

# THE NOOSE

March/April 2011



## NEXT MEETING: March 2, 2011

### Three industry pros let down their hair and reveal... "What Makes Us Stop Reading!"

*Literary agents, editors, reviewers, and booksellers are looking for books they can enthusiastically represent, publish, review, or recommend. With a surfeit of unpublished and published work clamoring for attention, why give them a reason to stop reading yours? This panel of experts talks frankly about what makes each of them stop reading. The panel features agent **Janet Reid** and editor **Katherine Nintzel** and moderated by author and Boston Globe reviewer **Hallie Ephron**.*

[Click here for more information.](#)

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## President's Letter

Dear MWA-NY Members,

It's hard to believe I've been an MWA member for only five years and here I am, writing my first chapter president message. Four books in four years and I don't think I could have done it without MWA and the wonderfully generous people I've met in this chapter and nationwide - starting with my immediate predecessors, Jane Cleland, Chris Grabenstein and Alafair Burke. The three past presidents have made our chapter one of the most robust in the country and they've created an atmosphere of support and camaraderie that has made it easy for a relative newcomer like me to step in and try to build on their legacies. Add to that an experienced board and a core group of dedicated volunteers and our chapter is well-poised to serve all of our members this year and to help each of us meet his or her goals.

One of my goals for this year is to engage members in all parts of our extensive geographical region. Our members live in six states and it is inevitable that some of us may feel that we are not "where the action is." To that end, our expanded program committee, chaired by the indefatigable Clare Toohey, has already planned events in four states and in some of our more far-flung regions. And with the help of Maggie Barbieri and Marian Borden Edelman, our new Yahoo List Divas, we are re-energizing the MWA-NY Yahoo Group so that members who can't attend the meetings can still exchange information, ideas and war stories! If you're not already signed up, sign up today.

Visit the group's page, at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MWA-NY/>. You should see the "Join" button. Just click, wait for approval and chime in! Upload your photo and/or book jackets and stay connected. Ask questions, give suggestions, tell us about your next event. You can also check the MWA-NY calendar and take a peek at what's coming up on the schedule.

I'm looking forward to meeting lots of you at upcoming events and on the yahoo list.

Cheers,

Rosemary Harris

2011 President, MWA-NY Chapter

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## FROM THE EDITOR



Hi all,

We hope you enjoy this issue of the *Noose* and that you'll find the contents useful, entertaining and a help to your writing life...regardless of the weather!! Please send your comments to

[mhannanmandel@yahoo.com](mailto:mhannanmandel@yahoo.com).

Marie Hannan-Mandel  
Editor

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## IMPORTANT DATES



- MARCH 2 —** **Chapter meeting:** *"Three Industry Pros Let Down Their Hair and Reveal... 'What Makes Us Stop Reading!'"* Chapter meeting at The National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South, New York, NY. 6:00 p.m. Further details at [www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.php](http://www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.php).
- MARCH 8 —** **Meeting:** *"Judge or Be Judged"* NJ meeting at Tumulty's Pub, 361 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ. 7:00 p.m. Further details [BELOW](#).
- MARCH 22 —** **Library Event:** *"Researching the Historical Mystery: The Importance of Accurate Detail."* The NY Mid-Manhattan Branch Library, 455 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 6th Floor at 6:30 p.m. Further details at [www.mwa-ny.org/library.php](http://www.mwa-ny.org/library.php).
- APRIL 6 —** **Chapter meeting:** *"A Visit from Publishing Legend Neil Nyren."* A rare opportunity to listen to one of the most well-respected and knowledgeable names in book publishing, Viking/Penguin/Dutton's Neil Nyren. Chapter meeting at The National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South, New York, NY. 6:00 p.m. Further details at [www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.php](http://www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.php).
- APRIL 13 —** **Library Event:** *"From the Autopsy Room to the Courtroom: How Medical Examiners and Lawyers Speak for the Dead."* The NY Mid-Manhattan Branch Library, 455 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 6th Floor at 6:30 p.m. Further details at [www.mwa-ny.org/library.php](http://www.mwa-ny.org/library.php).

## JUDGE OR BE JUDGED!

**On Tuesday, March 8th, at 7:00 p.m., join MWA in New Jersey**

Join us for an exceptional night! The Hon. Barnett E. Hoffman, recently retired as the presiding judge of the Criminal Division in Middlesex County, has presided over hundreds of cases, including more capital (death penalty) cases than any other judge in the state. During his long tenure on the bench, he became an expert on homicides and sexual assault cases, even teaching the trial of sexual assault crimes to other Superior Court judges at the statewide Judicial College. Judge Hoffman will discuss the details of crime and procedure writers should know--illustrating with a few war stories along the way--to help us create courtroom scenes that have drama and tension without straining credibility. Be sure to sign up early. You won't want to miss it!

This dinner program will be held at [Tumulty's Pub](#), 361 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ

The cost is \$30 in advance and \$35 at the door.

Please RSVP to Program Manager Jeff Cohen at: [jeff@jeffcohenbooks.com](mailto:jeff@jeffcohenbooks.com)

And send your checks to:

MWA-NY

c/o Sheila York

49 Morse Avenue

Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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## **MURDER, THEY WROTE** **An Interview with *Murder, She Wrote*** **Authors Donald Bain and Renée Paley-Bain**



**by Donna Nowak**

**This is the first of a multi-part interview with the co-writers of the "Murder, She Wrote" series. The interview will continue in future issues. Many thanks to Donna for allowing us to use it.**

Certainly there is no character more beloved than that of mystery writer and amateur sleuth Jessica Fletcher, charmingly brought to life by the inimitable Angela Lansbury in one of the most successful television shows of all time, "Murder She Wrote." Showcasing Lansbury as a widowed former schoolteacher from fictitious Cabot Cove, Maine, a woman forthright and independent, folksy yet sophisticated, the series ran for twelve great seasons, its popularity unflagging to the end, breaking ground for senior women. That the "show goes on," so to speak, is due to the versatile talents of prolific author Donald Bain who has spent more than twenty years penning "Murder, She Wrote" spin-

off books “in collaboration” with Jessica Fletcher, as the dust jackets tell you; actually, he now co-writes the series with his wife, author Renée Paley-Bain.

**Q. I feel every writer or artist goes through phases. How do each of you see your evolution as writers? What has gotten easier? What barriers or glitches as writers would you still like to overcome? What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your creative lives?**

**DB:** I refuse to use the aging of wine cliché, but I do feel I’ve become a better writer as I’ve gotten older. It isn’t so much the aging as having had the opportunity to do so much writing. I learn from everything I’ve written. Like a carpenter, I’ve become more comfortable with my writing “tools” and consequently attack the latest project with increased confidence. As for creative satisfaction, there’s no greater high for me than when a scene really works, or a line of dialogue rings true and pops off the page. Of course, a positive review or making a best seller list gives plenty of satisfaction, too.

**RPB:** As a child I was an ardent admirer of J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan, who flew to Wendy’s window to listen to the stories she told her brothers. I used to tell stories to my dolls in hopes Peter would invite me to Neverland. My parents were petrified I would try flying out the sixth-floor window, but I knew you needed pixie dust to fly, and I didn’t have any. All this is a long way of saying I have always thought of myself as a storyteller, although early in my career the bulk of my writing was non-fiction in such fields as journalism, public relations, and marketing communications. Don gave me my start in fiction by letting me contribute paragraphs, descriptions, and even full chapters in books on which he was working. He’s an excellent editor, and I learned a lot by trying to imitate his style and by seeing what changes he made to my copy. We work together very smoothly now, brainstorming plots and passing the story back and forth until the book is done.

The most important lesson Don taught me is “Just keep going.” Often writers will get stuck either admiring what they’ve already written or trying to perfect it. Don says let yesterday’s work go—you can come back to it later—and write the next scene. That little mantra—“just keep going, just keep going”—is often what I tell myself when I sit down to the computer.

**Q. I love your stories, Donald, of literary lunches like the “Writers’ Anti-Defamation Defense League” and “Men with Time.” How vital is this support network to feeding your creative juices?**

**DB:** Writing is a lonely pursuit and can become almost fatally insular. Spending time with other people who live creative lives is both inspiring and instructive, to say nothing of fun. I’ve been fortunate to have forged wonderful friendships over the years with an eclectic array of fascinating people. These friendships nurture me both personally and professionally. In regard to “Men With Time,” Renée keeps threatening to form her own group, “Women Without Time.” I think she’s making a point with me.

**You can contact Donna Nowak at [writerdonna7@hotmail.com](mailto:writerdonna7@hotmail.com)**



## ASK THE WRITER by Lisa Cotoggio

This is the first part of a two-part interview.  
The second part will appear in the May/June issue of the *Noose*

**Stefanie Pintoff, winner of the 2010 Edgar Award for Best First Novel, squeezed in some time for coffee and a chat about her new book and writing historical mystery novels.**

**Q. *Secret of the White Rose* is the third book featuring Detective Simon Ziele. Tell us a little bit about the latest story in your historical series.**

This book takes Simon Ziele into the world of New York's legal elite – and the city's anarchist underbelly – when the judge presiding over a sensational trial is murdered. The defendant, an anarchist, has been accused of setting off a bomb at a Carnegie wedding – but instead of killing millionaires, it killed passersby, including a child. The judge's murder appears to be the latest in a series of bombings and assassinations, and the entire city is on edge as Ziele investigates, helped by early criminal profiler Alistair Sinclair. The research for this particular book was fascinating, and there are obvious parallels between the anarchist attacks of the early twentieth century and the terrorist attacks of today.



**Q. What initially drew you into New York City's turn-of-the-century crimes?**

There was never a question but that New York City would be a central character in my books. I'm one of those people who became a New Yorker the moment I set foot here – and I find the city and its history endlessly fascinating.

When I was still in law school, I became fascinated by early criminal science and how it was being used to solve crime at the turn of the last century. By 1905, more innovative criminal scientists were beginning to challenge the prevailing opinion that criminal behavior resulted from a flaw of nature – a view popularized by Lombroso's theory of the "born criminal." Scientists like my Alistair Sinclair sought to disprove these notions by interviewing and learning from violent offenders themselves – just like the first FBI profilers at Quantico. Then, as now, this practice was highly controversial: people worried that if we came to understand the criminal too well, then we might excuse (and not punish) his or her behavior.

**Q. Do you find them more challenging to unravel for author and reader?**

While not more challenging, these crimes do have to be structured around the limits of my detective's knowledge. While early science offers my detective some help – for example, through fingerprint analysis or ballistics testing – the solving of the crime relies almost entirely on his

deductive skills. And he doesn't have the advantage of today's investigators, who benefit from instant communication and the latest technological advances.

**Q. Would you say the level of research needed for historical novels is much more intense than its contemporary counterpart?**

Just different, I think. In some ways, it can be easier, because there's a fixed body of knowledge that doesn't change – and in my case, I have the wonderful resources of New York City's libraries and historical societies readily available. With contemporary research, there's tremendous challenge in keeping up with rapid changes in society, particularly technology. I read a terrific novel recently where the plot twist centered on a cell phone SIM card. But competing technology already features cell phones without SIM cards, and if that technology eventually prevails, then it will affect writers' plotting options.

**Q. Do you take artistic liberties with the city's history or are you a stickler for fact?**

I love New York City's history and I always aim for accuracy when incorporating real events. But I write historical fiction, creating a world that's part-real and part-invented. So my real goal is to remain grounded in the spirit of the times, even when I abandon strict historical accuracy for my own inventions. I'd like to think that blend - of the real and the imagined - is actually part of historical fiction's appeal.

For example, in *Secret of the White Rose*, there were no large-scale bombings of the sort I fictionalize in 1906. There wouldn't be in New York, not until the Wall Street Bombing of 1920. But could there have been? Absolutely. Anarchists were active not just in New York, but throughout the US and Europe. The sitting president at the time was Teddy Roosevelt, who had been elevated from the vice-presidency after the anarchist Leon Czolgosz assassinated President McKinley in 1901. Anarchist leader Alexander Berkman had just been released from prison for his attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick. And the pages of The New York Times and other papers were filled with stories of dynamite bombings by anarchists as well as by other groups like the Black Hand. The threats were a constant source of concern for the police and all public officials.

To learn more about Stefanie visit: [www.stefaniepintoff.com](http://www.stefaniepintoff.com)

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

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**WHAT'S NOOSE?**





## Short Stories

Richard Ciciarelli, "The Body in the Yard," *Woman's World*, 10 February 2011.

Nina Mansfield, "Summer Reading," *Mysterical-E*, Winter 2010-2011.

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. *Italicize* book and magazine titles and put "quotes" around the titles of short stories and articles.

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## ASK THE LAWYER

**Dear Bob,**

**How long does copyright last? I want to put my grandfather's articles up on a website I've designed. He was published in an Irish paper from 1933-1948 and the newspaper says I can use them. Should I do anything else to make sure I'm safe?**

**- Concerned**

Dear Concerned,

Copyright is territorial. The duration of copyright protection varies from country to country.

It also varies within the United States, depending on when the work was created. For published books or articles written by a US resident between January 1, 1923 and December 31, 1977, copyright protection lasted 28 years, and, if renewed in the US copyright office, continued for another twenty-eight years. Due to various congressional extensions, such works, if properly renewed, are still protected.

Published books or articles written by a US resident on or after January 1, 1978 are protected by US copyright for the life of the author plus seventy years.

Works that were created but not published prior to January 1, 1978 are also protected for the life of the author plus seventy years, and, if published before January 1, 2003, continue until at least December 31, 2047.

You said that the article was published by a newspaper in Ireland. If your grandfather lived in Ireland



when he wrote the article, then the copyright in the article would be protected by Irish copyright, which also lasts for seventy years after the death of the author. As to who controls the copyright, it would likely be either the newspaper or your grandfather's heirs, including, I assume, you.

So, assuming your grandfather resided in Ireland when he wrote the article, and that you have the newspaper's written permission and your own permission, you have all necessary rights to publish the article. Assuming further that your grandfather is no longer living, that you are not his sole heir, and that your family, rather than the newspaper, owns the copyright, you may owe each of your siblings and cousins a share of any profits you derive from such publication, such as advertising revenue from your website.

If your grandfather lived in the US when he wrote the article, and if the Irish publication was the only publication, then I think (without research I am not certain) that it would still be considered unpublished under US copyright law, and the article would become public domain seventy years after your grandfather's death. If that time period has not yet elapsed, then copyright ownership would be as described in the preceding paragraph.

As often is the case in the law, even an apparently simple question can require a long, complicated and tedious answer!

Good Luck

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.***

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