

THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

Sisters in Crime † Northern California Chapter

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MAY 2016

Dear Sisters and Misters,

It doesn't seem possible that three months have whizzed by since our first, shiny new newsletter. It has been an amazing time. First, the meet and greet in February at the North Branch of the Berkeley Public Library exceeded all expectations. We greeted many old friends and met new ones—altogether a wonderful social time. In March, despite slashing rain we had a great turnout for the special event with Jan Burke. She was a wonderful speaker and we learned a lot about how crime forensics are really handled.

At the Executive Committee meeting before the Jan Burke event, we discussed our upcoming participation in the **Bay Area Book Festival, June 4-5, www.baybookfest.org**. It's going to be a wonderful festival. Our participation is made possible by a grant from SinC national. What a great, caring organization. Working with this year's Executive Committee is turning out to be a dream. At the EC meeting, we divided up duties for the festival. When I asked for volunteers to help organize our participation, there was a chorus of "I can do that." Wow.

Elin Barnes has thrown herself into the job of Event Coordinator with great enthusiasm. As a result, we had a fascinating meeting in San Francisco in April with Detective Daniel Ichige, San Jose Police Department, about his job on the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. And for May, Elin has organized another terrific event, literary agent Elizabeth Kracht, with Kimberley Cameron & Associates, talking about manuscript revision. Speaking of the website, if you haven't had a chance to take a peek at it recently, you should do so, at <http://www.sincnorcal.org>. Former president Susan Shea



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President's Message, continued

and our web maven, Maddy McEwen, have been working with Sue Trowbridge to improve the site in several ways. I think you'll love the results. As of now, the member roster on the public portion of the website is complete, with links to member websites. The team has also launched the Members Only roster that includes information on how to contact members. In addition, be sure to check out the programs planned for the remainder of 2016.

Once again, thanks to Margie Bunting for extraordinary work on the newsletter.

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 and venue suggestions and **Margie Bunting**, Newsletter Editor, mbunting@sbcglobal.net, with newsletter article suggestions and submissions.



Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming SinC Norcal Events

Saturday, May 14 (second Saturday in May), 12:00-2:00 p.m.

Revising for Publication

Belvedere Tiburon Library, 1501 Tiburon Blvd, Tiburon

They say the best writing is rewriting – but when it's time to revise your manuscript, it isn't always easy being objective about your work. Literary agent Elizabeth Kracht from Kimberley Cameron & Associates talks about what she looks for when she begins to read submissions, and how writers can step back from their work and look at the whole project to help them in the revision process. This is sure to be an informative discussion, and will be followed by a Q&A.



Elizabeth (Liz) Kracht is a literary agent with Kimberley Cameron & Associates. She represents both literary and commercial fiction (including thrillers and mysteries!) as well as nonfiction, and brings to the agency experience as a former acquisitions editor, freelance publicist and writer.

Saturday, June 11 (second Saturday in June), 12:00-2:00 p.m.

Hot Off the Press: Sisters in Crime Norcal Spring Author Showcase

Copperfield's Books, 850 4th Street, San Rafael

Catch up on the latest! Please join us for a lively event featuring readings (and prize drawings) by members with new books published since last winter. Participating authors include: Cheryl Arguile, writing as Emily Brightwell; Josie Brown; Mariella Krause, writing as Marla Cooper; Rita Lakin; J.J. Lamb and Bette Golden Lamb; Bourne Morris; Sharon Owen, writing as Sharon St. George; Marcia Rosen; Priscilla Royal; Susan Shea; Kirsten Weiss.

Saturday, August 6, 12:00-2:00 p.m.

Furrensics: Animal CSI

Venue: TBD

Every dog has its day . . . in court. Join animal forensics specialist Beth Wictum as she introduces us to the fascinating world of animal DNA and how it's used to solve criminal cases. She'll tell us about the kinds of cases she saw in the UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Lab and share some possibilities for DNA-based plot twists.

Beth Wictum recently retired as director of the UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Lab, which she established in 2000. She began her career in animal profiling after obtaining her B.S. in zoology and served as a member of the American Academy of Forensics Sciences, the CA Association of Crime Lab Directors, and the International Society of Animal Genetics Forensic Standing Committee.

Check our website for more info regarding venues and directions: <http://www.sincnorcal.org>. As always, there will be no meeting in July.

In Case You Missed It . . .

If you weren't able to join us at our March and April meetings, here's what you missed.

March Meeting: We gathered in Oakland to hear prolific, award-winning mystery writer **Jan Burke** tell us about The Crime Lab Project, which she founded and which works to increase awareness of the problems facing forensic science labs in the United States. Jan's presentation focused on how crime fiction authors can use their knowledge of forensic science to write a better book, as well as where to find resources available to help us "get it right." Jan cleared up misconceptions about topics ranging from bones, DNA evidence, hair, blood spatter, gunshot residue and bite marks to coroners, medical examiners and expert witnesses.



Jan says she wants her epitaph to read, "Had a great time, thanks for inviting me." Thank YOU, Jan, for being such an engaging speaker. If you are a SinC Norcal member and would like a copy of Jan's presentation slides, please contact Margie Bunting at mbunting@sbcglobal.net.



April Meeting: Detective **Daniel Ichige** (standing, third from left) of the San Jose Police Department related some of his experiences as a member of the Silicon Valley Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force. Dan's primary responsibilities on the task force include identifying users and sharers of child pornography, obtaining search warrants, confronting

suspects at their home, and conducting intense interrogations using creative methods of communication. A decorated police officer, Dan has an admirable 95% confession rate with child pornography suspects and states that he has never arrested a woman for this crime, although one or two in one thousand are women.

We hope you can join us at our upcoming meetings!

Left Coast Crime in Phoenix: Memories

Quite a few of us traveled to Phoenix at the end of February to enjoy the 4-day festival that was Left Coast Crime (LCC) 2016.

Our Intrepid Toastmaster, Catriona McPherson



Lefty Award Winners Rhys Bowen & Gigi Pandian



Lefty Award Nominees
Cindy Sample & Heather Haven

LCC 2016 Memories, continued

At the signing tables, Author Speed Dating and Author Encounter:



J.J. and Bette Golden Lamb



Diana Chambers



Rhys Bowen & Terry Shames



Martha Cooley



Mysti & Dale Berry, Camille Minichino



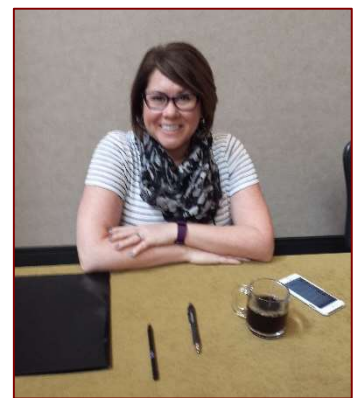
Susan Shea



Rita Lakin



Gigi Pandian



Holly West

LCC 2016 Memories, continued

Panels and other events:



Psychology of Murder with Pat Morin and Ellen Kirschman



Simon Wood facilitating a hilarious panel



Guest of Honor Gregg Hurwitz



Some familiar faces at the Ladykillers Table



Mr. & Mrs. Adam Plantinga



Kelli Stanley with Mike & Margie Bunting

IMHO this was one of LCC's best conferences. The hotel was great, conducive to having intimate conversations. I talked to more people I didn't know than at any previous LCC conference. Maybe I'm getting braver, maybe I'm more relaxed, but these talks seem to have big consequences—new friends, new ideas, new learning. -- **Ellen Kirschman**

I had a great time at the convention although it was zoom, zoom, zoom. It was absolutely wonderful to have total strangers come up and tell me how much they love my books. And always fantastic seeing friends and fellow authors again. -- **Cindy Sample**



From Chaos to Clues: Process and Craft

by Cheryl Arguile (aka Emily Brightwell)

Process, or how we do what we do as authors, is an amazing animal. I've been in the writing business for over 20 years, and I've yet to meet any two writers who produce their novels using the exact same methods. Some outline, some charge ahead as soon as they fall in love with an idea, some storyboard every scene, and some use a combination of all of those techniques, or none of them. Yet despite there being no one "right" method, the world is filled with wonderful books. I don't think I'm the only person fascinated by the mysterious nuts and bolts of putting together a story; as a matter of fact, it's the second most frequently asked question I am asked. So I've decided it might be of some value to share my process with my fellow writers.

When I sit down to start a book, the first thing I do is decide what I want to say—in other words, the underlying theme. Now before you flash back to sophomore English, my concept of "theme" isn't five pages on "what I did on my summer vacation." It's about writing what I believe, on the deepest level of my being. I'm a left-wing, progressive Christian with Buddhist tendencies, and I have a lot of deeply held opinions and beliefs I want to express. I know, most of you will shout that you just want to tell a story . . . that it's genre fiction and you just want to entertain people. Of course you do, and so do I, but writers don't pick up a pen, open a vein and sweat blood just to tell a story. Whether you know it or not, the moment you dedicated yourself to learning this craft, you had something you needed to express. Writing is bloody hard and no one in their right mind would do it unless they were driven. But I digress . . . back to my process.

Now that I know what I really want to say, I decide what kinds of characters, settings and suspects I will need. For *Mrs. Jeffries Wins the Prize*, the theme was "old sins cast long shadows." So to make that idea work, the characters had to have been associated with one another in the past. For *The One Who Got Away*, the theme was "even criminals are entitled to justice," so the victim needed to be someone whom most people would think deserved to die. You see what I'm getting at here: for your theme to be effective, you've got to come up with a set of circumstances that fit.

After I have my theme, suspects, characters and setting, I write the first of two crime lines. From my character/suspect list, I decide on the murderer, the victim and, most importantly, the basic circumstances of the crime—setting, method, time of day, etc. Then I pretend I'm the killer and walk through the crime. I do it in a very general fashion and don't sweat the details at this point.

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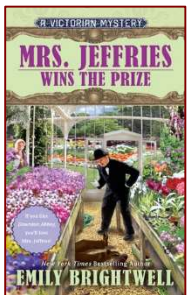
From Chaos to Clues, continued

Then I write the first draft. My series regulars examine the scene of the crime and interview/follow/obtain gossip about potential victims. But the most important information they learn is who the victim really was and who might have wanted him/her dead. Of course, it is here that I start planting the red herrings and false clues. I do the entire first draft using my suspect list, my theme, and the information the police and the household have picked up. As all writers know, the deeper into the story you get, the better you know your characters and the easier it becomes to know what they'll do next and how they'll react to the events that push the plot forward. I don't do an entire first draft; I do everything but the last two chapters, which I leave for the second draft.

But before I start that second draft, I do another, incredibly detailed, crime line. This is the heart of the story. I start from the moment the killer decides to do the deed and move slowly through his or her world to the murder itself. As I write this landscape, I pay close attention to anything and everything in the environment that can be used as a clue. It is this document that will ultimately lead to unmasking the murderer.

The second draft is so much easier to write than the first one. To begin with, I go back to my theme repeatedly and try to use it as both an over-reaching story arc and in individual scenes throughout the story. For example, if my theme is "the truth will out, no matter how deeply buried," I would have both the household characters and the various suspects grappling with old secrets from their past. As a practical exercise, using theme keeps me on track as to how the story should be unfolding. If I find myself going off on a tangent (and let's be honest, we all do that occasionally), I ask myself if the digression is in keeping with my theme and feels natural to the story. If so, it stays in. At this point, I add the last two chapters and then do a final draft to catch errors or other problems. I also use this third run-through to make sure the timeframe of the story makes sense,

This is my process. It's not particularly smooth or easy, and I'd be lying if I claimed it was perfect, but it works for me and keeps me in front of my computer writing. When I was starting out, I tried everything—outlines, storyboards, free flow, and even clustering—before hitting upon the method that was most natural for me. I'm hoping that by sharing my process, some of you might find a useful idea or two.



Emily Brightwell (Cheryl Arguile) has written 44 novels in three different genres. She is the author of the popular Mrs. Jeffries Victorian mysteries. Her latest, release, *Mrs. Jeffries Wins the Prize*, is the 34th book in the series. She is delighted to announce that Penguin Random House has offered her a new contract for books 35 and 36 in the series.

Now What?

by M. Glenda Rosen (aka Marcia G. Rosen)



Now what, indeed!

There are numerous options for authors today to get their books in print, but many people have a room full of good-looking printed books they wrote and wonder, “What do I do now?”

From traditional publishing, self-publishing, independent publishing, and university presses to e-books, it’s important that you be sure your publisher will pay attention to your requests and needs and will offer the expertise and experience to help you publish your book the way you want. However, it is also essential for you as an author to realize that publishing is only the beginning. You need an aggressive and comprehensive marketing plan incorporating traditional and social media options and opportunities.

Who is going to read your book? Who will buy it? Oh yes, of course some friends and family. But all traditional and self-publishers will tell you, “You need to market your book. YOU need to promote it, tell your story, and create a buzz about it.”

I know you’re a writer. You’re a creative person. You really don’t want to do this. However, more and more, it’s a proven fact that writers do have to promote their books. No matter how wonderful, interesting, and compelling your book might be, you still have to let the reading world know it exists. Any publisher or literary agent will agree with me. Unless you market your book, chances are it will fall through the cracks of literary chaos.

Following are a very few of the many options now available Good luck!

Marketing Options/Opportunities for Authors Initial Concepts for “Creating a Buzz”

Marketing includes everything from getting your book reviewed to doing book signings or seminars. It’s also important to have a website for your book. It’s like that old question that advertisers asked: “Do you know what happens when you don’t advertise?” Answer: “Nothing.”

Public Relations provides information and can be a way to get free publicity through articles, book reviews and interviews in print or electronic media.

Advertising is when you pay for placement in the media such as a Facebook Author Fan Page, a Google ad or even local media, which is far less costly than national media. Authors can now also pay for reviews in publications such as Kirkus Indie Review, Goodreads and San Francisco Reviews. Search Google for reviews and event contest options.

Continued

Now What? Continued

Traditional Marketing Actions

Author Book Launch

- Schedule book launch event, time/place and details.
- Develop invitation list and sign-in sheet and have books on hand to sell.
- Send releases to media, announce on website, and email personal contacts.

Author Public Relations Actions

- Develop “pitch” letters for speaking opportunities.
- Develop press release to get calendar listings for signings and speaking dates.
- Submit online calendar listings on websites in target market.
- Arrange to speak at target-appropriate conferences.
- Develop a sell-sheet with your book cover, about your book and author.

Online and Social Media Actions

- Consider a Blog Book Tour.
- Be sure to have some book swag (bookmarks, cards, flyers, T-shirts, etc.).
- Goodreads Giveaway Programs.
- The e-Library includes 9,000 books: <http://e-library.net/>
- USA Book Awards
- Kirkus Reviews: You can pay for a Kirkus review through their Indie program. Information about Indie reviews can be found here: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/indie/about/>
- Facebook Author Fan Pages Advertising Program: Costs vary. You can spend \$5 a day or \$100 for United States and any other country you want to reach. Can be very effective in building social media and website traffic. <https://www.facebook.com/AuthorAds>
- Social media postings - Content may include book signings and other events, new book announcements, press releases, snippets or excerpts from book to engage audience.

M. Glenda Rosen (Marcia G. Rosen) is the author of a new mystery novel, *Dying to Be Beautiful: Without a Head*. Coming in the *Dying to be Beautiful* series are *Fashion Queen* (6/1/16) and *Fake Beauty* (10/15/16). Irish setter “Watson” stars in the mystery series. As Marcia Rosen, she has also written *Eliminate the MindBlocks and RoadBlocks to Success* and *My Memoir Workbook*. Contacts: www.dyingtobebeautiful.com, marciagrosen@gmail.com



Europe by Train: These Roman Streets

by Diana Chambers



Trastevere Street

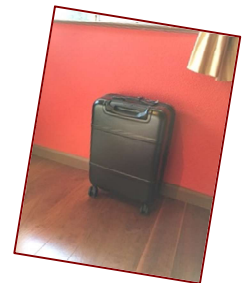


Map Room, Vatican Museum
Modern Italy



Ancient Italy

This is our second time traveling Europe by train. We go light, one small carryon each. Previously I had a solid Red Oxx backpack that gave me great freedom of movement. But after a shoulder injury this year I bought a Bric spinner with four wheels for easy navigation and a handle for lifting up steps. With my suitcase filled with several black and navy separates, I was ready for almost everything except tea with the Queen.



Tiber River

Two years ago we visited Italy last, Rome last of all. This time it would be first. I needed to test just how fickle I am. I've lived in Paris and visited often; it has always been my great love. So I was shocked by my visceral reaction to Italy, most especially Rome.

The first evening we arrived late but in time for a glass of (organic) wine at an outdoor neighborhood bar/café. The server was gracious and warm . . . the night was warm!

The warmth continued to surround us. Although much of Italian art is about reaching for the heavens, life here is cheerfully grounded in the earth. This earth. This life.



Trastevere bar/café

Continued

Europe by Train: These Roman Streets Continued



Trastevere Neighborhood



Food Market



No visitor should miss the Vatican . . .

. . . or Capitoline museums, set on one of the seven hills. Their collections are astonishing, but they have serious competition from the art of the churches on every corner.

And the streets.

Vatican Map Room Ceiling



Views of Forum Ruins and Equestrian Statue



Bernini's Ludivica,
San Francesco Church

Continued

Europe by Train: These Roman Streets Continued



Bernini's Fountain, Piazza Navona

The week goes too swiftly. And too soon we are back at the colossal Termini railway station. Next step: Arezzo, Tuscany.

For more Europe by Train, please visit Postcards, the blog:
<http://dianarchambers.blogspot.com/>

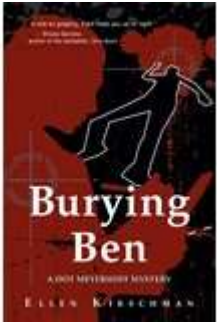


Diana Chambers is SinC Norcal's current Vice President and the author of two Nick Daley Series books: *Stinger*, and *The Company She Keeps*. She is currently touring Europe with her husband and doing research for future novels. At left, she is pictured on the train from Zurich to Paris.



Book Reviews

Burying Ben by Ellen Kirschman



Ellen Kirschman's *Burying Ben* snatches you up from the first scene and keeps your eyes fastened on the page until the surprising twist ending. The protagonist, Dr. Dot Meyerhoff, is a clinical psychologist newly hired by the police department. She instantly has to face multiple challenges, such as the cops' skepticism about the value of what she can bring to the table and her boss's expectation of instantaneous "fixes." I really like Kirschman's portrayal of the Meyerhoff character, who has good psychological instincts but doesn't have x-ray vision. In the real world even highly skilled psychologists have to feel their way and adjust their assessments as events and revelations unfold. I was also very taken with Kirschman's deft unveiling of some of the characters, who at first seemed one-dimensional but gradually revealed themselves as complex and very human. On a last note, I want to mention that Kirschman's writing is superb and contributes in a large way to creating a compelling read.

The Right Wrong Thing by Ellen Kirschman

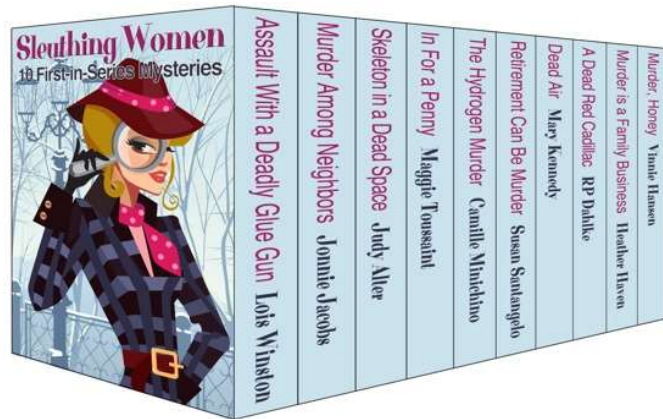
To call *The Right Wrong Thing* a gripping read is an understatement. The second mystery in the Dr. Dot Meyerhoff series makes good on the promise of the first. Ellen Kirschman gives us fully realized characters, a plot with perfectly timed twists, and a protagonist you root for. Add in a wonderful writing style and you have the full recipe for a totally satisfying mystery. But what I personally liked best was the accurate rendition of what it's like to be a woman in a male-dominated profession. The struggles of the rookie Randy Spelling to deal with the traumatizing experience of shooting an unarmed woman are magnified by the suck-it-up cop culture where emotional expressions aren't tolerated. Even newly appointed Chief Jacqueline Reagan, who has made it through the ranks to a position of command, isn't spared the hazing by cops who resent being subordinate to a woman. And Dot Meyerhoff has the double whammy of being a woman and a psychologist, both reasons for police personnel to discount her. Kirschman doesn't give Meyerhoff the easy way out. Meyerhoff isn't a wizard who can wave a magic wand and make everyone's emotional problems disappear. She's a very real therapist who has to face the painful limits of her profession. Yes, this is fiction, but it's also very real.



Reviewed by Judith Wrubel, who writes as Judith Janeway. Judith will follow up her first Valentine Hill Mystery, *The Magician's Daughter*, with the second in the series, *The Magician's Duel*, in September 2016.

Sleuthing Women Features Several Fellow Norcal Sisters

SinC Norcal Sisters Vinnie Hansen, Camille Minichino, Jonnie Jacobs and Heather Haven are featured in *Sleuthing Women: 10 First-in-Series Mysteries*. Launching May 1 and now on sale, the collection includes 10 full-length mysteries featuring murder and assorted mayhem by 10 critically acclaimed, award-winning, and bestselling authors. Each novel in this set is the first book in an established multi-book series – a total of over 3,000 pages of reading pleasure for lovers of amateur sleuth, caper, and cozy mysteries, with a combined total of over 1700 reviews on Amazon, averaging 4 stars.



Murder Among Neighbors, a Kate Austen Suburban Mystery by Jonnie Jacobs – When Kate Austen’s socialite neighbor, Pepper Livingston, is murdered, Kate becomes involved in a sea of steamy secrets that bring her face to face with shocking truths—and handsome detective Michael Stone.

The Hydrogen Murder, a Periodic Table Mystery by Camille Minichino—A retired physicist returns to her hometown of Revere, Massachusetts and moves into an apartment above her friends' funeral home. When she signs on to help the Police Department with a science-related homicide, she doesn't realize she may have hundreds of cases ahead of her.

Murder is a Family Business, an Alvarez Family Murder Mystery by Heather Haven—Just because a man cheats on his wife and makes Danny DeVito look tall, dark and handsome, is that any reason to kill him? The reluctant and quirky PI, Lee Alvarez, has her work cut out for her when the man is murdered on her watch. Of all the nerve.

Murder, Honey, a Carol Sabala Mystery by Vinnie Hansen—When the head chef collapses into baker Carol Sabala’s cookie dough, she is thrust into her first murder investigation. Suspects abound at Archibald’s, the swanky Santa Cruz restaurant where Carol works. The head chef cut a swath of people who wanted him dead, from ex-lovers to bitter rivals to greedy relatives.

Other authors in the collection include Lois Winston, Judy Alter, Maggie Toussaint, Susan Santangelo, Mary Kennedy, and R. P. Dahlke.

<http://amzn.to/260z0T6>

<https://store.kobobooks.com/en-us/ebook/sleuthing-women-10-first-in-series-mysteries>

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/sleuthing-women-lois-winston/1123663544?ean=2940153179940>