

# THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

Sisters in Crime  Northern California Chapter

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## Dear Sisters and Mistery,

Happy spring!

I've been thinking lately of the multiple lives I've lived. My "real" lives and my story lives. A writing career, as you know, is not for the faint-hearted. Yet it has expanded my world in infinite ways and enabled me to explore many roads not taken. Still, much of my work remains unpublished. So why do I keep being inspired to write the next one?

As authors, we craft stories we hope will entertain and thrill, evoke a laugh, a tear. An "aha" moment. We get to stand in the shoes of many characters. Just as we bond with them—even our bad guys, in a way—we want our readers to care about them, too. Lately there's been much discussion of how reading fiction helps develop empathy. This is true of other forms of media that lead us to step outside ourselves.

When I began watching *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix), I was annoyed by the often salacious nature of the scenes. But as the show developed—and perhaps the producers/writers became more secure in their success—they began to use their power to educate us about their imprisoned characters, each of them with full, usually heartbreaking back stories. I've said many times that OITNB changed my life. From watching this show, I developed a new sense of compassion for incarcerated men and women, and I know full well that there but for the grace of God—and my white skin—go I. (Believe me, I have a checkered past!)

Last year, two young women, one a former student of Vinnie Hansen, visited our booth at the Bay Area Book Festival.



## CONTENTS

- Page 1: President's Letter
- Page 3: Upcoming Events
- Page 4: In Case You Missed It
- Page 5: More on Prisoners Literature Event
- Page 7: New EC Member Bios
- Page 8: Series vs. Stand-alone
- Page 10: Truth or Dare
- Page 12: Member Profile: Vera H-C Chan
- Page 16: A Bold Third Act
- Page 18: How to Prepare for Your First Panel
- Page 20: Nuggets from LCC 2018
- Page 24: Member News
- Page 26: Question of the Quarter

## President's Letter, continued

They were there with the Prisoners Literature Project (PLP)—[www.prisonlit.org](http://www.prisonlit.org)—a Berkeley nonprofit dedicated for thirty years to fulfilling inmates' book requests. I learned the dictionary is one of the most in demand. This still chokes me up. Think of the thirst that drives this request, the yearning to read and understand the words, to grow and travel beyond those prison walls. I vowed to try to help PLP in the future.

This year we have that opportunity. On June 2, the NorCal chapters of Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America are co-hosting a benefit for the Prisoners Literature Project, to which our boards have agreed to make a joint contribution. Lunch and wine will be served, along with your favorite side. We'll be joined by three people involved with the creative and spiritual development of San Quentin inmates. One of them, a former prisoner who now facilitates rehabilitation groups, will share a video, and I'll moderate their discussion.

You won't be surprised to learn prisoners love mysteries and thrillers. Each of us has many in our home libraries that would find eager new homes. So do attend and bring your new or gently used paperbacks. As postage is costly, PLP cannot accept hardcovers including dictionaries and other reference books. The event will take place at the Edgewood Room, City Hall, 420 Litho Street, Sausalito. For more details, please read the *Stiletta* pages or our website.

In the meantime, see you May 5 for Mystery Ink: Selected Readings from Sisters in Crime (Spring Showcase), 12:00 to 2:30 p.m. at Books, Inc., 2251 Chestnut Street, San Francisco. And keep writing!

Thanks for supporting our great group.

Sincerely,  
Diana Chambers  
President, Sisters in Crime, NorCal



# Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming SinC NorCal Events

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**Saturday, May 5, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

## *Spring Showcase*

### *Mystery Ink: Select Readings from Sisters in Crime*

*Books, Inc., 2251 Chestnut Street, San Francisco*

Find your new favorite mystery author as Sisters in Crime members read from their latest works. We gather at noon for our usual potluck, mingling, and announcements, followed by the readings at 12:30 that are open to the public. Invite your friends to hear from our talented Sisters in Crime members!

#### Participating members:

Ana Brazil, *Fanny Newcomb and the Irish Channel Ripper*

Glenda Carroll, *Drop Dead Read*

Janet Dawson, *The Ghost in Roomette Four*

Dana Fredsti and David Fitzgerald, *Time Shards*

Heather Haven, *The Culinary Art of Murder*

Katherine Bolger Hyde, *Bloodstains with Bronte*

Ellen Kirschman, *I Love a Cop, Third Edition: What Police Families Need to Know*

Terry Shames, *A Reckoning in the Back Country*

Susan Shea, *Dressed for Death in Burgundy*

Nancy Tingley, *A Death in Bali*

**Saturday, June 2, 12:00 – 2:30 p.m.**

## *Prisoners Literature Event*

*Sausalito City Hall, Edgewater Room, 421 Litho Street, Sausalito*

Join us for an exciting SinC/MWA joint event featuring a panel on prisoner literacy and human development, as well as information about how we can help the prisoners gain access through the Prisoners Literature Project to more books while they are incarcerated. For details about this event, please see the article, “More about the Prisoners Literature Event” on page 5. Bring paperbacks to donate and potluck side dishes (main dish will be provided).

**As always, there will be no July event scheduled.**

**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 . . .

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

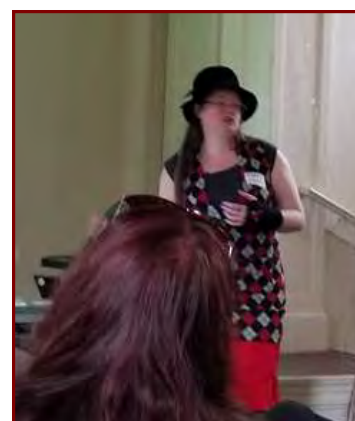
## February Meeting



The first meeting of the new year is traditionally our Meet and Greet, where members can mingle with potential new members and report on what's new, and this February was no exception. Board members also took the opportunity to talk about exciting events and projects coming this year for SinC NorCal, and refreshments were enjoyed by all.

## March Meeting

Marketing Content Strategist Karma Bennett of Future is Fiction Communications was our guest speaker, conveying valuable information about building your brand, finding an audience, and spreading the word about your books through the use of social media.



## April Meeting



At one of our infrequent South Bay meetings, Judge Portor Goltz gave a fascinating talk about his experience in Juvenile Traffic Court, where he has the authority to fashion creative sentences for youth convicted of a wide spectrum of lower-level offenses relating to drug and alcohol, tobacco, truancy, trespassing, public transit fare evasion, curfew violation, fish and game law violation, harbor and navigation code violation and, yes, traffic issues. Such sentences have included essays, public service announcements,

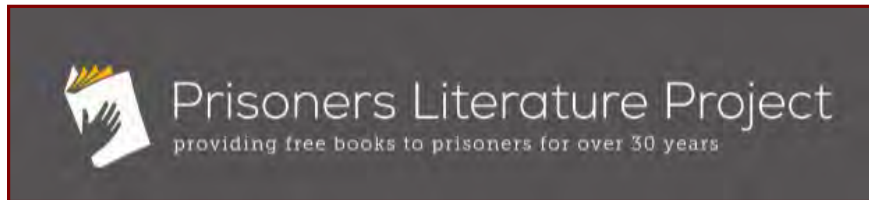
artwork, and special residential programs. His efforts have been responsible for at least two previous offenders' earning appointments to national military academies.



*"Sisters in Crime" bread baked for potluck by Victoria Kazarian*

## More about the Prisoners Literature Event

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SinC NorCal and MWA NorCal are proud to announce a joint event to benefit The Prisoners Literature Project ([www.prisonlit.org](http://www.prisonlit.org)), a non-profit that sends books to prisoners

nationwide. Some of the prisons have no libraries whatsoever. One of the most requested books is the dictionary, and recently they have also been sending out many how-to-draw guides (see their site for drawings and letters from grateful prisoners). These women and men are also big readers of mysteries and thrillers. So our goal is for every attendee to donate some new or gently used paperbacks and/or contribute to our financial donation. A large part of their funds go to postage, which is why they don't want hardbacks.

Our program will be a panel discussion on prisoner literacy and human development, beginning with a potluck gathering. Joining us to speak of their San Quentin volunteer work are Carter Schwonke, Brian Cahill, and Terrell Merritt. The panel is to be moderated by Sinc President, Diana Chambers.

Carter Schwonke is a six-year literacy volunteer at San Quentin, as well as the Sonoma County Jail and the Hanna Boys' Residential Center for boys at risk. Her fiction has appeared in *Fiction Fix*, *Blueline*, *Pif Magazine*, *Snake Nation*, *Stirring*, *Calliope*, *Underground Voices 2013* print anthology, *Bird's Thumb*, *Pot Luck*, and *Evening Street Review*. She is a graduate of Syracuse University and University College London.

Brian Cahill is a volunteer in prison ministry, co-leading a weekly spirituality group for San Quentin lifers. He is a writer on religion and public policy and was the executive director of San Francisco Catholic Charities for forty years. A few days after his retirement, his oldest son, a veteran San Jose, CA police officer, took his own life. Since 2011, Mr. Cahill has been a volunteer suicide prevention trainer for the San Francisco Police Department.

Terrell Merritt served 21+ years in prison and now facilitates the GRIP (Guiding Rage Into Power) program in Avenal State Prison, GRIP was founded by the visionary leader Jacques Verduin.

The Prisoners Literature Event will take place on Saturday, June 2 from noon to 2:30 p.m. at the Sausalito City Hall, Edgewater Room, 420 Litho Street, Sausalito, CA. A city parking lot is available.



# Prisoners Literature Event, continued

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From the Prisoners Literature Project website:

## Who are we?

The Prisoners Literacy Project (PLP) is an all-volunteer, non-profit group that sends free books directly to prisoners who request them from throughout the United States. Working almost continuously for 30 years, our U.S prison books program has gotten (literally) tons of books into the American prison system, while staying overwhelmingly ‘grassroots’ – no full-time employees, no overhead eating up your donations.

Our many volunteers for sending books to prisoners include radical librarians, soccer coaches, anarchists, old folks, teens, yoga devotees, LGBTQ activists, ex-prisoners, and booklovers – all united in the belief that everyone has the right to read. (Here’s [a video from 2012](#) showing what we do.)

PLP is run entirely by volunteers and funded entirely by donations. All funds go to pay for postage, mailing supplies, rent and books specially requested by prisoners, including dictionaries (our number one request). Our project started in the back room of Bound Together Books, an anarchist bookstore on San Francisco’s Haight Street.

Now working out of Berkeley’s Grassroots House (our 501 (c)3 sponsor), we appreciate continuing support from Bound Together Books, Moe’s Books, BookMooch, the Resist Foundation, and many generous folks in the Bay Area. Subscribe to our newsletter for regular updates on what we’re up to.

## Why send books?

In American prisons, access to books is treated as a privilege, not a right. That’s why prison book programs are vital.

Most prisons do not allow prisoners to receive books directly from individuals. Instead, books must be sent through “pre-approved vendors,” usually expensive booksellers or publishers. In many cases, prisoners don’t have anyone on the outside who is willing or able to send books this way. Most prisoners don’t have internet access to order books, or money to pay for them. Many prison libraries stock only mass-market pulp fiction and/or religious tracts. And people in solitary confinement have no access to books outside their cells.

This where the Prisoners Literature Project steps in. We respond directly to prisoners’ book requests, and (working together with Bound Together Books) ship hundreds of good books directly to them every week. We know the particular book restrictions for more than a thousand prisons, and are part of a network of folks offering free information resources to those behind bars.

## Prisoners Literature Event, continued

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Activitists and artists such as Nelson Mandela, Eldridge Cleaver, Jean Genet, Angela Davis, and Gandhi have written about the great solace they received from books in prison. Every month, we receive thank-you letters from prisoners echoing the same sentiment. The American prison-industrial complex is frighteningly huge, but—with your help—we can continue to make a positive difference for thousands of people each year.

### New Executive Committee Members

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Exciting news! We have two new SinC NorCal Executive Committee Members:



**MYRA JOLIVET, Public Relations Coordinator:** At six years old, I was a poet and playwright, holding SRO productions in my backyard in Berkeley. That led to a 20+-year career in TV news, politics, corporate communications and non-profits. When my children went off to college, I gathered the nerve to begin a series of cozy murder mysteries, the Sarah Doucette Jean-Louis mysteries, stories that had lived in me for decades. Sarah's life is a blend of my own California and Louisiana Creole cultures, helping me create a world of mysticism, murder and humor. I am a public relations executive in Silicon Valley. I also have a son who is a surgeon and a daughter, an investment banker. I'm in the glow of twin granddaughters with another on the way.

**CLAIRE ORTALDA, Secretary:** My short fiction and poetry have been published in literary journals, earning me a few prizes along the way, such as the Georgia State University Fiction Prize and national Hackney Award. I've been associate editor and co-editor on several anthologies and was an associate editor for *Narrative Magazine* for five years. My fairly recent segue to mystery writing resulted in my first story in that genre, "Crime on Hold," being published in the Guppy anthology, *Fish Out of Water*. My mystery novel, *The Psychopath Companion*, was short-listed for the Del Sol Press First Novel Prize 2017 (judge: Hallie Ephron). I'm shopping it now as I work on a middle grade novel. My story was accepted into the Anne Perry-edited Mystery Writers of America anthology, *Odd Partners*. [www.claireortalda.com](http://www.claireortalda.com)



## Series vs. Stand-alone

by Rhys Bowen



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**Congratulations to our own Rhys Bowen, who recently won the Lefty Award for Best Historical Mystery Novel at Left Coast Crime 2018 for her first stand-alone!**

*In Farleigh Field* was something I'd wanted to write for a long time. I've always been fascinated with WWII, partly because I was born near the end of it, so my early memories were of my father coming home, rationing that continued until 1953, stories of hardship and bombing, and the black market.

What I had not heard as a child were the stories of traitors. I was horrified when I read a biography of the former King Edward VIII (the Prince of Wales who married Mrs. Simpson) that suggested he was whisked to the Bahamas because of his pro-Hitler sentiments and that the Germans wanted to invade and put him on the throne. Further investigation revealed that there was a group of aristocrats who were pro-German and wanted to aid the invasion, believing, mistakenly of course, that Hitler would treat Britain kindly and that this would stop the destructive bombing of Britain's monuments. This was a story I had to write.

Of course, it was a big risk, moving away from my series. Fans love series. They look upon the series characters as friends and want to get back to that environment. So do I. One of the good things about a series is that it is like going home to visit old friends. I know my way around. I know who I'll meet. It is a comforting and satisfying way to write. However, the downside is that there are stories I can never tackle, places my series characters will never go.

So I felt I was far enough along in my career to risk writing a stand-alone. My publishers were not enthusiastic. It was too far from my "brand," I was told. But a new publisher, Lake Union, was dying to publish anything I wanted to write. They embraced *In Farleigh Field*, put lots of clout behind it, and the consequence was that it was #1 on Amazon for six weeks. And it has received three award nominations so far. I loved the freedom of multiple stories, multiple points of view. We see the war and the unfolding mystery through the eyes of Lady Pamela, daughter of an Earl, now



## Series vs. Stand-alone, continued

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working secretly at Bletchley Park, her sister Margo, now taken by the Gestapo in Paris, her youngest sister Phoebe, a precocious 12-year-old, and Ben, the vicar's son, now also working secretly for MI5. And through each of them we put together pieces of the puzzle while we watch their interpersonal relationships develop.

My second stand-alone, *The Tuscan Child*, has just come out and has been a top ten seller on Amazon since day one. I am just completing the third, this one set in WWI, about women who worked on the land. And who knows where I'll go next. So many ideas, so little time . . .

I haven't abandoned my series, I promise you. I have put Molly on hold for a while, because there are so many other things I want to write, but I haven't finally waved goodbye to her, although we have shared 17 books together. But Lady Georgie of the Royal Spyness novels is still flourishing, and I really enjoy chuckling as I write about her escapades. A new one comes out in August, and it is called *Four Funerals and Maybe a Wedding*.



Rhys Bowen is the *New York Times* bestselling author of two historical mystery series: the Molly Murphy mysteries, set in early 1900s New York City and the lighter Royal Spyness novels, featuring a minor royal in 1930s England. She is more recently the author of two stand-alone novels, *In Farleigh Field* and *The Tuscan Child*. The former was a #1 Kindle bestseller for six weeks, won the 2018 Lefty Award for Best Historical Mystery Novel, and is currently nominated for both Edgar and Agatha awards. Rhys is a transplanted Brit who divides her time between California and Arizona. <http://rhysbowen.com/>



# Truth or Dare

by Susan C. Shea

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I was standing in a crowded hallway in front of a charming diorama, a drawing room in which a handful of serene, bland-faced mannequins were posed in early 20<sup>th</sup> century French clothing. Then



I had a flash. What if the one draped on the chaise longue wasn't a fake? What if she was real? And—being a fiction writer—what if she was dead?

In polite company, this might seem ghoulish, but I'm among friends here at Sisters in Crime, so I know heads are nodding happily right now. If it isn't one thing, it's another: poison, knives in the back, bodies crumpled at the foot of the stairs.

It's what we do and the world would be a poorer place without us.

The only drawback is keeping the people who don't understand us from getting bent out of shape when we want to use their houses, cafés, hospitals, and museums as chambers of death. They are afraid readers won't understand the word "fiction," that would-be clients will run screaming or at least not buy whatever it is they are selling. But we know that's not true, right? After all, they buy our books (we hope). They watch crime shows on TV and don't avoid Manhattan (*Law and Order*) or Miami (*Miami Vice*) or London (*Sherlock*). They play *Clue*, or at least old-fashioned people like me do. They like to be scared.

But try telling that to the Peet's Coffee manager who is aghast at hearing you're wondering how to insert strychnine into a croissant. In my case, I've made it both easier and harder to deal with the fact that my latest fictional death takes place in the charming small costume museum I visited in Burgundy, France. Harder because my French isn't good enough to be absolutely sure the 90-something-year-old proprietor would understand the nature of my stories if I tried to explain and wouldn't shoo me out of the *Musée du Costume* with the French equivalent of "never darken my door again." Easier because Madame speaks not one word of English and the chance that she will ever see *Dressed for Death in Burgundy* in her local bookstore, much less read it, is infinitesimal.



My American friend, the one who inspired Katherine in the series, wants to place my books in the local bookstore, but I am not so sure. I have been careful to emphasize in the Acknowledgments that nothing like this has ever happened, that the *Musée* is worth a detour if

## Truth or Dare, continued

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readers are traveling in the region, and that my portrait of Madame is meant to be a compliment. But still . . .

Perhaps I'm assuming people are more thin-skinned and easily offended than they are. But I have to say I deliberately created a whole new African country when I wrote *The King's Jar* because of my direct experience as executive director of a paleoanthropology institute that was world famous for its work in Ethiopia. We had been through the most delicate dances with the rather turbulent government agencies there in order to secure research permits every year. Rumors, competition with other researchers, demands for bribes (never paid, I hasten to say), intense politics within the Ethiopian leadership made me nervous about describing how an iconic object might have left the country illegally. If somehow – perhaps through a competitor – my book wound up in front of the minister who had to approve the annual application, and if he took offense, I could still endanger the best researchers in the field even though I was no longer associated with the institute. So I punted and Kenobia was shoehorned into the African landscape.



Linda Fairstein has no problem scattering bodies and murderers anywhere she chooses in New York City, and more power to her. Cara Black paints Paris's tiny alleys and the banks of the Seine in dangerous colors, and they've all but given her the key to the city. So, I admit, I'm chicken. But the *Musée du Costume* is the loving creation of a single person who has spent her life creating this small gem in the middle of nowhere, and I fear I'd break her heart if I even brought up the subject of a dead body sprawled on an antique sofa in one of her salons. So please don't tell her if you get to Avallon. Ignorance in this case is bliss.

Susan C. Shea is a past president of the NorCal chapter and is on the national board of Sisters in Crime. The second book in her French village mystery series, *Dressed for Death in Burgundy*, comes out May 1. The first, *Love and Death in Burgundy*, was called a "pleasant getaway from hard core killers" by the *New York Times*. Her first series features Dani O'Rourke, a San Francisco fundraiser.



## Member Profile: Vera H-C Chan

Fifth in a series to introduce our members to each other

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Meet Vera Chan. Working full-time as a journalist and content strategist, she is on the verge of actively seeking publication of her first suspense novel.

*Stiletta:* You were the 2015 Winner of Sisters in Crime's Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award—congratulations! How did you hear about the award and what were the entry criteria?

*Vera H-C Chan:* Thanks! Unfortunately, my internet-fragmented brain means I have a mind like a steel sieve, and I don't know how I stumbled across the award. The primary criteria were to have something to submit and to be a person of color, unpublished in the fiction world. I likely have a million words in print from newspaper and online reporting but I haven't published a word of fiction (no matter what a handful Yahoo trolls might say).

*Stiletta:* Tell us about the entry you submitted to the judges.

*VH-CC:* I thought you'd never ask. I submitted two short stories, the first and last, about Brenna Hom, a surly Chinese-American private "investigator," tasked with spying on the wayward offspring of moneyed Asian parents. The premise is a look at not just cultural and age gaps within families, but also the social media micro-revolutions that occurred within a single generation and affected how they communicated, not just with kin and friends, but the world.

*Stiletta:* How did you hear you had won, and what has the win meant to you?

*VH-CC:* Professor Norlisha Crawford gave me a call, which was beautifully sweet. The win was a validation I actually had entered the year before, when it was a one-off. A year later, I received an email notifying me that SinC had decided to make this an annual award. I work full-time and so hadn't made any progress on poor Brenna Hom (I've also been working on another novel best described as book club fiction). It really gave me an impetus and encouragement to cross over into a different writing world.

*Stiletta:* You have worked for a number of years in the world of newspapers, magazines, and the web. What attracted you to that type of employment?

*VH-CC:* I hadn't planned on journalism per se. This will be familiar to your readership. I wrote stories ever since I was a kid. In fourth grade, I wrote "horror" stories (in the Scooby Doo fashion) involving my classmates, which the teacher read aloud. In sixth grade, the same year I discovered



## Member Profile: Vera H-C Chan, continued

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Jane Austen and Emily Bronte, I wrote “Diary of a Serial Murderer” (because Agatha Christie and more cutthroat authors had a head start).

But as an immigrant, you feel an obligation to honor what your parents did. Mine were a chemist and an English teacher escaping from the Cultural Revolution to the United States, which had only just lifted the exclusion on the migration of Chinese. The Chinese are the only racial group to be specifically outlawed (African slaves, of course, were considered chattel). So rather than the frivolity of fiction (which is both a privilege and a sacrifice to undertake), I got a master’s in journalism and aimed for magazines but took a roundabout route to daily feature writing, since the magazine world then and now remains centered in NYC.

The web was another roundabout route, which followed me taking a newspaper buyout, freelancing, buying a house and then my husband saying, “You have to get a real job.” Basically, I found my job at Yahoo because of spousal switch-and-bait, so you might say switch-and-bait ended up in clickbait (although luckily I did little of that).

**Stiletta:** Tell us about your most recent jobs at Yahoo and at Bing News.

**VH-CC:** Yahoo turned out to be fascinating. I had the rare privilege of seeing (in the aggregate) how millions of people search. I was hired as a “buzz trends analyst” and wrote scripts for radio (even though I’d never done broadcast). In a more friendly fashion than Cambridge Analytica, the data showed how our society consumed news, how they reacted to certain news, the dizzying pace of public opinion and our collective guilty pleasures and curiosities. Journalists have a way of being cynical about their audience, but seeing how people want to dig deeper into their interests and their world made me feel good about our society, even as the trolls and hackers work to desensitize and fragment us.

At one point, one in two people who visited the internet went to Yahoo. Truthfully, it should have been more of a media powerhouse, but its focus on original content was already extraordinary considering how Silicon Valley tends not to truly appreciate what editorial is. I worked with great people and with sociopaths, from product to engineering, marketing to PR, sales to, of course, editorial. What an education for a journalist!

I lasted six CEOs at Yahoo, doing everything from writing radio scripts to being a spokesperson on Web trends, writing news stories to running global editorial projects. But as Ben Bagdikian—the late Berkeley j-school dean who wrote *The Media Monopoly* in 1983—predicted consolidation of media, the NY-based newsroom wanted to consolidate all editors to Manhattan or Santa Monica.

So I ended up with the engineering team at Bing News in Microsoft as a consulting Chief Journalist/Content Strategist, my first job in years where writing isn’t the primary task. My goal



## Member Profile: Vera H-C Chan, continued

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was, if I don't write during the day, I'll write more for myself. Incidentally, describing "content strategy" is like the blind men with the elephant. It's defined by whatever you're touching that moment. In my case, it's everything from "string" edits (user interface instructions) to competitive landscape research to product feature proposals. Phew. Remember that I-can-now-write-for-myself goal? It's tough.

**Stiletta:** Your LinkedIn bio calls you both a "passionate reader advocate" and a "pop anthropologist." Please elaborate.

**VH-CC:** The audience. The reader. The end user. The customer. It stuns me sometimes that the person who ultimately engages with the "product" is sometimes lost in the grind of "how we do things," ignored in someone else's ambitions, misunderstood by the well-intentioned but distant. So I advocate for all of us, because it makes me grouchy otherwise—and I'm often grouchy (but charmingly, of course).

The pop anthropology stems from my being an immigrant. I came to America when I was six months old, and at the time it was deemed important that I be fully assimilated, that I have no accent to be mocked. Pop anthropology is a matter of investigating the cultural lingua franca. In America, as a consumer society, these tastes must shift to fuel our economy, so it's fascinating to understand the patterns that reveal who we are and who we want to be. (Can you tell I went to Berkeley?)

**Stiletta:** I have read that you are a lifelong lover of mysteries. Who are some of your favorite authors, past and present?

**VH-CC:** Taking this straight from my contest entry: old-school authors such as Edgar Allen Poe, Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, G.K. Chesterton, Dashiell Hammett, Ellis Peters and Rex Stout (my all-time favorite) to their successors such as Tony Hillerman, Robert B. Parker, Patricia Cornwell, Nevada Barr, Elizabeth George, Louise Penny, Ann Cleeves, and Jo Nesbo. I especially delight in genre challenges from the likes of Mark Haddon, Charlie Huston, and Gillian Flynn. I did read an awful lot of true crime back in the day as well, such as *Mindhunter* (now a Netflix series), *The Gift of Fear*, and academic books on violence.

**Stiletta:** Tell us what you have written in the mystery genre and about your road to publication.

**VH-CC:** I'm 95% done with my book, which always reminds me pretty much of the only concept I remember in AP Calculus (in which I did horrifically): as you approach infinity, you slice that progress in half, then you slice that in half, and so on and so on. (My apologies to people who understand calculus.) It's Sisyphean, but Brenna Hom's about ready to see an agent. The book, which comprises five cases over 12 years, might edge more towards literary suspense; we shall see. I'll be sending out query letters ANY DAY NOW. (I'm shouting to myself.)

## Member Profile: Vera H-C Chan, continued

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*Stiletta:* Do you have any writing mentors or coaches?

*VH-CC:* Not quite. I have a writing group comprised of former newspaper reporters. I was in an online group which included Susan Alice Bickford. I've asked friends to review for cultural accuracy, and I've now attended many writing conferences. I'd love to have a mentor or coach, but it's tough because my full-time work requires a lot of time. *If someone wants to adopt a mentee, I'm available!*

*Stiletta:* What benefits have you gotten from SinC membership?

*VH-CC:* The above writing group, the ability to meet other writers and readers, and a lot more benefits that frankly I haven't taken advantage of, because I needed to be heads-down to write. It's difficult for me to ask questions online, doubtless due to an annoying reporting habit of not revealing your story in advance. But now that I'm 95% done (did I mention I'm 95% done?), I can plunge back in.

*Stiletta:* Is it true your husband's parrot merely tolerates you?

*VH-CC:* Oh, that bird. His name is Hemingway, by the way, more's the irony (as I always favored Victorian lit over American). Except for my husband, the bloodthirsty Pionus parrot would sooner take an eye out than let you pet him, except when you feed him. Then he tolerates you, but don't expect gratitude. (Not that I do, as we are, in Berkeley parlance, 'pet guardians' and not 'pet owners.')

By the way, he has lived for about 30 years, damn his sweet feathered hide.

*Stiletta:* Is there anything else you would like fellow SinC members to know about you?

*VH-CC:* I AM LOOKING FOR AN – ahem, pardon me.

After too many weekend afternoons watching kung fu matinees in Boston Chinatown, I started taking martial arts when I was in college. I realized that being an awkward kid did not magically resolve itself with martial arts lessons. However, I've done, among other pursuits, Hapkida (a Korean martial art that combines kicking, punching, throws, joint locks, mat wrestling) and volunteer-teach with my husband weekly at the UC Berkeley martial arts club. I joke that everyone stays 18 as I age, but somehow that's not as amusing (to me) anymore as joints creak. The most important things I've learned are how to fall, that running away can be your wisest move, if you start something you need to finish it (really, those horror movies in which you think you've bashed the killer's head in), and simply to be aware and project confidence even if you don't feel it. Good lessons for life.

Vera Chan was interviewed by Margie Bunting, Sisters in Crime NorCal's newsletter editor.

# A Bold Third Act

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

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NO! I do not want to retire because I'm a senior. Absolutely not!

More than ever, seniors are living full and engaging lives. More than 45 million Americans are over the age of 65 and millions of them still work—some by choice, some by necessity.

In what I consider my BOLD THIRD ACT, I'm writing mysteries. I'm bringing my passion for writing together with my rather unusual upbringing. In doing so, I am writing with more insight and purpose. As seniors, we can use our life experiences—whether failures, challenges or successes—to bring about enjoyable and productive lives filled with doing something we relate to and love. This is why the seniors in the mysteries I write are strong, smart and active main characters.

Mysteries and crime are probably in my DNA. It never occurred to me that my father and his friends were doing anything illegal. The environment I grew up with seemed perfectly natural to me. It's what I saw everyday: my father was a bookie. He also owned a gambling hall where the men played pool in the front and poker in a private back room. My father and his partners would count the take from sports bets at our kitchen table. Once there was a raid on his partner's apartment, which was right across from ours!

My father's close friends had names like The Gig, Gimp, and Doc. So, it makes sense that I'm fascinated by slightly shady characters, and crime and mystery stories. Once, I wrote a memoir story and referred to my mother as my father's "gun moll." Believe me, she was a character as well!

I've been a business owner for more than 40 years, which includes having a successful marketing and public relations agency for more than 20 years. I used to explain to clients that I was a "business detective," finding solutions to problems that seemed a mystery to them. Of course, people and life in general are often a mystery.

My kids have encouraged me to "go for it!" They do not want me to slow down, sit around and dream of days past. They don't want me to use age and going to doctors as a social outlet, as so many elderly people do. They don't even want me to have grey hair! To those who do not agree: sorry! I think I still have much to offer and enjoy. Positive aging is important to me, and writing is my way of showing it.

I used to tell friends that maybe I was too old to see my dreams and ambitions to be a successful author come true. Yet, I refused to give up trying, and now the first book in my new

## A Bold Third Act, continued

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Senior Sleuths mystery series, *Dead in Bed*, has been published, and more are on the way with my publisher, Level Best Books.

When I was doing consulting and public speaking, I'd often ask business and professional women to ask themselves: "What voices in your head do you need to eliminate? Get rid of the negative voices that say, 'Who do you think you are?' And 'You can't do it.'"

Now, in my senior life, I'm reminded through conversations over a cup of coffee with my friends, my age and younger, that we all matter. What you want and who you are matters. We can make a difference at any age. Moreover, as we grow older, we can also share our experience, knowledge and even, at times, a good bit of wisdom.

In my mystery series, "The Senior Sleuths," my senior characters represent my beliefs with energy and enthusiasm. These characters are my voice and reflect my truths.

Marcia Rosen is the author of The Senior Sleuths Mystery: Book One: *Dead in Bed*, published by Level Best Books. Book Two: *Dead in Seat 4-1*, is scheduled for late fall 2018. She has previously published four books in her mystery series, "Dying to Be Beautiful." Rosen is also author of *The Woman's Business Therapist* and the award-winning *My Memoir Workbook*. For a dozen years she has given writing workshops on "Encouraging and Supporting the Writer Within You!" and "Now What? Marketing Your Book." She was founder and owner of a successful marketing and public relations agency for many years, a frequent guest speaker, created several radio and TV talk shows, received numerous awards for her work with business and professional women, and was chosen 2005 "Woman of the Year" by East End Women's Network. She is Board Member and Marketing Co-Chair, Women's National Book Association, San Francisco; Member of Sisters in Crime San Francisco, Los Angeles and National; and Member of Public Safety Writer's Association. She is also a member of "The Mob Museum" in Las Vegas. Marcia currently resides in Carmel. <https://www.theseniorsleuths.com> <https://levelbestbooks.wordpress.com/>



Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking. . .

## How to Prepare for Your First Panel – A Newbie’s Guide

By Madeline McEwen



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Recently I had the delight of joining Mary Feliz, Katherine Bolger Hyde, Bette Golden Lamb and JJ Lamb at the AAUW Authors Night in Sunnyvale. Here are a few things I learned:

1. Three weeks prior to the event, avoid all contact with small children because they are havens of contagion. Tricky if you are:
  - a. Female or a parent or have living relatives.
  - b. Likely to mix with the general public for business, work or pleasure.
  - c. Unable to book a solo sailing trip at short notice.

Now would be a good time to adopt the life of a hermit – and boost your word count at the same time.

2. Scout out the site location, your route at the time of day you’ll be traveling, and parking arrangements. And remember, late=rude. Check any prima donna pretensions – you’re a writer, not a Kardashians.
3. Make an inventory of your book(s) to ensure a plentiful supply, and invest in equipment (e.g., Radio Flyer) to transport your wares (pens, notepad, props, posters, water, tissues, breath freshener, freebies/swag, and emergency blouse – don’t ask) over rough terrain and variable distances from the parking lot to the venue. (Pack your walking shoes.)
4. Plan your appearance with care – e.g., it is essential to wear normal clothing. Pajamas, robe, and slippers may be your go-to-work wear while writing, but your audience demands daytime clothing. If you abide in the State of California, you require a tad more than shoes and a shirt.
5. Practice introducing yourself aloud. Use a phone to record and listen to your own voice. Once you’ve recovered from the shock, you still have a few weeks to hire an



## How to Prepare for Your First Panel, continued

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elocution coach. Failing that, a voice synthesizer can be purchased from any good retailer (buy spare batteries).

6. Know yourself. If you are wordy, attempt brevity. If you are taciturn, turn on your loquacious app.
7. If the host provides example questions in advance, prepare your answers. The key word here is *prepare*. Ideally, prepare three or more answers to each question. Then if you are last on the panel to speak, you can avoid repeating what other cleverer, more experienced, and erudite authors have already said.
8. After the formal Q&A session and during the socializing aftermath, resist the temptations of the snack table. Eating anything guarantees a snappy question requiring an immediate response and a showering of crumbs.

Lastly, be yourself – unless you’re an actor instead of a writer – in which case you’re at the wrong venue.

Madeline McEwen is an ex-pat from the UK, bifocaled and technically challenged. She and her Significant Other manage their four offspring, one major and three minors, two autistic, two neurotypical, plus a time-share with Alzheimer’s. In her free time, she walks the canines and chases the felines with her nose in a book and her fingers on a keyboard.





## Nuggets from Left Coast Crime 2018

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“Crime on the Comstock,” this year’s Left Coast Crime convention, was held in Reno, Nevada, March 22-25, and attended by quite a few Sisters and Misterys from the NorCal chapter. Here are some of the highlights, as reported by the attendees.

### **I Brought Along My Boy Toy to LCC** by Heather Haven



Yes, he is my husband of 38 years, but is he ‘boy toy’ material? Not quite, but I feel there’s potential. As a musician, he spent much of each day on a musician’s retreat. He’d practice on the keyboard and guitar and memorize lyrics to several songs for an upcoming gig. However, part of each day, while I worked the conference, he went off to have a steam bath or sauna. One day he even went shopping! Okay, never mind he came back with four pairs of argyle socks. I was very supportive. I feel he’s a shopper in training, so why burst his bubble? I tried to talk him into having a pedicure, but that seemed to be beyond the pale. I guess becoming a boy toy takes baby steps. In argyle socks.

### **Miniature Casino for Auction** by Camille Minichino

It’s always my pleasure to put together a miniature scene for the auctions at our conferences. The money generated at Left Coast Crime 2018 went to the Women and Children’s Center of the Sierra, a non-profit organization that provides education, job training, and other resources to help women escape or avoid poverty.

I started working on a typical reading scene—a comfy chair, books scattered around—when I got a little bored and mentioned it to my longtime friend and fellow author Ann Parker. “Do slot machines,” she said, so I did! The centerpiece tiny (2” high) machines started out on keychains; I searched all my drawers of craft supplies for suitable accessories and made what I couldn’t find. The showgirl tiara was fashioned from a pipe cleaner and a feather boa. The most fun: making cigarettes (on the floor near the matchbox) out of the white sticks in the center of Q-tips!



## Nuggets from LCC 2018, continued

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### My Memories of LCC by Vinnie Hansen



An important part of every LCC is the New Authors Breakfast. It featured 21 authors this year, including NorCal Sisters Nancy Tingley and Susan Bickford, both nominated for the Lefty Award for Best Debut Mystery. At left, I'm with Nancy Tingley.

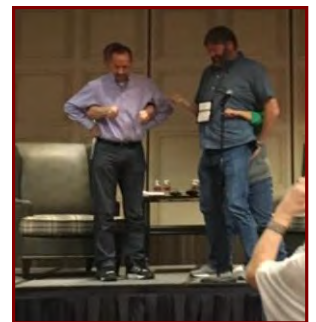
Kellye Garrett won the Lefty Award for Best Debut Mystery, and I look forward to reading her book, *Hollywood Homicide*. One of the joys of LCC is returning with many titles to add to my to-be-read list.

The Santa Cruz area was well represented at LCC. Poe poses here with: Peggy Townsend, me, Mary Feliz, Leslie Karst, and Katherine Bolger Hyde. We are all NorCal members, although we've formed a Santa Cruz group called Santa Cruz Women of Mystery with five other mystery writers.



G.M. Malliett did a lovely job of interviewing William Kent Krueger, one of two Guests of Honor. For those who are wondering—yes, there will be a follow-up book to *Ordinary Grace*, titled *This Tender Land*.

In addition to the always hilarious Sex Panel and Liar's Panel, this year the panels included an improv session with Naomi Hirahara, the other Guest of Honor. Very entertaining! In this "Arms Through" bit, the little green arms belong to Naomi.



Norcal Sister Peggy Townsend and I clown with Naomi Hirahara. We three all have stories in *Santa Cruz Noir*, due out in June 2018.

Some attendees dress to the nines for the Saturday Night Banquet. Here's NorCal sister Katherine Bolger Hyde looking quite exotic.





# Nuggets from LCC 2018, continued

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## More Photos

Thanks to all who contributed!

Busy at the signing tables . . .



*Susan Bickford*



*Ann Parker*



*Camille Minichino*

And on panels . . .



*Katherine Bolger Hyde, Mary Feliz*



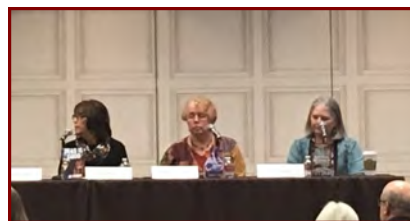
*JJ and Bette Golden Lamb*



*Mysti Berry (second from l)*



*Better Late Than Never Panel: Terry Shames, Cathy Ace, Ellen Kirschman*



*Peggy Lucke (center)*



*Simon Wood with Robin Burcell and Bill Fitzhugh*



Across miles of carpet!



*Marla Cooper and Gigi Pandian (r)*

# Nuggets from LCC 2018, continued

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Fun with friends . . .



*Catriona asks Todd Borg a tough question*



*Terry Shames and fellow Seventh Street Books authors*



*Janice Peacock and Heather Haven prep their table*



*Ellen Kirschman and Edgar*



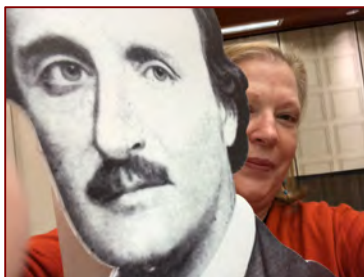
*Susan Bickford (l. top) and Nancy Tingley (l. bottom)*



*Margaret Dumas, Sophie Littlefield, Gigi Pandian*



*Sabrina Flynn and Simon Wood*



*Edgar and Ana Brazil*



*Terry Shames with fellow Lefty nominees*



*Camille Minichino (second from r.) at banquet*



*Gigi Pandian and her literary hero, Aaron Elkins, hosted a table*



# Member News



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## ***New Releases***

*The Senior Sleuths: Dead in Bed* by M. Glenda Rosen, book #1 in the Senior Sleuth Mysteries, February 6 by Level Best Books

*A Dying Note* by Ann Parker, book #6 in the Silver Rush historical mystery series, April 3 by Poisoned Pen Press

*Dressed for Death in Burgundy* by Susan C. Shea, book #2 in The French Village Mysteries, May 1 by Minotaur Books

*I Love a Cop: What Police Families Need to Know, Third Edition* by Ellen Kirschman, May 3 by Guilford Press. Discussions of trauma and resilience, domestic abuse, and addiction have been expanded. Third edition includes new stories from police families, new chapters on relationships and living through troubled times, and fully updated resources. Camille Minichino claims to have kept a dog-eared copy of the first edition on her desk as a reference for her mysteries.

Claire Ortalda's short story, "Oglethorpe's Camera," was selected for inclusion in *Odd Partners, a Mystery Writers of America anthology*, edited by Anne Perry (Ballantine Books, April 2018).

## ***Public Appearances***

Ann Parker will be at CozyCon! at the Poisoned Pen Bookstore in Scottsdale, AZ on May 1 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., with Tessa Arlen, Kate Carlisle, Jane Cleland, Vicky Delany, and Paige Shelton.

Ann Parker will be on a panel/workshop, "How to Be an Author, or What a Writer's Life is Really Like," at Tempe Public Library in Tempe, AZ on May 6 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., with Donis Casey and Vicky Delany.

Susan Shea will hold the book launch for *Dressed for Death in Burgundy*, her fifth published novel and second in that series, on Sunday, May 6 at 4:00 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera.

Camille Minichino will be speaking to a mystery group at the Orinda Library on Friday, May 18 at 2:30 p.m.

Terry Shames will be at a "Meet the Author" afternoon at Eileen Fisher clothing store in Walnut Creek, 1282 Plaza, on May 19 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Wine and cheese will be served, and clothing will be discounted 15% during the event. Terry will give two short talks during the afternoon. She also has the following events scheduled with fellow Seventh Street Books author James Ziskin: June 13 at 7:00 p.m., Janet Rudolph's International Readers Literary Salon; June 14 at 7:00 p.m., Towne

## Member News, continued

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Center Books, 555 Main Street, Pleasanton; June 15 at 6:30 p.m. Sundance Books, 121 California Ave., Reno, NV; June 16 at 2:00 p.m., Murphys Public Library, 480 Park Lane, Murphys.

Simon Wood will be the keynote speaker at this year's Southwest Washington's Writers' Conference in September. He will also be presenting a workshop on plotting and outlining.

### *Awards – Congratulations!*

Late-breaking news: Gigi Pandian and Rhys Bowen both won Agatha Award teapots at Malice Domestic on April 28. Gigi won for her short story, "The Library Ghost of Tanglewood Inn," and Rhys won for her historical novel, *In Farleigh Field*.

Ana Brazil's debut historical mystery, *Fanny Newcomb and the Irish Channel Ripper*, won The Independent Book Publishers Association's 2018 Gold Medal for "Historical Fiction."

### *Training*

Shelley Adina will present "Series and Subplots" to the California Writers' Club Fremont Area Writers Group on May 26 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. As the author of a 12-book steampunk series and several Amish trilogies, Shelley will share strategies and tips for over-arching plotlines, reappearing characters, and interlocking subplots. She will also touch on how to use collaborative creativity skills to work up a continuity series with other authors.

Camille Minichino will lead a short story workshop at JFK University in Pleasant Hill, CA on May 19 from noon to 2:00 p.m.

### *Miscellaneous*

Rita Lakin reports that there is an in-depth interview of the 25 years she spent as writer-producer of hundreds of TV shows in the March issue of *Emmy Magazine* (pp. 56-60). The original 2-hour video interview that took place last May can be found at [TelevisionAcademy.com/interviews](http://TelevisionAcademy.com/interviews).

Patricia L. Morin has been appointed President of the International Centre for Woman Playwrights (ICWP), an organization whose goal is to promote gender parity and equal opportunity for women playwrights throughout the world.

Rita Lakin just sold two more books in her Gladdy Gold mystery comedy series, which began with *Getting Old is Murder*, to Severn Books in England. Books 8 and 9 are called *Getting Old Can Hurt You* and *Getting Old Can Haunt You*. The first one will be out by the end of the year.

Simon Wood has sold his *one millionth* book with his current publisher, Thomas & Mercer.

## Question of the Quarter



**What other careers have you had besides writer/author?**

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I was the director of quality control in a vegetable cannery in Louisiana, and I also worked part-time for a pet sitting company. *Tish Davidson*

My previous jobs included: oil and gas project engineer, race car driver, private investigator. *Simon Wood*

I was a short-lived actress in NYC, worked backstage on Broadway doing wardrobe for 10 years with such shows as *Annie* and *A Chorus Line*. When we moved to the Bay Area, I became the manager of the Faculty Recruiting Department at the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University. That was my all-time favorite job. But I still took an early retirement to write novels. *Heather Haven*

What a fun question! Carhop-waitress at Burger King, fancy donut maker and counter girl at Dunkin Donuts (at age 15—if you were my friend, I would put lots and lots more donuts than a dozen in a box), nursing home aide, transplant nurse, and Chopra Yoga instructor. *Amy Peele*

My previous career was owning a marketing/public relations agency for over 20 years, great value in helping me promote my author clients and my books. My first “business” was owning a nursery school in very snowy upstate New York for ten years, and at the end of that time I had two schools with almost 200 children. *Marcia Rosen*

I am the mother of re-invention. Here is a partial list of jobs from present to past: psychologist, clinical social worker, probation officer, modeling school teacher, cocktail waitress, temp typist, gym instructor, actress, dancer. *Ellen Kirschman*

Interior designer, spa consultant, concierge, hotel management, landscape architect. *Laura Boss*

Can you have a career at age 12? If so, then my first one was as cotton candy twirler, then pizza counter manager. Moving on to early adulthood, we have USPS sorter; computations and data entry for meteorology project; engineer in Connecticut lab. How many others are we allowed to name—one for each decade of life? College teacher of applied math and physics; philosophy and logic; a brief stint as a paralegal as I relocated across the country; physicist: high-temperature, high-pressure experiments on heavy metals; commercial nuclear reactor inspector; technical editor; science education program developer. I guess that makes me about 140. *Camille Minichino*

I first started earning my own money (because we had nothing resembling an allowance) by collecting and selling pop bottles. I delivered *The Rapid City Daily Journal*, gathered and sold eggs, babysat, cleaned motel rooms, waitressed, worked as a kitchen aide in a hospital (all before I graduated from high school), modeled nude, walked around in a bathing suit passing out brochures

## Question of the Quarter, continued

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for swimming pools, hawked credit card sign-ups, clerked in retail stores, helped students in a high school math program, sold produce (I've really lost track of all my jobs), before I began my 27-year career as a high school English teacher. *Vinnie Hansen*

My all-time favorite job was between my junior and senior years of college when I was a security guard at Wrigley Field in Chicago. I was 19 years old at the time and got paid \$3.60 an hour to watch the Cubs lose. They gave me a walkie-talkie and a billy club and set me loose to maintain law and order in the left field bleachers. Fortunately, the Cubs were still playing all day games in those days, so the crowds were small and pretty well behaved. On occasion, we would have to carry out a fan who had consumed too many Old Styles. I always kept one hand on my billy club so that nobody would take it away from me and hit me with it. It didn't pay much, but it was a lot more fun than being a lawyer (although at the end of the summer, I vowed that I would work in an air-conditioned office when I grew up . . .). *Sheldon Siegel*

The question says careers, so I'm going to skip summer and part-time jobs—I was a lousy waitress anyway. Post college, I worked as a housing market analyst, city planner, policy analyst economist, and strategic partner. I ended up teaching strategic planning to adults. This probably sounds dull, but I enjoyed the work, encountered lots of interesting people, and eventually got to work overseas, which was a long-term goal. *Patricia Dusenbury*

You couldn't call them all careers, but I worked as a temporary secretary, airline stewardess, house painter, and director of marketing before becoming a full-time journalist and writer in 1993. *Susan Kuchinskas*

Receptionist/switchboard operator in college. Reading teacher for a few years. Mother. Technical writer for EDA software. Freelance newspaper and magazine articles. Unpaid editor for several newsletters. Horsewoman/trainer. Now fiction writer. *Kate Wyland*

In reverse time order: technical writer and content strategy (25 years); movie theatre—all positions from candy counter through box office to manager; administrative assistant for a half dozen companies, including one called 1800Software, which is funny because my favorite tech writer job was with a company that called itself No Software; one-day gig selling Dali prints to people with the promise he'd drop dead any day now (it was years before he did)—and I never took another sleazy phone job. ☺ *Mysti Berry*

A dress model in NYC summers! Newspaper reporter on small town newspaper, Michigan. Elementary school teacher, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Michigan. Ad agency, NYC. Secretary, Universal Studios, LA; TV writer and producer. *Rita Lakin*

## Question of the Quarter, continued

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To me, “career” means a paying job I did/have done for more than a year. Applying that logic, I’ve been a bicycle mechanic, sports journalist, paralegal, and cyber crime investigator. **Robin Stuart**

So far, I have had three long and satisfying careers. I started, at age 20, in the advertising business in New York as a junior copywriter, did well at Ogilvy & Mather and ended up running the Ogilvy agency in Los Angeles. At age 45, retired from advertising and moved to Reno, Nevada, where I was hired as a professor in the school of journalism at the University of Nevada. Retired from the university at age 72 and started writing fiction. That was four books ago and I still have some ideas.

**Bourne Morris**

Ace babysitter in high school. College: waitress at several places (loved it), maid in Yellowstone National Park Old Faithful Inn; front desk at the same place; private secretary for a famous law professor. After college: summer desk job at the Texas Teacher’s Union; CIA—where I learned computer programming. Programming jobs at Colorado National Bank, Crocker Bank in SF, and Wells Fargo. Real estate agent for a few years. It looks dry when it’s laid out like that, but boy do I have stories! **Terry Shames**

In somewhat chronological order—secretarial intern (at NASA), microfilm assistant, head resident of a scholarship house at Florida State University, vintage clothes and jewelry peddler, manuscript typist, historian, architectural historian, non-profit project manager, desktop publisher, college recruiting coordinator, recruiter, editor, and technical writer. And once I assisted a Salad/Master salesman until I let the food burn in the “food-never-burns-in-these-pots.” Shortest. Job. Ever. **Ana Brazil**

My lives have kind of slid into each other. When my would-be partner in a jewelry and accessories importing business didn’t show up in Delhi, I improvised. Three Asia trips later, I designed a line of jewelry for the hair in LA, which led to commercial styling. This led to several years in Hollywood as a costumer and designer. Which, inevitably, led to scriptwriting! After my characters demanded their own novels, I turned one of my screenplays into my first novel, *Stinger*. **Diana Chambers**

I was a 911 dispatcher, sheriff’s records supervisor, meter maid and community service officer (report car). **Thonie Hevron**

My only real career was as a mechanical designer, starting as a draftsman and finishing as a senior designer who could sign for a \$50K purchase on my own. I started with small summer jobs during high school in Illinois, followed by jobs in the SF Bay Area and Portland, Oregon. The last two



## Question of the Quarter, continued

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decades were working for Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. But, my more interesting jobs—not careers—were in my teens and early twenties: babysat; cut lawns; caddied (in the north suburbs of Chicago—*Caddyshack* is a favorite); assembled industrial light parts; industrial stock room clerk; U.S. Army Security Agency—two years in Japan listening to Russians and others on the radio; freelance photographer; strung beads for street artists. After retiring, I worked as a desk clerk in a health club.

*Jim Guigli*

I was a professor of women’s studies at UC Davis. *Judith Newton*

Science writer, marketing writer/editor, corporate communication expert, jill-of-all-writing-trades (proposal writing, employee manuals, web content, ghostwriter for CEO, you name it) at a (now defunct) solar energy startup, technical editor for U.S. R&D forest service station, library assistant . . . huh, all of these have to do with the written word. NOTE: I am still doing the day job, i.e., the first two. *Ann Parker*

Thanks to **Rita Lakin** for this question. If you have any suggestions for future **Questions of the Quarter**, please send them to [mbunting@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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 **Heather Haven**, Event Coordinator ([heatherhavenstories@gmail.com](mailto:heatherhavenstories@gmail.com)), with meeting and venue suggestions and **Margie Bunting**, Newsletter Editor ([mbunting@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mbunting@sbcglobal.net)), with newsletter article suggestions and submissions.

### SinC NorCal Executive Committee

President: Diana Chambers [diana@dianarchambers.com](mailto:diana@dianarchambers.com)

Vice President: Mariella Krause [krausely@gmail.com](mailto:krausely@gmail.com)

Secretary: Claire Ortalda [c.ortalda@comcast.net](mailto:c.ortalda@comcast.net)

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Event Coordinator: Heather Haven [heatherhavenstories@gmail.com](mailto:heatherhavenstories@gmail.com)

Public Relations Coordinator: Myra Jolivet [myra.jolivet@comcast.net](mailto:myra.jolivet@comcast.net)

Newsletter Editor: Margie Bunting [mbunting@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mbunting@sbcglobal.net)

Anthology Coordinator: Margaret Lucke [getlucke@earthlink.net](mailto:getlucke@earthlink.net)

Website Wrangler: Mysti Berry [mysti.berry@gmail.com](mailto:mysti.berry@gmail.com)

Past President: Terry Shames [terryshames@gmail.com](mailto:terryshames@gmail.com)

