

THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

Sisters in Crime  Northern California Chapter

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Dear Sisters and Mistrs,

I often say, only half-joking, that I wouldn't wish the life of a writer on my worst enemy . . . who wants to sit inside on a beautiful day (like today), seeking the perfect word or perfect twist, at the mercy of everyone—agents, editors, readers, and one's own harsh inner critic?

And yet. The people I've met! People who have become my closest friends, whom I trust, colleagues who understand the struggles and the joys. I am so grateful for their generosity, the fun we've shared. In short, they have expanded my world. And it's all due to this g*d* writer's life that has chosen me.

Of course I still think of the road not taken—for some reason, being a globe-trotting tech exec fascinates me—but what a fabulous path this has been. Leading to unknown places. Who would have thought I'd be writing this letter, as President of Sisters in Crime Norcal?

I'm here because of books. Because my mother always had her nose in a book and always took us to the library. I love them as objects, their touch, their smell. (As you might guess, I am an e-reader only on upon occasion, rarely by choice.)

Our chapter had the opportunity in June to donate hundreds of books and a generous amount of cold cash (for postage) to the non-profit, volunteer-run Prisoners Literature Project in Berkeley, www.prisonlit.org. The desire to benefit them led to an inspiring Sausalito event involving a former inmate and two individuals dedicated to working with other incarcerated San Quentin individuals.



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President's Letter, continued

When Event Coordinator Heather Haven asked me to moderate the panel, I felt unqualified. What did I know? Yet I felt obligated to turn my eyes to the issue of mass incarceration (aka the school-to-prison pipeline) that entraps so many youth, usually young people of color. Co-hosted with MWA NorCal, the event was a moving and unforgettable afternoon that left no one dry-eyed. There was laughter, too, plenty of heart. Many departed with the resolve to contribute their efforts as tutors or mentors – anything to help end the bitter cycle of poverty.

During SinC NorCal's summer hiatus, I traveled by bus, train, and plane throughout southern China with my 23-year-old daughter – for WW2 research. Research being my favorite part of this writer's life. Now home, I'm eager for the quiet months ahead in which I hope to channel all I've learned onto the page. During this time, it'll be a great treat to anticipate our August meeting, the wildly popular Chocolate Seminar and Tasting led by Frank Price and Janet Rudolph.

In September we will hold an author-oriented presentation on gun mechanics and safety by Jim Guigli at San Francisco's Mechanics Institute.

After a hugely successful craft workshop two years ago, our chapter is organizing another one this October. Stay tuned for further details and don't forget to sign up!

Sincerely,
Diana Chambers
President, Sisters in Crime, NorCal



Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming SinC NorCal Events

Saturday, August 4, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

CHOCOLATE: Myth, Reality, Fantasy, and the Usual Suspects

Terry Shames' home, Berkeley (details shared after RSVP)

Members: \$10 Non-members: \$20 Cash or check at the door

Did you know that chocolate is a finite resource? Weather, insects, over-cultivation, and political forces can all affect the crop's yield. Presented by Janet Rudolph and Frank Price, this seminar examines the myths, realities, and fantasies, from bean to bar. What has threatened the supply of chocolate? Will the fluctuating price of the bean in the global economy drive suppliers out of business? How might new manufacturers offer delectable twists on a beloved confection? What of large corporations adding small artisanal brands to their portfolio to entice consumers with reimagined snacks or haute couture cuisine? And, what dastardly deeds can possibly be associated with something this addictive? Learn more about the history, culture and taste of the alluring bean.

Saturday, September 1, 12:00 – 2:30 pm.

Firearms Briefing with Jim Guigli

San Francisco Mechanics' Institute Library, 57 Post Street, San Francisco

Join us for a safe hands-on show-and-tell (with gun simulators used by law enforcement in training) about what writers need and want to know about firearms, led by our own Jim Guigli. Bring all your firearms questions. Door prizes! Book exchange! For Jim Guigli's experience with firearms, check out http://www.jimguigli.com/guns_page.htm.

Saturday, October 6, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Mystery Writing Intensive Workshop

Daly City, close to BART, but not within walking distance; free parking

Price through 8/31: \$60 members/\$80 non-members; after 9/1: \$75 members/\$95 non-members

Dig deeper into your writing! Join us for a full day of craft workshops and informational discussions geared toward writers at any stage in their journey. Presenters include: Gene Brenek (Cracking Creativity: Coming Up with Good Ideas and Lots of Them); Catriona McPherson (The Place of Persistence); and Jess Lourey (Revolutionize your Writing with These Easy Editing Hacks). There will also be a state-of-the-industry panel where a bookseller, a librarian, and an agent answer your questions about what makes a great mystery. Price includes workshops, lunch, wine reception, and door prizes.

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

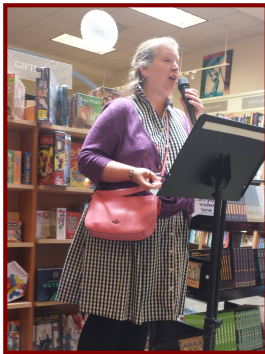
<http://www.sincnorcal.org> [Sisters in Crime NorCal Facebook page](#)

In Case You Missed It . . .

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

May Meeting

At our twice-yearly author showcase, "Mystery Ink: Select Readings from Sisters in Crime," we heard excerpts from a number of our members with new releases and a lucky few won a book.



Ana Brazil



Glenda Carroll



Janet Dawson



Dana Fredsti/ David Fitzgerald



Katherine Bolger Hyde



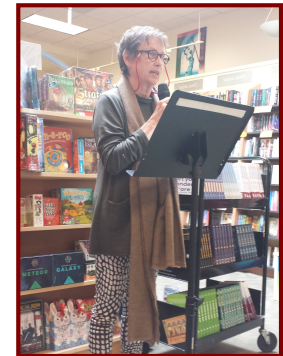
Ellen Kirschman



Terry Shames



Susan Shea



Nancy Tingley

June Meeting



By all accounts, the Prisoners Literature Event was a memorable day for all attending, as we learned how we can donate books to prisoners and heard from a panel of experts on prisoner literacy and human development. See the article on page 22 for more detailed information about this event.





Terry announcing the Paperback Original award winner

Edgar Week Report

by Terry Shames

Last year I fell off the edge of the world – at least it felt that way. What I did was agree to be head of the Paperback Original panel of judges for the annual MWA Edgar awards. Oh, I couldn't just take on being a judge—I actually agreed to be head of the committee. What that meant was finding six other authors who were willing and able to read somewhere around 350 books in a nine-month period. The team had to be balanced by gender, by the type of books they wrote, and by geographical area. I ended up with a team that I was very happy with, people who took seriously the business of choosing the best paperback originals submitted.

I had always felt a little conflicted about the Edgar awards. I had read winners that I thought were spectacular, and others that I wasn't so excited about. I was a little leery of the value of an award that depended on only a few readers. Other awards depend on the votes from readers in general; the Edgar is one of the few awards that uses a committee of readers.

I came out the other side of this experience with much more respect for the process, and that's because of my team. They were dedicated! I knew that asking each person to read all 350 books submitted in the category would be too daunting, so I divided the books among four teams. The team members would read the assigned books and give them a score. If both team members gave a low score, the book would not move forward. If either team member gave the book a high score, the book went on to a second round, where others would read it as well. Occasionally, the team was unsure about how they would rate a book and would ask for others to chime in. On a personal level, it was interesting for me to see how I had to reconsider a book I had given a high mark when another book came along that I liked even better. It was also an opportunity, and sometimes a challenge, to read sub-genres I would not normally read, but we all knew it was important to put prejudices aside and consider the merits of the books. I found some new authors in the process.

Adding to the burden of so many books was that although the submission period started early in the year, it was June before we started getting most of the books. There were other problems that arose—books sent to us in odd formats that were hard to read, time constraints that made it difficult for some team members to keep up the pace, books that didn't arrive when they were supposed to. But we overcame all of it.

Edgar Week Report, continued

What eventually came out of the process were about thirty books (a little under 10%) that made the second round. These were books that everyone needed to read, or reread, and score. Then it was time to get serious. Which books would rise to the top?

I had been cautioned that there might be problems with the team if one person was passionately in favor of a book and another disliked it. Maybe it was because of the way the teams were structured, or maybe it was just luck, but we didn't have that problem. In the end ten books rose to the final round, and when we decided on the finalists, everyone was satisfied. We all liked the final list, and we were all pleased with the winner. That said, we each mourned a book we thought should have been on the list. Every single person lobbied for a particular book that others didn't agree with. I secretly wished there was some way to let those authors know that their books engendered passion. But that's against the rules.

My reward for being head of the committee was to personally present the award at the Edgar banquet in New York. I had never been to the Edgars and was awestruck with the event. Everyone was dressed to the nines, and when I say "everyone," I mean many heavy hitters in our crime fiction world attended. I was thrilled to meet Attica Locke, winner in the Best Novel category for *Bluebird, Bluebird*, in person for the first time, having corresponded with her since her novel first came out. It

made me happy to meet three of our Paperback Original finalists in person. Alas, the winner, Anna Mazzola (*The Unseeing*) is from England



Camille Minichino and Ann Parker at the Edgars Banquet

and was unable to attend. I was also thrilled to meet one of the few members of my team whom I had never met, Andrew Case. We had a good time gossiping and meeting all the stars.

Would I do it again? Hard to say. I know people who have acted as judges numerous times, but I also know how disruptive it is to regular life. Since I was also president of our NorCal chapter of Sisters in Crime, I was especially short on time. In fact, for the first time ever I was late meeting my contract deadline. Thank goodness for an understanding editor. Being in a time crunch also meant having to turn down favors for people, begging off as "too busy," and being unable to explain why, because judges are to remain anonymous until after the awards are announced. All in all, it was a memorable year, and I came to really appreciate the time and effort put in by my team. This year seems light by comparison.



Attica Locke and Terry Shames

Edgar Week Report, continued

Still, I recommend giving serious consideration to being a judge. It gives you an appreciation for the wide range of writing subjects and styles, and for the amazing work of authors.

Terry Shames writes the best-selling Samuel Craddock series, nominated for numerous awards. *A Killing at Cotton Hill* won the Macavity Award for Best First Mystery and *The Necessary Murder of Nonie Blake* won the RTReviews Critics Award for 2016. MysteryPeople has twice named her one of the top five Texas mystery authors. *A Reckoning in the Back Country* came out in January, 2018. *A Risky Undertaking for Loretta Singletary* is due in January, 2019. Terry lives in Berkeley with her husband and two rowdy terriers. She is past president of SinC NorCal and is proud of the great work Sisters in Crime does on behalf of writers. Catch her blog posts twice monthly in 7Criminal Minds. Visit her website at www.terryshames.com.



Malice Domestic Celebrates 30 Years of the Traditional Mystery

by Gigi Pandian



Rhys Bowen and Gigi Pandian

Malice Domestic was created to celebrate the traditional mystery, and this year's Malice community gathered for its 30th convention. Malice is always held in the Washington, DC area, but for me, it has always felt like my home convention. Why? Because it was my introduction to the mystery world, and it's where I learned about SinC NorCal!

In 2007, I didn't know any mystery writers. But I'd been toying with a novel for years, and after discovering National Novel Writing Month, I finally *finished* a draft. I was so excited that I submitted it to the Malice Domestic grants competition, and was gobsmacked to win that year's grant. It included admission to the convention, so I attended. There, I learned that people who write about crime are the nicest people in the world! One of them was Julie Goodson-Lawes, aka Juliet Blackwell, who was up for an Agatha for Best Debut for the novel she wrote as Hailey Lind with her sister. Julie and I immediately hit it off, and learned we both lived in Northern California. She was serving on the board of SinC NorCal, and she invited me to join the chapter.

I'd stepped off my flight to DC as a lifelong mystery reader who didn't know any mystery writers, and left Malice Domestic having met many favorite authors and with a renewed passion for writing—not to mention a suitcase bursting with books.

By the following year, I was not only serving on the SinC NorCal board myself, but I'd made several wonderful friends and learned so much about the craft and business of writing. So you see, it's all Malice's fault that you've had me as a member for more than a decade.

This year at the 30th Malice Domestic, I and fellow SinC Norcal member Rhys Bowen were both honored to win Agatha Awards. Rhys won Best Historical Mystery for *In Farleigh Field*, and I won Best Short Story for my locked-room mystery novelette "The Library Ghost of Tanglewood Inn." For those of you who write traditional mysteries, Malice is work the trek.

Gigi Pandian is the *USA Today* bestselling and Agatha Award-winning author of the Jaya Jones Treasure Hunt mysteries, Accidental Alchemist mysteries, and locked-room mystery short stories. www.gigipandian.com

Member Profile: Mary Feliz

Sixth in a series to introduce our members to each other

Meet Mary Feliz, a successful mystery writer who has written four books to date in her popular series featuring Silicon Valley professional organizer Maggie McDonald.



Stiletta: You have lived in Northern California (currently Watsonville) for more than 30 years. Where else have you lived, and what attracted you to come to Silicon Valley and stay?

Mary Feliz: In the early 80s, I met my husband-to-be, who was finishing up a master's in electrical engineering at MIT. He was a California native and wanted to be back in the Bay Area. I'd moved around a lot as a child and was game to try someplace new, so I came with him. I grew up all over the East Coast and lived for a time in Chicago, but had never been further west—it was a grand adventure.

Stiletta: You majored in sociology at prestigious Smith College. Did you have a particular career objective in mind? In what types of jobs did you spend your career?

MF: I started college as a biology major with an emphasis in plant biology. A run-in with a Neanderthal who was my only choice for an advisor derailed that plan. I applied as a transfer to Cornell, but then a professor in Smith's Sociology Department offered a tuition-free year studying in England. I never looked back. Sociology had been very nearly a minor for me, so it was an easy transition. I love looking at what makes society tick as a whole, which is very different from what drives us as individuals. My family considered a liberal arts education a stepping stone to further education or career training, so I had the luxury of exploring academia without worrying about exactly how I would cash it in on a career. Yet, surprisingly, I found that so much of the broad-based background I picked up in college served me very well in the work world. For most of my formal career I was in Corporate Communications and Public Relations for a diverse technology company. My eclectic education served me well. My other jobs included cleaning bathrooms, teaching swimming, customer service, and a dreadful stint at a dismal place locals called "The Prayer Factory."

Stiletta: What made you decide to make the transition from the corporate world into writing mysteries (and do you now write full-time)?

MF: I do write full-time now—the best job in the world. After a long stint as an at-home mom and community volunteer, I decided writing a book would be the ultimate challenge for me. My first paper in college was written for a professor who'd been a pal of Tolkein. I worked hard on it, but it

Member Profile: Mary Feliz, continued

came back with the notation, “Did you sprinkle the commas in with a pepper grinder?” I got some of my worst grades in English. My first two books (never published) were young adult historicals about early California. I decided mysteries might be more marketable . . . and my Maggie McDonald series was born.

Stiletta: The fourth in your successful Maggie McDonald Mystery series was released in July. How would you describe your series?

MF: It’s a small-town mystery set in the outskirts of the Silicon Valley megatropolis. I’d read that successful books were often “the same, but different.” Since I loved British village mysteries, I tried to think of the most unlikely place to set one. My own hometown seemed a good fit. That dichotomy between cutting-edge technology and an old-fashioned murder mystery appealed to me. Maggie and her friends are women who are strongest when they work together to restore that sense of community that we all need. I try to reflect Silicon Valley more realistically than it’s been portrayed in movies and on television, focusing on the diversity of the inhabitants and their everyday lives instead of flashy dot.com billionaires and their super cars.

Stiletta: Tell us about your road to publishing a mystery series—what advice do you have for fellow members struggling to get published?

MF: I think the most successful authors are those who were too stubborn to quit, no matter what. Luck plays a role, of course, but fate can’t work for you unless you’re overprepared and eager to recognize and embrace the opportunities.

Stiletta: Were you a professional organizer like your protagonist, Maggie McDonald, in a previous life? If not, how did you decide on this career for Maggie?

MF: I’m definitely not organized like Maggie! She’s a fantasy for me. But I think she has the ideal career for an amateur sleuth. Her job gives her access to all the places people hide their secrets. An editor suggested the career. It sounded intriguing, but I didn’t know much of anything about it. But, the National Association of Professional Organizers was holding a conference that same weekend in San Francisco. When coincidences like that occur in life, I have to pay attention. I had a blast meeting with the organizers, who told me more wonderful stories than I could ever put in a book.

Stiletta: Animals seem to play major roles in your series—can you tell us about that?

MF: When I started writing, our golden retriever always sat at my feet, and one of our cats perched on the windowsill over my desk. By the time I began the Maggie mysteries, both animals had died, and I missed them, but they found their way into the stories. I discovered that the ways in which

Member Profile: Mary Feliz, continued

my characters interact with animals reveal nuances of their back stories very efficiently. Now, whenever I create characters, I include their animals. If they don't have a pet, I try to figure out why. It's a fantastic tool for me. The tricky bit is remembering that I'm writing mysteries, not dog stories.

Stiletta: What are your proudest accomplishments?

MF: My original goal was to hone my skills well enough to nab a traditional NY contract. I did that and I'm still pinching myself to make sure I'm not dreaming. Oddly, though, I'm proudest of something that might shame other people. After always being the student who handed in assignments early or on time, I was forced to ask for more time to finish my third book. Sucking up the courage to ask for help and realizing my publisher was willing to bend over backward to meet my needs was a hugely freeing experience for me.

Stiletta: Do you have any writing idols or mentors?

MF: Louise Penny. Hands down. I love her characters and miss them between books. I'd like to think that her clever, slightly nutty, flawed, and community-minded residents of Three Pines might become great friends with my characters if they were ever to meet.

Stiletta: What has your membership in Sisters in Crime meant to you?

MF: I went to a women's college and reveled in the inclusive environment that fosters women helping women to succeed, grow, and thrive. Sisters in Crime embraces those same ideals, and I felt immediately at home when I joined, particularly in the online Guppy chapter, in which we all have something to offer and we all have something to learn, no matter where we are on our journey. That kind of thinking makes the world go 'round. It's more rare than it should be, but it abounds and is celebrated within Sisters in Crime.

Stiletta: I saw in your bio that you have competed in whale boat races and done synchronized swimming. Please tell us more about those activities.

MF: The whale boat races were a goofy Bicentennial celebration. My Connecticut hometown built reproductions of the whale boats that had been instrumental in fighting the British, who were entrenched in New York and on the opposite side of Long Island Sound. A Long Island town took up the challenge and we raced those unwieldy boats with heavy oars. Oddly, there were three oars on one side and two on the other. We didn't go very fast, but we had lots of fun. Our "uniforms" were far less authentic than the boats: shorts, T-shirts, and mob caps. And synchronized swimming was an excuse to spend more time in the water in college. Swimming has always been my stress-buster. I made up in enthusiasm what I lacked in skill.

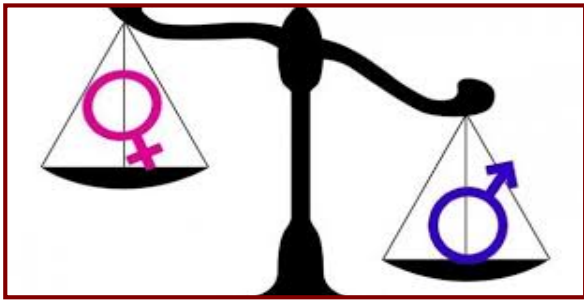
Member Profile: Mary Feliz, continued

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

Disorderly Conduct released July 10, 2018 and throws Maggie and her family into the perils surrounding a Bay Area summer wildfire. By the time I sent it to Kensington in the fall of 2017, the fires in the Wine Country were the top news story all over the country. My editor said it was incredibly creepy to watch the story unfold in the book and in real life at the same time. The next book, *Cliff Hanger*, takes place on the shores of Monterey Bay where I live now. I had such fun writing about the diverse wildlife and natural beauty that I may need to revisit it in a new series!

Mary Feliz was interviewed by Margie Bunting, Sisters in Crime Norcal's newsletter editor.





Gender Parity: A Road More Traveled

by Patricia L. Morin

I was drawn to the relationship between gender parity in theatre and publishing through my work with the International Centre of Women Playwrights (ICWP), of which I am the president. We had just completed our 50/50 Applause Awards honoring theatres that promote women playwrights on an equal basis with male playwrights. ICWP's mission is to connect, inspire, and empower women playwrights to achieve equity on the world stages.

The theatre world is dominated by men: artistic directors who choose the plays, directors, board members, decision makers, and other employees. Women's productions on main stages are where bigger budgets are allotted for royalties, actors, and marketing. Unfortunately, the statistics for women's productions had ticked up only a few percentage points in the last 7 years (from 25 percent to 28 percent, and in some places 30 percent). Although ICWP reached seven countries outside of the U.S.--Australia, Canada, Finland, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, and Wales--our percentage of theatres promoting gender parity remained low.

In late 2017, *American Theatre* magazine reported that, out of 513 not-for-profit theaters across the U.S., only 26 percent of their new plays and revivals were written by women, with 63 percent written by men and 11 percent co-written by women and man.

Women playwrights were paid less in royalties, given smaller stages, and had fewer performances.

My work with ICWP and gender parity led me to ponder about women who write mysteries. Are women mystery authors paid equal or close to equal royalties compared to their male counterparts? Do they receive similar advances (given same individual publishing data)? Do they get equal review space in newspapers and magazines? How has the women's movement impacted women mystery writers with respect to equal pay and equal opportunity?

Let's take a short look at what has happened to gender parity over 2017 and 2018 thus far.

In January 2017, the first Women's March, one of seismic proportions (over 4 million women), created a tsunami of awareness and solidarity that flooded major U.S. cities, as well as other cities throughout the world. Women were taking a unified stand.

Gender Parity, continued

Actress America Ferrera said, during the march: “We stand together in solidarity with our partners and children for the protection of our rights, our safety, our health, and our families.”

<https://www.womensmarch.com/>

The march was repeated in January 2018.



The #MeToo movement spurred on more resistance by women. What began in October 2017 rocked the film, media, publishing, and theater industries across the world – when actresses started using the #MeToo hashtag on social media to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment. It followed on the heels of the Harvey Weinstein sexual misconduct allegations.

The #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #I'mWithHer movements strengthened the power of the Women's March 2017-2018. Issues of job and pay discrimination shared the spotlight with sexual harassment complaints. Women were asking questions, becoming bolder, and demanding recognition. Men in power were stepping back and re-evaluating, while also being made to answer for sexual harassment complaints. Women also, mind you, but men more so.

Leigh-Anne Jasheway, writing in *Writer's Digest*, said, “There seems to be no genre that has not been impacted by women finally feeling able and welcome to tell their stories. A recent Google search with the words “#MeToo articles” returned 6.6 million results. To those of us who have been paying attention, seeing the internet filled with so many women's voices, including so many new

Gender Parity, continued



voices, is a remarkable thing. I've noticed a shift in my writing. I feel gutsier and less apologetic." -- "The #MeToo Movement and its Impact on Women's Writing," March 29, 2018, *Writer's Digest*

Has this movement helped women mystery writers on the road to gender parity?

I say yes . . . even though the crime writing/mystery world has slowly been

amassing female authors, the publishing world around them needed to change.

Barbara Fister wrote in *Bitchmedia 2014*, "Though overall numbers have improved, more mysteries by men than women are nominated for and receive high-prestige awards. More men than women are reviewed in high-profile publications such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Women are far more likely to be published in paperback than hardcover and find the warmest review reception among book bloggers, who are increasingly important contributors to book criticism but get less respect than 'professional' reviewers. Women make up more than half of the mystery writers – but get criminally few reviews."

Unlike plays that are divided into flash, short, one-act, and full-length, the fiction world breaks down into many genres, with more delineated statistics. In "Bias, She Wrote: The Gender Balance of *The New York Times Best Seller List*," Rosie Cima of *Pudding* breaks down the history of male/female percentage in the fiction world from 1950 to 2016, depicting the very uneven progression, but slow rise, of sales for female mystery writers.

The publishing business, however: "*Publisher's Weekly's* annual salary and jobs 2016-2017 survey certainly (also) backs up the . . . power that men hold in the publishing industry. Despite the fact that men are a minority (20%) of the overall workforce, 51% of the managers are men (2016)." *Publisher's Weekly Survey 2017* (PW, November 3, 2017, Jim Milliot). Women dominate men as literary agents.

But now, after 2015, women mystery and crime writers have come closer to 50/50 gender parity (55% men, 45% women). Female crime writers have fared the best, with a slow but steady rise in the last ten years. Today, men are using female pen names to sell crime fiction, a real turnaround in the world of publishing! As Sophie Gilbert states In *The Atlantic*, August 2017 ("Why Men

Gender Parity, continued

Pretend to be Women to Sell Thrillers”), “Over the last decade, female writers have come to dominate crime fiction, a genre traditionally associated with men.”

“Also, through the work of Sisters in Crime 1987-2013, the percentage of mysteries by women reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review* went from a miserable 17 percent in 1987 to 36 percent in 2013. The *Paris Review* and *The New York Times* have grown more responsive to women’s writing. *The New Republic* and *The New York Review of Books*, not so much. We know women have been seriously underrepresented in high-prestige venues, and that the situation can be improved.” (Fister, *Bitchmedia*, 2014).

And so it has . . . 2016, and especially 2017, have seen a marked change in the number of reviews and the number of awards, as well as the number of women mystery authors on the top ten list of *Times*, *Post*, *Atlantic*, *Kirkus*, and others.

Where does that bring us? Women in the mystery and crime genres are nearing perfect gender parity and, notwithstanding gender-changing names from men, have flooded the market!

Also, in 2016 and 2017, and growing in 2018, women mystery authors crept to a near 50/50 gender split with men mystery writers for “best-mystery-books-of-the-year” choices.

The *Washington Post’s* 2016 “Best Mystery” list included seven men and three women; however, in 2017 the publication honored six women and four men! In 2016, *The New York Times* selected four women and six men on their “best-of-mystery” list; in 2017 the number for the *Times* remained four women and six men. *Kirkus Review* showed an even seven-seven pick for best of 2016 and 2017. But *Booklist* for 2017 named fourteen men and six women as their best of the year.

Although . . . reviews of women’s mystery books are still lower, and the recent pay differences between male and female mystery writers were not available. Although . . . a recent article by Danuta Kean in England’s *The Guardian* states, “Women fare worse, according to the survey, earning 7% of what their male counterparts.”

Would the changes in the publishing industry have occurred without the impact of the surging wave of the women’s movement? Probably, I believe, but much slower. Also, women in the publishing workforce will hopefully speak louder and more clearly about the changes that still need to be made in both the theatre and publishing industries.

In most areas, women authors have leaped to the forefront in mystery and crime fiction. A success story, and one we hope to see in the future with playwrights.

Gender Parity, continued

FYI: definition and history of feminist hashtags:

<http://yourdreamliveyourdream.org/2018/02/feminist-hashtags-metoo-timesup/>

Besides writing short stories, novels and plays, Pat Morin has Master's degrees in both Counseling Psychology and Clinical Social Work. She is also an award-winning international playwright. She has four short story collections published: *Mystery Montage* (2010), *Crime Montage* (2012), *Confetti* (2014), and *Deadly Illusions* (2016). Her short story "Homeless" was a Derringer and Anthony Award finalist, while "Pa and the Pigeon Man" was nominated for a Pushcart. The National League of Pen Women awarded her first place for her short memoir, "Grandpa Hoesler and the Race Riots." You can learn more about Pat and her writing by visiting her website: www.patriciamorin.com.

New Executive Committee Member

Exciting news! We have another new SinC NorCal Executive Committee Member:

VERA H-C CHAN, Communications Coordinator: I've probably published more than a million words, all of them true. I've worked as features and A&E reporter/editor in newspapers, magazines and online; a contributor to a travel book and a martial arts encyclopedia; and as a senior editor, Web trends analyst and content strategist at the world's biggest online destinations, Yahoo! and Bing@Microsoft.



I've been making the pivot to fiction by attending writers' conferences and joining membership boards such as Exceptional Women in Publishing, Sisters in Crime NorCal, and the California Crime Writers Conference. In 2015, I won Sisters in Crime's Eleanor Taylor Bland award for unpublished mystery writers of color. Among other volunteer activities, I've been helping (along with my husband, Ray) to teach martial arts at UC Berkeley for about 25 years (as a black belt, I know when to run away). Currently I'm sending out queries for two (count 'em, two) works: *The Mounted Position* (a gentle comedy of bruising proportions) and *Brenna Hom: Discreet Investigations* (the mystery!). *Insert shameless plug for an agent here . . .*



Small-Town Adventures by Patricia E. Canterbury

I have published adult mysteries and a children’s chapter book, but I have a special place in my heart for the three pre-teen mysteries I have written over a 20-year period.

It all began when I joined a critique group, ZICA Creative Arts and Literary Guild, in 1996. At the time, only one of the 12 members had published a novel. So we decided to jump-start our creativity by pulling colors, numbers, and short phrases from a hat, which each of us would use to start writing a poem, short story or manuscript.

When I pulled the number three, I knew I wanted to write about three best friends, as I thought friends would be easier to write about than siblings. These friends are 12-year-old girls who are so close that the folks in their town call them “The Triplets” – one rarely sees one without the other two. I didn’t want to deal with any of the problems confronting pre-teen children in the late 20th or early 21st century; therefore, I set my stories during the late 1920s and 1930s.

I came up with the setting for my books when six of us in the ZICA critique group rented a house in Sea Ranch, a colony south of Mendocino, during the Columbus Day weekend to work on our manuscripts. The atmosphere at and around Sea Ranch became Poplar Cove and its two closest towns, in which I framed my mysteries.

I’m a native Californian and wanted to celebrate the wonders of Northern California. I set my towns as *colored* to give a broader history than is currently seen in pre-teen novels. The folks who live in my towns are predominately African-American, although Mexican, Chinese, and Anglo folks live and interact with The Triplets. I interviewed women of all races, including my 104-year-old aunt, who were 90 to 100+ years old at the time, to get their take on life as a 12-year-old in small-town America in the 1920s, and built my protagonists with their memories.

The Secret of St. Gabriel’s Tower, the first in the series, dealt with the girls’ missing friend, who is the only one in Poplar Cove to have polio. Explaining polio to 21st century children is AMAZING. Even many of their teachers had not heard of the disease. The second novel, *The Secret of Morton’s End*, features the first murder in Poplar Cove. The sheriff, in a moment of weakness, makes The Triplets junior deputies, which leads to their determination to find the murderer who has “invaded” their town.

As I was promoting book one, mothers of boys would ask when I would write a *boy* book because their sons refused to read books with girl protagonists. I responded with book three, *The Case of the Bent Spoke*, released this July. Instead of The Triplets, this book focuses on Marshall “Major” Taylor, the foremost African-American bicycle racer, who comes to Poplar Cove on his way

Small-Town Adventures, continued

to an exhibition in Japan. While in Poplar Cove he is the judge of a bicycle race among the boys and young men in the TriCove area. Of course, someone wants to prevent him from racing in Japan.

I had never heard of Major Taylor—a real person—and needed to do some research to make him come alive on the pages. Thank heavens for the Sacramento Public Library system, as well as Google. Now, Hennessey Whiskey is featuring Major Taylor in some of their commercials, where the tagline is, “Major’s only competition is himself,” which ran during the NBA final game.

The final Poplar Cove Mystery, *The Secret of Sugarman’s Circus*, will hopefully come out late summer 2019. The Triplets are once again in deep mischief when a traveling circus breaks down just outside Poplar Cove and a circus member who befriends the girls is murdered; the junior deputies are right on the job.

While I enjoy writing pre-teen novels, I like exploring other genres and am currently working on a manuscript, also set during the 30s, where an African-American private investigator, Tanner Sullivan, is searching for his long-lost cousin and her best friend.

Patricia E. (Pat) Canterbury is a native Sacramentan, political scientist, art collector, avid reader, and philanthropist who has written six published novels—one children’s chapter book, three pre-teen mysteries, and two adult mysteries. Pat has traveled to all 50 states and over 45 countries. More information can be found on her website, www.patmyst.com. She lives in Sacramento with her husband, elderly cat, and a yard full of wild birds, raccoons, and golden butterflies.



A Week of Brittany and a Photo Show

by Madeleine Adkins

Brittany, in San Francisco and Berkeley?!

Yes, for one week this past May, Brittany flourished in the Bay Area, when the Fête de le Bretagne (Brittany Celebration) came to town. Five events during the last week of May provided opportunities for local folks to experience Breton music, dance, history, culture, language, and food without having to buy a plane ticket. I had the honor of featuring over twenty of my Brittany photographs in an exhibit at the Alliance Française of San Francisco for three weeks in May, as part of a Breton-themed exhibit.



The exhibit, entitled “From Brittany to California,” featured a number of posters—in French and in English—on Brittany (a region of France) and its historic ties to the Bay Area and California, in addition to my photographs of Breton coastal areas, buildings and scenery. I began photographing the landscapes of Brittany on my first visit in 2004, and have continued to do so on my many visits since then. A large number of the

photos in the exhibit were taken in 2010-2011, when I lived in a coastal village in the Morbihan region, while I was studying the Breton language. I fell in love with the area, and spent many hours taking my camera around the



Week of Brittany, continued

neighborhood so that I could capture the incredible beauty that surrounded me in my daily life there. In the last few years, I've had a handful of photographic exhibitions, and my Brittany photos have always been a highlight. This year, in the exhibit at the Alliance, the Brittany photos got to shine on their own.

The main event of the week, on May 24, was a big bash at the Alliance Française, combining historical talks, a concert, Breton crepes, and the official opening of the exhibit. People from around the Bay Area came to enjoy the immersive evening.



The Fête de la Bretagne was organized by Breizh Amerika (www.breizh-amerika.com), a non-profit organization that seeks to build cultural and economic ties between the U.S. and Brittany. At a number of venues, the Breizh Amerika Collective, a group of Breton musicians living in the U.S. and Brittany, performed alongside local musician Joe Kyle, creating a fusion of modern jazz and traditional Celtic tunes.



Breizh Amerika is bringing these events to new locations in the U.S. every year. While a different region will be the focus next year, the celebrations were a big hit in the Bay Area, so the Fête de la Bretagne will return next year, albeit for a shorter visit. I don't know if there'll be another chance to exhibit my photos. But either way, I'm looking forward to celebrating Brittany once again next year.

Madeleine Adkins is currently writing her first mystery, set in Ireland. She has published travel articles, op-eds, and academic articles in the past, and in the daytime, she works as a technical writer. An active Instagrammer, Madeleine publishes her iPhone photos, focusing on the scenery of daily life, as well as past travels, at <https://www.instagram.com/madeleine.adkins/>

Literature at San Quentin

by Heather Haven

The following article first appeared in the *MWA Lineup*. On reading it, I felt it perfectly captured the day's spirit, and would be enjoyed by the SinC members unable to attend, as well as provide good memories to those of us who did – Diana Chambers



Lunch Under the Trees

On June 2, Sisters in Crime NorCal, as well as Mystery Writers of America NorCal, embraced a special event held in Sausalito. If it didn't change our lives, it certainly latched onto our souls. The catalyst for this combined event was the Prisoners Literature Project (PLP), a non-profit that sends books to prisoners nationwide: www.prisonlit.org. For those who didn't attend on June 2, it was a beautiful day, and I don't mean just the weather. Beautiful people participated, sharing the past and present: who they were, who they are, what they've done, and what they do. This included two former inmates of San Quentin, Terrell Merritt, guest panelist, and Leonard Rubio, now Executive Director of Insight Prison Project (www.insightprisonproject.org), who paid a surprise visit. If I bandy around a lot of names, links, and initials in this brief but important article, please forgive me. The names are real, not fiction. The outcomes are real, not fiction. The links and initials represent how people reclaim their lives, whether they are victim, assailant, friend or family.



A Goodly Gathering

Literature at San Quentin, continued

Terrell Merritt said he turned around his life in San Quentin. A major influence in becoming the remarkable man he is today was due to Guiding Rage into Power, or GRIP (<http://insight-out.org/>). He showed a short video of a 'lifer' lost to society who found his way again through this important program. His grief and regret brought most of us to tears. Terrell said repeatedly he was lucky to have been sent to San Quentin. The good fortune at being at San Quentin was also talked about by the other two panelists, Carter Schwonke and Brian Cahill, who have volunteered there for years.

It seems to come down to location, location, location. Because of San Quentin's location, there are many volunteers with the time, inclination, and education to help make these and other programs come to life. But most other prisons are not so lucky. That's where we come in. There are so many people who need a helping hand. Filling that hand with a book is a great place for us wordsmiths to start. Consider contacting PLP today, a program that might just latch onto your soul.



**Diana Chambers, Carter Schwonke, Terrell Merritt,
Brian Cahill, Leonard Rubio**



Terrell Merritt, Carter Schwonke, Brian Cahill

Member News



New Releases

The Dancer Wore Opera Rose by Shelley Adina, book #2 in the Mysterious Devices series, August 20 by Moonshell Books

Disorderly Conduct by Mary Feliz, book #4 in the Maggie McDonald Mystery series, July 10, Kensington

The Case of the Bent Spoke by Patricia E. Canterbury, book #3 in her historical mid-grade Poplar Cove Mystery series, July 21

Island of the Mad by Laurie R. King, book #15 in her Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes series, June 12 from Bantam

To Bead or Not to Bead by Janice Peacock, book #4 in the Glass Bead Mystery Series, June 29 by Vetrail Press

Four Funerals and Maybe a Wedding by Rhys Bowen, book #12 in the Royal Spyness series, August 7 by Penguin Group

Vinnie Hansen's short story, "Miscalculation," is out in *Santa Cruz Noir* in June 2018 from Akashic Books. Her story, "Room and Board," has been selected for inclusion in the Guppies' anthology, *Fishy Business* (Wildside, TBA), and "Critical Mass" will be included in *Santa Cruz Weird*, releasing in September from Good Read Publishers.

Mary Feliz reports that Kensington has sold to Tandor the rights to audiobook versions of all four of her Maggie McDonald Mysteries.

Public Appearances

Rhys Bowen has several local appearances on her book launch tour for *Four Funerals and Perhaps a Wedding*: August 14 at 7:00 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera; August 16 at 7:00 p.m. at Books, Inc. in Palo Alto; August 22 at 7:00 p.m. at Copperfield's in Santa Rosa; and August 23 at 1:00 p.m. at Towne Center Books in Pleasanton for a fun lunch hour tea party. She hopes to see some fellow sisters and misters at some of these.

Member News, continued

Public Appearances (continued)

On Saturday, September 15 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., Vinnie Hansen, along with editor Susie Bright and several contributors to *Santa Cruz Noir*, will read and entertain you at Borderlands Bookstore, 866 Valencia St., San Francisco.

Awards

Thonie Hevron's crime thriller, *With Malice Aforethought*, won first place in the published novel category in the annual Public Safety Writers Association Writing Competition.

At the Public Safety Writers Conference in Las Vegas, Jim Guigli received the following awards: second place, fiction short story nonpublished for "Just a Dream"; first place, fiction short story nonpublished for "Always Rings Twice."

Dead in Bed by M. Glenda Rosen was awarded an Honorable Mention at the Public Safety Writers Association Writing Competition.

Training

Simon Wood will be the keynote speaker at this year's [Southwest Washington Writers' Conference](#) on September 8 at Centralia College in Centralia, WA. He will also present a workshop on plotting

Miscellaneous

As you may know, the publishing world's firebrand, Harlan Ellison, passed away recently. You can listen to Simon Wood's anecdote about the time he had to go toe-to-toe with the fearsome Ellison at <https://soundcloud.com/simon-wood-445458542/harlan-me-2>

Question of the Quarter



Have you ever published anything under a pseudonym or would you consider it? Why or why not? How do/would you come up with a pseudonym?

At one time I had four pseudonyms, one for each market: Shelley Adina (young adult), Adina Senft (Amish women's fiction), Shelley Bates (Christian fiction), and Shannon Hollis (sexy Harlequin romance). This was back in the days when publishers insisted on a different pseudonym for each market "to prevent reader confusion." I've since narrowed it down to only two: Shelley Adina (my first and middle names) for steampunk mystery and romance, and Adina Senft (my middle and maiden names) for Amish fiction. No reader ever gets confused, and the genres I write are clearly shown on my website, so readers can choose what they like. Much easier to maintain—four websites and the marketing that went with them was just insane. *Shelley Adina*

I have not used a pseudonym but am considering the name Zoey Kozinski for the literary suspense books I'm currently writing. My WIPs veer from the genre type of my PI Carol Sabala mysteries, so a new name might help with rebranding. Plus, Zoey Kozinski is a writer character in the second new book who supposedly wrote the first book. *Vinnie Hansen*

I haven't published under a pseudonym, but I could consider it if I'm writing outside my normal genre, or if I publish a book independently, to avoid confusing readers about what to expect. I write a traditional mystery, and if I decided to write a thriller and publish it myself, I would want readers to know this was not like my other books. As for a pseudonym, that's tough one. I suppose I could try "Louise Penny" or "Megan Abbott." *Terry Shames*

No, I didn't think I could make up anything as catchy as my real name. Also, by the time I published (2010), it was obvious that branding would need to be an integral part of any author's marketing plan. Any successful brand would need to utilize my own name. *Cindy Sample*

I have never used a pseudonym. My name already sounds like one. Did consider using my full name, Heather Lee Haven, but that sounds like a rest home. Might use the name Aphrodite Goldfarb one of these days. Just like the sound of it. So if you run across that name in the future, it's probably me. *Heather Haven*

I have never published under a pseudonym. I'm sure there are good reasons for doing so, like a wish to remain as private as possible. What I really disagree with, however, is the frequent pressure from agents or publishers to have different names for different series. As I reader, I hate that. If I like one series, I am more likely to read a new one by the same author (like Anne Cleeves' Vera and Shetland series) than start a new series by an unknown. *Priscilla Royal*

Question of the Quarter, continued

The very first sale I made was for a male-oriented magazine (*Manhunt* in the 1950s). I was warned that they didn't buy from women, so I wrote under my initials, RWLakin, and sold my story. In the years I wrote for TV, there were times I wanted to use a pseudonym when I thought the project was beneath me. Again, given good advice—don't do it. It insults the producers. True. Kept my name and kept my work. **Rita Lakin**

I have one book published under my name, and I did not consider a pseudonym. I worked too hard to write and publish the darned thing, and I wanted everyone to know I wrote it! **Heather Young**

Yes, I use three pseudonyms and one REALnym. My publisher requires pen names for any new series; I would never do it otherwise—it takes old readers a long time to find you! I've come up with them by using variations of friends' names (like Margaret Grace), the name of a heroine (Ada Madison, after Countess Ada Lovelace, the world's first computer programmer), or my favorite cousin's name (Jean Flowers, a translation from the Italian). **Camille Minichino**

I have never published anything under a pseudonym, but I would consider if it I published significant fiction because I have published 13 nonfiction books under my real name and would like to distinguish them from fiction. I would probably use some combination of my grandparents' first names: Martiscia, Goldie, Franklin and Dyer. **Tish Davidson**

No, I would only publish under a pseudonym for a specific reason. If I did, I would come up with the pseudonym the same way I make character names. Why not? Just look at "I'm Joe Blow writing as "Ralph Windbag . . ." **Jim Guigli**

I write fiction under the pseudonym Heidi Noroozy and translate under my legal name, Heidi Holzer. Noroozy is my Iranian husband's last name, which I did not take when we married but "borrowed" later, I picked the pen name when I was shopping a novel set in Iran, and my agent and I both felt having an Iranian name would lend me more credibility. I'm not writing stories set in other cultures as well, but I still use the pseudonym when I've got my writing hat on and my real name when I'm a translator. It helps separate my two identifies. **Heidi Noroozy**

Yes, because we were writing erotica around the time I started writing biblical history. For a while I was keeping it all hush hush until I realized that if you're an atheist, you've already lost any street cred with the Christians, but the atheists love it. Dana [Fredsti] writes under "Inara Lavey"—after the character Inara Serra from the show *Firefly* (for the sci-fi fans) and Anton Lavey (for the goth crowd) I write under the name "Kilt Kilpatrick." I'm known for wearing kilts every now and again, so I knew I wanted that to be the first name, and keeping with the time-honored Marvel Comics tendency for alliterative character names, wanted something that started with a "K." As a Fitzgerald, I frequently answer to Fitzpatrick, so Fitzpatrick = Kilpatrick. **David Fitzgerald**

Question of the Quarter, continued

I publish under the pseudonym Judith Janeway (two romances, two mysteries, one flash fiction, one upcoming short story in the SinC anthology). Judith is my own name. Jane is my middle name and my mother's first name. Janeway is how I honor my matriarchal lineage and my own individuality separate from my father and my ex-husband. *Judith Wrubel*

Never used one because I have name recognition from my nonfiction work. Doubt I'll need one in the future. *Ellen Kirschman*

Yes, Kate Wyland is a pseudonym, though not much of one. I didn't feel comfortable using my real name (too shy). Was going to use a very different one, then I heard an author recommend using one that at least starts with your own initials. Because you may start to autograph a book automatically with your real name. If you use your initials, there's a good chance you can catch yourself before you spoil a book. Don't know how true that is, but it sounded good. *Kate Wyland*

I've written under two pseudonyms. I used one when I was writing out of genre. Mystery readers thought I wrote horror, and horror readers thought I wrote mysteries. I wrote under a pen name for a book that I ghost-wrote, as the subject wasn't connected to anything I wrote. All my pen names start with Simon because if someone calls my name, I won't forget to turn around. *Simon Wood*

I've never written under a pseudonym, but I've considered it. The first time I thought about it was when my dad complained that my characters swear too much. I encouraged him to listen to real conversations and he finally agreed that real humans under stress, do, in fact, tend to swear a lot. 😊 When he found out I was thinking of writing under a different name because of his objection to language, he was horrified and apologetic. He was quite proud of our heritage/last name but, more than that, he was proud of me and wanted bragging rights.

The second time I thought about it was when I started writing cyber crime fiction. I've operated "under the radar" for most of my crime-fighting career due to threats against people in this line of work, myself included. The good guys know who I am but very few of the bad guys did, which made it safer for me. The way my name is spelled leads a lot of people to think I'm a man if they've never met me in real life so it was always a red flag when particular people reached out to me as "Mr. Stuart." When I embraced my day job as my subgenre and platform, I thought long and hard before putting my face and name out there for all the bad guys to see. I have a huge network within the tech community who are rooting for my writing success so I decided the best way to honor them (and my parents) is to use my real name.

While considering the mechanics of writing under a pseudonym, I thought of using an anagram in a nod to Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City*. *Robin Stuart*

Question of the Quarter, continued

I wasn't entirely comfortable answering because I think the only way to truly protect one's identity is not to tell others than you use another identity. ☺ But my official answer is: Yes, I do have a pseudonym which I use to write in a specific genre, which I think is the main reason to do it. Suffice it to say that my pseudonym keeps me safe and protects my real-life identity, and separates my mystery writing from my fantasy writing. Someone looking for my fantasy writing is going to be pretty disappointed if they pick up a mystery novel with no fantasy elements by accident. For the name I use in that genre, I chose a kind of combination of my first and middle names, and because it was easy to remember and looks good written in red sharpie. *E.L. Oakes*

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



It's All about YOU!

Make the most of your membership. Your Executive Committee members are working hard to present the most interesting, educational, useful and entertaining programs to our members. We invite your participation regarding ideas for speakers, events, and potential meeting locations, as well as articles for *The Stiletta*, our quarterly newsletter.

Please contact **Heather Haven**, Event Coordinator (heatherhavenstories@gmail.com), with meeting and venue suggestions and **Margie Bunting**, Newsletter Editor (mbunting@sbcglobal.net), with newsletter article suggestions and submissions.

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