

THE STILETTA NEWSLETTER

Sisters in Crime  Northern California Chapter

VOLUME 21, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2020

Greetings, Siblings

One of the best things about commencing my term as President of Sisters in Crime NorCal is that we're starting 2020 with strong momentum. As one of SinC's largest chapters, we have had excellent leadership over the years, an engaged and active membership, and terrific programs. What more could we want?

Plenty! And we want your participation and help getting there.

An aspect of Sisters in Crime I have always loved is our "Big Tent" mentality. We are a lively mix of readers, published authors, aspiring authors, and industry professionals. The entire organization, from SinC National to the Guppies, to our local chapters, has done a fabulous job of being inclusive and giving back.

Now we need to up our game.

You'll notice that I addressed the piece as Greetings, Siblings. Although we have always had a substantial number of Mistresses as well as Sisters, it is time to recognize that the world around us is expanding.

We need to make sure we are reaching out beyond



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President's Letter, continued

“sisters” to everyone who subscribes to our vision of making sure that we all have an equal seat at the table of opportunity in the field of crime fiction and fully embrace the SinC vision. *To be the voice for excellence and diversity in crime writing.*

While racial, ethnic, and cultural inclusion remain key cornerstones of our mission, our understanding of diversity is expanding in every dimension. We embrace creating a safe and welcoming environment for all genders, gender expression, ages, disabilities, and more. This needs to be a part of our DNA and what we do for all of our events and communications.

If you have any feedback or suggestions on how we can improve in this regard, please feel free to reach out directly to me and to members of our executive committee. This is a journey and we want your help.

We are not alone in this effort, by the way. SinC National has explicitly called out inclusivity and diversity there, too. In addition, the Guppies Chapter is in the process of becoming the online chapter for all of Sisters in Crime. Originally set up to help the Great Under/Unpublished, the Guppies is now the single largest chapter in SinC with over 800 members and climbing. I encourage all of our members to join this active, supportive group which offers critique groups, online classes, and more.

Another challenge for SinC NorCal is how to leverage digital technology and social media to broaden participation options. Our chapter covers a large geographic area, and we know it isn't possible for some members to attend many events. While we value the ability to provide fun and dynamic in-person meetings, we know we need to enhance our approach. Last year we expanded our social media efforts using sites like Meetup and Eventbrite, as well as Facebook and Twitter. This year we want to start exploring how we can best provide great virtual experiences as well, using technologies such as online meetings and sharing.

If you would be interested in helping us figure out how to best leverage technology to help with this challenge, let us know. Look for announcements in this space.

I am thrilled with the events lined up for this year and hope to see many of you there, in person and online. Ana Brazil has been working on fantastic content, including David Corbett in March and Bay Area Book Festival in May. Robin Stuart, our new VP, is organizing our two Author Showcase events in April (at Book Passage in Corte Madera) and November. Be sure to check out our website and the articles about these events and more.

President's Letter, continued

The year 2020 is going to be a fabulous one for book events in California. In addition to the Bay Area Book Festival in May, Left Coast Crime will be held in San Diego in mid-March, and Bouchercon will be in Sacramento in October. Personally, Left Coast Crime is my absolute favorite conference. It welcomes readers as well as writers and is more intimate than Bouchercon, the titan of crime writing book conferences.

For those who are new to conferences, consider volunteering. It's a great way to meet authors, make friends, and enjoy the many hidden gems of the conferences. We'll be holding a session in our February Meet and Greet about how to get the best experience from Bay Area Book Festival, Left Coast Crime, and Bouchercon.

I'd like to welcome a new chapter to our area: the Coastal Cruisers. Based primarily in Santa Cruz, the South Bay, and the Monterey area, the Cruisers offer more participation and connection options, along with the Capitol Crimes chapter in the Sacramento area. Sisters in Crime allows members to join multiple local chapters. We are extremely fortunate to live in an area with so many writers and enthusiasts. Having multiple chapters is a validation of the health and enthusiasm of our memberships.

Once again, please let me know your opinions and recommendations for how we can help you personally and our membership continue to thrive.

Sincerely,

Susan Bickford (she, her, hers)

President, Sisters in Crime NorCal

Calling all LCC 2020 attendees!

Are you going to Left Coast Crime 2020? Our Events chair, Ana Brazil, would like to know how many NorCal members will be attending in case we decide to plan a special NorCal event at the convention in San Diego. Please indicate your attendance by emailing her at [anabrazil \(at\) sbcglobal.net](mailto:anabrazil@sbcglobal.net).

Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming SinC NorCal Events

Saturday, February 1, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Annual Meet & Greet

Sausalito Public Library, 420 Litho Street, Sausalito

Our annual Meet & Greet gives current, new, and prospective members an opportunity to introduce themselves, their writing, and their other mysterious (or not) interests. In addition, we'll have a panel discussion loaded with information and tips about this year's biggest literary events: Left Coast Crime, March 12-15 in San Diego (Janet Rudolph); Bay Area Book Festival, May 2-3 in Berkeley (Ana Brazil); and Bouchercon, October 15-18 in Sacramento (Susan Bickford). Contributions to the refreshment table and book exchange are appreciated. Free parking is available at the library.

Saturday, March 7, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

David Corbett, The Four Cross-Directional Forces in Complex Motivation

Rockridge Public Library, 5366 College Avenue, Oakland

Join us for a talk by novelist, short story writer, writing craft expert, and teacher David Corbett. His most recent book on the craft of writing is *The Compass of Character* (Writer's Digest Books). David will be selling and signing his books at the event. Contributions to the refreshment table and book exchange are appreciated. Unmetered and metered neighborhood parking is available close to the library or you may park at Rockridge BART station, five blocks away.

Saturday, April 4, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Crime Time: Spring Author Showcase

Book Passage, 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera

Looking for the newest in great crime fiction? Mystery solved! Join us as Sisters in Crime NorCal 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 2:00 p.m. The reading is open to the public, so please invite your friends to hear these talented SinC NorCal members:

Mysti Berry	Priscilla Royal
M.M. Chouinard	Cindy Sample
Linda Howe Steiger	Joseph Schneider
Susan Kuchinskas	Kelli Stanley
Deb McCaskey	CJ Verburg
Ann Parker	

In Case You Missed It . . .

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

November Meeting - Author Showcase

Our talented members with new releases read excerpts and gave away copies of their books. This session was especially well attended by an appreciative and enthusiastic audience.



Claire Ortalda



Ana Manwaring



Heather Haven



Ana Brazil



Faye Snowden



Mary Feliz



Janet Dawson



Susan Bickford



Terry Shames



Vinnie Hansen

December Meeting - Holiday Party

A jolly time was had by all at our joint holiday party with Mystery Writers of America NorCal.



Introducing Our 2020 Executive Committee Members



SUSAN ALICE BICKFORD, President: I was born in Boston and grew up in Central New York, the setting for many of my stories. Eventually I migrated to Silicon Valley to work in high tech in a variety of engineering and managerial roles. I write thrillers and suspense stories that are deeply embedded in the rural areas of New York State and New England, featuring resourceful female protagonists. My debut novel, *A Short Time to Die*, was published in 2017 and was nominated for the 2018 Left Coast Crime Best Debut Novel. My second novel, *Dread of Winter*, was released in October 2019 and is nominated for an Edgar Award. My short stories have appeared in the anthologies *Fish Out of Water* and *Fishy Business*. In 2020, my goal for my role on the EC is to work with our fabulous team to grow the strength and diversity of our membership, and to find ways to engage with a wider range of our far-flung community.

ROBIN STUART, Vice President: I am a veteran cyber crime investigator and contributing author to the short story anthology, *Fault Lines*. I consult on all things cyber security for Fortune 100 companies, authors, screenwriters, and media outlets including BBC and NowThis News. Besides being the Vice President of SinC NorCal, I am a member of Mystery Writers of America, International Thriller Writers, and the Council on Foreign Relations. I am also an alumni faculty member of the Book Passage Mystery Writers Conference and a significant contributor to the Tech Interactive (formerly known as The Tech Museum of Innovation) acclaimed Cyber Detectives, one of the museum's most popular permanent exhibits, which earned praise from the Obama Administration. I live in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2020, my goal for my role is to celebrate, elevate, and amplify my fellow sisters and misters at every available opportunity.



CLAIRE ORTALDA, Secretary: The first story I ever wrote as a child was a Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer knock-off about a multi-colored spider named Colloquy. A few years passed and I became a journalist, then wrote ad copy and promotional materials in Silicon Valley. I got my MA and MFA at San Francisco State in Creative Writing: Novel and wrote literary fiction and poetry for a while, with some publication success and a few awards. Along the way, I became aware that my reading material of choice was mysteries. I joined Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America and was very grateful for all the opportunities to learn how to write in this fascinating genre. I am currently marketing a full-



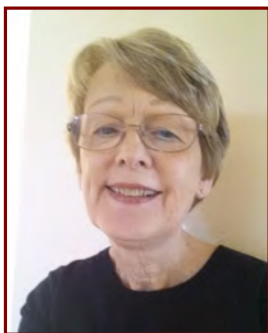
2020 Executive Committee Members, continued

CLAIRE ORTALDA, Secretary, continued: length traditional mystery, a version of which was short-listed for the Del Sol Press First Novel Prize (Judge: Hallie Ephron), working on another mystery novel with a bit of a sci-fi bent, and awaiting publication of "The Recipe Box" in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* sometime this year. My story, "Oglethorpe's Camera," was published in the Anne Perry-edited Mystery Writers of America anthology, *Odd Partners*, in 2019. In 2020 my goal for my role on the EC is to be the liaison for conveying our chapter news to the Sisters in Crime national newsletter. www.claireortalda.com



MALENA ELJAILY, Membership: I love to read mystery novels, especially cozies, but also enjoy the occasional thriller. I belong to a book club that has been meeting for 25 years. My short plays have been produced at various locations around the country. I also love to knit and do needle felting. I live in Santa Rosa. In 2020, my goal for my role on the EC is to make our meetings a green as possible.

ANA BRAZIL, Events: I am a longtime student of history and a voracious reader of mystery. My historical mystery novels and short stories feature brash American heroines, the more bodacious the better. My debut novel, *Fanny Newcomb and the Irish Channel Ripper*, won the 2018 IBPA GOLD Medal for Historical Fiction. My current WIP features a vaudevillian-chanteuse-who-knows-too-much, set in 1919 San Francisco. I'm an active member of the Historical Novel Society and a founding member of the Paper Lantern Writers Collective of historical fiction writers. I believe in time travel, ghosts, and keeping my butt in the chair until the chapter is finished. In 2020, I hope to listen to others more than I talk. (Wow, that's going to be a challenge!) Also, I'm eager to seek out fascinating speakers who can inspire, excite, and encourage all of us to write our best fiction. www.anabrazil.com



MARGIE BUNTING, Newsletter: I'm so thankful for the opportunity to serve as editor of *The Stiletta* for four years so far. Retired from an HR management career, I keep busy as VP of Education for my Toastmasters club and as a devoted reader, occasional copyeditor, musical theatergoer, sweepstakes hobbyist, mother and grandmother. I am also a proofreader of the national SinC newsletter. In 2020, my goal is to figure out how to continue editing the NorCal newsletter after I move (spring or summer) to the Sacramento area.

2020 Executive Committee Members, continued

SUSAN KUCHINSKAS, Speakers Bureau: After holding down a series of random jobs – exercise demonstrator, office temp, stewardess, house painter – it was probably inevitable that I became a writer. I started my career as an architecture and design journalist and then moved into technology when the Internet became a thing. I cover automotive and digital technology as a freelance journalist, as well as writing content for tech companies. My science fiction/detective novel, *Chimera Catalyst*, was published in 2017, and the sequel, *Singularity Syndrome*, will be released in February 2020. My crime stories have been published in *Switchblade*, *Shotgun Honey*, and our chapter's *Fault Lines* anthology. I live in Berkeley with my mate, a cat, a dog, and some 60,000 honeybees. <http://www.kuchinskas.com> In 2020 my goal for my role on the EC is to expand our circle of sisters and misters.



DIANA CHAMBERS, Past President: I was born with a book in one hand and a passport in the other. After graduating UC Berkeley in Asian art history, I was soon wandering Paris cobblestones and later, the bazaars of India and Southeast Asia. An importing business led to Hollywood scriptwriting, until my characters began demanding their own novels. My latest, *The Star of India*, will be published May 2020 by Penguin Random House India. Based on the true post-WW2 story of young Hollywood actress Nancy Valentine and the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, *The Star of India* weaves a stirring tale of a strong-willed woman whose fate was deeply entwined with the momentous birth of modern India. My earlier mystery thriller, *Stinger*, set in Afghanistan and Pakistan, remains stubbornly timely. I am a member of the Writers Guild of America, Mystery Writers of America, and immediate past-president of Sisters in Crime NorCal. www.dianarchambers.com In 2020 I hope to contribute my knowledge of NorCal's institutional history to help guide our outstanding new leadership forward.





Great Tips for Being a Panel Moderator by Ann Parker

A new year begins, along with a new year of appearances and conferences. If an appearance involves a panel, inevitably someone is tapped or volunteers to be the moderator. For new moderators (or seasoned ones who want a little refresher), I asked three local Sisters who are well-versed in the "art and science" of moderating for their suggestions. Their tips are below. My little summation of the "data" appears at the end.

The following suggestions come from **Camille Minichino**, author of five mystery series under as many names. *Mousse and Murder*, the first of her Alaskan Diner series, will be out May 2020 under the name Elizabeth Logan.

- **DO care about your panelists.** You can show this by reading at least a chunk of their writing if you don't have time for a whole book and be ready to share one detail about each at the appropriate time. (DO NOT use it for lengthy intros!)
- **DO hand out a list of potential questions before the panel gets underway**, even if you've shared them by email. Add a pen to the mix.
- **DO bring chocolate or some sweet!** Even a couple of fun-sized bars for each will do and might mean the difference between a yawn and a yarn.
- **DO allow questions as they arise from the audience.** No sense pushing ahead with your own agenda if an audience member is waiting with a question. DO control the time, however!

And now we have **Heather Haven**, who writes humorous, noir, historical, and romantic mysteries, short stories, and plays. Her most recent novel is *Christmas Trifle*, the first in her Snow Lake Romantic Suspense Novels series.

- **Know your subjects.** This means reading at least one of each of the panelists' books. Do a little research on each author, as well, more than what appears on their Amazon author page. Ask them for one little-known fact about them they wouldn't mind revealing.

Panel Moderator, continued

- **Make everyone comfortable.** They are guests at your dinner table. Authors are often shy or nervous about talking in front of a group of people. Draw them out. Let them know it will be a fun, easy-breezy, shared time with their readers and audience.
- **Have fun yourself.** This isn't open-heart surgery. An audience likes nothing more than seeing a group of people talking about themselves and their work, led by someone relaxed and knowledgeable. They will be with you all the way.

Finally, **Mysti Berry** adds her advice for moderators. Mysti's stories have appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, and several anthologies.

- **Do your homework.** Read some of each panelist's work. Review their website. Know who they are, what they write, and what's interesting about them and their point of view or slant on whatever genre(s) they write. Having a reasonably rich reservoir of knowledge will help you make small jokes, ask questions that prompt interesting answers, and facilitate a back-and-forth between panelists to get interesting conversations started. Feel free to ask each writer what you should read of theirs.
- **Send the panelists sample questions.** They want to prime their mental pumps and be prepared to deliver value on the panel. Of course, you don't want to over-rehearse, but do build camaraderie and trust by sharing what you are interested in about the topic (or discovering a panelist has no idea why they are on the panel—it happens!). Invite the panelists to share. If they are very busy, they may not say much, but the simple act of a few swapped emails will “warm the room” and pay dividends on panel day.
- **It's not about you—but it's all up to you.** Do tell the audience at the beginning of the panel who you are (your name, your latest publication if relevant), but then be invisible the way a good journalist is invisible. People will get to know you by the funny or smart or provocative questions you ask, the way you invite shy panel members into the conversation, the way you listen to what's going on and encourage interesting conversations. People are slow to forgive a selfish moderator (I'm still mad at one from 2005) but are quick to remember an earnest, helpful, or funny one.
- **Don't try to be something you aren't.** I desperately want to be as funny as Catriona McPherson. I'm not, and I never will be. But I am fascinated by structure and pretty good with a button line. So I lean into those strengths, instead of trying to be something I'm not. Work with your strengths. However, don't let being shy stop you from trying moderation if you think you might like it. Being a moderator is great practice for speaking in front of other people. I started out scared out of my wits, and now I only get mildly nervous before a panel.

Panel Moderator, continued

Mysti also added the following aside: "I have enjoyed discovering many fabulous writers through being a moderator. In the writing community, there are many ways to build "social capital," a fancy term for investing in the people around us to raise us all up. Moderating is a great way to invest in yourself and the wider writing community."

Now, did you notice any patterns as you read through the above suggestions? Even though I communicated with each of these folks separately (and I don't think they colluded behind my back!), we see similar advice pop up over and over. I am always interested in data and where it clusters (and where it diverges). In this case, you can see some common themes, which boil down to the following:

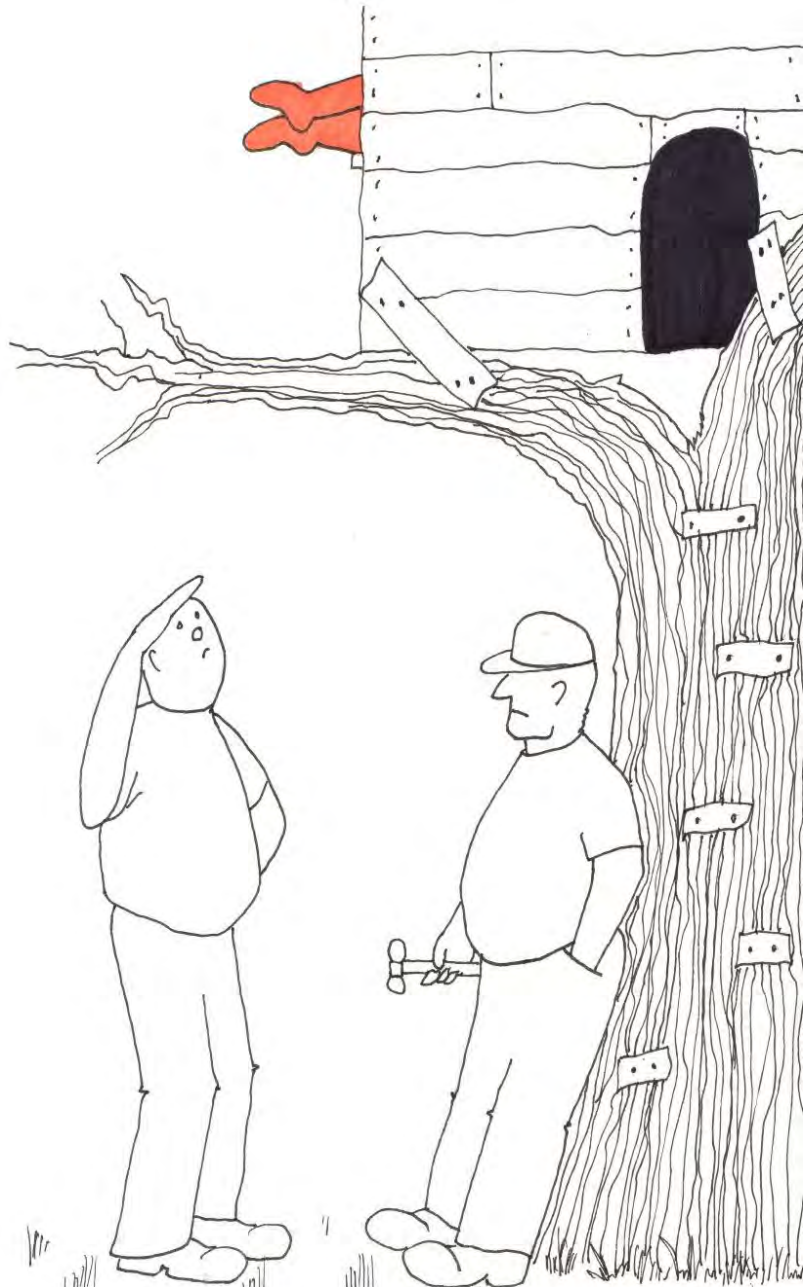
- **Get to know your panelists and their work** – read, research, ask.
- **Make your panelists comfortable and keep them "in the loop"** – share a list of questions beforehand, bring treats. If you relax, they will too!
- **Shine the light on your authors** – remember, it's not about you. It's about them.

Camille, Heather, and Mysti included some other valuable tips as well. So, when you are sitting in panel audiences this year (at the upcoming Left Coast Crime, for instance), direct some of your attention to the moderators and note how they guide and interact with their panelists. You'll probably come away with other insights into the art and science of panel moderating.

Ann Parker lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she is a science writer by day and historical fiction writer at night. Ann is the author of the award-winning Silver Rush historical mystery series, set primarily in the 1880s silver boomtown of Leadville, Colorado and, more recently, in the "Paris of the West," San Francisco. *Mortal Music*, the newest book in the series, was released in January 2020. Learn more about Ann and her books at annparker.net.



From Maddy McEwen . . .



Couldn't afford the writers' retreat, so I made her a room of her own.

Notes from a Newbie at Bouchercon

by Susan Kuchinskas



I had heard Bouchercon was overwhelming. Planning my trip, I was excited and anxious.

But I needn't have worried. While Bouchercon may be big compared to other writer conferences, it's not all that huge. In fact, the size is an advantage if you don't know anyone. People have to spread out. They can't travel in a pod with their friends.

It turns out, most people were friendly, and it was easy to spark conversations. There's the same spirit of welcome and congeniality that I love about our chapter.

I'd also heard that it was a reader's conference, but that did not seem to be the case. Almost every time period had more than one session about craft or marketing. Because each Bouchercon is locally organized, this might not always hold true. Besides, if you're an author who participates on panels or wants to, the more reader-centric sessions are good for seeing what works and what doesn't.

I arrived a day early for the SinC Into Great Writing Program, Writing the Breakout Novel with Donald Maas. It's the reason I decided to come to Bouchercon, and I was not disappointed. The workshop focused on specific tactics that take a manuscript to the next level. Maas managed to distill concepts such as making a novel feel bigger into actual tactics. It got me excited to get back to work on my WIP.

Here are my tips for getting the most out of Bouchercon:

Pace yourself. The SinC Into Great Writing workshop was amazing and intense. I was toasted. No way did I want to go out with people. I was happy to walk into town, have a quick dinner and get to bed. It was full days for the rest of the conference, starting at 7:00, 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. I'd retreat to my room for downtime and skip a few session blocks when I needed to.

Be open. That said, go to as much as you can. Everything I went to paid off in some way. Even if a panel topic didn't seem on target for me, I heard of new markets, picked up an insight on craft, or at least discovered a new author. I met the Editorial Director of Thomas & Mercer – and she gave me her email. How cool is that?

Bring an extra suitcase. Free books! This year, each attendee could choose four books from an excellent selection. Then, Thomas & Mercer had a book signing with twenty authors – each of whom gave out their books. I could have come home with a lot more books if I'd had the space.

Newbie at Bouchercon, continued

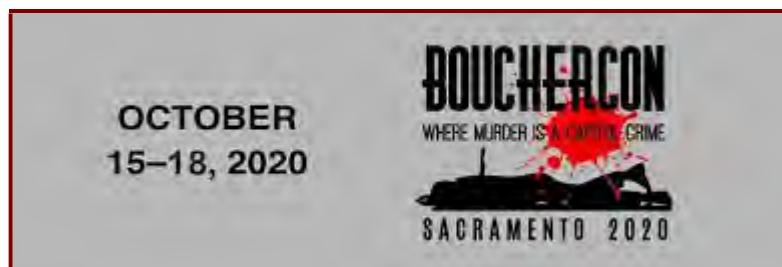
If you've published a book, bring a handout. It doesn't have to be a postcard or bookmark, but it should be four-color and clearly show your name and title or titles, URL and email. Even when you're networking with fellow authors, it's a good reminder of a nice interaction and an easy way to keep in touch. <http://kuchinskas.com/>

Airbnb vs. hotel. I opted for the conference hotel and, in this case, I was glad I did. The hotel was located away from downtown proper, and the weather was cold and rainy. It was nice to be able to take a break in my room without leaving the hotel. On the other hand, being able to fix my own breakfast and coffee would have been healthier and cheaper. Hotel living gets expensive when even a regular coffee costs \$3. For future conferences, if I could locate a nice Airbnb that was a decent walk from the conference and close to shops and restaurants, I might opt to stay offsite.

What to wear. Women's attire runs the gamut from jeans and sweatshirts to glam outfits and full makeup. Those done-up women did stand out, but if that's not you, business casual is fine. The look for men was mostly jeans, nice shirt and sports jacket. Almost no one wore anything special for the themed parties.

Get ready for Sacramento. Bouchercon 2020 will be held in Sacramento, making this a more affordable conference for our chapter. Be there!

Susan Kuchinskas is the author of the science fiction/detective novels *Chimera Catalyst* (2017) and *Singularity Syndrome*, to be released February 2020. Find out more at <https://kuchinskas.com>





Book Tour Basics, or How to Live out of a Roller Bag on Book Tour

by Cara Black

I've gone on book tours for twenty years. For me, it's all about meeting readers, hanging out with booksellers and librarians, and sharing my excitement over my new book. What works in my experience is a blitzkrieg book tour, which can mean doing two events a day. That can be a brown bag book talk/coffee and croissants at a library, wine and cheese discussion and bookstore event in the PM. This works because I feel on a roll, excited to talk about my inspiration and research, and geared up. After the book tour, I'm home crashed on the duvet, letting those blistered feet rest after throwing my clothes in the washer. My physical book promotion is done—pew—and I'm working on the next book.

But, ooh la la, the biggest logistical challenge is packing for a book tour in a *roller bag*! Trial and error has shown me it's all about stripping down to essentials and fitting everything—and I mean *toutes*—in one roller bag. One roller bag. Sucking in breath here. So whether you're a debut author or a veteran of book tours, here's my minimalist book tour survival guide and you might find something helpful. It's all about efficient packing, getting to the event on time, dressed to kill, hydrated, prepared and happy to see your readers.

Tools of the trade – In my roller bag a reading copy of my book with margin notes, post-its, one-page cheat sheet for book talk, photos of locations in the story, pencil and Moleskine notebook for NEWSLETTER SIGNUPS, new book ideas, bookseller names, notes. And the heaviest tools. Bookmarks for all two-plus weeks of events. Or I mail them ahead to the bookstores! If it's a road trip, I've learned to keep a box of books in the trunk, just in case.

Outfits – My rule of thumb is to go with a staple outfit: always black, washable and without buckles and metal strips to hold up the line at TSA. My event wear, perfect for any weather, is the little black dress (LBD), a basic black swing dress hitting above the knees and leggings (my uniform) washed out in the hotel sink at night. Black on black, accessorized with scarf, jewelry, shrug, sweater. Travel outfit – black joggers, T-shirt, pashmina shawl for the plane.

Underwear- 2 sets of undies, one that I wash out in the sink at night and dry with a hair dryer.

Book Tour Basics, continued

Shoes – These are always a space hog in the roller bag but I choose only two pairs: one pair for events (either ballet flats, ankle boots, pumps, or sandals); one comfy walk-miles-through-the-airport pair (running or walking shoes) on my feet the other times, plus fluffy socks for the plane (to wash out at night).

Toiletries – I use hotel soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion—free and no weight. Always pack Neosporin and bandaids, hair clip, scrunchies, brush, department store perfume samples to spritz on a pulse point. Electric toothbrush? Not anymore, just several toothbrush 6-packs easy to break off and stick in pocket, use and discard.

Makeup – Bio makeup remover wipes, 3-oz. astringent, 3-oz. vials of moisturizer, day and night creams, tinted sunscreen, lip gloss, eyebrow and eye pencil, blush, and, if it doesn't fit, it stays HOME.

Seasonal outerwear - Depends on layering for the weather—basic cardigan sweater staple for evening chill, air conditioning, and the plane. For the cold, I layer a Uniqlo light puffer knee-length and outer puffer coat and maybe another puffer jacket, which fit in their little pouches, and clip them by carabiners from the bike shop to my roller bag handle (yay, no coats to stuff inside). You can always wear your outerwear and divest after boarding the plane.

Packing – One YouTube video changed my life—how to roll everything up and, presto, life fits. I go for the cigarettes-in-a-box approach. Wedge in the plastic Baggies for shoes, makeup, underwear, and socks, which leaves you space—yes, space—for an extra book!

Carry bag – Don't call it cheating, but I've got a super-light, fitted crossbody bag with pockets for iPad, ID, cards, phone, cords and chargers, ear pods, medications, collapsible water bottle to fill up, slim paperback for waits on the runway, and sunglasses.

Roller bag – The book tour packing isn't so different from what I pack for Paris—everything must fit in one roller bag, or *le rolair*, as the man in the shop at Belleville calls it, where I get the best price on his newest model. He sold me on the hardshell 4-wheeler lightweight swivel that fits into the smaller-sized European overhead. Dimensions are 55 cm high, 35 cm across, and 20 cm deep.

Necessary phone apps – When I need to get to the airport, the rental car, the hotel, and the bookstore on time, I install all the airplane apps so I can check in online and get alerts. CityMapper to show transportation modes, distance and times. Waze to check traffic, rental car agency, or Lyft to get me there.

Book Tour Basics, continued

Pre-event checklist – Now dressed, lip gloss applied, have I planned time for an espresso stop before the event? Breath mints? Full water bottle? Do I have my reading copy? Moleskine ready and sharpened pencils to jot down the names of the bookstore staff so I can write appropriate thank you's later and for readers to sign up for my NEWSLETTER? Can I give myself one last thankful moment to remember my inspiration for the book and how excited I was writing this, and how lucky I am to share this with readers? Oh, and remember to breathe!

Cara Black is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of 19 books in the Private Investigator Aimée Leduc series, which is set in Paris. Cara has received multiple nominations for the Anthony and Macavity Awards, a *Washington Post* World Book of the Year citation, and the Médaille de la Ville de Paris – The Paris City Medal--which is awarded in recognition of contribution to international culture. *Three Hours in Paris*, her first standalone novel, comes out in April.





Whither Diversity? by Terry Shames

Diversity has many faces.

For the past few years, Sisters in Crime has been working diligently to come up with ways to make it clear that the organization welcomes everyone, regardless of gender, color, creed, age, sexual orientation, geographical location, writers, readers . . . everyone. But it's easier to say you are welcoming than it is to accomplish it.

As humans we are attuned to notice “differences.” People notice color, gender, height, weight, age, attractiveness. We note the way someone talks—do they have a “foreign” accent, a regional one? We take note if someone’s language use makes them sound as if they are from a different economic or social background. We notice subtle hints of “different” sexual orientation.

We notice. Noticing doesn't have to be the same as judging or having negative reactions, but sometimes those negative reactions crop up. And that's the hard part. We have judgments. No matter how hard we try to be judgment-free, the twinge of opinion creeps in. We're wired that way. We notice.

The trait that is most noticeable on sight is color. I had an enlightening experience when I was in my 20s. An African American co-worker and friend invited me to go skiing and stay in the group cabin that she was part of. I'll never forget my surprise when I got to the cabin and found that everyone there was African American—all a lot like me, except for skin color. We went to a big party that night. I was one of only a handful of white people. It didn't bother me in the least. Why? Because I knew it was temporary, and that my wider world was full of people who looked like me. I thought about what it would be like if every situation I entered, every day, was like that weekend—where I was the person of a different color. The lesson stayed with me.

And then there's gender. Women have judgments based on our experiences with men. Especially in these “me, too” days, we're finely tuned to hints of unearned judgments (are blondes really so daffy?).

Gender-fluid situations can be puzzling and difficult to navigate for people who are new to the concept. Even unintended reactions can be received as judgment. Because of course there is judgment, and people who know that they do not fit into the one-size-fits-all categories may have heightened sensitivity to perceived slights. All we have to do is pay attention to the news to know that those who don't fit into easily identifiable gender categories are at risk of being on the receiving end of hurtful, even cruel, judgment.

Whither Diversity, continued

If someone wears an obvious sign of religious difference, there is always the possibility of negative reactions – again, just look at the news.

Age is another category that gets noticed. “Little old women” and “little old men” feel the brunt of those terms. “Okay, boomer” can be hurtful, even when it’s intended lightly. Those of us in that category can be tempted to turn the ageist category around and sneer at the naïve, inexperienced youth. We can unintentionally signal lack of awareness of what younger generations are experiencing.

Disabilities (different abilities?) can be overt, but they can also be invisible. I’ve been talking to a woman who struggles with autism. I had no idea she was an autistic. I always simply thought of her as intense. The same is true with hearing impairment, sight impairment, some physical issues that limit activities. Often we aren’t aware that someone may be struggling with a situation because of a hidden (or even overt) limitation that makes them feel “different.”

Sisters in Crime is wrestling with a way to make these “categories” disappear, or to at least make people aware of the hurt that careless references can impose. But there’s another way in which we need to be aware of the tendency to be careless about labels.

We have to be aware of the slights that we impose when we make judgments about what people write and how they publish.

What do you write? It sounds like a friendly enough question. But we all know that the answer can trigger negative responses. I write cozies. Thrillers. Domestic suspense. Police Procedural. Historical. Humorous. Paranormal. Religious. Suspense. The list is endless. I’ve had readers tell me point blank that they will not read any books that feature a male protagonist. Period. We in the publishing world can’t afford to make such judgments about fellow writers.

Another inclusiveness issue is particular to our writing community. The seemingly innocuous question, “Who is your publisher?” can be a portal to a negative response if the answer is, “I’m self-published.” I know a lot of independently published authors who still feel excluded, are still made to feel “less than.”

Inclusion has to cast a wide net. No matter what “minority” status someone has, many suffer from negative stereotypes. By pushing for diversity, I think we hope to mitigate some of that suffering.

In the past year the Executive Committee has been working on outreach ideas. We do have a few members who are in minority categories, but we need to do much more. One of the challenges for people of color is that they are in great demand to “represent.” If you only have a small group to

Whither Diversity, continued

select from, the members of the group are going to be bombarded with requests to be the face of diversity. No matter how much they may want to oblige, it eats into time (writing time), and I expect it can be exhausting.

I'm not sure how to "fix" the issue of welcoming those potential members of our organization who will always find themselves in the minority. As an institutional issue, it's a slow process. I remember reading an article about how difficult it is for children of color to feel welcome in the classroom when not only are they in the minority, but also all the teachers, administration and staff are white. The same holds true for adult organizations. A few years ago, I persuaded a good friend to come to our NorCal SinC workshop and to join Sisters in Crime. Afterwards, she gently explained to me how difficult it was for her, a black woman, to walk into a room and not feel on display: "Ooh, look, a black woman." She said no matter how kind and welcoming people were, she felt like it was hard to fit in. And she is the opposite of shy. She's self-assured, competent, and strong.

I think members have to start by extending a welcome individually to their diverse community of friends and invite them to join Sisters in Crime as writers or readers. And when we spot someone who has been invited who is obviously a member of smaller percentage group, welcome them, being aware that it can feel overwhelming to be "only."

I know the Executive Committee would welcome ideas about how to be more inclusive – and how to publicize that inclusiveness.

Terry Shames writes the popular Samuel Craddock series, published by Seventh Street Books. The books have been finalists for multiple awards, winning the Macavity Award for Best First Mystery and an RT Reviews Critics Award for Best Contemporary Mystery of 2016. The eighth in the series, *A Risky Undertaking for Loretta Singletary*, was published in April 2019. Terry lives in Berkeley, CA. She is a member of both NorCal Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America. For more, see www.terryshames.com.

Website Enhancements: Powered by Interbridge

Our Sisters in Crime NorCal website (sincnorcal.com) is the heart of our communication platform for the organization. Stop by and check out some of the new features we have introduced on our Events page (and of course our renewals process and more).

Anyone who has ever set up a website can attest that doing something once is (relatively) easy. Maintaining it, keeping it fresh, and doing that in a timely way is hard. It is even harder for volunteer organizations like ours.

Bay Area local Sue Trowbridge is the power behind our website. If you visit her own website for Interbridge (interbridge.com), you'll find wonderful examples of authors who are clients, including many Bay Area authors and MWA. She really understands what makes compelling websites about books and writing.

Sue also sends out our newsletters and other “blasts” for us. Her range of services include website development and maintenance, blog design, e-newsletters, and book design (print and e-books). She is quick to suggest improvements, handles updates in a flash, and is very fair and generous with her time. And she designed the interior and e-book versions of the *Fault Lines* anthology (working with Margaret Lucke) – a very big project!



We love the professionalism and consistency Sue has brought to our website.

Many thanks, Sue!





Member Profile: Tim Tigner

Thirteenth in a series to introduce our members to each other

Tim Tigner, originally from the Midwest, now resides in San Ramon with his wife and two daughters and sports a license plate that reads NOVLST. After a fascinating, diverse international career, he now writes best-selling thrillers.

Stiletta: You published your most recent “philosophical mystery thriller,” *The Price of Time*, in May 2019. Please tell us about this book and what inspired you to write it.

Tim Tigner: I was approaching my 50th birthday and pondering mortality when I got to wondering: What would happen to the world if people didn’t grow old and die? One answer was pretty clear: we’d run into a nightmarish population problem. This isn’t a purely hypothetical question. Anti-aging is a major area of medical research. (Google, for example, has a whole company devoted to it.) As a writer, I put myself into the shoes of a Silicon Valley startup that discovers a way to halt aging, only to then realize that they couldn’t sell their invention to the world without running it. That’s chapter one of *The Price of Time*.

As an aside, the same thought experiment made me realize that only by dying do we make room for our children. Accepting that as a trade I’m happy to make, I am no longer bothered by my own mortality.

Stiletta: You have also written a spy series about Kyle Achilles—four novels and a novella to date. Who is Kyle, and are there more to come in the series?

TT: Achilles, as he’s known, is a competitive free solo climber who did five years in CIA Operations and now occasionally gets called to serve or falls into international conspiracies, Jack Reacher style. He’s got a strong sense of social duty and right and wrong.

I’ve just completed book 5 in the series, *Boundless Ambition*. My plan is to continue writing Kyle Achilles stories for many years to come unless the market pulls me in another direction.

Stiletta: You have written several standalones and a series. Which do you prefer to write?

TT: Standalones are easier to plot, as I’m not constrained by making existing characters fit the unusual scenarios that characterize my plots, but series books are easier to write because the characters are familiar. Since those factors are about a wash, I’d say that I enjoy both equally.

Member Profile: Tim Tigner, continued

While we're on the topic of choices, I do prefer one that's considerably more difficult than the alternative: self-publishing over traditional publishing. For me, the benefits of flexibility and control outweigh the cost of doing everything myself. Plus self-publishing pays a lot better – when you get it right.

Stiletta: You have a BA in philosophy and mathematics, an MBA in finance, and an MA in international studies. What kind of career did you have in mind while studying, and how did you combine what you learned into a career?

TT: I wanted to run international businesses, and that was exactly what I ended up doing. Although I got my dream jobs at an early age, I wasn't truly happy. Looking at alternative careers, I decided that Robert Ludlum's life looked pretty good. The transition was tougher and took longer than I expected, but I now consider writing thrillers to be the perfect fit and am as happy as can be.

Stiletta: Your background includes Soviet counterintelligence with the Green Berets, as well as work in Russia with the MIR space station cosmonauts and on Russia's first law on healthcare. Tell us more about the part of your career you spent in Russia and other foreign countries.

TT: Out of grad school, I got a job starting up the Russian operations of a major German medical corporation during *perestroika*. We placed one of our blood analyzers on the MIR space station, which led to my visiting Star City and teleconferencing with the cosmonaut performing experiments from mission command. In a similar vein, we traded another of our analyzers for office space in the presidential hospital, leading to more adventures I won't go into here. While in that job, forty of my peers twice elected me chairman of the medical industry association. That role led to consulting with parliament on Russia's first law on healthcare, and many more memorable experiences.

Stiletta: Your online bio says you "climbed the peaks of Mount Olympus, hang glided from the cliffs of Rio de Janeiro, ballooned over Belgium . . . and ran the Serengeti with a Masai warrior." It sounds like you are quite the traveler and daredevil. More information, please!

TT: I've long lived my life wanting to pack in as much possible before I die. That attitude has led to many an adventure, including getting a grant to study philosophy in Greece for the summer after my sophomore year, during which I climbed Olympus. The hang-gliding was during a spring break study trip I took during grad school. The ballooning was a date with my now wife while I was working in Brussels. The Serengeti run took place during a corporate reward trip to Tanzania. Those are just a few of many examples of seizing on an adventurous opportunity to explore our wondrous world.

Member Profile: Tim Tigner, continued

On their death beds, people typically regret the things they didn't do. I'm determined to be an exception – hopefully in one piece and out of jail.

Stiletta: Also from your online bio: you acted on stage in Portugal, taught negotiations in Germany, and chaired a healthcare conference in the Netherlands. How did all of these come about?

TT: I did my junior year of high school in Lisbon and was in a play while there. That time in Portugal was what convinced me to pursue an international business career.

My favorite class in business school was negotiations. I ended up writing a 2-day case-study class that was very popular in Russia and so was invited to do it at my company's headquarters in Mannheim, Germany as well.

While chairman of the international industry association in Russia, I was asked to speak at a lot of conferences, and to chair one in Amsterdam.

Stiletta: Finally, from your bio, you have been a “marathoner, paratrooper, triathlete, and yogi.” Do you still pursue any of these active pursuits?

TT: My knees gave out in my late forties, so cycling is my primary form of exercise these days. That means I'll never do the Ironman in Hawaii, which was once a goal, but I'm okay with that. I actually write in the sports bar at my gym, Bay Club Pleasanton. That habit gets me to spin class 5-6 days a week.

Stiletta: What brought you to Silicon Valley to live and work?

TT: I spent 20 years in the medical industry, and Silicon Valley is its mecca. I always intended to end up here, and timed it for when we were ready to settle down – and housing prices were at a relative low. My wife and daughters love it, so we'll likely stay here until the girls are out of school, even though we can now live anywhere given that my wife and I both work on a laptop.

Stiletta: Where and how did you start writing thrillers, and how did your own experience influence the content?

TT: I started toying with writing thrillers while living in Moscow, when I realized that I wanted a different profession. But I didn't really start work on my first novel, *Coercion*, until after I'd walked away from the medical industry with enough savings to finance five years of learning to write. That was at the end of 2002. I knew I could draw on my personal experience and imagination to develop captivating plots, but I had to learn to write fiction from scratch. I did that by repeatedly listening to my favorite audiobooks, while working on my first book

Member Profile: Tim Tigner, continued

Stiletta: What are your proudest accomplishments?

TT: Earning a Green Beret, a Wharton MBA, and several significant business promotions were the defining accomplishments of my 20s and 30s. Getting a couple of Silicon Valley CEO gigs and a publishing deal highlighted my 40s. Since turning 50, I've ranked among Amazon's 100 most-read authors every month, and my latest novel, *The Price of Time*, is #85 on Amazon's 100 Most Sold ebooks of 2019 (at \$6.99, and it wasn't an Amazon Prime pick or Kindle First). But the thing that gives me the most satisfaction these days is my family, for which my wife deserves the vast majority of the credit. But hey, I picked her.

Stiletta: Amazon named you an All-Star Author for being one of the most popular authors on Kindle Unlimited, and your books have garnered thousands of Amazon reviews. To what do you attribute this success?

TT: I treat writing as a business and myself as a brand. I work relentlessly to produce consistent, high-quality, originally-plotted and professionally-marketed products. I'm constantly studying, experimenting, and attempting to improve. I pay a lot of attention to detail. I guard my time like it's gold and have learned to ignore everything that I don't enjoy if it doesn't have a proven ROI. Accent on proven. Much of the conventional thinking about the book business is dead wrong.

Stiletta: What writers do you consider your biggest influences and why?

TT: My writing began as an attempt to learn from what I loved reading in my formative years. That was Robert Ludlum's plots, Ken Follett's characters, Lee Child's writing style, and John Grisham's voice.

Stiletta: What else would you like us to know about you that we haven't asked?

TT: We haven't talked about process or mindset, which are things I'm always curious about when talking to my peers. I work 60 to 70 hours a week and spend about 9 months on a book. That's a month of brainstorming, a month of outlining, 6 months of writing and rewriting, and a month of editing – with cover design and marketing copy mixed in. I know that many of my successful peers produce books at two, three, even four times that speed. So what gives? While it seems that I'm inefficient, my resume indicates that's not one of my defining characteristics. I think that's just how long it takes to write my brand of book.

That brings us to mindset.

Member Profile: Tim Tigner, continued

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I aim for a product of which I'll always be proud, that will produce a significant revenue stream for many years to come. And I write knowing that each page I put out will likely be read a million times before I die.

Tim Tigner was interviewed by Margie Bunting, Sisters in Crime NorCal's newsletter editor.

Memories of Bouchercon 2019



Janet Rudolph



Alec Peche



*SinC Pres. Lori Rader-Day
with Catriona McPherson*



Susan Bickford



Rhys Bowen



Terry Shames with Lesa Holstine

A Toast to Toastmasters

by Margie Bunting

As an author – or an aspiring one – you’re great at expressing yourself through your writing . . . but do you wish you were a better verbal communicator?

Do you . . .

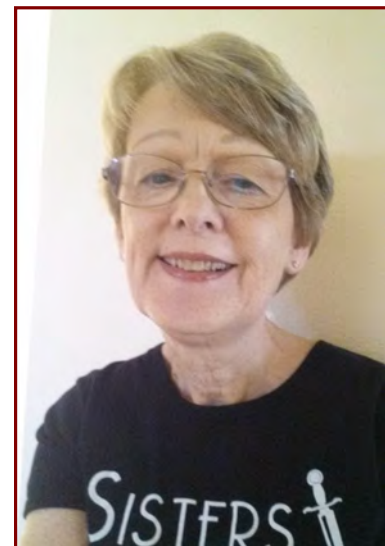
Dread speaking in front of a group at a book launch?

Worry about having to think on your feet as a panel member?

Cringe at the idea of pitching to an agent or publisher?

Struggle talking to readers one-on-one?

Wonder how to give better (and better received) feedback to a fellow writer’s group member?



You may want to consider joining Toastmasters, a 90+-year-old international organization devoted to helping its members improve their speaking and leadership skills. Chances are, there are multiple Toastmasters clubs in your neck of the woods, making it easy to find a nearby club and a convenient meeting time.

Here’s the basic idea: Toastmasters provides an educational program that allows you to learn at your own speed and with the support of your fellow club members.



Two years ago, the Toastmasters educational program was updated to a system called Pathways, where you can choose your own “path” based on your personal needs (my current path is Presentation Mastery, which focuses more on speaking skills than leadership skills) and fulfill a variety of assignments—many of them speeches on whatever topic you choose. There are also projects where you can choose options such as writing a blog, building a social media presence, or handling an effective Q&A session. You will have a mentor to help you through the first few projects and to assist you in learning to navigate the online Pathways system.

Toastmasters meetings are typically weekly for one hour, but some clubs meet biweekly or even monthly, for longer than an hour. There are a number of roles that rotate at each meeting, and you will have the opportunity to fill each of these roles. For example:

- The Toastmaster leads the meeting.
- There may be one or more Speakers, making presentations of typically 5-7 minutes based on assignments from their educational path.
- Each Speaker has a Speech Evaluator.
- The Ah Counter reports on the use of “filler words” (uh, um, y’know, so, like, etc.)

Toastmasters, continued

- The Grammarian calls out good uses of English grammar and language and suggests improvements.
- The Word Master picks a vocabulary Word of the Day and keeps track of who uses it.
- The Table Topics Master asks impromptu questions for responses of 1-2 minutes.
- The Timer keeps track of whether speeches, evaluations, and Table Topics responses are within the specified time range.

So how does all of this benefit you? Let's take a look again at some of the fears authors may have:

Speaking at a book launch: The best way to become comfortable in front of a group is to practice, practice, practice! Each time you speak at a Toastmasters meeting, you will become more comfortable (I guarantee it!).

Thinking on your feet as a panel member: Here's where being a speech evaluator or responding to Table Topics questions becomes invaluable. Speech evaluations are meant to be mini-speeches, with a beginning, body, and ending, but they're only 2-3 minutes long. Since you haven't heard the speech you are evaluating before the meeting, you learn to gather your thoughts quickly and put them together into something coherent that doesn't exceed the time limit. Again, practice is the key. And Table Topics, which is the part of the meeting most feared by newcomers, helps you become comfortable coming up with an articulate answer on the spot. Here's a secret—if you can't think of an answer to the Table Topics question posed to you, it's okay to talk about whatever you want. The goal is to practice speaking on the spot, regardless of the subject.

Pitching to an agent or publisher or talking to readers/fans one-on-one: The overall Toastmasters experience is the key. When you practice speaking in any part of the meeting, and you are supported by well wishes and feedback from your fellow members, you become much more prepared for person-to-person conversations, and you learn to trust yourself in those situations.

Giving better feedback to other writers: Again, being a speech evaluator is the best preparation. At Toastmasters we learn to reinforce what the speaker is doing well, and to offer specific examples of how the speaker could improve the speech, all in a supportive manner. And learning to listen is a critical skill in so many areas of life.

SinC NorCal member **JoAnn Smith Ainsworth** says, "In 2007 when I had sold my first novel to a publisher, I realized that effective communication is essential in marketing books. Over the years, I'd heard about Toastmasters for speaking and leadership skills, but I had never investigated it. I attended Cherry City Toastmasters as a guest a few times and then joined. Over a decade later, I'm still a member. I stay with the club because I keep learning—from the training and from other

Toastmasters, continued

members. I even joined an advanced club, Speakers Forum, which adds an extra challenge to be an effective communicator to larger and larger audiences.”

All “open” Toastmasters clubs (those not restricted to employees of certain companies, where the meetings are held) welcome guests at their meetings. You may be asked to stand up and introduce yourself, and to comment on the meeting at the end, but you will not be required to participate in Table Topics unless you want to (but go ahead – give it a try). If you do join, dues are quite reasonable and are collected every six months. Your membership entitles you to the monthly *Toastmasters Magazine*, which has lots of helpful articles on being a more effective speaker. Try out several clubs, as each one has its own particular “feel,” and you can choose what feels right for you.

Are you worried about fitting Toastmasters membership into your busy schedule? In my experience, there are numerous occasions where you might miss a meeting – priorities at work, vacation, illness, family issues. And that’s OK – we’re all in the same boat. I think that once you experience Toastmasters, you will try your best to get to the meetings as much as possible, but you’re only human!

I’m not an author, but I’ve been a Toastmaster for ten years with my current club, and for one year with another club about 30 years ago. I joined because I could see that it would be very helpful in my HR career, and that certainly turned out to be true. When I had to emcee an all-employee meeting, or when I had to talk with a manager or employee about a sensitive subject, my Toastmasters experience made it easier for me. I felt more confident of my ability to listen and speak articulately, regardless of the situation, because of the skills I learned from Toastmasters.

I’ve been retired for close to five years now, but I’ve stayed with my Toastmasters club because I love the club, the people, and the feeling I get from each meeting, and I still find the experience helpful in my personal life.

To locate clubs in your area, go to [Toastmasters International](#) online and click on “Find a Club” – it’s that easy. Type in your address and you’re off and running. Enjoy!

Margie Bunting is the newsletter editor for Sisters in Crime NorCal. As a Toastmasters member, she has attained the levels of Advanced Communicator Bronze and Advanced Leader Bronze and is about to complete Level 2 of the Presentation Mastery path. She is VP of Education for VentriTalks Toastmasters in Sunnyvale.



Ed Gorman: A Thank You by Simon Wood

I recently finished reading the late Brian Garfield's short story collection, *Suspended Sentences*. In the introduction, he thanks Ed Gorman for helping him with the book, which I found touching, because I also owe Ed Gorman a debt of gratitude.

Ed was a writer who published in almost every genre but is best known for his work in the crime, mystery, western, and horror fields. He passed away in October 2016.

When my first thriller, *Accidents Waiting to Happen*, came out, it was with a small publisher, with a small print run of a few thousand copies. In that situation, getting any kind of promotional and industry support was tough. I wrote to *Mystery Scene* magazine, which Ed owned at the time. He liked what he saw and assigned the book to one of his reviewers, which resulted in my first trade review.

Seven years later, Ed and I ended up being stable mates at the same publisher. He wrote to our editor to say how much he loved my books and to recommend that he keep on publishing my books. The editor forwarded his email to me, saying I had a fan. We asked Ed if he would turn his praise into a blurb for my upcoming book at the time, *Terminated*, which he did, saying:

"Simon Wood packs his books with suspense, surprises, and superb storytelling." -Ed Gorman, author of *The Midnight Room*.



Ed Gorman

Of all the blurbs I've received for my books, this is one of the most cherished.

Here's the astounding detail about this—we never met. We kept in touch over the years, but it would've been nice to have thanked him in person. This public thank you will have to suffice in its place.

Simon Wood is a California transplant from England. He's a former competitive race car driver, a licensed pilot, an endurance cyclist, an animal rescuer, and an occasional PI. He shares his world with his American wife, Julie. Their lives are dominated by five cats and a long-haired dachshund. He's the Anthony winner of more than a dozen books. His most recent book is *Trouble and Strife*. Curious people can learn more at <http://www.simonwood.net>.

Member News



New Releases

Opus Murder by Alec Peche, book #10 in the Jill Quint, MD Forensic Pathologist series, January 28

Above the Bay of Angels by Rhys Bowen, February 11 by Lake Union Publishing

Mortal Music by Ann Parker, book #7 in the award-winning Silver Rush historical mystery series, January 27 by Poisoned Pen Press

Expect Betrayal by JoAnn Smith Ainsworth, book #3 in her Operation Delphi paranormal suspense series set in WWII, April 18

Three Hours in Paris, the first standalone by Cara Black, April 7 by Soho Crime

Singularity Syndrome by Susan Kuchinskas, book #2 in the Finder series, February 2020 by Pandamoon

Her Daughter's Cry by M.M. Chouinard, January 23 by Bookouture

Stardusted: A Frankie Franklin Mystery by Deb McCaskey, November 21, 2019

One Day You'll Burn by Joseph Schneider: Book #1 in the LAPD Detective Tully Jarsdel Mysteries, February 4 by Poisoned Pen Press

Terry Shames has a short story, "The Inheritance," scheduled to appear in the *Jewish Noir II* anthology in September.

Camille Minichino's Professor Sophie Knowles series, previously written under the pen name Ada Madison, has been re-released by Crossroad Press.

Margaret Lucke's short story, "Thus With a Kiss," about a community theater production of "Romeo and Juliet" that goes terribly wrong, has been selected for the Malice Domestic 15 anthology, *Murder Most Theatrical*. The book is scheduled to be published by Wildside Press in time for the Malice Domestic convention at the beginning of May.

Public Appearances

Priscilla Royal will be part of a mystery writer panel, "The Why of Where," at the Petaluma Public Library on Saturday, February 15 from 10:30 to noon. Others on the panel are Dominic Stansberry, Nancy Tingley, Glenda Carroll, and Susan Shea.

Member News, continued

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Priscilla Royal will participate in an AAUW fundraiser on Saturday, March 7 from 11:30 to 2:30 at Northbrae Community Church in Berkeley. The event will include lunch and a panel with Diana Chambers, Ann Parker, and Nancy Tingley.

Training Presented

Margaret Lucke will teach a 10-week class on Writing Genre Fiction for UC Berkeley Extension this spring on Wednesday evenings, March 4 to May 6 in Berkeley. It will cover mystery, thriller, science fiction, fantasy, romance and more, exploring the techniques of craft common to them all and the conventions and expectations that make each one distinct. More information, including registration details, can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/WritingGenreFiction>.

Margaret Lucke will present "Telling Your Story: A Memoir Writing Workshop" at the Town Square Library in Vacaville on Tuesday, February 25 at 1:00 p.m.

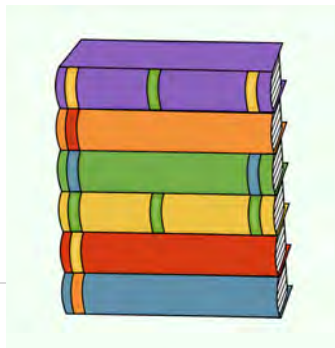
Awards and Recognition

"Dispatcher," a short story by Judith Janeway (aka Judith Wrubel), won third place in the *Writer's Digest* 2019 competition in the mainstream/literary category. The award came with a \$250 cash prize and appeared in the *Writer's Digest* November/December 2019 issue.

Sisters in Crime NorCal is proud of all of our fabulous nominees for major literary awards, including: Susan Bickford, Edgar Award/Best Paperback Original for *Dread of Winter*; Rhys Bowen, Agatha Award/Best Historical Mystery for *Love and Death Among the Cheetahs*; Leslie Karst, Lefty Award/Best Humorous Mystery Novel for *Murder from Scratch*; Catriona McPherson, Mary Higgins Clark Award for *Strangers at the Gate*, and Lefty Award/Best Humorous Mystery Novel for *Scot and Soda*; Gigi Pandian, Sue Grafton Memorial Award for *The Alchemist's Illusion*. Congratulations and good luck to all!

Miscellaneous

After eight years of being on the SinC NorCal Board, Terry Shames is going to slot into the MWA national board. She says it will be interesting to see how the sausage is made in the "other" organization.



Question of the Quarter



Leap Day, February 29, 2020, is on a Saturday! What is your idea of the perfect way to spend this rare “extra” day?

I intend NOT to watch any political stuff that day. Instead, watch movies on Netflix or Amazon.
Rita Lakin

I don't have to think about it for two seconds. The perfect way to spend that day is to forget about doing anything productive—no writing, no chores around the house, maybe not even getting out of pajamas. The perfect way to spend the day? READING. It would be such a wonderful day. Of course, I couldn't begin to put a dent in my TBR pile, but I'll definitely devote my time to reading that day. ***Terry Shames***

That is so easy to answer! If I could do anything I wanted, I would ignore my endless to-do lists and take a long walk to one of my favorite coffee shops (I have several), where I would sit, drink coffee (and probably nibble a pastry), and READ. ***Ann Parker***

Oh, good! I have one more day before submission deadline. ***Priscilla Royal***

I've always wanted an extra day, but it's good only if no one else knows about it. I understand that it would be a tough job for whoever runs the time dimension, but I need a day on which no one else is even awake. Otherwise I'll still be getting hundreds of emails with requests to do this or that, toll-free phone calls, forms to fill out, deliverables due. If I had my own day, I wouldn't waste it “catching up” on chores or deadlines. I'd call or email friends and relatives in as many states as possible (OK, they'd have to wake up to take my call). I'd look up former classmates and colleagues, students, distant relatives, friends, and friends of friends who touched my life. ***Camille Minichino***

Extra hours? Read and write, of course! My TBR pile is getting out of hand. Since Leap Day falls on a Saturday, I won't have to work, so my plan is to write for a couple of hours, go for a bike ride (weather permitting), read for a couple of hours, and maybe go out to dinner to make the most of a freebie day. ***Robin Stuart***

I'll be thinking about what I was doing at one-quarter my age. Ahhhh. If only I were about 15 birthdays old again. ***Susan Bickford***

My day would start with a horseback ride with my friend Karen. Lunch at some fabulous diner that doesn't turn up their noses at smelly horse girls. Then, home to write all afternoon. A lovely dinner prepared by my own personal chef, The Mister, served with wine and chocolate cake for dessert! Oh, and time somewhere in there to read my latest novel--*The Captains and the Kings* by Taylor Caldwell.
Thonie Hevron

Question of the Quarter, continued

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Didn't 2/29 used to be Sadie Hawkins Day, when woman were "permitted" to chase men? I'll probably spend the day with the man I caught in 1995, curled up reading (not writing) a good book. My alternate plan, contingent on the weather, is walking along the ocean looking for whales. *Ellen Kirschman*

It's been a long time since I went shopping. (Didn't expect that, did you?) I did get some fun gift cards for Christmas, so I might call a girlfriend and hit the shops with her. The best part of the day will be catching up with my girlfriend, but finding the perfect shoes wouldn't be too shabby. *Ana Brazil*

Double Saturday! On a normal Saturday, I'd walk the dog, do some errands, garden. On this uber Saturday, things would be different. Walking the dog is non-negotiable; after that, I'd do everything fun and useful that I could. Take a long hike in the woods, work on a garden sculpture, browse the spice shop, cook Moroccan chicken with preserved limes, cuddle with my mate. *Susan Kuchinskas*

I never think about it, or that it's an extra day. Life continues as usual, writing and editing. *Carole Price*

Since it's an extra day, the perfect way to spend it would be lounging on my sofa, reading a really good mystery, eating popcorn seasoned with butter and finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, and sipping champagne, with my Jack Russell mix Ziggy by my side. (She'd be hoping to share the popcorn, and I would of course indulge her.) But do I have to wait till Leap Day to do this? *Leslie Karst*

I have a couple of friends who were born on February 29, and I'd love to be with them to share their rare opportunity to celebrate their birthday on the actual day. But they live at too great a distance, so for my fantasy perfect day, I'll spend time writing a good scene, reading a good book, taking a good walk by the water, and sharing a good meal with other people I love. *Margaret Lucke*

Well, February 29 ... interesting day. While I never do anything special with it, I always think of all those unfortunate people who have that as a birthday and only get to celebrate on the actual day every four years. But then, it's also an extra day before taxes are due. *J.J. Lamb*

At home, writing. *Janet Dawson*

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

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