

THE NOOSE

May 2010



Mystery Writers of America

New York Chapter

NEXT MEETING:

June 2

THE PHOENIX FACTOR:

Authors Whose Careers Rose from the Ashes Irene Fleming,
Parnell Hall, Kenneth Wishnia

Their publishers let them down, but Fleming (The Edge of Ruin), Hall (The Puzzle Lady vs The Sudoku Lady), and Wishnia (The Fifth Servant) just kept writing. . . and won critical raves and successful comebacks. Find out how craft and business sense – and emotional intelligence – added up to the Phoenix Factor for this inspiring threesome. Liz Zelvin moderates. Reserve now for June 2!

\$40 per person gets you dinner, a drink, and an unforgettable talk by one of today's true mystery stars.



[Click here for more information.](#)

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President's Letter

Our chapter has continued to thrive this year thanks to our dedicated members and hard-working committees. For this Noose edition, I wanted to highlight efforts by our library outreach and programming committees.

Our library outreach committee organized five library panels in the first four months of 2010, with topics from Sherlock Holmes, to crime scene selection, to marketing. Up next: Forensics and the Mystery Writer: Is it Science or Fiction, on May 18, and Chick Lit Mysteries: Laugh or I'll Use My Stiletto to Kill You, on June 22. Thank you, Jane Cleland (chair) and Sheila York!

Our programming committee has put together stellar programs for our monthly dinner meetings. Since kicking off the year with Joyce Carol Oates, we have heard from pathologist-slash-thriller author-slash-food reviewer Jonathan Hayes about the art of writing about violence, from a Secret Service agent about school shootings, and from independent book sellers and a national accounts manager on the inside-scoop about book selling. Next up: The Phoenix Factor: Authors Whose Careers Rose From the Ashes, with authors Irene Fleming, Parnell Hall, and Kenneth Wishnia. Thank you, E.W. Count (chair), Patricia King, and Elizabeth Zelvin for your hard work! (Liz will be moving on to other work for the chapter board, so we're especially thankful for contributions this year and will thank her in person when she moderates our June panel.)

Although we continue to try to record and videotape all of our programs, not all speakers are in a position to authorize webcasts of their talks, so we do hope the exciting programming we've been working on will bring you to the National Arts Club in person. We are a community of writers and try to schedule programs conducive to building and supporting that community.

Best,
Alafair Burke
Chapter President, MWA-NY



FROM THE EDITOR

Hi all,

We here at *The Noose* are very interested in reaching all our members and I am pleased to welcome a new contributor, Mary Kennedy. Mary is from Delaware. It's good to be reminded from time to time that the New York chapter (despite its name) includes six states – CT, DE, NJ, NY, PA, and WV. I'd like to hear from all our members – wherever you happen to live. Send comments, suggestions, complaints or requests to me at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com.

Marie Hannan-Mandel
Editor

IMPORTANT DATES



May 18th *Forensics and the Mystery Writer: Is It Science Or Fiction?* Mid-Manhattan Branch, 455 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 6th Floor, 6:30 p.m

June 2nd Chapter Meeting: *The Phoenix Factor: Authors Whose Careers Rose from the Ashes.* The National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South, in Manhattan, 6: 30 p.m.

June 22nd *Chick Lit Mysteries: Laugh Or I'll Use My Stiletto to Kill You.* Mid-Manhattan Branch, 455 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 6th Floor, 6:30 p.m



ASK THE LAWYER

Hi Bob,

My daughter is going to have her first book published by a start up publishing company. She just received the contract and has questions and concerns about parts of the contract. Can you recommend a lawyer who might charge \$1,000 or so to look it over and advise her? The main concerns are the warranty clause and copyright.

Thank you,
D.B.

Dear D.B,

I have no idea what any other lawyer would charge to review the contract and to advise the young lady.

If she lives in New York and if her income is low enough, she may be eligible for free assistance from Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (www.vlany.org).

If she would like to send me a digital copy of the contract, I will tell her (depending on its length, its complexity, and its degree of "evilness") what I could and could not do for \$1,000. (My hourly rate is \$500).

Best,
Bob

Advice given in this column is general, and is not based upon a thorough review of facts and considerations in any given instance. You should consult an attorney in depth if you need legal advice.

Bob Stein counsels and represents people at all levels of the entertainment industry from writers to film producers. He has represented David Baldacci and Janet Evanovich and spent thirteen years in-house at Random House, Simon and Schuster and Warner Books before entering private practice.



HOW TO SPOT A SOCIOPATH (Part 1) by Mary Kennedy

When I speak at conferences, my fellow mystery writers often ask me for a quick guide to creating a "realistic" sociopath. I've come up with a few red flags, a handful of character traits that novelists can incorporate into their stories.

* **Red flag.** He knows your weak spots and has an uncanny way of sizing you up. Most criminals are students of human behavior and keen observers of body language. They know how to "profile the profiler" and can zero in on any weaknesses or vulnerabilities. Think of a lion and a herd of wildebeest. Wouldn't the lion go for the weakest of the pack?

I once brought a student intern with me when I interviewed a violent criminal. He immediately picked up on her youth and inexperience and said in a wheedling way, "You're new at this, aren't you, honey?" Then he lunged across the table and pretended to attack her. (Luckily, his foot was chained to the floor.) It was a silly power play, and the idea was to put her on the defensive, shift the power differential, and put her in a one-down position. Sociopaths always want to be in control.

* **Red Flag:** He's narcissistic, craves attention, apparently convinced he's the center of the universe. He talks about himself constantly, is bored and disinterested when the conversation shifts away from him. He craves admiration the way a vampire craves blood.

* **Red Flag:** He plays loose and fast with the truth. In other words, he lies. All the time. Little white lies, medium-sized fibs and giant whoppers. Sociopaths lie even when it's not necessary. They like to exaggerate, embellish, make every story "bigger" than it has to be. Most sociopaths are known as "practiced liars." That simply means they're smooth, they're slick, and yes, they can look you right in the eye and lie to your face. (It's a common misconception that people can't look you in the eye tell a lie; sociopaths do it all the time.)

* **Red Flag:** He's a control freak. He's overly concerned with his victim's whereabouts, and his interest borders on obsessive. He wants to know who she sees, what she talks about, and what she's wearing. Think stalking behavior. Stalkers like to track their victims 24/7. I once had a client whose ex-husband called and texted her more than a hundred times a day. Classic stalking behavior. The only thing that stopped him was a restraining order.

Mary Kennedy is a licensed clinical psychologist and the author of the Talk Radio Mysteries. REEL MURDER is a June, 2010 release. You can visit her website at www.marykennedy.net.



ASK THE WRITER by Lisa Cotoggio

David Levien, a prolific writer, was gracious enough to take a few minutes out of his hectic schedule for a brief chat.

You've built up quite an illustrious list of credits over the last ten years as a screenwriter, director, producer and novelist. Why the departure from your earlier novels into PI?

I had the idea for the book that turned into *City of the Sun* many, many years ago. The story of the abduction, and the toll it took on the parents, was one I carried around endlessly while working on film projects and other books. Finally, Frank Behr showed up in my head, and I knew he was the vehicle through which to tell the story. I didn't immediately think "series." I knew it had to be set in the Midwest, where these kinds of crimes aren't "supposed" to happen. Eventually, I decided on Indianapolis, because though it is perceived as bucolic, it is actually a large city with a big drug trade, lots of murders, and other violent crimes. So, on the long shot that the book did turn into a series, Frank Behr would have plenty of future business.



Do you think you will ever go back into humorous fiction again?

Wait, you don't think *City of the Sun* and *Where the Dead Lay* are funny? Clearly, I'm ready to snap back into comedy at any moment.

With six film projects in development, do you think you'll be able to keep up with one book a year for your new Frank Behr series?

You must have checked IMDB. Some of those projects are finished scripts, some producing projects, some Hollywood rumors. But the simple answer is: a book a year might be a little fast. I'm more concerned with writing each book well, and while *Where the Dead Lay* was a year after the first, eighteen months between books may be about the right pace.

Can you give us a brief description of the third book in the Frank Behr series?

In my upcoming book, Frank Behr is back, but in a very different strata of Indianapolis than that which he encountered in the first two books. I don't want to let the plot out of the bag right now, but he's got his hands full with nasty, professional opposition. And, unfortunately, I always seem to come up with the title right towards the end. So, I don't have it to drop here.

I've read countless interviews where you've said you write on the train during your morning commute from Greenwich to Manhattan. Do you not find it cumbersome at times?

Only when I don't get a seat! I actually like writing on the train. (I'm doing it right now.) I don't want it to sound glib, like I knock off books during my commute. I work on them at night, during weekends, on vacation, and any other free day and time I have. I remember reading that Scott Turow wrote much of *Presumed Innocent* on the bus to work as a lawyer in Chicago and that inspired me to try and net my commuting time.

How does your screenwriting partner feel about your newfound success as a solo novelist? Any interest in co-authoring a book with you?

Brian Koppelman, filmmaking partner, is totally supportive of my novel writing. He's a big fan of crime fiction and loves Frank Behr. He has side projects outside the partnership, as well. And we hope to bring Frank Behr to the screen together.

Words of wisdom for our up-and-coming authors?

This is going to be shopworn advice, but: write it the way you see it and feel it, not the way you think the market wants it. Work diligently, every day. Re-write a lot once you've gotten to the end. Once it's really as good as you can get it, submit, submit, submit, to as many agents and editors as it takes. And start writing the next thing while you're still submitting. Sorry I don't have a magic bullet, but that's the only way I know that works.

City of the Sun was nominated for the Strand Award and the Barry Award for Best First Crime Novel, and the Hammett Prize for literary excellence in the field of crime writing. Visit: www.DavidLevien.com

A top ten finalist in the 2002 Nevada Film Office 15th Annual Screenwriting Award, Lisa Cotoggio has worked as a script doctor for Summer Moon Productions and with Classical Alliance as a TV series creator and writer. You can contact Lisa at www.lisacotoggio.com.

WHAT'S NOOSE?



Alafair Burke, *212*, HarperCollins.

Joanne Dobson, *Death Without Tenure*, Poisoned Pen Press

Kate White, *Hush*, HarperCollins

Sheila York, *A Good Knife's Work*, Five Star/Gale/Cengage

Stories

Gary Cahill, "Corner of River and Rain," Short Story, May 2010

Bill Chambers, "Another Night to Remember," Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine, May 2010

Other

The audio version of Peggy Ehrhart's mystery *Sweet Man Is Gone* (Five Star/Gale/Cengage 2008) is now out from Books in Motion—with a new title: *Blue Murder*.

Send items for "What's Noose?" to Peggy Ehrhart at pehrhart@sprynet.com. Please use the format you see in the entries above. Because of the Noose's new format, we now have limited space (100 to 150 words) and have to give priority to publications.