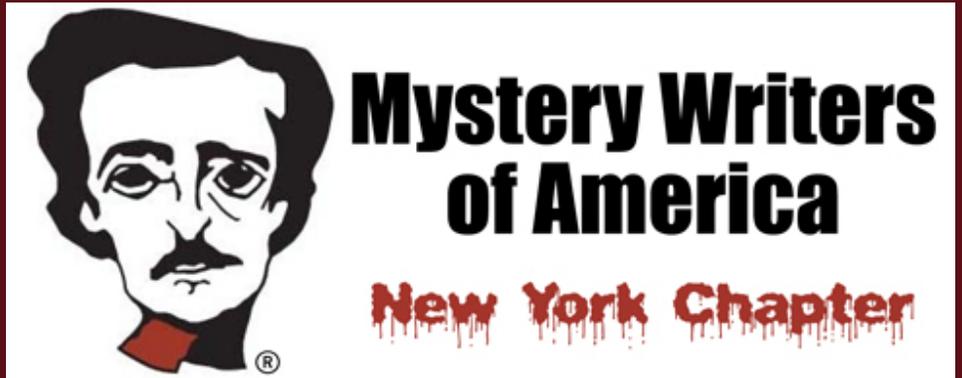




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# THE NOOSE

November/December  
Noose 2011



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## President's Letter

Dear Members,

Hard to believe how fast this year has flown. It's been an eventful one for our chapter with new faces, new activities, and as of January 2012, a new meeting place. The Midtown Executive Club will be our frequent home in 2012. As the board continues to try to find ways to engage members from all over the region, we are moving to another part of town and planning at least two non-dinner meetings – perhaps on weekends – to connect with members for whom the Wednesday night NYC meetings have been difficult. Add to that our occasional NJ, PA, and CT events, and you'll see we have a pretty busy slate for next year.

We say goodbye to board member Persia Walker, who'll be leaving us for an exciting new job in Washington DC. (We expect your next book to be a political thriller.) We welcome Triss Stein and Shizuka Otake, who have taken over the reins as library liaisons, and we thank Clare Toohey and her team on the programming committee for putting together this year's informative and entertaining programs. (Can't wait to see what you have lined up for next year!) And we're very pleased that treasurer Sheila York has agreed to take on the new role of Festival Chair. Sheila will be orchestrating our presence at book and street festivals.

So, what happens every year at this time? Winter Revels! This year MWA-NY's holiday party is Thursday, December 8, 2011 at the legendary Salmagundi Club on Fifth Avenue, and our Honorary Santa is *New York Times* bestselling author Linda Fairstein. So it's going to be an awesome event.

Hope to see you there!

Rosemary Harris  
2011 President, MWA-NY Chapter

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Hi all,

It's Halloween as I write this, and I've been enjoying the falling leaves (and snow, don't forget the snow???) We asked to hear from you and you got in touch. The *Meet the Members* segment is a great addition to the newsletter, so please send us your information – we want to get to know you! Make an end-of-year resolution to send in your information for *Meet the Member*. We'd like a up to 200 words and a picture – you **don't** have to be a published member to be included. I look forward to hearing from you!

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Peggy Ehrhart as editor of *What's Noose?* Peggy has done excellent work for the newsletter and we will miss her. Thank you, Peggy. In future, all submissions for *What's Noose?* should be sent to me at [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com).

Marie Hannan-Mandel  
Editor

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## All A-Twitter

Attention MWA-NY members: our local chapter now features a Facebook page and a Twitter feed! Our Facebook page is titled [MWA-New York](#), and our Twitter handle is [@mwanewyork](#). The accounts are linked, so that information about upcoming MWA meetings, public library panels, chapter programs, and all our special events will be broadcast over social media. Members are encouraged to follow these accounts, and to post their own upcoming engagements, good news, and book updates on Facebook. All members are welcome to post on the wall any information relevant to the chapter, including future signings or panels, resource aids, and mystery-related content. Thank you for helping to make MWA-NY more active than ever in the world of web communication!

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## IMPORTANT DATES



- NOV. 2 —** **Chapter Meeting:** *Red Alert: E-book Royalties and other Critical Clauses*. The National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South (a.k.a. East 20th St.), New York, NY, 10003, (212) 475-3424, 6:30 p.m. [www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.php](http://www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.php)
- NOV. 13 —** **Library Lecture:** *The Making of a Series Character in the Mystery Genre*. New City Library, 220 N. Main St, New City, NY 10956, (845) 634-4997, 2 p.m.
- NOV. 16 —** **Library Lecture:** *So You Think You Can Detect: Do You Have What it Takes to be an Amateur Sleuth?* Mid-Manhattan Library, 40th St and 5th Ave, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10016, (212) 340-0837, 6:30 p.m.
- DEC. 8 —** **Winter Revels!** The Salmagundi Club, 47 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10003-4396 (near E. 12th St.), (212) 255-7740. Look out for further details as they become available!
- DEC. 14 —** **Library Lecture:** *A Mystery Writers' Dialogue with Thomas H. Cook and S.J. Rozan*. Mid-Manhattan Library, 40th St and 5th Ave, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10016, (212) 340-0837, 6:30 p.m.

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## GOING BALLISTIC IN NEW JERSEY

## By S. A. Solomon

On a crisp October day, an eager group of MWA crime writers gathered at the New Jersey State Police Technology Complex in Hamilton, N.J. for a tour of the Ballistics Unit, organized by New York chapter member Jeff Cohen. Our guide was Detective Sergeant First Class Robert Cowden, a 24-year veteran of the NJSP, and the Assistant Unit Head of the Ballistics Unit.

Our first stop was the process room, where firearms recovered at crime scenes, as well as bullets and cartridge casings, are decontaminated, marked for identification, placed in envelopes, and bar-coded to preserve the chain of custody required to introduce evidence in a criminal trial. There's also a station for restoring altered or damaged gun serial numbers. Guns, bullets, and bullet casings from active cases are secured in the evidence room, and must be scanned in and out of lockers by the firearms examiners working on cases for potential courtroom testimony.



The southernmost ballistics unit in New Jersey, the unit gets cases from all over the state, processing some 1200-1500 per year. We trooped through the well-stocked Reference Ammunition room and into the rear of the firing range where crime weapons are test-fired to create "example" bullets and cartridge casings for comparison with bullets and casings collected at crime scenes. Though we did not get to see a test-firing, we learned that it is generally done in a water tank to slow down the bullet's trajectory and to facilitate its recovery. Crime guns are also test-fired at distance intervals on targets to recreate firing patterns for comparison with trace evidence, such as gunshot residue on a victim's clothing.

The NJSP Ballistics Unit also maintains a Firearm Reference Collection with a fearsome array of weapons, primarily from adjudicated cases, ranging from a rocket launcher (donated by the military) to a hot pink .22 Long Rifle caliber KSA bolt-action rifle.

Recovered bullets and casings are examined under a microscope to identify "lands" and "grooves," or rifle mark impressions, which enable police to match a bullet to a particular weapon by comparing it to the test-fired examples. The highly magnified images are submitted to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)'s National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) database for possible matches with bullets and cartridges recovered at other crime scenes.



State Investigator Robert E. Crowe walked us through the steps necessary to submit a query to the NIBIN database. An image of a cartridge casing is captured and sent on a secure line to the database to be stored and correlated against other images. Positive matches are not made by the system; rather, results are returned to the unit to be reviewed by a NIBIN technician. When an image looks like a match, the specimens are examined on a comparison microscope. The NIBIN unit entered 1655 cases into the system last year, yielding 117 hits.

Bad guys may want take notice of the sign on the unit's Reference Ammunition room door: "There is no such thing as too much ammo." This firepower is used not to add to the cacophony of gunshots on New Jersey's mean streets, but to help silence it.



## ASK THE WRITER

### Three Authors, Three Hit Series by Mary Kennedy

I asked three best-selling authors – Donald Bain, (*Murder She Wrote* series), Carolyn Hart (*Death on Demand* series) and Susan Wittig Albert, (*China Bayles* series) – to tell me about their characters.

**MK:** What are the challenges and rewards of creating a long-running character?

**DONALD BAIN:** : Having been handed Jessica Fletcher as a character is a two-edged sword. On the one hand we've been given a great, full-fleshed character created and nurtured by the wonderful Angela Lansbury, as well as by the writers and directors of the TV series. On the other hand, we have restrictions as to what we can do with the character. NBC-Universal is extremely protective of the Jessica Fletcher character and brand, and for good reason.

**MK:** What is it like, creating a character who lives and breathes for twenty or more books?

**CAROLYN HART:** Recurring characters mean the author knows the terrain and understands the characters' mores. It can be great fun to chop through the forest and blaze a new path, but there is charm and comfort in following a familiar path.

**MK:** What are reader expectations regarding the character? Does the character change and evolve?

**SUSAN WITTIG ALBERT:** I've never wanted to create a series character who doesn't grow and change. (This probably harks back to my days as Carolyn Keene, when I got thoroughly fed up with a "static" Nancy Drew.) It seems to me that the challenge presented in each book ought to be significant enough so that the protagonist is deeply affected – after all, she's dealing with death, and the encounter ought to change her. As well, if she is to seem real to her readers, she ought to grow and change over the course of the series.

**DONALD BAIN:** Our readers don't want Jessica to change. A running debate among them is whether she should marry the dashing Scotland Yard inspector George Sutherland. Most readers like that she's not married and free to travel the globe. A smaller number would like to see her marry George (and others have long lobbied for Jess to marry Dr. Seth Hazlitt). This backstory also functions to allow the reader to experience changes in her as she debates this issue.

**CAROLYN HART:** Definitely. Even though at the end of every book Annie and Max are always young and carefree on their sea island, they know good times and bad. They discover what it means to care terribly and to fight for survival of love and life. They explore loyalty, disappointment, loss and gain. They feel and therefore the reader will feel with them.

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).

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## ASK THE LAWYER

Dear Bob,

If I send an agent a submission and he or she asks for a period of exclusive review, is this legally binding? I mean, if I happen to meet an agent during that exclusive period who wants to see my work, can I send it, or am I breaking a contract with the first agent?

Anxious

Dear Anxious:

You know the old Hollywood expression, "You'll never be published in this town again!"? How about, "Beware the wrath of an agent scorned!"?

Seriously, no, it's not likely to be legally binding, as far as I know. I very much doubt that it has ever been litigated. However, I can imagine an unlikely scenario in which you would have liability to the agent: you send the ms to a second agent within the first agent's exclusive period. The first agent reads the ms, likes it, and shows it to one or more editors. She receives one or more offers. The second agent does likewise, and also receives offers. Then a publisher tells both agents that each has submitted the same ms to him.

Which agent gets the sale? More importantly, which lawyer gets to represent the first agent? I'd like to take that case against you, for breach of an oral contract, after the first agent relied on your promise of exclusivity. The thing is, the damages due the first agent would be easily ascertainable: 15% of the best offer you received from either agent. (You'd end up paying a double commission, as well as your own lawyer's legal fees.)

If you do decide to send the ms to a second agent, you must immediately let the first agent know that you've done so, so she won't waste her time reading it. If you don't, and she finds out another agent also has it, she will be furious and is likely to spread the word that you are untrustworthy and a waste of an agent's valuable time. You may then find yourself without any agent, and with a bad reputation to boot.

If the first agent has already invested her time in reading your ms, and still wants to represent you, you would be wise to so advise the second agent and request that she return the ms to you.

Good luck.

Bob Stein

*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.*

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## WHAT'S NOOSE?



### Short Stories

Richard Ciciarelli. "Country Club Murder." *Woman's World*, 1 Dec. 2011.

----- . "In Vino Veritas." *Over My Dead Body*, Sept. 2011.

----- . "A Private Murder." *Over My Dead Body*, Oct. 2011.

Lou Manfredo. "Home of the Brave." *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, Jan. 2012 (on sale Nov. 2011).

----- . "Soul Anatomy," *New Jersey Noir*, ed. Joyce Carol Oates. Akashic Books.

Maan Meyers [Annette Meyers & Martin Meyers]. "Forty Morgan Silver Dollars." *The Mammoth Book of Historical Crime Fiction*, Sept. 2011.

Send items for "What's Noose?" to to the *Noose* Editor at [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com). Please use the format you see in the entries above. *Italicize* book and magazine titles and put "quotes" around the titles of short stories and articles.

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## MEET THE MEMBER

**Join me in saying "hello" to two more of our members!**

### **ALINE LENAZ, Proprietress, the Cloak & Dagger Mystery Bookshop, Princeton, NJ**

"Intrigue, murder, suspense ... put a little mischief into your daily routine." This phrase ricocheted in Aline Lenaz's head for almost twenty years before she decided in 2001 to open a mystery bookshop. Located at 349 Nassau Street in the historic Jugtown section of Princeton, N.J., the Cloak & Dagger is a perfect place to take a break from busy schedules, explore new authors and reconnect with classic mysteries.

Aline's former profession as an architect helped her transform a

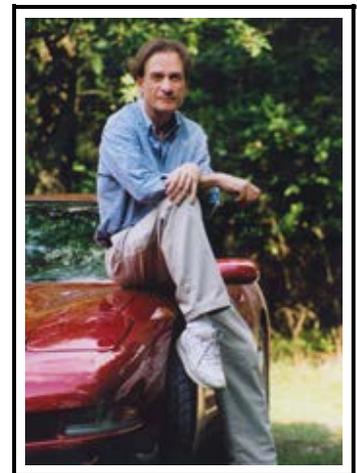


dingy insurance office in a century-old building into an elegant English-style library, complete with more than 10,000 titles representing a cross-section of the mystery genre. Mostly new mass market and trade back titles are sold with hardbacks as special orders. Specialty sidelines complete the mystery menu with a wide selection of audio, video, puzzles, and games oriented toward solving the perfect crime.

Princeton maintains its bucolic charm anchored by the university and a wide variety of restaurants, local specialty and brand name retail shops. Aline welcomes all members of MWA, SINC and mystery lovers of all ages. Take a short day trip and enjoy all that the Princeton area has to offer, along with a special visit to the Cloak & Dagger.

## PHILIP CIOFFARI

Philip Cioffari is the author of three books of fiction: the mystery/thriller, *Catholic Boys*; the short story collection, *A History of Things Lost or Broken*, which won the Tartt Fiction Prize, and the D. H. Lawrence award for fiction; and, most recently, *Jesusville*. His short stories have been published widely in commercial and literary magazines and anthologies, including *North American Review*, *Playboy*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Northwest Review*, *Florida Fiction*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. He has written and directed for Off and Off-Off Broadway. His Indie feature film, which he wrote and directed, *Love in the Age of Dion*, has won numerous awards, including Best Feature Film at the Long Island Int'l Film Expo, and Best Director at the NY Independent Film & Video Festival. He is a professor of English, and director of the Performing and Literary Arts Honors Program, at William Paterson University. [www.philipcioffari.com](http://www.philipcioffari.com)



Send contributions to Meet the Member to [mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com)

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