska Nguyen**, felony trial attorney in the Public Defenders Office.
- ✦ **Karen Catalona**, deputy District Attorney in both San Francisco and Contra Costa Counties.
- ✦ **Sheldon Siegel**, NYT Bestselling Author of legal thrillers and practicing corporate and securities attorney.

Location: Villa D'Este Restaurant, 2623 Ocean Avenue (@ 19th Ave), San Francisco

Cost: Only \$25 per person. RSVPs due to [kelli@kellistanley.com](mailto:kelli@kellistanley.com) by **July 26th**.

Lunch: Choice of Eggplant Parmesan, Chicken Picatta, or Filet of Sole.

Lunch includes a house salad with antipasto, minestrone soup, pasta Bolognese, coffee or tea, and ice cream. <http://www.villadeste-sf.com>

**IMPORTANT:** An RSVP is a commitment to purchase lunch. If you RSVP and choose not to attend the meeting and do not cancel by the 26th, you will be expected to reimburse MWA.

You may pay in advance by sending checks to: Pat Morin, PO Box 2220 Sausalito, CA 94965.  
Make all checks out to MWA NorCal

*See You There!*

## Sisters in Crime Northern California Chapter

### It's All About YOU!

Make the most of your membership. Your Board of Directors 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. Please send your ideas and comments to **Camille**, Speakers Bureau, ([camille@minichino.com](mailto:camille@minichino.com)) or **Terry**, Events Coordinator, ([tmsshames@pacbell.net](mailto:tmsshames@pacbell.net)).

#### The Stiletta Newsletter

is published quarterly by the **Sisters in Crime Northern California Chapter**. For newsletter requests and submissions, contact Julie Benbow ([jambow99@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jambow99@sbcglobal.net)).