

# THE NOOSE

Nov/Dec 2010



## NEXT MEETING: November 3

### Our hand-picked promotion coaches pick their online, radio and in-person events essentials!

*For fiction authors, what are the two or three essentials in each self-promotion arena? What efforts are a waste of time, and why? Describe the single most creative, effective self-promotion idea you've seen a fiction author exploit?*



These are among the vital questions we'll fire at our November 3rd expert panel: Kevin Heisler, internet marketing expert,

VP, RankAbove, interviewed on CNN and NPR; Harry Rinker, host of "Meet the Author" weekly half-hour radio show; and Joan Schulhafer, Pres., Joan Schulhafer Publishing & Media Consulting. Moderator: Patricia King.

[Click here for more information.](#)

## IN THIS ISSUE

[November Meeting](#)

[Chapter President Letter](#)

[From The Editor](#)

[Important Dates](#)

[Winter Revels](#)

[Dirty Rotten Liars](#)

[Ask The Writer](#)

[What's Noose?](#)

[Ask The Lawyer](#)



## President's Letter

Once again, it's my pleasure to share good news with the chapter and celebrate members who are working hard on our behalf.

### **Winter Revels:**

I'm delighted to announce that #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Harlan Coben has agreed to serve as honorary holiday host for the annual Winter Revels party. Thank you Rosemary Harris for all of your work on what is certain to be a spectacular party.

Harlan is the internationally bestselling author of eighteen novels, including *Caught* and the Myron Bolitar series. He is also extremely tall and has a strong handshake and a good laugh. You should swing by to meet him. Watch your mailboxes (both paper and electronic) for details, but save the date: December 1 at a special forum, Housing Works Bookstore Café, and see more details below.

### **Library Committee:**

I'm also happy to announce that Lisa Cotoggio is now the chairperson of our Library Committee. She will continue to program and publicize our excellent series with the Mid-Manhattan Public Library and is expanding the series to include Brooklyn and Queens. I'd also like to thank Jane Cleland for her years of tireless service as this committee's former chair.

### **Mentor Program:**

My continued thanks extend to Catherine Maiorisi for spearheading our renowned Mentor Program. Have a manuscript ripe for feedback? Or are you a published member looking for a way to give back to the writing community? Send an e-mail to [mentors@mwa-ny.org](mailto:mentors@mwa-ny.org).

### **Volunteer Opportunities:**

Are you looking for additional ways to become more active with our local chapter of MWA? Maybe you have technical skills that could be used recording our programs for the Internet or designing the program notice postcards? If so, the board wants to hear from you. Email me at [alafairburke.com](http://alafairburke.com) and let me know how you'd like to be involved.

Hope to see you soon!

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### **One More Piece of (Less Good) News**

Because our monthly dinner programs provide our most frequent opportunities to come together as a chapter face-to-face, we work very hard to maintain a reasonable price that is affordable to a crowd of writers. Unfortunately, our usual meeting spot at the National Arts Club has raised its charges by twenty percent.

After taking a close look at the chapter finances, the board determined that the chapter was able to absorb the full brunt of the increase in the short-term and therefore voted not to raise the admission to our dinner programs for the remainder of 2010. We could not, however, sustain an operational deficit indefinitely.

Accordingly, beginning with the January 2011 program, the cost to attend will be \$42, representing a two dollar (or five percent) increase over the previous charge. The chapter budget will cover the additional percentage increase imposed by National Arts Club.

We will continue to look for suitable, affordable venues, with your convenience, comfort, and pocketbooks in mind.

Best,

Alafair Burke  
Chapter President, MWA-NY

[Top](#)



**FROM THE EDITOR**

Hi all,

Here 'tis – another issue of the *Noose*. I hope you find it, interesting, entertaining and informative. Send comments, suggestions, complaints or requests to me at [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com).

Marie Hannan-Mandel  
Editor

[Top](#)

## IMPORTANT DATES



- OCTOBER 31** — Deadline for submissions for the MWA-NY Mentor program. Details available at [www.mwa-ny.org](http://www.mwa-ny.org).
- NOVEMBER 3** — Chapter meeting: *Create Your Own Self-Promotion Checklist with Expert Help*. Our handpicked promotion coaches pick their online, radio and in-person events essentials! National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South, New York, NY.
- NOVEMBER 13** — *Queens Library Whodunit Slam Event*. Queens Library, Forest Hills, 108-19 71st Avenue, Queens, NY; (718) 268-7934; 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
- NOVEMBER 16** — *Where Ideas Come From: Mystery Writers Reveal All*. NYPL Mid-Manhattan Branch, 455 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 6th Floor, 6:30 p.m.
- DECEMBER 1** — *Winter Revels*. Housing Works Bookstore Cafe, 126 Crosby Street, New York, NY. [www.housingworks.org](http://www.housingworks.org), 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.
- DECEMBER 14** — *21st-Century Witches: Inside the Mind of the Female Killer*. NYPL Mid-Manhattan Branch, 455 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 6th Floor, 6:30 p.m.

[Top](#)

## WINTER REVELS



It's that time again...

This year MWA-NY's annual holiday event, Winter Revels, is Wednesday, December 1, from 6:30 p.m-8:30 p.m at Housing Works Bookstore Cafe, 126 Crosby Street. The web address is [www.housingworks.org](http://www.housingworks.org). It's a great new location and as it is a non-profit organization we'll be able to do some good while kicking off the holiday season.

And thanks to MWA-NY President Alafair Burke, our honorary Santa is *New York Times* best-selling author Harlan Coben. How cool is that? Reconnect with other members, speakers you may have missed and maybe even a few publishing execs. Look for the postcard mailing for more details.

Volunteers are needed at the Cafe at 5:00 pm to help set up and decorate. Others will be needed to

point people toward the coat check and the bar (although mystery writers always seem to be able to find the bar.) If you're interested in being a MWA-NY elf, please email me at [rosemary@rosemaryharris.com](mailto:rosemary@rosemaryharris.com).

Chief Elf,

Rosemary Harris

[www.rosemaryharris.com](http://www.rosemaryharris.com)

[Top](#)



## DIRTY ROTTEN LIARS – and how to spot them

by Mary Kennedy

Recently, I sat down with three thriller writers who are experts on the art of deception. Like the television character Dr. Cal Lightman, on *Lie to Me*, they've honed their lie-detecting skills through years of experience in the field. Mark Bouton, (*The Second Savior*) is a former FBI agent, Robin Burcell (*The Bone Chamber*) is a detective with the LAPD and New York Times best-selling author Denise Swanson (*Murder of a Wedding Belle*) is a psychologist.

**Mary Kennedy:** Mark, I love your new book, *How to Spot Lies Like the FBI*. Which is more important—what someone says or how she says it?

**Mark Bouton:** What someone says is critical because their story must make sense. You need to keep track of the narrative to make sure it is logical. But how someone says something can send clear signals that they're lying. Mumbling, hesitation before speaking, using a number of "uhs" and "ers," losing volume toward the end of a sentence, and the voice rising in pitch at the end can all signal that someone is lying.

**Robin Burcell:** That's one of those "It depends" questions. You have to take it all in context. Some people are understandably nervous while being questioned by the police. Others are great orators. And still others are fantastic liars.

**Mary Kennedy:** Is the use of qualifiers a tip-off that someone is lying? ("I don't recall, not to the best of my recollection, that's hard to say, etc, etc."). I noticed this quite a bit when I was doing forensic psychology.

**Mark Bouton:** The use of qualifiers and a seeming lack of recall about details that will incriminate someone are indications that he is protecting himself by using evasive answers.

**Robin Burcell:** Absolutely. It should be a red flag to sit up and notice. Quite often a liar will respond to a question with another question, usually an echo. "Where were you on Saturday night?" "Where was I

on Saturday night?" The reason for this is he will be concocting his answer while he is echoing the question. It gives him time to think.

**Denise Swanson:** Since I worked with a lot of teens with learning disabilities, particularly verbal expression, this would often meant they were searching for a word. So no, I wouldn't automatically suspect they were about to lie to me.

**Mary Kennedy:** What are some red flags to watch for, regarding body language? I've noticed that my clients would often tap their foot when we ventured into territory they didn't want to talk about. Is this common?

**Robin Burcell:** Yes. But is it always an indication of lying? Not necessarily.

**Mark Bouton:** Toe-tapping, foot jiggling, playing with an object such as a pen or coffee cup, putting a pen in one's mouth, and scratching one's cheek can all be signs of fibbing.

**Denise Swanson:** Angling their body away from me or toward the door was always a tell for me. Also, the most important part of the whole session was usually as they were about to leave and had their hand on the door knob. I paid particular attention to their last statement.

**Mary Kennedy:** Is it always possible to detect when someone is lying?

**Denise Swanson:** No. The kids who lied the most often were the most difficult to detect.

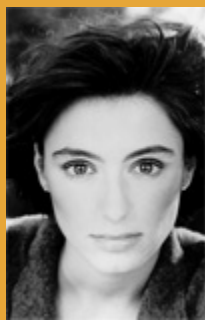
**Mark Bouton:** Tests have shown that people ordinarily detect lies only 44% of the time. Most of the law enforcement officers tested did well to reach 50% effective.

**Robin Burcell:** No. Sociopaths can make excellent liars.

*Mary Kennedy is a clinical psychologist and the author of The Talk Radio Mysteries for Penguin.*

*Her upcoming January release is Stay Tuned for Murder. You can visit her website at [www.marykennedy.net](http://www.marykennedy.net).*

[Top](#)



**ASK THE WRITER**  
**by Lisa Cotoggio**

Hilary Davidson was kind enough to take some time out of her busy schedule since the release of her new book, *The Damage Done*, to discuss her experience in the industry.

**Q. I thought we might start off with the process of going from travel writer to mystery author. How did this come to fruition?**

A. I've been very lucky, because I've been able to make a career out of writing about what interests me — for the most part, anyway. Travel writing allowed me to go all over the world, seeing fascinating places from Spain to Peru and from Thailand to Bermuda. I've collected stories from everywhere I've been, but the writing I do for magazines and guidebooks is mainly focused on a narrow range of things: hotels, restaurants, spas, museums. They aren't interested in things like the time a gang of gypsies tried to mug me on the French Riviera. So, I've been collecting these other stories, too — ones that don't fit into the publications I've written for, but that seem more interesting to me than, say, a new hotel.



Writing fiction was what I'd always wanted to do, but for years I focused on making a living from freelancing. I wrote 18 nonfiction books and countless magazine articles, and I was often on the road. Then, about four years ago, I realized that travel writing just wasn't doing it for me anymore. I'd collected years' worth of strange stories that I wanted to tell, and I started writing fiction. The irony of *The Damage Done* is that my main character, Lily Moore, is a travel writer, but in the book she's forced to come home to New York when she's told that her sister has killed herself, only to discover that the dead woman had stolen her sister's identity and that her sister is missing. But since Lily has been living in Spain and traveling, she feels like a stranger in her hometown in many ways.

**Q. Do you find your style of writing somewhat different now? If so, what kind of changes took place as you transitioned into genre writing?**

A. On the practical side, very little changed. Because I've been writing full-time for more than a decade, I've got a schedule that works for me, though it was tough initially to justify taking time away from paying work to write fiction that might never see the light of day. But my approach to nonfiction and fiction are so different. As a journalist, I'm a one-draft writer; it didn't matter what the subject was, I would write the opening in my head and then write the whole piece in one or two sittings. With fiction, I'm completely obsessive, and it takes me anywhere from five to ten drafts to get a piece anywhere near what I want it to be. Also, the story lives in my head while I'm working on it. That's not so bad with a short story, but with a novel, it's tough. Fiction has taken over my brain in a way that journalism never did.

**Q. Having previously published in the travel arena, did you find it difficult or should I say challenging to navigate into the fiction side of the publishing industry?**

A. It was very difficult! Before I started *The Damage Done*, I wrote a number of short stories. It seemed to take forever to get one of them published. My first, "Anniversary," was rejected by various print and online publications for an entire year before *Thuglit* agreed to publish it. Ironically, that story went on to







be selected for a best-of-the-year crime and mystery anthology. I know that I expected things to get easier after that, but it was still very tough to find markets for my short fiction. *Thuglit* also published my second short story, "Son of So Many Tears," and my third, "Stepmonster," which is set in Peru. I can't really say that being a travel journalist helped me get my fiction published. No one was very impressed with that!

**Q. What was your experience when it came to securing an agent?**

A. I was very, very, very lucky. Agent Nat Sobel saw my work in *Thuglit*, and contacted me to ask if I was working on a novel. I was, and I sent it to Nat and his partner Judith Weber when I felt that it was ready. They liked the book, but believed that I needed to cut out a subplot that overcomplicated the story. That was tough initially, but when I started re-writing, I saw that they were right. It took me three weeks to do, but we were all very happy with the resulting draft, and they formally offered me representation.

**Q. Tell us about the level of anticipation when *The Damage Done* was bought by your editor.**

A. It was exciting on so many levels. I was thrilled to sell the book, and then I was pretty much speechless when I found out that Forge wanted to do a two-book deal. That was more than I'd hoped for. Meeting my Forge editor, Paul Stevens, was another high point. He was so enthusiastic about *The Damage Done*. I'd wondered if he'd want to change the book somehow, but he loved it as it was. So all of the editing and rewriting I'd had to do was worth it!

**Q. The process from manuscript to finished book can be somewhat lengthy. What was it like when you grasped that first copy in your hand?**

A. Paul called me and told me he had a surprise for me. I was certain that he meant the finished book, but that didn't ready me for the sight of it. It's a great-looking book, with a dramatic red cover that I love, and I think I stood there gawking at it for a full minute at least. Then I'd opened it to look for the author photo credit — my friend Trish Snyder had taken my picture, and I wanted to make sure her name was spelled correctly. Then I leafed through it and went back to staring at the cover. It had my name on it! After writing 18 nonfiction books, I'd finally written a book that had my name on the cover. That felt like such a huge accomplishment.

**Q. Any words of wisdom for your fellow up-and-coming authors?**

A. I'm a big fan of writing short stories, because doing that helped me in so many ways: they let me experiment with style and improved my writing, they got me my agent, and they got me a lot of attention in the crime-fiction community. I know that not everyone wants to write short fiction, but I encourage people to try because it helped me more than anything else.

I would also remind people to be persistent. Rejection feels awful, but if you remember that everybody else gets rejected before they get published, it's a little easier to take. Sometimes you need to go back



and take a look at a story to figure out what's not working; other times, you need to just send it out again. If you're in doubt, give it to other people to read. Many writers will tell you that your family won't give you any criticism, but I get some of my best criticism from my mother and from my husband. That's not for everyone, but you need to find what works for you. Also, read your work aloud. It makes a difference in the quality of your writing.

Read more about Hilary at [www.hilarydavidson.com](http://www.hilarydavidson.com).

Lisa Cotoggio is chair of the MWA-NY Library Outreach Committee and can be contacted at: [www.lisacotoggio.com](http://www.lisacotoggio.com).

[Top](#)

## WHAT'S NOOSE?



### Books

Lou Manfredo's *Rizzo's War* (Minotaur 2009) was published in the United Kingdom by Corvus on October 1. St. Martin's Griffin will release the trade paperback in North America in January 2011. The second of the three Rizzo novels, *Rizzo's Fire*, will be published by Minotaur March 1, 2011.

Evan Marshall, *City in Shadow: A Hidden Manhattan Mystery*, Severn House.

### Poetry

Annette Meyers, "The Villain's Villanelle," *EQMM* August 2010.

Send items for "What's Noose?" to Peggy Ehrhart at [pehrhart@sprynet.com](mailto: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.

[Top](#)



## ASK THE LAWYER

**Hi Bob,**

**I worry about signing a contract with either an agent or a publisher. How binding are these contracts and should I try not to have one? Would it be better to be free?**

**Cynthia**

Dear Cynthia,

Most agents' and publishers' contracts are very binding. That's why there are lawyers who represent writers (ahem!).

However, in my opinion it is not better to be free. Kris Kristofferson wrote it best: "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose."

If you don't sign with an agent, then you have no one to help you find a publisher, or to advise you in your writing career. If you don't sign with a publisher, then your only publishing option is self-publication (and I don't know how you would self-publish without signing any contracts). Self-publication, while perhaps gratifying to the ego, is far less likely to result in widespread sales of your book, or in fame or fortune. It should only be considered when you truly have "nothing left to lose".

I believe it is still worthwhile to follow the traditional route to publication, so long as one is careful to avoid the pretenders... those predators who pretend to be literary agents or publishers, but are really just out to steal money from untutored writers.

There are resources available to guide the writer avoid such creatures, such as the websites [www.pred-ed.com](http://www.pred-ed.com) ("Predators and Editors") and [www.aaronline.org](http://www.aaronline.org) ("Association of Authors' Representatives"), and the books, Jeff Herman's *Guide to Book Publishers, Editors, and Literary Agents 2011* and *Putting Your Passion Into Print*.

Only after you have availed yourself of these resources, and found after repeated inquiries that no mainstream agent or publisher is interested in representing you or publishing your book, would I say you "have nothin' left to lose", and so should think about "being free".

Best,  
Bob

*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 13 years in-house at Random House, Simon and Schuster and Warner Books before entering private practice.*

*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.*

[Top](#)

