



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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Sunday, August 26th

2 pm – Reader’s Forum

3 pm, True crime writer **Dennis McDougal** will be our speaker this month.

McDougal has chronicled Hollywood, crime and the media for over 30 years. Most recently author of **THINGS HAVE CHANGED: A Biography of Music Legend Bob Dylan**, his previous books include **THE CANDLESTICKMAKER** and **FIVE EASY DECADES: How Jack Nicholson Became the Biggest Movie Star in Modern Times**.

Before he began covering movies and media for the Los Angeles Times in 1983 and, more recently, the

New York Times, McDougal was a staff writer at the Riverside Press-Enterprise and the Long Beach.

It should be a great talk!



Reminder from Gita: If you want to have a book raffle at each meeting, please bring your gently used mysteries to donate to the cause. Thank you in advance and happy reading!

2012 MEETING CALENDAR

Due to complications related to booking our regular meeting room at the Irvine Ranch Water District, some of our meetings in 2012 will not be held on the 3rd Sunday of the month. Please be sure, therefore, to note the dates on your calendar. Also note that some of the meetings will be held at locations other than Irvine, including a couple in North Orange County. So be on the lookout for changes of venue!

Subsequent meetings will be held on Sept 23, Oct 28, Nov 11, and Dec 9 (Holiday party at Mystery Ink.)

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Hi everyone,

Sorry I couldn’t make it to the joint SinC MWA meeting. I hope to see you next time.

Do you have a Kindle, a Nook (from Barnes and Noble), or an iPad? Have you downloaded any ebooks? What did you think of them?



Some of the writers in my critique group have gone the way of ebook publishing, and one of them says she is making \$2000 a month from ebooks, so I've been giving it some thought, especially since my agent feels that I should go that route with *A FLY HAS A HUNDRED EYES* now that I got the rights back. Ebooks might not work for everyone. The ebook people in my critique group are Romance writers with followers, and as everyone knows Romance readers are insatiable and gulp down a book a day. Mystery readers, on the other hand, are more discerning. Or so they tell me.

There are advantages and disadvantages of ebooks for both readers and writers. Advantages for readers include convenience, lower cost, and immediate access. Disadvantages include limitations on the amount of time the book can remain on the carrier and a need for them to be reformatted when converted to a new carrier. Print books have a longer shelf life. Ebooks cannot be wrapped and given as a gift. And then, there is the cost of the reader, whether Kindle, or Nook or iPad. You can browse for print books in a bookstore, and talk to people and get recommendations. And then there is the sensual aspect: the feel, the visual aspects of the cover and binding, the way they look on a bookshelf, and some people say, the smell of a book. I have never smelled a book. I have been in areas where there are printing presses, and been overwhelmed by the metallic odor of printer's ink, but I have never been able to smell a bound book.

As far as writers are concerned, the principal advantage is the percentage of royalty. There is an upfront cost to the writer that includes formatting, cover design and making the book available to Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Smashwords (the principal carriers). And there is additional PR cost to get the book noticed. Digital books may be the way to go with established authors who have a following, but they may be a tough sell for new authors. Publishing digitally doesn't have the sting of self-publishing so far, but if enough unedited

books show up, that may be in the offing.

What's your take on it?

All the best,
Your President, Aileen

MEETING ROUNDUP

[It turns out that Theresa, before she left town, had taken the time to write up this excellent meeting summary. I missed it in the inbox, and apologize. Gayle K. Brunelle]

July's meeting gave us the opportunity to meet and mingle with members of Mystery Writers of America (MWA) as we hosted a luncheon with guest speaker Jim White, forensic scientist and son of acclaimed mystery writer Anthony Boucher. Sherlock Holmes expert Les Klinger got things going by interviewing Jim about what it was like to grow up in the Anthony Boucher household. Jim's family frequently welcomed famous guests such as Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury and Reginald Bretnor. His own family was even featured in Boucher's novel *Rocket to the Morgue*. With mystery and science fiction featuring prominently in his upbringing, Jim turned to solving real life mysteries as a forensic scientist.

Jim received a BS in Criminalistics from UC Berkeley. From 1964-1968, he was employed by the Laboratory of the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department, where he developed an expertise in recovering bodies buried in the desert. From 1968 until his retirement, he worked for the Forensic Science Services Laboratory of the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department, where he specialized in forensic chemistry, forensic biology and fiber microscopy. Believe me—Jim knows his stuff.

We covered several topics over the course of the afternoon, beginning with the objective of forensic genetic testing, which is three-fold:



- 1) To link an individual to a crime/criminal act
- 2) To exonerate suspects
- 3) To establish paternity or other family relationships

We learned about blood typing, RFLP testing, and “touch DNA.” Jim gave credit to Rosalyn Franklin for her work in x-ray crystallography that led Nobel Prize winners Watson and Crick to identify the structure of DNA. We heard about the beginnings of CoDIS, the Combined DNA Index System, a database of DNA profiles taken from violent felons and crime scene samples. Jim reminded us that a “hit” on CoDIS does not automatically equate to guilt, and he shared the real-life stories of how DNA sampling was used to apprehend criminals.

In England, Richard Buckland became the first person exonerated by DNA evidence in the Colin Pitchfork case. Police then collected nearly 5,000 donated samples of blood and saliva from local residents. The real murderer paid another man to give a DNA sample on his behalf, but he was discovered when the man bragged about all the money he’d made. The case was described in Joseph Wambaugh’s book, *The Bleeding*.

Normally it takes several weeks to obtain DNA results. In the Samantha Runyon case, however, investigators obtained DNA samples from under her finger nails and worked around the clock from Friday to Monday to obtain a profile of the murderer.

Lonnie David Franklin Jr. was identified as the Grim Sleeper because of familial DNA analysis. When his son committed a felony and his DNA was entered in California’s DNA profile database, investigators noted that his DNA was similar to that collected from the crime scenes of the Grim Sleeper’s victims. Detectives then used a piece of discarded pizza with Franklin’s DNA to make the link.

Jim also reminded us of a rule of physics especially useful to mystery writers:

The unusual, by definition, happens.

THERESA SCHULTZ



EDITORS’ COLUMN

Online Writing Workshops versus “The Real Thing”

This summer I joined an online writing workshop run through OoVoo, which is rather like Skype only better (in my opinion). Having participated in a quite a few “face-to-face” seminars and workshops in the past, I was curious but also dubious as to how an online version would work. My workshop requires payment because it’s run by an agent/editor. I don’t know how good an agent she is, but she seems to be a pretty good editor, at least for fiction. She seems honest with her criticism without being brutal, and offers cheerleading and support. Here are my perceptions of my summer workshop, focused especially on the benefits and drawbacks of an online format.

In the plus column is convenience. We can all meet online on a Sunday morning in the comfort of our own homes. No child/pet care needed, no gas expended.

Also a plus, an online workshop enables a group of writers who are at about the same level of expertise but who live over a large area to meet and critique each other’s work regularly. I’ve joined a number of local writing groups over the years where the skill and experience of the members varied greatly. This can be a problem in that if the group is too



uneven, the more experienced writers tend to give out much more useful advice and critiques than they receive. Our online group, vetted by the group leader, consists of about five to seven participants each week, scattered around California and beyond, who are working on very different projects but are all at a similar place in their writing careers, and thus able to offer mostly useful comments to one another, as well as support and encouragement.

Oovoo works quite well as a means of communication, but although online can be a good substitute for a face-to-face workshop if none is available locally, something is also lost in the online format. I come away from this workshop more convinced than ever that although online interaction certainly has a place, it will, for me at least, always be “second best” as a forum for teaching and learning.

In the online workshop, even though we see each other, we can't see each other clearly enough, even on my large console, to “read” each other's facial expressions or to hear the nuances in each other's voices sufficiently to pick up on subtle reactions to hearing each other's work read aloud or critiqued. Looking a person in the eye when they are in the room with you and telling them the truth about your take on their work, or experiencing someone doing that to/for you, is much harder than doing it online. But it also forces you to pay closer attention to the other person and the unspoken “vibes” you pick up regarding their reception of your work or your critique. I can judge better how other folks in the workshop are hearing and understanding what I have to say, and how I may need to adjust my message in my critique to get through to my listener in the most helpful way.

So I wouldn't discourage anyone from trying an online class or workshop, especially if it uses a program like OoVoo which allows for real-time interaction, but I'd encourage beginners especially to try to find a local writing workshop or critique group first.

GAYLE K. BRUNELLE



THE WRITER'S BOOKSHELF

AUTHOR INTRUSION?

Writers today use direct address—“You,” or “Dear Reader,”—to poke fun at Victorian melodrama. But in the early days of the novel, direct address was respected as a polite way of acknowledging readers, or alerting them that the author was making a serious comment.

Harriet Beecher Stowe used it brilliantly in *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*, when stirring oratory was prized and many fired-up preachers were arguing that slavery was ordained by God. By co-opting their bombastic, emotional sermonizing, Stowe highlighted the hypocrisy of Christians advocating an institution that tore families apart. Though still condemned by some as racist and melodramatic, Stowe's masterpiece helped to end slavery and remains one of the most influential novels ever written.

But minstrel show parodies of *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN* on stages across the country probably contributed to the decline in popularity of passionate authors bleeding onto the pages of their fiction. So now, direct address also goes by the name, “Author Intrusion,” suggesting that at the very least, a storyteller is being impolite, but more likely, committing some sort of felony. While it's true that direct address can snap a reader out of a story, it doesn't necessarily follow that it's always a bad thing.

Lindsey Davis uses the device to good effect in her engaging historical mystery *ALEXANDRIA*. Her



ORANGE HERRING

Sisters in Crime  Orange County



series character, Marcus Didius Falco, a droll Roman detective, has come with his family to see the sites of the celebrated city. But a murder at the Great Library soon finds him embroiled in the lethal side of academia. Following a traumatic ordeal at the top of Alexandria's famous lighthouse, where lamp fires blaze 300 feet above the raging Mediterranean Sea, Falco returns safely to his family. After a bite to eat, he's resting in bed, cuddling his young twin girls, and chatting with his wife Helena. Here's how Davis ends the scene:

Helena hauled herself from her stool, and came across to me. After moving the tray to a side table, she took our daughters' place in my arms, as we held one another for comfort, reconciliation and relief. Once it would have led to more. I was too exhausted; she was too pregnant; we were too intrigued by our enquiries. We lay there, thinking. Don't sneer until you've tried it.

Yes, the comment is aimed straight at the reader. But it's so in character, so brief and unexpected, that the interruption provokes a chuckle, giving the reader a momentary respite from the high tension of the previous scene. Author intrusion? Not if you can pull it off with purpose and flair.

LAURIE THOMAS



MEMBER NEWS

Jeri Westerson will be at the following locations this month:

Sunday, August 5, 2 to 4 pm — Sisters in Crime Los Angeles meeting. She'll be on a panel: How to Create a Main Character of the Opposite Sex, with Gayle Bartos-Pool, Robert Fate, Patricia Wynn,

Mike Mallory. South Pasadena Library Community Room, 1115 El Centro St., South Pasadena, CA.;

Sunday, August 5, Schmooze and Booze 8 pm, Readings begin 9 pm – Noir at the Bar. Jeri will be doing a reading from the upcoming BLOOD LANCE...at a bar! Along with other high-powered authors, Megan Abbott, Denise Hamilton, Christa Faust, and Sara Gran. Mandrake Bar 2692 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90034 (between Venice Blvd. and Washington Blvd.);

Tuesday, August 14, 1:30 pm — Bowers Museum, lecture on medieval weapons 2002 N.Main St., Santa Ana, CA 92706;

Saturday, August 18, 2 pm — Author Panel at the Simi Valley Library 2969 Tapo Canyon Rd., Simi Valley, CA 93063

Patricia Wynn will also be speaking at SinC LA on the same panel as Jeri Westerson, about Writing from the Viewpoint of the Opposite Sex, August 5 at 2:00, in the South Pasadena Library Community Room, 1115 El Centro Street, South Pasadena, CA.

D. P. Lyle also has several events coming up:

RUN TO GROUND Virtual Launch Party on Shindig

Tuesday, August 7, 1012, 6-7 p.m. PDT

RSVP and Join the event at:

<http://shindig.com/event/dplyle>

Mysterious Galaxy, Redondo Beach, CA

Friday, August 17, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

2810 Artesia Blvd

Redondo Beach, CA

[310-542-6000](tel:310-542-6000)

<http://www.mystgalaxy.com>

Suspense Radio/Blog Talk Radio Interview with Gregg Hurwitz, Saturday, August 25, 2012, 10:30 a.m. PDT.

<http://www.suspensemagazine.com/suspenseradio.h>



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MYSTERY INK NEWS

Mystery Ink has a new location:

**Mystery Ink Bookstore
8907 Warner Ave. #135
Huntington Beach, CA 92647
(714) 960-4000
www.mysteryink.com
events@mysteryink.com**

**Hours:
Thursday, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Friday & Saturday, 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Sundays and all weekdays - Open for events**

At Mystery Ink on Saturday, August 25th, 11:00 a.m.

New York Times Best-selling author, Gregg Hurwitz will be discussing and signing his latest novel, **THE SURVIVOR**.
“In between tight, compelling action scenes, Hurwitz

sensitively depicts Nate’s struggles with ALS...thriller fans won’t let this one gather any dust on the nightstand.”
Publishers Weekly



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 THINK!

If you have events coming up or announcements you want to make, let us know. Please send your contributions and suggestions to:
Ocsinc.newsletter@gmail.com.

The deadline is the 1st of each month!

SISTERS IN CRIME ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER

Print and complete this form. NOTE: YOU MUST ALSO JOIN SISTERS IN CRIME NATIONAL TO BE A MEMBER OF THE ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER.

Send the completed form with both checks, \$40 payable to Sisters in Crime (National) and \$25 payable to Sisters in Crime, OC to:

**Membership
Sisters in Crime, Orange County
P.O. Box 53132
Irvine, CA 92619-3132**



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please print all information and list your name as you want it listed in the Membership Directory.

New Renewal Name: Address:

Day Phone:

Evening Phone:

Email: I am a (check all that apply):

Mystery Writer Published Unpublished

Writer in other fields Published Unpublished

Screenwriter

--Produced: Features TV/Cable Other

Reviewer Agent Bookseller Librarian Reader

I would like to help with (check all that apply):

Publicity Refreshments Speakers Raffle Other: