

THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

Sisters in Crime  Northern California Chapter

VOLUME 20, ISSUE 4

NOVEMBER 2019

Dear Sisters and Misters,

Every year around this time we always say, *Before you know it, it will be Christmas. I can't believe another year has gone.*

Well, I can't believe almost two years have passed since I was elected President of Sisters in Crime NorCal. It's been an exciting time for our chapter. First, I'd like to call out Peggy Lucke for leading an outstanding team of volunteers and putting in uncountable hours selecting, editing, and formatting our well-crafted anthology, *Fault Lines*. She met her own challenging deadline for a Left Coast Crime-Vancouver launch. We are all proud and grateful, Peggy.

As I review this period, a few other events stand out. In June 2018, we held an important benefit for the Prisoners Literature Project, a Berkeley nonprofit that provides free books to incarcerated people with limited or *no* other reading opportunities. In conjunction with NorCal Mystery Writers of America, we presented an outstanding panel inspired by Jacques Verduin's Insight Prison Project in San Quentin.

In June of this year, we hosted acclaimed author and educator Jane K. Cleland, who flew from New York to lead an educational and lively workshop, *Mastering Suspense, Structure, and Plot*—an event generously sponsored by Sisters in Crime National.



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President's Letter, continued

We have also stepped up our digital game. Susan Kuchinkas established NorCal on Meetup, from which we drew several new members. In 2020 you can expect an active presence on Instagram and Twitter to complement NorCal's Facebook page. In addition, Susan Bickford, Malena Eljumaily, and Ana Manwaring have moved registration and renewals online. On December 1, you will receive an emailed link to a secure renewal site. A similar link will lead to SinC NorCal's 2020 ballot.

I am so proud of the depth of talent in our slate of 2020 officers and board members, both new and long-serving. *Stiletta* editor Margie Bunting has developed a fabulous quarterly newsletter. As Secretary, Claire Ortalda keeps the board on track with precision and wit. It was a coup to attract the energetic and creative Ana Brazil as Events Coordinator. Likewise, VP candidate Robin Stuart, an expert on all things digital – including security!

The board is committed to reaching out to the community and broadening our membership. Please "Bring a Friend" when you attend meetings. Bring an aspiring young writer, a person of color, an immigrant interested in telling her story; anyone who might feel voiceless or excluded. Anyone who loves books.

I'd like to highlight the huge benefits to be gained by volunteering. My involvement has led me to develop leadership and organizational skills I didn't know I had. I'm grateful to Terry Shames for tapping me on the shoulder to lead Events, as well as, more importantly, for her years of unstinting and generous service to NorCal. *Chapeau* also to Terry's predecessor, Susan Shea, for her example of dedication and quiet proficiency.

Having worked closely with Susan Bickford this year, I can attest to her competence and energy. She will be a great President going forward!

As a final note, this summer I sold a novel I began working on thirty years ago. So, Keep Going and Hang In. (Just don't harm yourself, as I did, by spending too many hours slumped over the computer.) Love Your Work but Take Breaks!

Sincerely,
Diana Chambers
President, Sisters in Crime NorCal

Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming SinC NorCal Events

Saturday, November 9, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Crime Time: Fall Author Showcase

Books, Inc., 317 Castro Street, Mountain View

Looking for the newest in great crime fiction? Mystery solved! Join us as Sisters in Crime members read from their latest works. We'll start at noon with our potluck, mingling and announcements, and our readers will take the stage at 1:00 p.m. The reading is open to the public, so please invite your friends to hear these talented SinC NorCal members:

Susan Bickford	<i>Dread of Winter</i>
Cara Black	<i>Murder in Bel-Air</i>
Ana Brazil	<i>Me Too Short Stories: An Anthology: "Miss Evelyn Nesbit Presents"</i>
Janet Dawson	<i>The Devil Close Behind</i>
Mary Feliz	<i>Cliff Hanger</i>
Heather Haven	<i>Christmas Trifle</i>
Ana Manwaring	<i>The Hydra Effect</i>
Claire Ortalda	<i>MWA Odd Partners Anthology: "Oglethorpe's Camera"</i>
Terry Shames	<i>A Risky Undertaking for Loretta Singletary</i>
Faye Snowden	<i>A Killing Fire</i>
Susan Bickford, Vinnie Hansen	<i>Fishy Business Anthology: "Payout Payback," "Room and Board,"</i>
Andrew MacRae	<i>"The Hollerith Effect"</i>

Saturday, December 7, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Holiday Party

Borderlands Books, 866 Valencia Street, San Francisco



It's the most wonderful time of the year because we're throwing a holiday party with our friends at Mystery Writers of America NorCal. We're providing scrumptious food and beverages, but we welcome your delicious dishes. Bring guests and join us for an afternoon of good cheer. Don't miss this happening. Plus, here's a chance to do your holiday shopping and support our local independent bookstore, Borderlands Books. Purchase a book for a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate!

As always, there will be no event in January.

In Case You Missed It . . .

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



August Meeting

Author and writing instructor Nina Schuyler taught us all about how to use left/right/mid-branching sentences and such devices as polysyndeton, ellipsis, anaphora, and anastrophe—to name just a few—in an interactive session that had us practicing writing (and reading) our own “stunning sentences.”

September Meeting

Robin Stuart scared us all into changing our passwords and taking our online security more seriously by giving us insights into cybercrime and cyber-villains, based on her own professional experience.

For a longer summary of this event, please read Glenda Carroll's article, “Think You're Hacker-Proof?” on page 30.



October Meeting

Sophie Littlefield and Rachael Herron were frank about their own misadventures in handling their finances as writers, thereby giving us all valuable information about how to take command and control of our finances and put together a plan that works for the future.

A Visit to the International Spy Museum by Rhys Bowen



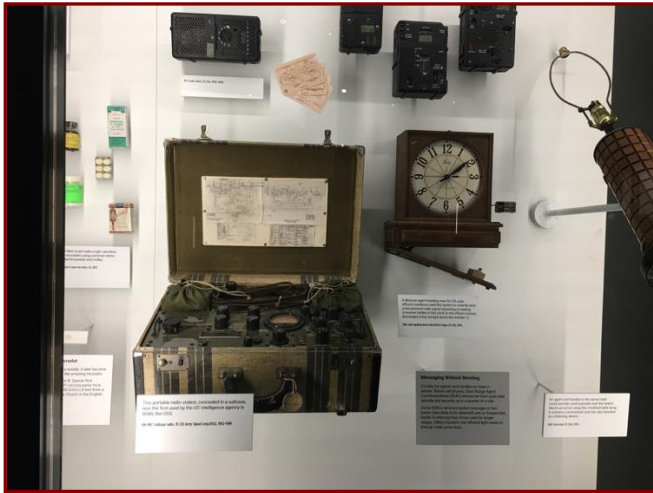
At the beginning of September, I flew to Washington, DC to give a workshop to Sisters in Crime's Chesapeake Chapter. I flew in a couple of days early, to overcome jet lag and to spend those days on the seashore. Unfortunately, Hurricane Dorian chose the same time to visit, so no seashore visit. I looked at the DC map, trying to remember which museum I might have overlooked, and remembered Penny Warner telling me about the International Spy Museum.



So John and I headed to Gallery Place metro, only to find that the museum had moved from where it is shown on the map. Back to the metro and this time to L'Enfant Plaza. There is a neat shuttlebus that swings by the museum, which is good, as you will need your legs to cover a lot of ground inside. It is in a fabulous modern building. We were escorted up to the top floor, presented with a badge and tag, and first we were given a briefing on what was required of us as spies.



International Spy Museum, continued



Then we had to check in, be given a password and a new identity, after which our mission would be revealed. I was Rafael Torres from Bilbao, Spain. I was an architect and my mission was to uncover a base for chemical weapons in one of the 'Stans, based in a flower shop. I had to remember all these details, as I would be called upon to reenter them later.

Then it was on to the exhibits: the whole history of spying starting with the Trojan Horse. Then all the various methods of eavesdropping, breaking and entering, disguises, codes, baffling surveillance. The most fascinating to me were the WWII exhibits, as I've written about them. One complete section on Bletchley Park and breaking the Enigma Code, which of course I knew well from the real thing in England. Tiny candy tins containing maps made on silk, minute tools. Also the radios. I've written about those, too, and I don't think I realized quite how big and cumbersome they were. You couldn't have carried one on a bicycle without being noticed!

The Soviet era exhibit was amazing: they were so clever at eavesdropping, including a pair of shoes sent to be repaired and coming back with a tiny transmitter in the heel. It really was Get Smart! One section on lady spies and where they concealed listening devices: earrings with a transmitter built in?

At each section we were required to log in and complete a task: choose something in my purse in which to hide a tool, choose a disguise, break a code, uncover likely sites for surveillance, and at each one we were rated. I have to tell you I'm a very good spy! I aced almost all of them . . . it comes from my reading so many crime novels!

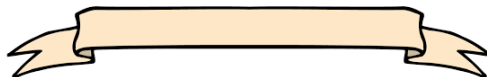
This is a museum that older children would adore. But plenty of adults like John and me were enjoying it equally. And even if you don't play along, the whole history of spying is fascinating. Most moving? Accounts of young women in WWII who were under cover in Paris, finally betrayed, tortured, but went to their deaths having betrayed nobody. I don't think people realized how heroic women were in that war.

Did I learn anything for a future book? Well, my heroine won't be walking around with a radio under her jacket, that's for sure!

International Spy Museum, continued

If you go to the International Spy Museum, it's at L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, DC. That's the closest metro stop. A shuttle bus will drop you outside. It's not free like the main museums on the Mall; in fact, it's quite pricey at around \$25, but worth it. And a fabulous gift shop with clever T-shirts, pens in fake lipsticks, safes inside books, and all sorts of other goodies.

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 nominated for the Edgar and won the Agatha, Macavity, and Lefty Awards, and the latter has sold over half a million copies. Rhys is a transplanted Brit who divides her time between California and Arizona. <http://rhysbowen.com/>



A Tip for Authors Required to Read Their Work Aloud by Maddy McEwen

Committing the story to memory,
"the reading" went spiffingly.



Don't Neglect the Endings

by JoAnn Smith Ainsworth



Endings are important features in novels – endings of sentences, scenes and chapters.

“What makes the end of something so important?” you ask.

Endings of sentences can carry the “punch” that makes your words stick in the reader’s mind. Endings of scenes can vault your reader seamlessly into the next scene where that Point-of-View character reappears. Endings of chapters are many times the reason why readers stay awake all night, unable to put down the novel.

Let’s take the end of a sentence.

Sentences are made up of a variety of words, some of which are more impactful than others. When the most powerful word or words are put at the end of the sentence, you give that sentence increased power. The words at the end of the sentence stand out more vividly in the reader’s mind than those in the middle of the sentence. This technique is called back loading. Back loading increases pacing and contributes to page turning.

Of course, writers can’t use the technique of back loading for all sentences. A reader can’t take all those “punches.” Soften the impact and give the reader relief from the punches by using a variety of sentence structures. Besides, a variety of sentence formats creates a complexity of form that is pleasing to the eye and to the ear.

How do you go about back loading?

Take a look at the words in your sentence. Which word carries the most emotional punch? Is it a strong word that makes the sentence interesting? Well, then, you’ll want the word at or near the end of your sentence.

However, sometimes back loading won’t work for a particular sentence. If the sentence sounds awkward no matter how you revise it, give up. Don’t struggle to use the technique if it isn’t effective.

Let’s have a look at an example of back loading.

ORIGINAL: He had an **utterly amazed look** on his face.

See how the most powerful words are in the middle? Now, put them at the end.

Don't Neglect the Endings, continued

REVISED: His face had an **utterly amazed look**.

The back loading evokes a stronger image, one that keeps the reader flipping through the pages fast, ready to dig into the next chapter.

Now, let's look at scene and chapter endings.

The power of the last sentence in a scene or chapter is in its hook. Hooks set up the reader to want to continue reading to see how the anticipated action will be resolved.

In scenes, hooks have a dual purpose: (1) They keep the reader from flipping through the pages and (2) they let the reader know what the POV character is planning for his or her next appearance in the story. The aim at the end of a scene is to set up anticipation so interesting and powerful in the mind of the reader that the reader wants to keep reading to find out how it plays out.

But . . . here's where you have to watch out.

If you write third person with several POV characters, the scene hook becomes anticipation for when the character **next comes into the story**, which is not necessarily the next scene. That "next time" might be several scenes or even chapters away. Despite that, the transition needs to be smooth so that the anticipation set up at the end of the scene matches the action when the character again joins the story.

The following examples of scene endings that anticipate the next arrival of the POV character are from my own novel, *Expect Deception*, a paranormal suspense.

"The clock struck eight as the binding spells clicked into place. The battle was begun in earnest."

"Satisfaction washed through her when the smell of rotten egg assaulted her senses; she'd latched onto the source."

"He wiped his hands, one on the other, as if cleansing them for the next task—the disintegration curse for the Liberty Ship."

Ends of chapters are easier than scenes in that there is no skipping forward. The ending hook must entice the reader into the chapter immediately following. The hook carries the reader to the next chapter in sequence.

Don't Neglect the Endings, continued

To do this, you have to give the reader something to anticipate about the next chapter. Shutting down and closing off the current chapter with no anticipation for things to come in the story will only give the reader the notion to put the book down and go do something else.

These endings must be interesting enough to keep the reader in the story. Ending a scene or chapter with a character deciding to go to sleep is likely to lead the reader to make the same decision—to go to sleep. Instead of closing down action at scene or chapter endings, these endings should anticipate new action, new problems to resolve, and new happiness or unhappiness to anticipate.

Dan Brown wrote chapter hooks effectively in *The Da Vinci Code*. Here are some examples of those endings:

“If all went as well as planned tonight in Paris, Aringarosa would soon be in possession of something that would make him the most powerful man in Christendom.”

“Thirty seconds later, forty kilometers away, hidden in the undercarriage of the armored truck, a tiny transponder blinked to life.”

“When Collet read the label above the empty peg, he knew he was in trouble.”

“As I expressed when we first spoke, Bishop, you would do well to remember that you are not the only man on the verge of losing everything.”

Don't you agree that these hooks make you want to know what's going to happen next?

Endings are valuable real estate in any piece of writing. When doing your final edits, take a look at each ending. Make sure each is as powerful as it can be.

Now it's your turn. Create those hooks which keep readers reading.

JoAnn Smith Ainsworth experienced food ration books, Victory Gardens and black-out sirens as a child in WWII. These memories help her create vivid descriptions of time and place for her award-winning paranormal suspense series where the U.S. government recruits psychics to hunt down Nazi spies. JoAnn lives in California. She has B.A. and M.A.T. degrees in English and has completed her M.B.A. studies. To learn more, visit <https://www.joannsmithainsworth.com/about-joann/>



Three Books for a Desert Island

by Camille Minichino

As part of a fiction seminar for an MFA class, we were asked to submit an annotated bibliography of 20 books that influenced us as writers or writers-to-be. I'll spare you the long list, but I have chosen three that might be of interest.

Alighieri, Dante, *La Commedia*, 1320. ("Divina" was added two centuries later, by Boccaccio.)

As a high school student in fourth-year Italian, I spent a whole school year taking the poem apart, canto by canto, in Italian. We examined the scene of illicit love between Francesca and Paolo (*Inferno*, canto 5) as well as scenes where the wise are graced with crowns of flowers in heaven (*Paradiso*). I remember a (physical) blackboard filled with circles, charts, and historical references. There's nothing like writing in a "foreign" language to foster the need for faultless grammar and precise word choice. Studying this poem taught me those skills, perhaps more than in my English classes, though it's hard to separate the courses from the teachers in those early years. One takeaway turned out to be misleading: Dante explored an entire universe of themes in one poem; I've often tried to do the same thing in a piece of writing. It might have been a better lesson to future generations of writers if Dante had written 100 separate poems.

Highsmith, Patricia, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, 1955.

The first of the five Ripley books, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* introduced a character who is the prototype of the personality disorder known as Ripley's Syndrome. The simplest description is: Tom Ripley is a person who believes the lies he has made up.

Ripley's indifference to morality is at once disturbing and enviable, though who will admit it? I probably should, because Ripley was a strong influence drawing me to write murder mysteries. While feeling sorry for Ripley's victims, and sympathizing with all who suffered from association with this psychopath (though Highsmith, his creator, never accepted that designation), I found it impossible to dislike him. The dichotomy served me well—to write a successful mystery, it's necessary to embrace all the dimensions of the fictional personalities. The heroes must be flawed and the villains endowed with an admirable trait or two. Two films—one in French (*Purple Moon*, 1960) and one in English (*The Talented Mr. Ripley*, 1999) were made from Highsmith's novel, but neither came close to engaging me as a viewer/reader as intensely as this first novel of the series.

Three Books for a Desert Island, continued

Poe, Edgar Allen, "The Cask of Amontillado," 1846.

Poe's name brings to mind tales of the macabre. Perhaps the best known is his poem, "The Raven." MWA names its most prestigious awards the Edgar™ and the Raven™. "The Cask of Amontillado" is the story of a man who gets revenge on a man who has insulted him, by burying him alive.

"The Cask of Amontillado" is not Poe's most famous work, but it's the story that engaged me enough that I remember holding my breath when I read it for the first time. The brick by brick exacting of revenge had me in suspense, in fear for both parties (was Fortunato going to sober up in time to smash a brick into Montresor's skull, thus saving his own life?), and, in the end, satisfied that there was no more to be told. I remember being disappointed that we don't know exactly how Fortunato insulted Montresor, or whether the insult deserved such harsh retribution. But I've stopped being embarrassed that I like stories of vengeance in any case. I have, however, graduated to calling it "justice," and have written several flash fiction pieces that feature this particular sin. "The Cask of Amontillado" is *The Godfather*, but much shorter and more elegant.

Camille Minichino has a Ph.D. in physics from Fordham University and teaches science at Golden Gate University and writing throughout the Bay Area. She has published more than 25 novels, as well as many short stories and nonfiction articles. Under her own name, she has published the Periodic Table Mysteries featuring retired physicist Gloria Lamerino, as well as the standalone, *Killer in the Cloister*, featuring Sister Francesca, and the nonfiction book, *How to Live with an Engineer*. As Margaret Grace, she writes the Miniature Mysteries, featuring Geraldine Porter and her 11-year-old granddaughter, Maddie. As Ada Madison, she has published the Professor Sophie Knowles Mysteries. And as Jean Flowers, she has launched the Postmistress Mysteries, with the third in the series released in July 2017. Camille is a Past President of SinC NorCal. Her fifth series, the Alaska Diner Mysteries by Elizabeth Logan, will debut in May 2020.

<http://www.minichino.com/>



The Gourmet Gangster: Mysteries and Menus by the Family *Inspired by a Father and a Grandfather* by Marcia Rosen



My father was a gangster. Really.

He was a bookie, owned a gambling “place,” and when he was ready to move on, he and his partner opened a restaurant and bar at the heart of Main Street in Buffalo, New York.

The head of one of the big crime families lived in Buffalo. Odd as it may seem, Buffalo was home to many members of that family in the middle of the twentieth century. There are books about them, telling who they were and what they controlled – from Buffalo to Niagara Falls.

My father knew some of them, I have been told. He was invited to share their goods, their ill-gained fortunes and business opportunities. He always refused, and I’m grateful for his wisdom and choice. For some reason they left him alone to forge his own gains.

He did not have or carry a gun. In fact, even though his wife, my mother (whom I once called his gun moll in a story I wrote) could be nasty, he was never too unkind to her or me. He was generous, and I learned a lot about generosity through his actions.

Once, years ago when I was in downtown Buffalo taking a walk with him, a homeless man asked for money. My father took him to eat. He brought baskets of food to a family member when her husband was out of work. He never denied my mother and me anything, if at all possible. As I said, generous.

My boyfriend at the time, his friends and I would stop in at the restaurant. They would even go on their own, knowing my dad loved to have them visit. What stories he told them! Ones he wouldn’t tell a daughter, he told them and, eventually, his grandson. Who, of course, told me.

My friends and I were only in our late teens. What did we know, then, of life and relationships? What did we know about how to deal with the joys and sorrows we are presented as we grow into adults? What did we know about almost anything until we had our own true life experiences of love and loss, of finding our way at times and, at other times, losing it?

I watched my father as he found his way, lost it, and then found it again. Through all of it, I always knew I was loved. How lucky!

The Gourmet Gangster, continued

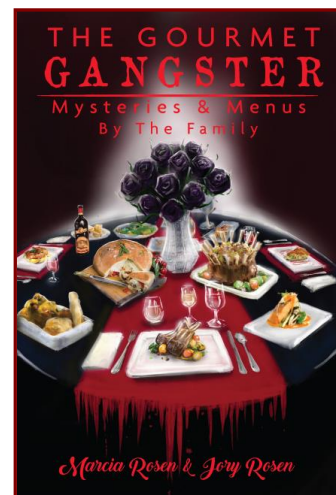
My two sons, his grandsons, also knew he loved them. They were more than special to him; he adored them.

He loved owning and hanging out at his restaurant, The Spaghetti House, and he truly enjoyed cooking as much as serving drinks and talking to people. Some people sat at the bar, others in leather booths where meals were served. Passersby stopped to talk with him. Looking back, I know that, for my father, it was the best of times. Food, friendship and family were at the heart of his life.

Remembering, and picturing him there, was what initially inspired me to write stories that took place in his restaurant. Well, as a mystery writer, they had to be about murder, mayhem and, I thought, a fun bit of madness. Loving short stories, I decided to write a book with a series of short mysteries taking place in a restaurant called Manhattan Shadow.

For me, being a New Yorker at heart and having lived there for many years, New York was perfect as the restaurant's location and the center of the criminal organization featured in the stories.

My father, whose grandsons called him Papa, is a *good* character in the stories, while The Mob Boss is a violent and evil villain. Zero the Bookie, inspired by my father's previous "career," plays a role in the book. After all, he is the central character in my *Senior Sleuths Mystery Series*, where Dick and Dora Zimmerman are a modern-day version of "The Thin Man."



The Gourmet Gangster will be released November 5, 2019

The idea of adding recipes heightened the interest level. Then, Level Best Books, our publisher, suggested putting a recipe before each story.



Jory Rosen

I agreed. "Great idea. My son Jory is a fabulous cook. He can create the recipes. Plus, we'll give some of them fun names to fit the stories. For example, "Chicken Piccata Caper," "The Sacrificial Lamb," "The Quiche [Kiss] of Death." Near the end we added "A Deadly Delicious Dessert."

It will perhaps seem strange to some readers that those desserts are donuts, but those donuts belong to a very important memory. When my father and mother came to visit us after we moved to Long Island, my father brought a small donut-making machine.

The Gourmet Gangster, continued

I wisely disappeared from the anticipated mess.

Oh, how his grandsons loved making the donuts, adding different frostings and sprinkles and devouring them. The three of them had such fun! The experiences of those times have long belonged to my son Jory. I believe they inspired his joy of cooking, although he claims much of his inspiration came because I really didn't like to cook. In fact, I have a sign that says, "I only have a kitchen because it comes with the house." But I think Jory loves cooking for many reasons.

"Some of my earliest memories of my grandfather include making donuts with him in the kitchen of our house. I remember his kindness, patience, and love for the process, as well as the end result. It gave me a lifetime passion for cooking and a desire to learn the best techniques. It did, of course, also have the effect of creating a lifetime love affair with donuts (come on, they're nature's perfect food). As I grew older, there were many shared meals and stories that sparked my imagination and provided a true appreciation of my grandfather as a person.

"I also love the fact that we truly look forward to our evening meals. I have three kids (two girls, 9 and 7, and a boy, 3); my grandfather would have adored them. What I cook allows my children to get to know my grandfather, and for him to live on through every bite of the cuisine he created. I hope these recipes inspire good memories and experiences in others, too."

As I considered mystery stories for the book, I thought about places familiar to me or where I like to spend time.

The story, "He's a Dead Duck," was a reminder of a duck pond we lived near on Long Island, years ago. I loved the idea of creating a story beginning with a duck recipe. "The Chicken Piccata Caper" was the easiest; I always ask Jory to make that delicious recipe for me when I visit.

There's a story centered in a coffee shop; I meet friends there several times a week to take a writing/computer break.

"Malled to Death" is the result of my seeing a mall at death's door, most stores gone, when I was back east last year. And the "Waste Hauler Murders" is thanks to an idea from my friend whose son is in the business. (Very successfully, I might add.)

The stories are from my vivid imagination, played out for the pleasure of mystery lovers. They have humor and romance as their characters face the violence and murders of the criminal organization. The recipes I have chosen for this book are either from my grandfather (such as his donut recipe) or inspired by the stories and the life he led. They are all accessible and doable by cooks at all levels. Today, these are some of my family's favorite dishes. Here's a recipe for you:

The Gourmet Gangster, continued

Chicken Piccata “Caper” with Cauliflower Rice and Fresh Italian Bread

Chicken piccata is a classic recipe filled with an amazing lemon butter flavor. Place the Piccata over the fresh cauliflower rice (or standard rice, if you prefer) and let the sauce coat the rice for the ideal bite. Use the bread to soak up any extra sauce. The meal is the perfect complement, to the crisp, clean taste of the Sauvignon Blanc.

4 skinless and boneless chicken breasts (The thinner the cutlet the better, as it will cook easier and more evenly. If you buy thicker breasts, use a meat mallet or rolling pin to pound them/flatten them out.)

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

All-purpose flour, for dredging

6 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1/3 cup fresh lemon juice

1/2 cup chicken stock

1/4 cup brined capers, rinsed

1/3 cup fresh parsley, chopped

Season chicken with salt and pepper, then dredge in flour and shake off excess. In a large skillet over medium high heat, melt 2 tablespoons of butter with 3 tablespoons of olive oil. When butter and oil start to sizzle, add 2 pieces of chicken and cook for 3 minutes. When chicken is browned, flip over and cook other side for 3 minutes. Remove and transfer to plate. Melt 2 more tablespoons butter. When butter starts again to sizzle, add the other 2 pieces of chicken and brown both sides in the same manner. Remove pans from heat and add chicken to the plate.

Into the pan add the lemon juice, stock and capers. Return to stove and bring to boil, scraping up brown bits from the pan for extra flavor. Add seasoning to taste and return all the chicken to the pan and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove chicken to platter. Add remaining 2 tablespoons butter to sauce and whisk vigorously. Pour sauce over chicken and garnish with parsley.

M. Glenda (Marcia) Rosen frequently speaks about writing mysteries and growing up as “the gangster’s daughter.” She is the author of The Senior Sleuths mysteries, and her publisher will be re-releasing her Dying to be Beautiful Mystery series beginning in 2020. She is the author of *The Woman’s Business Therapist* and the award-winning *My Memoir Workbook*. She was the founder of a successful marketing/PR agency and received numerous awards for her work with business and professional women. Marcia is also the host of the new MysteryLoversPodcast. Jory Rosen, her son and collaborator on *The Gourmet Gangster*, has been in the advertising and marketing business for over 30 years and now takes the show on the road by doing cooking demos for his kids’ schools and classrooms. www.theseniorsleuths.com www.jrosengroup.com



A Touchy Topic: Sensitivity Readers

by Susan Alice Bickford

Bringing up the topic of sensitivity readers is a great way to start a very contentious conversation. As writers of varying backgrounds, how can we avoid making all characters look and act like us? We're writers. Creating characters and variety is what we do.

And yet . . . cultural appropriation is becoming a new watchword and a touchy topic for many readers and writers. In the YA space, there have been epic conflicts, full of toxic accusations, resulting in the withdrawal and delay of previously lauded work.

When I started my second novel, *Dread of Winter*, I was determined to introduce a wider set of character types in my Central New York setting. My first novel, *A Short Time to Die*, was set in Central New York but also in California, where Colombian American Vanessa Alba and her Chinese American partner, Jackson Wong, were the perfect foils to balance out the less-diverse aspects.

However, *Dread of Winter* was crafted to be entirely set in Central New York. I even created a new county for my tale. This time I needed to pay attention and step up to diversity and recapture what I saw around me during my upbringing.

Having lived for a long time in New York City and now California—both minority-majority places—Central New York might look like a very white environment but on close inspection is also diverse.

The string of small cities that follow the route of the old Erie Canal like a string of pearls, “from Albany to Buffalo,” are like many rust belt cities rich with ethnic cultures: African American, Lebanese, Italian, Irish . . . and now are magnets for new immigrants and refugees from other parts of the world.

Close by, the rural areas are more diverse than might be expected as well. The tiny “hamlet” of Peterboro, part of my high school district, was a center for the abolitionist and suffrage movements in the 1880s. It is the home of the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum and there are African American families in the area to this day who trace their family histories to this location on the underground railroad.

Even more embedded are the members of the Iroquois Nation, the *Haudenosaunee* (the People of the Long House). Although smaller in numbers, the Iroquois remain, enriching our heritage, as they have for centuries. Created as a confederacy of five—and eventually six—tribes, the Iroquois were one of the very first examples of complex representative government, which included

Sensitivity Readers, continued

the right of women to vote and the adoption of outsiders into their communities. Women elected the chiefs and made critical decisions such as war, and they carry on this tradition to this day. Discerning colonists such as Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin were influenced by the Iroquois constitution (sadly minus several aspects such as suffrage).

Representing a wider range of characters presented a number of quandaries. I am not African American, and I am not Native, both ethnicities I wanted to represent, plus the father of my main character, Sydney, is from Argentina.

Writing the novel turned out to be a journey of my own, forcing me to consider what I think I know and what I truly understand. For example, I interviewed my next-door neighbor, whose Spanish Ladino (Jewish) ancestors colonized what is now New Mexico. Blonde and blue-eyed, she does not speak Spanish very well but is often caught in subtle racism based on her name. For example, when she needed to move her family so they could remodel their house, she could not get callbacks or approvals for rentals if she used her own last name. Using her husband's British last name produced results.

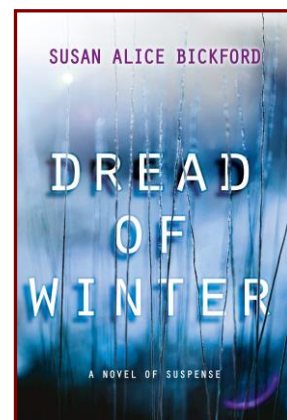
By the time I turned in the manuscript, the state of conflict over cultural appropriation in YA had me worried. My editor accepted the manuscript but in her editorial letter told me she wanted to see more distinctive (aka interesting) details about Black and Native characters. I had to agree. I had opted for bland rather than compelling in several aspects. Now, what to do about it?

I decided to pay my sensitivity readers. The payments were not large but seemed in line with industry rates.

First, I approached an African American friend. I knew she would be straight and not cut me any slack. To my pleasant surprise, she agreed with my editor. She wanted to see more clarity and shape in the African American characters.

Finding a Native resource was more daunting. Native cultures are not monolithic across the US or North America. Even for tribes that had common cultures pre-1492, the pressures of our American culture and government policies have forced very similar tribal nations to make different choices.

As an example, when I was a teenager, I was very surprised when a good friend explained to me that she could not be a member of her father's nation because her mother was white. Under



Sensitivity Readers, continued

pressure from the government, many Native cultures which determined members through their mother's line prior to the arrival of white people adopted "blood quantum" from either a mother or father as a way to determine tribal membership. The Iroquois nations that remained in New York have stayed matrilineal, although branches that moved to other areas, including Canada, do not necessarily follow that model. It gets complicated. And I needed someone with deep expertise.

Another worry was that I had created a scene centered around Iroquois mask societies. This was something I "knew" from growing up close to some of these cultures, but it wasn't until I researched the topic further that I realized these are highly secret and sacred practices. Oops.

Rather fearful, I adjusted a few points and approached a Mohawk historian. To my joy, he validated my approaches and also provided a number of Mohawk language phrases that have added wonderful depth and zing to the narrative.

He also suggested I change the name of my fabricated Central New York town (and county) from Oniska – place of hills – to Oriska, meaning place of nettles.

I would never tell another author to use sensitivity readers. I can only say that I have found that the things I think I know are often what I need to question. Writing *Dread of Winter* turned into a wonderful journey of learning and enrichment after I opened up and let others into my Place of Nettles.

Susan Alice Bickford was born in Boston, Massachusetts and grew up in Central New York, the setting for many of her stories. Eventually her passion for technology pulled her to Silicon Valley, where she held a wide range of roles and became an executive at leading technology company. She is now a full-time author and the Vice President of Sisters in Crime NorCal. She splits her time between Silicon Valley and her family's home base in Vermont.



The Historical Fiction Tribe Meets Up

by Ana Brazil



Sword and dagger fights! Waltzes and cakewalks! Men in kilts! Suffering suffragettes!

And also . . . agent pitches, writers' panels, the Readers Festival, book signings, and inspiring [Guests of Honor](#) (Jeff Shaara and Dolen Perkins-Valdez).

Welcome to June 2019's [Historical Novel Society \(HNS\) Conference!](#)

Every other year, somewhere in North America (this year in Baltimore), writers and readers of historical fiction gather to do just what writers and readers of crime fiction do at Bouchercon and other mystery events—learn about weapons and forensics, share our love of research, argue about how many exclamation points can be used in one paragraph, and coo over our favorite authors.

Except, we do it with historical panache.



*Panache in Progress:
George and Martha Washington
(aka Vern and Sandy Frykholm)
Photo by Rosanne Lortz Spears*

Historical Fiction Tribe, continued

This year's conference launched on Thursday, June 20 with a Costumed Cocktail party (attended by such luminaries as George and Martha Washington) and ended on Saturday with Lady Baltimore's Ball.

The General Sessions included such gems as "Gone with the Windbag, Or, How to Write a Focused Plot Even if It's 418,053 Words Long," "Weird-But True Things No One Knows About the Roaring Twenties," "Writing the Historical Female In The #MeToo Era," "Inside the World of Espionage: Stealing, Deception, and Manipulation," and "Gaslamps, Ghosts, and Tropes: Writing the Neo-Gothic Novel."

One of the most popular sessions was the boozy and bodacious "Hooch through History," where food and beverage historian Isobel Carr shared the history of certain alcoholic beverages while the audience sampled them. This year our historic research included savoring extremely potent gin and tonics, punch, and daiquiris. Swigging all of those samples in an hour and a half *was* hard work, but historical writers and readers are a stout bunch.

I'm a student of history from way back (and have the master's degree to prove it) and HOW I LOVE THIS CONFERENCE! This is my historical fiction tribe at its best.

But wait! In addition to the North American conference, there is also an [Australasian Conference](#) and a [UK Conference](#).

Historic costumes, hairdos, and weaponry are not required to attend any of the HNS conferences, although men in kilts are always appreciated.



Ana at the Readers Festival on Saturday

Ana Brazil's historical mystery, *Fanny Newcomb and the Irish Channel Ripper*, (Sand Hill Review Press) won the IBPA 2018 Ben Franklin Gold for Historical Fiction. Her short story, "Kate Chopin Tussles with a Novel Ending," appears in our NorCal SinC *Fault Lines* anthology, while "Miss Evelyn Nesbit Presents" appears in *Me Too Short Stories: An Anthology*.



Member Profile: Faye Snowden

Twelfth in a series to introduce our members to each other

With a new book out after an extended absence, Faye Snowden is gearing up for more books in the series and an upcoming role as Secretary of Sisters in Crime National.

Stiletta: Congratulations on your new book released in August 2019, *A Killing Fire*. Please tell us about the book.

Faye Snowden: Thank you! It's been a journey. *A Killing Fire* is a dark, twisty psychological suspense featuring a homicide detective whose father was a serial killer. Raven Burns had the misfortune of witnessing a few of his crimes as a child, including the killing of her own mother. She struggles with what part of Floyd is in her. The whole point of her being a homicide detective is to make up for his crimes, and to put men like him away. That becomes complicated when she's involved in a shooting, and her nemesis, a wealthy socialite, is murdered by a serial killer who uses the same peacock feather signature as her father. Raven has to confront both her past and a doubting public in order to find the killer.

Stiletta: Are you planning more books with Detective Raven Burns as your protagonist, or do you prefer to write standalones?

FS: I do like writing standalones, as there is something refreshing about writing "the end" and knowing that it really is *the end!*

But I had always planned on Raven being a series because I don't think I can do what I want to do in one book. I have three more books coming based on the elements—water, air and earth. In each book, Raven will make a decision that will move her closer to the person she will eventually become—a killer like her father or a law-abiding citizen of Byrd's Landing, Louisiana.

Stiletta: You also had three books published between 1999 and 2006. What inspired you to write another book after 13 years?

FS: Yes, it's a little odd, isn't it?

But I've never stopped writing, even when it was just a trickle of words coming in between raising my boys, managing an intense day job in tech, and getting my master's in literature. I was still able to produce some short stories, poems, and two very drafty novels for fun during that period. But publishing? I was just too damned busy! Once I had my degree, and my boys were on a good path, I

Member Profile: Faye Snowden, continued

started getting out there again with the Raven book. I still have the tech job, but it's not as demanding as it was earlier in my career.

Stiletta: Your Amazon bio indicates you were born in California but moved as a child with your family to Louisiana. How did life in Shreveport differ from life in the West Coast?

FS: Great question. The first words I remember hearing when I arrived in Shreveport were "Y'all come on in and have a glass of tea." It was my aunt welcoming all seven of us into her small house the first day we were there. The word "y'all" told me in no uncertain terms that California was behind me.

People are people no matter where you go, but the difference between the west and the south to me is that the south has a way of settling into your bones. The language, the music, the pace, the food, and the weather feel palpably alive to me in a way that does not happen in California. While California has its own culture and uniqueness, some places you go feel like Anytown, USA. I said *some* places! I don't want my California peeps to come after me!

Stiletta: You joined the Navy when you were 18 years old. Where did the military take you, and what kind of work did you do?

FS: I had the opportunity to travel some in the Navy. Since I was only in for five years, I didn't get to a lot of places, but I lived in Italy for a little over two years and had the opportunity to vacation in Austria and Germany. I did in the military the same thing I'm doing now—information technology—so I got to see the entire progression of computer technology from computers that filled an entire room to the ones people now carry around in their hands. That's the best part of being in this career so long.

Stiletta: After leaving the Navy, you continued a career in information technology. Are you still working in that field?

FS: I was a tech in the Navy, and yes, I'm still in that field. I've done everything from computer and network operations to project management, which I do today. It's been a good career for me.

Stiletta: You also have a master's degree in English literature and had three writing fellowships. How did those experiences influence your career and/or your writing life?

FS: The education in English literature helped me appreciate books more, and what it takes to make them, and the reason we tell stories. It helped me realize how important storytelling is to a culture, and how and why stories are made. Studying the classics, literary criticism, and how different work is perceived helped me understand how important it is for diverse voices in storytelling. Someone

Member Profile: Faye Snowden, continued

once said, I don't remember who, "Tell your own story or someone else will tell it for you." Seeing the lack of diversity in what I was studying illuminated that point for me.

The three writing fellowships gave me the two things I craved and needed most—validation and time. Because the fellowships were competitive, they helped build my confidence as a writer. And I so desperately needed the time because my non-writing responsibilities kept me busy. It was nice to get away for the sole purpose of writing.

Stiletta: How did you decide to start writing novels—and mysteries in particular?

FS: Novel writing was an experiment. I start off writing poems and short stories. Short stories are not easy, by the way! I just couldn't explore all that I wanted to explore, so I started experimenting with longer works. I like mysteries because you can do so much more with them—you can tell an entertaining story and give the readers a puzzle to solve, all the while exploring some big themes. And there are so many variations to spark creativity.

Stiletta: Tell us about your search for an agent and a publisher. Do you have any tips for aspiring authors?

FS: Oh, my goodness. I've heard a few people say that it's not good practice to say if your agent or publisher was difficult or took a long time, as it may reflect on the quality of your work. But I don't believe that's always true, and it's an important point for someone looking to acquire an agent, so I'm going to be honest.

During the first part of my writing career, it was pretty easy. I think I got an agent on my second or third try, and a publisher almost as quickly. This time around it was like trying to find Atlantis. The market appears to be very tight, very competitive. I must have sent queries to at least a hundred agents, and it took my agent some time to get the book sold. It took such a long time that I went back and reread the work from beginning to end in one sitting to see if it was good. I thought it was the best novel I could write at the time that I wrote it, so I pushed forward. I'd say to aspiring writers to write the best book they can. Once they have the best book possible, research the best agents possible for representation. Treat it like a job. When one agent rejects, move on to the next one. And don't give up. Keep pushing. As I've learned, it just takes one person to love it in order for the book to find a home.

Stiletta: How long have you and your family been back living in California?

FS: Since 1999. It's my forever home.

Member Profile: Faye Snowden, continued

Stiletta: You are on the proposed slate of SinC National Board members for 2019-2020 in the role of Secretary. What attracted you to that role? And what benefits do you receive from SinC membership?

FS: The best things about SinC are the networking with other writers, the advocacy for women crime writers, and the writing advice. I think that's key in such a competitive and sometimes closed marketplace.

Nothing in particular attracted me to the position of secretary. I just want to serve now that I have the time and capacity to do so. I think it will be a good fit given my technology background and my military-inspired attention to detail.

Stiletta: What else would you like your fellow NorCal members to know about you?

FS: That in some ways I feel like the older adult going back to college! I'm somewhat nervous about returning to writing and the activities that the writing life brings. I could use the networking and the support as I navigate my return.

And just to throw in something a little less needy, like Billy Ray from *A Killing Fire*, I make a mean gumbo.

Faye Snowden was interviewed by Margie Bunting, Sisters in Crime NorCal's newsletter editor.





Surveillance: Life Inside the Van

by Eileen Rendahl

Back in 2007, I was looking for a part-time job, one I could juggle with writing and raising kids and taking care of aging parents and, you know, trying to have a life. I scanned Craigslist and ran across a listing for a report editor position at a private detective agency actually in the town where I lived. I applied and got an interview. I was probably pretty close to twice the age of anyone else at the table during that interview, but somehow we all hit it off and they offered me the job. It was supposed to be a temporary thing, three months, just until the Production Manager came back from maternity leave.

I stayed for eight years.

The firm I worked for, which I'll leave nameless for now, specialized in Workers' Compensation surveillance, kind of like Kinsey Millhone in Sue Grafton's alphabet series. When I say we specialized in that, it was pretty much all we did. On occasion, we'd do something else as a favor for someone. We'd follow a husband someone suspected of cheating or look for someone who needed finding. It was rare, though.

I thought it might be useful to anyone writing a PI novel to know a little about how we did surveillance, especially since it doesn't bear much resemblance to what I see on television or in movies. Those scenes with two people sitting in the front seat of a sedan at night, eating sandwiches and drinking coffee, flinging their sandwiches out the window when the subject comes out, and screeching after them? It just didn't work that way.

We did very little at night. The point was always to get video of the person breaking the restrictions that could be used as evidence in court. That requires light.

Our investigators were never in sedans. They favored minivans and SUVs in some neutral color—beige or gray. Not too old. No dripping oil. No noisy mufflers. No dirt streaks. Before leaving for their assignment, they would have either folded all the seats down flat in the back of the vehicle or removed the seats from the back so they had an open area to work in. All the windows except one would be covered with lengths of black material.

Once they arrived, they'd slide between the two front seats into the back. When it was time to follow someone, they'd slide back into the front seat the same way. Big guys were definitely at a disadvantage. We had one guy who kept getting stuck between the seats. By the time he'd get into the driver's seat, the subject could be more than a block away and he'd lose them. He didn't last long, which was a shame because he was great in every other way.

Surveillance, continued

In the back of the van or SUV they'd have:

- Video cameras with electrical tape over the red recording light. The red light could be really noticeable in the otherwise blacked-out back of a van or in a bag or a jacket where it might be concealed while recording.
- Tripods and bean bags to stabilize the cameras. No one wanted shaky footage. I actually sewed the bean bags for them for a while.
- Batteries for everything.
- A computer.
- A fanny pack or some kind of small bag with a panel cut out and replaced with mesh that could conceal a camera to carry into restaurants and stores.
- Something to sit on, usually a stadium seat or something similar.
- A foam board to kneel on.
- Water and snacks.
- At least one change of regular clothing and a set of gym clothes. They followed a lot of people into gyms.
- Hats. It's surprising how much a hat can do to change someone's appearance when given only a cursory glance.
- A bucket with a lid. I'll let you figure out what that was for. They definitely don't show that on TV shows and in movies.



We worked up and down the Central Valley all year long. It gets pretty toasty in the back of a van when it's over one hundred degrees outside. While they could occasionally slip in front and run the air conditioning, they couldn't do it too often or too much. It makes you too noticeable. Pretty much everyone had a fan. One investigator rigged an ingenious thing with a cooler and ice and a fan.



Surveillance, continued

You'll notice that conspicuously absent from that list is any kind of weapon. No guns. No knives. No tasers. It was made very clear that nothing we were doing was worth anyone getting hurt. If a subject made an investigator and confronted him, he was to get away as quickly and safely as possible.

Some places presented particular challenges. A vehicle sitting all day on the side of a country road is pretty conspicuous. They would set orange cones in front and behind the vehicle so it looked like someone was doing work in the area and had parked the vehicle there.

Gated communities were next to impossible. Even if there wasn't a guard and we could slip in behind someone else going in, we were way too conspicuous in those neighborhoods. Bad neighborhoods also presented challenges. We did surveillance in one neighborhood where there had been a murder. Everyone was jumpy and they noticed the strange van sitting there all day. Our investigator ended up face down in the road with the police searching him. In another case, an investigator's van was attacked by men with baseball bats who thought the van might be related to a string of sexual assaults in the area. People tend to be a little jumpy and observant about strange vehicles near schools as well. We had more than one investigator explaining to local police what he was doing near an elementary school in the back of a van with a video camera.

Speaking of police, following them wasn't easy. As a group, they tend to be wary and very aware of their surroundings. They also don't hesitate to call it in if they see something they feel is suspicious. Our investigators would then have to explain why they were there to someone who was often on the same police force as the subject, and our subject would then know he or she was under surveillance. It was pretty much game over at that point.

Because the goal was always to get evidence that would stand up in court, we never participated in any activity that could be considered entrapment. They would definitely film someone who bent over to pick something up, but they would never put something out to be picked up.

On occasion, a new investigator would think he was being clever by checking someone's mailbox to see if mail had been picked up or putting a penny on the back tire of a car to see if it had moved overnight. It was a surefire way to get yourself pulled into the office for a chewing out. We did not go on private property or touch a subject's property. We would not climb a tree on a neighboring property to peer into windows.

Our best detectives were very average-looking guys. Not too tall or too short, not too handsome or too ugly, not too skinny or too fat. I asked one of our detectives how he could follow someone through a series of errands over the course of a day and never get made. He asked me to describe him. He was a 5'10" white guy with brown hair. All he had to do was put on a different baseball hat and people didn't notice him.

Surveillance, continued

Our detectives were almost all young and male. It wasn't an old man's game. There was too much sitting, kneeling, and crouching in the back of vehicles. As to why they were mainly male, I will refer you back to the bucket with the lid on the equipment list. Some things are just easier for boys. Many of them were ex-military. Several had finished criminal justice degrees, were hoping to join police or sheriff departments, and saw it as a stepping stone.

The good ones were independent, able to multitask, patient, and had good communication skills. They tended to be a bit sneaky and also somewhat empathetic. If they could put themselves in someone else's shoes, it was easier to anticipate what they the subject might do next and be ready to follow or film.

When the firm began branching out, they offered me a position as an AOE/COE (Arising Out of Employment/Course of Employment) investigator. I interviewed people who had been hurt on the job, their supervisors, and any witnesses, and took photos and measurements at the scene of accidents. When I left the firm in 2015, I had just hit the point where I had enough hours to sit for the licensing exam. I had also gotten an offer to teach creative writing at the college level, which had been my goal when I went back to school to get my master's degree in 2013.

The licensing exam is not a cakewalk. In the time I worked for the company, only one detective passed the exam on the first try. I decided that it wasn't worth it to put in the studying time when I wasn't going to be using the license. While I don't regret my choice to leave the firm, I do occasionally regret not sitting for the exam. I think it would give me an interesting piece of street cred.

Eileen Rendahl is a national bestselling and award-winning author of mystery, paranormal, and romance novels. Her alter egos, Kristi Abbott and Lillian Bell, write cozy mysteries. All the Eileens (and Kristi and Lillian) were born in Dayton, Ohio. She moved when she was four and only remembers that she was born across the street from Baskin Robbins. Eileen remembers anything that has to do with ice cream. Or chocolate. Or champagne. She has had many jobs and lived in many cities and feels unbelievably lucky to be where she is now and to be doing what she is doing.

www.EileenRendahl.com

www.KristiAbbottAuthor.com

www.lillian-bell.com



Think You're Hacker-Proof? Think Again. by Glenda Carroll

That's what I learned from a talk by Robin C. Stuart, a veteran cybercrimes investigator, who laid it on the line recently in a talk sponsored by Sisters in Crime NorCal at the Half Moon Bay Public Library.

"If someone wants to hack you, they can do it," said Stuart. In other words, barriers, firewalls, security systems will slow the bad guys down, sometimes significantly, but it won't stop them. Unfortunately, we the public are on the losing side because there aren't enough cybercrime fighters.

For example, according to Stuart, the FBI has a robust 14,000 agents but a mere 1,200 workers in their cyber squad. The Secret Service has 13,000 agents, but a miserly 1,000 cybercrime stalkers.

"The bad guys are after you and me and our information," she said. Although they are successfully attacking companies such as Microsoft, Apple, Facebook and Google, what they want are not organizational secrets, but their customer database. For Google and Facebook, that amounts to four billion combined users' private information. If you are like me, you have probably given up enough info to one or more of these groups to make you shudder.

To plug the hole in the ever-widening gap in the cybersecurity dam, people like Stuart are hired. Surprisingly, she doesn't have a law enforcement background. She was a paralegal before. But what she does have is a topnotch analytical mind and a tremendous curiosity that keeps her digging for answers.

Since I had my identity stolen last year, with my hacker going into my bank accounts, health account, home phone and email, I was interested in not just specifics (how the hacker retrieved my information) but also the big picture.

On an international scale, there are the nation states such as Russia, China, North Korea and Iran who use, among others, military personnel whose day job is to infiltrate computer systems, retrieve IA, influence opinion and, in the US case, elections.

"Then there are the garden variety attackers. They use traditional malware or ransomware. Their only goal is money," said Stuart. At one time, investigators could "follow the money." But with the invisibility of cryptocurrency as a payment method and the dark web, the money trail is almost impossible to follow.

Hacker-Proof, continued

“I’ve been following miscreants from a particular region for ten years,” said Stuart. During that time, attacks on cities, health-related companies (e.g., hospitals), and organizations with huge databases have been increasing.

If there is one thing I learned from Robin’s talk and my own personal experience, it is that it is up to me to protect my information. That means having different and complicated passwords for each of my accounts. However, it’s not foolproof. My debit card was recently hacked into and someone bought some extremely expensive face cream. But I knew immediately who to call (my bank) and what to do (change passwords).



Robin Stuart is introduced by Diana Chambers

Thanks, Robin, for a very informative talk . . . a scary talk . . . but one I needed to hear. As for my hacker last year, he/she was never caught by the cyber police I worked with. However, in my third Trisha Carson mystery, the creep goes to jail.

Glenda Carroll is the author of the Trisha Carson mysteries *Drop Dead Red* and *Dead in the Water*. They are set in the San Francisco Bay Area, including Marin, the East Bay State Parks and, of course, San Francisco. Currently she is in the editing stage of the third thriller in the series. All of her books have a swimming undercurrent, based on her own experience. She has raced in more than 150 open water swimming events in Northern California, as well as Hawaii and Perth, Australia. She was a long-time sports columnist for the *Marin Independent Journal* and has written for numerous publications, including *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Defenders of Wildlife*, *Sailing*, *Yacht Racing*, *Swimmer*, and *Ford Times*. She works for the San Francisco Giants, a baseball junkie’s dream job. In the off season, she tutors first generation high school students in English. She lives in San Rafael, CA with her dog, McCovey. For more information, go to www.glendacarroll.com.



Member News



New Releases

Dying for a Double by Cindy Sample, Vol. 8 in the Laurel McKay Humorous Mystery series, November 14

The Secret of Sugarman's Circus by Patricia E. Canterbury, book #4 in the mid-grade Poplar Cove Mystery Series, November 1 by Pegasus Books

Diana Chambers' end-of-the-Raj suspense novel, *The Star of India*, has been acquired by Penguin Random House India.

Simon Wood has crossed the aisle from writer to editor. He's curated a group of crime stories for a *Cockney Rhyming Slang*-themed anthology called *Trouble & Strife*. It features stories by Robert Dugoni, Catriona McPherson, Johnny Shaw, Steve Brewer, Paul Finch, and Susanna Calkins, to name a few, and it'll be from Down and Out Books on December 9.

Public Appearances

Launch party for *Dying for a Double* by Cindy Sample will be on Saturday, November 16 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Face in a Book in El Dorado Hills. Everyone is invited. Wine and chocolate will be served!

Launch events for *The Gourmet Gangster: Mysteries and Menus* by M. Glenda Rosen and her son, Jory Rosen, will be held on: Saturday, November 23 at 4:00 p.m. at Napa BookMine; Sunday, December 1 at 1:00 p.m. at River House Books in Carmel; and Saturday, December 14 at 2:00 p.m. at Book Carnival in Orange.

Along with three other members of Santa Cruz Women of Mystery—Nancy Wood, Nancy Jarvis, and Mary Feliz—Vinnie Hansen will be hawking her books at the La Selva Beach Holiday Fair, November 16 at 4:00 p.m. at the La Selva Beach Clubhouse.

Vinnie Hansen will be part of LocalLit2019 at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San Jose on Sunday, December 1 from 2:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Thonie Hevron will be at the Rohnert Park Community Center, 5401 Snyder Lane, Rohnert Park, on November 29 and 30 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and will have her books for signing and sale (maybe even a new book). The event is free.

Question of the Quarter



What is the best piece of writing advice you have received, and from whom?

On many occasions I've wished that early on I'd heeded the advice from my 8th grade English teacher, Mrs. Wiggs, who took me aside on more than one occasion and suggested I should consider writing as a career. But my head was into becoming a pilot and studying aeronautical engineering. Then one day I dropped my engineering classes and started studying journalism. My life-long "writing career" was set in motion. ***J.J. Lamb***

Listen to your characters. They know themselves better than you do. ***Priscilla Royal***

Never give up. (Source is anonymous.) ***Ellen Kirschman***

By far, Isaac Asimov's "On Persistence" has been the biggest asset to me: "You must keep sending work out; you must never let a manuscript do nothing but eat its head off in a drawer. You send that work out again and again, while you're working on another one. If you have talent, you will receive some measure of success – but only if you persist." ***Heather Haven***

A close friend, commenting on how tough it was to deal with Hollywood producers in TV, gave me advice that worked perfectly: "Kill them with kindness!" It worked because they were expecting an adversary and didn't know how to deal with somebody being nice to them. They melted. ***Rita Lakin***

I really like this from Elmore Leonard: Avoid detailed descriptions of characters. In Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants," what do "the American and the girl with him" look like? "She had taken off her hat and put it on the table." That's the only reference to a physical description in the story. ***Adam Plantinga***

I've taught many writing classes and workshops over the past more than fifteen years, and almost everyone says what I tell them that they like best is "Listen to your own voice, not others. Trust yourself. Don't let anyone else take away your voice or the power of your own words." ***Marcia Rosen (aka M. Glenda Rosen)***

Don't try to make every sentence perfect the first time. Just write it down and keep writing. You can go back and clean things up in future rounds. When I finally managed to do that, my writing started going a lot faster (unsurprisingly). I can't credit one person with that advice; I have heard it from many people (it just took a while to sink in). ***Jenny Carless***

Best piece of writing advice I've received came from Mary Higgins Clark, and it was, "Learn to trust your instincts as a writer." ***Janet Dawson***

Question of the Quarter, continued

“Put your butt in the chair and write.” Like everyone else, I’ve struggled to write something to make my daily word quota. An early mentor told me to just do it. I’m good at following directions so I do. There have been so few times when I’ve reviewed the day’s work and found it unsatisfactory (without a tweak or two, or three . . .) that I’ve come to look at this as a mantra of sorts. Just do it. *Thonie Hevron*

To join Sisters and Crime and the Guppies – definitely good advice. *Susan Bickford*

Sometime during grad school, I heard the G.K. Chesterton quote, “Anything worth doing is worth doing badly,” a saying that propelled me into and out of many first drafts. ALSO . . . I don’t remember when I first heard that “writing is rewriting,” but that is absolutely the truest writing advice there is. People who don’t understand that writing is rewriting are doomed, I tell you. Doomed! *Ana Brazil*

Way back in the last century, before I’d published a word, I took an ongoing screenwriting workshop with TV scriptwriter Larry Menkin for about a year. His first rule for writers was “Apply seat of pants.” Which of course means you need to apply seat of your pants to the seat of your chair in front of your keyboard or your paper and pen. The way to succeed as a writer is to write – be persistent, be determined, and get words on the page. I don’t follow this advice as diligently as I might, but I often hear Larry’s voice in my head, reminding me to “Apply seat of pants.” *Margaret Lucke*

I started a critique group 15 years ago with several women I met in writing classes. I’d written the first s**** draft of *Set Up* by then and we critiqued it month by month for two years before our most accomplished member finally owned up that she couldn’t stand my character. JadeAnne was unsympathetic, unbelievable, and lacked motivation. Oh, and the writing, in the third person, wasn’t working. Kathy suggested I switch to the first person and figure out why JadeAnne stayed in Mexico. Switching to the first person let out Jade’s voice and she’s let me know what she thinks and why ever since. *Ana Manwaring*

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



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