



President's Message

Right now I'm gearing up for Malice Domestic, a mystery fan convention in Bethesda, Maryland. Actually, by the time you read this, I'll have already been and returned. But fan conventions, whether large like Bouchercon, or small like Left Coast Crime, can be incredible experiences. For me, the first thing is getting to mingle with online friends who only seem to exist in the ether. Yes, they *are* real! Next is networking with other authors I don't necessarily know, just introducing myself letting them know I'm alive. (Lee Child is good at reading name tags without looking like he is, but he does somehow recall what I write. He always greets me with "Jeri Westerson, my favorite medievalist.")

But one must not forget that it's also a job. I'm there to meet librarians and new readers. I make a beeline for people just hanging around on benches and sofas, people who don't look like writers (is there a "look"? Yes, I think so. That always "on" sort of thing, that most writers exude). I try to sit with the same kind of folks at the banquets and in fact, I'm hosting a table at Malice. I haven't been to this particular convention before so I hope enough people have heard of me and my books to want to sit at my table. If they do, I'll have some exclusive goodies for them.

It also means being on a panel, getting seen by many more people than just hanging around in the bars. After every panel, there is always one person who approaches me at the signing tables that says "I've never read a medieval mystery but yours sounded so interesting and you were so funny I had to give it a try." And that, in a nutshell, is why authors go to fan conventions. To sell books!

Here's hoping you sell many books and those members who are mystery readers, hoping you *read* many books by our chapter members.

Speaking of fun events, please mark your calendars for July 17. That's our joint OC and MWA event. This time, we are venturing on a Raymond Chandler bus tour in LA. The tour will include fabulous commentary on all the places mentioned in Chandler's crime novels. We'll meet downtown to pick up the bus and mingle with our Mystery Writers of America counterparts. Spouses are welcomed on this exciting tour. More information such as cost and tour times will be upcoming.



Your Prez,
Jeri Westerson



SISTERS IN CRIME MISSION STATEMENT

To promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry.

MEETING PLACE:

Irvine Ranch Water District
15600 Sand Canyon Avenue
Irvine, CA 92618

For more information: www.ocsistersincrime.org

MAY MEETING

Don't miss our next meeting on Sunday, May 15th. It will begin at 2:00 p.m. with a Writer's Forum led by Diana James, owner of P.R. Me! Publicity. She will discuss e-book/self-publishing trends, pros and



cons, and the steps writers can take now to build and strengthen their presence in preparation for becoming published. For published authors, she will talk about Facebook/Twitter and how to increase traffic to those sites.

At 3:00 p.m. our guest will be Larry Bender, a retired fire captain and arson investigator with 40 years experience in fire service.

Larry has plenty of stories to share, from the colorful nicknames firefighters give each other to the best practical jokes played in the firehouse. Bring your questions about realistic dialogue, firefighter's gear, anything and everything. He will provide information on standard firefighting procedures, difficult rescue operations and the proper handling of evidence. Larry is an avid hunter, fisherman and reader of mysteries.

JUNE MEETING

Our June meeting will be held on the 12th to avoid Father's Day and will feature Bob Hammer of the FBI as our speaker. Our readers' forum will be led by Jill Amadio and will focus on CSI. Both should be interesting and fun!



Editors' Column

Like many of you, I spent most of the weekend of April 30-May 1 at the LA Times Festival of Books, held at USC this year. Also like some of you, I suspect, I was a bit anxious about the new venue, after having gotten used to the festival being held at a venue with which I was also more familiar, UCLA. I was pleasantly surprised, therefore, at how smoothly the transition went, for me and, as far as I can tell, for the festival overall. The weather was

wonderful, sunny but not too hot, with a great breeze most of the time. There were lots of shady places, and the Sisters in Crime LA booth, as well as that of Mystery Ink right next door, seemed to be in shade most of the time, and to get plenty of good traffic of enthusiastic readers. The festival was well-attended and the parking was not too difficult to access, at least if you got there early. The lines for food were too long, especially if you had a signing or a panel to attend. But in general I had a good time and I think that most of the people I saw there seemed to be enjoying themselves as well.

Selling your book, or helping others sell theirs, even to the sort of sympathetic folks who attend book fairs, a built-in audience of people who like to read (if not, why show up at all?) is hard work. It requires preparation – of marketing materials, of the short and long versions of the “elevator speech” (how do you characterize your book in a few sentences to a potential reader, publisher, or even producer, who's got a couple of minutes to linger in front of you at the table), and of yourself, of your attitude. Even if you're not feeling friendly, if your back hurts, or if you're behind on a deadline, you have to put a smile on your face and try to attract the interest of people who wander up to you. Or you can do what I did, and stand in front of your spot with bookmarks and try to draw them in.

Some authors, of course, are successful enough that people come to them in droves. But for the rest of us and, I suspect, even for those really successful ones once upon a time when they were starting out, a book festival takes a lot of effort and energy to make it worthwhile. And Sisters in Crime provides a wonderful venue for authors, and a lot of good advice and mentoring beforehand to help beginners in particular to be prepared to sell their works, and to bring those hardworking authors sitting behind the table together with readers who love their work, or perhaps have never even heard of it yet. If you missed the Sisters in Crime LA booth at the festival this year, or missed the festival, be sure to make it



next year!



GAYLE K. BRUNELLE

MEETING ROUNDUP

Attendees at the April meeting got an extra treat, when guest speaker Don Winslow agreed to lead the Reader’s Forum on the topic of beach reads. He confessed he rarely reads at the beach, preferring to surf whenever possible, but he tried his best to return to beach reads whenever we wandered off topic. The forum turned into an informal chat, with Don sharing stories of his days as a safari guide, including the very romantic story of how he proposed to his wife as they gazed at a breathtaking sunset on an African beach.

Though he is “always in love with the book I’m doing now,” he has a soft spot for his first book, *A Cool Breeze on the Underground*, the first in his series of Neal Carey mysteries.



Winslow’s book, *Death and Life of Bobby Z*, was made into a movie that went straight to DVD. Don is hoping for a much better result when *Savages* hits theaters. Filming begins later this year. Other novels

Don has written include: *The Power of the Dog*, *The Winter of Frankie Machine*, and *The Dawn Patrol*. His latest novel, *Satori*, is the prequel to Trevanian’s *Shibumi*, a work that inspired Don when he first read it. How appropriate then that he was chosen to bring the beloved characters of that novel back to life through his own *Satori*.



Mysteries have been around for a long time. “The roots of what we do are from themes that we’ve been writing for thousands of years,” says Don. He noted the noir elements in the story of Agamemnon, the hard-boiled writing of Cervantes, and the “first major piece of crime fiction” written in English – Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*. He dislikes what he sees as the publishing industry’s need to categorize writers as thriller or suspense, cozy or noir, procedural or soft-boiled. “These threads have become too tightly defined.”

Don’s work ethic is admirable. He treats writing like a factory job, reporting for work every morning at 5:00 A.M. and going at it until 10:00 or 10:30, when he takes a break and goes for a walk or a run. He returns to work refreshed and stays on the job until 5:00 P.M. He maintains that schedule five or six days a week.

“Writers write,” he reminds us. “Before it’s a noun, it’s a verb.”



Theresa Schultz

THE WRITER'S BOOKSHELF

Bill Walsh, copy chief for national news at the *Washington Post* and author of *Lapsing into a Comma*, has written another entertaining reference, *The Elephants of Style: A Trunkload of Tips on the Big Issues and Gray Areas of Contemporary English*, ISBN 0-07-142268-4. Be advised: I am NOT suggesting you use this guide to “correct” all fictional prose. Do that, and your novel could end up sounding like newspaper-speak. Walsh’s advice can be used for polishing narrative, but serves even better to make your characters’ diction more telling. For example, in the chapter “Writers, Typists, Thieves and Liars, Plagiarism and Its Kin,” Walsh cautions that if you interview a man who says, “I ain’t got no problem with them there neighbors,” you may quote him as follows:

“I ain’t got no problem with them there neighbors,” he said.

He said he has “no problem” with his neighbors.

“I . . . got no problem with . . . [the] neighbors,” he said.

But if you write: “ ‘I have no problem with the neighbors,’ he said,” you are lying. Correcting someone’s grammar or usage is just as unethical as changing their meaning--IF you’re writing a factual report. But a fiction writer can use the above quotations as models to create four different levels of education or formality in various characters, or as a guide to show Character A enhancing or

demeaning the veracity of Character B, by misquoting Character B. Many of the examples in this style guide can be used in such deliciously devious way. Another example:

In “Lies Your English Teacher Told You: The Big Myths of English Usage,” Walsh addresses split infinitives, starting sentences with conjunctions, ending them with prepositions, etc. On contractions he opines: “Unless you’re writing an ultraformal academic paper or want to communicate the idea that you’re very very constipated, don’t strain to avoid contractions.” This advice is usually good, but eliminating contractions in the speech of an ultraformal character might be just the device to distinguish him from his teenage son, who talks in text-speak, setting up not only visual and aural contrast in the manuscript, but opportunities for conflict between those characters.

The chapter “Gray Areas” addresses *Host* and *Office*, once exclusively nouns, now free-ranging into verb territory; *Hopefully* and *More Importantly*--differentiating between adverbs describing a single verb and those affecting the entire sentence--and other sticky wickets. Self-proclaimed curmudgeon he may be, but Walsh is not a straight-laced grammarian or stylist. Recognizing that language is ever-evolving, he bases his choices on clarity and common sense. This strengthens his arguments when he does maintain the status quo, as in his disagreement with the *New York Times*’ dismissal of the distinction between *like* and *such as*. Though he agrees that *like* may sound less stilted, Walsh maintains that “Every time a usage distinction is wiped out, writers lose the ability to use that nuance.” Indeed. Nuances are among a novelist’s most precious tools.

The Elephants of Style is a guide to read from cover to cover for sheer pleasure, because if you just stick it on your shelf until you need it, you may miss interesting tidbits like this: A native of Pakistan is a Pakistani, but a native of Afghanistan is an Afghan,



because *afghani* refers exclusively to the country's main unit of currency. "To call an Afghan an *afghani* is like calling an American a dollar," says Walsh. Why anyone would prefer to be called a blankie rather than chump change, he didn't say, but happily, Walsh misses few opportunities to poke fun at English while teaching us how to sharpen it.

Laurie Thomas



**WRITING SEMINAR
OPPORTUNITY –
Another OC SinC Member Benefit!**

James Bell, organizer of **So What Does It Really Take to Sell Your Novel or Screenplay?** will be offering discounts to some select writing groups, like SinC chapters. For any three or more people from a group who sign up, he'll knock \$50 off the price...for EACH person.

For more information, email him directly at: jamescottbell@gmail.com.

For more information about the seminars, go to: http://web.mac.com/jamescottbell/Site/The_Seminar.html.

MEMBER EVENTS

D.P. LYLE has several great events coming up next month:

**Mystery Ink, Huntington Beach, CA
Saturday, June 4, 2011, 1:00 p.m.**

Launch Party for *Hot Lights, Cold Steel* and *Royal Pains: First, Do No Harm*

7176 Edinger Ave.
Huntington Beach, CA
[714-960-4000](tel:714-960-4000)
<http://mysteryink.com>

**Mysterious Galaxy Books, San Diego
Saturday, June 11, 2011, 2:00 p.m.**

Signing of *Hot Lights, Cold Steel* and *Royal Pains: First, Do No Harm*

7051 Claremont Mesa Blvd. Suite #302
San Diego, CA
[858-268-4747](tel:858-268-4747)
<http://www.mystgalaxy.com>

FURTHER ADVENTURES: Writing Novelizations and Media Tie-ins Panel with William Rabkin, Lee Goldberg, Nathan Long, and Christa Faust (Moderator)

An MWA sponsored event
Saturday June 18, 2011, 11:00 am

Sportsmen's Lodge
12833 Ventura Boulevard
Studio City 91604
[818-755-5000](tel:818-755-5000)
<http://www.sportsmenslodge.com/>



MYSTERY INK EVENTS

Saturday, May 21st, 4:00 p.m. - Thomas Perry

Thomas Perry will be discussing and signing his new novel, *The Informant*, featuring the title character first introduced in his Edgar-winning debut novel *The Butcher's Boy*.



Saturday, June 18th, 4:00 p.m. – Michael Robertson

Michael Robertson will be signing his new novel, *The Brothers of Baker Street*.

Autographed copies of the L.A. Times Festival of Books authors are now available, including: Michael Connelly, Mary Higgins Clark, Carol Higgins Clark, Walter Mosley, Diane Mott Davidson...check out the website for a complete list.

Mystery Ink Bookstore (across from Goldenwest College): 7176 Edinger Avenue, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, (714) 960-4000, www.mysteryink.com.



MEMBER NEWS

Patricia Wynn has been invited to appear at the Poisoned Pen Conference at the Biltmore Resort and Spa in Phoenix on June 24 and 25. On Friday at 3:00 P.M., she will be on the Historicon Panel hosted by Laurie R. King, and including authors Peter Lovesey, CS Harris and Laura Willig. On Saturday, she will have some kind of solo performance, TBA.

Also, in June, she will appear on the book page of Orange Coast Magazine in a feature story and book review of her July release, *A KILLING FROST*.

LINKS OF INTEREST

A social network of crime readers and writers: <http://crimespace.ning.com/>

North American branch of the International Association of Crime Writers (IACW):

<http://www.crimewritersna.org/>. The IACW is based in England, and can be found at: www.iacw.org.

[Please pass on any links you think that might be of special interest to our members to: Ocsinc.newsletter@gmail.com]

PUBLICATION POSSIBILITIES

Kings River Life Magazine is a California online magazine. Due to our expanding mystery readership, we have created a special mystery section, Mysteryrat's Maze, and we are now accepting submissions of mystery short stories. Stories need to either be written by a California author or set in California, and can be up to 2000 words in length.

This is a non-paying market, but every author will have the chance to include promo information with each story for whatever project/website they are currently promoting. A new issue goes up every Saturday. Visit: <http://KingsRiverLife.com>
Contact Lorie Ham, publisher, at: life@kingsriverlife.com

Call for Articles: London: Mystery Readers Journal (Volume 27:1)

The next issue of the [Mystery Readers Journal](#) (Volume 27:1) will focus on **Crime Fiction set in London**. I'm looking for **articles, reviews** and **Author! Author! essays**. We may go to two issues, but in the meantime, the deadline for reviews, articles and author essays is **March 15!** Beware the Ides of March!

Author! Author! essays are 500-2500 words, first person, upclose and personal about yourself, your mysteries and the 'London' connection. Think of it as chatting with friends, writers and writers in the bar or cafe. [Send me an email](#) if you're interested or know an author who would like to write an essay!



SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW your subscription to **Mystery Readers Journal** for 2011 (Volume 27). If you're not sure if you've renewed, send her an email.



FROM NATIONAL

Recent News – Find out more about all these happenings at the Sisters in Crime website: <http://www.sistersincrime.org/>

- [SinC Into Great Writing!](#) Mapping The New World of Publishing: Or, How to Succeed in a Business That's Really Trying. \$50 for SinC Members. Sisters in Crime will be holding its 3rd annual SinC Into Great Writing! in St. Louis, the day before Bouchercon. Keynote Speaker: David Wilk, CEO Booktrix; Dinner; Dinner Speaker: Meg Gardner, *NY Times* Bestselling Author. Register Now!
- [The American Library Association Annual Conference](#) - June 23 - 28, 2011 - New Orleans: Sister in Crime will host a booth, in the exhibit hall at ALA. Authors and Librarian SinC members are welcome to spend some time at the SinC booth. Reservations need to be made with Library Liaison, [Mary Boone](#). If you are attending ALA please stop by the SinC Booth and say

hello. The booth number will be posted soon.

- Congratulations! You've just sold your first book. Then you get the big question: How do you plan to promote it? [Shameless Promotion for Brazen Hussies](#).
- Sisters in Crime has invested in America's Libraries by becoming a Library Champion with the American Library Association.



UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND CONVENTIONS

June 11-12
California Crime Writer's Conference,
Pasadena, CA
Our own **Jeri Westerson** will be teaching a workshop on Saturday, June 11 on Researching Historicals. For more information, go to: <http://www.sistersinrimela.com/ccwc.htm>

September 15 - 18
Bouchercon 2011 - World Mystery Conference,
St. Louis, Mo
For more information, go to: <http://www.bouchercon.info/>



Support your local SinC chapter. Buy a lovely mug at the next meeting, and bring your novels for our Sister Share!

TELL US WHAT YOU REALLY THINK!

If you have ideas about how this newsletter could be better, let us know. Also, if you have events coming up or announcements you want to make, or ideas for columns you'd like to share, let us know that too. We want to support our members in their literary endeavors and publicize their signings and achievements far and wide. Please send your contributions and suggestions to:

Ocsinc.newsletter@gmail.com.

The deadline for the newsletter is the 1st of each month!