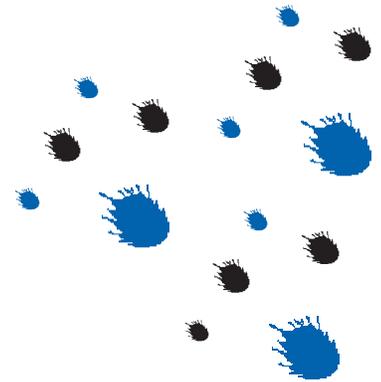




CALLING ALL ...

- ⇨ **MEMBERS** who wish to participate in the Speakers Bureau for Libraries. Contact Sheila York at sheila@sheilayork.com.
- ⇨ **NON-NYC AREA MEMBERS** The Board is very interested in participating in meetings and events around the membership area. Anyone with an idea for an event please contact our President Jane K. Cleland at jane@janecleland.com.
- ⇨ **MEMBERS** wishing to set up library activities in their own community. A checklist is available from MWA/NY to help you organize the event.
- ⇨ **MEMBERS** with legal questions to do with their writing. Send your questions to mhannanmandel@yahoo.com, putting "Ask the Lawyer" in the subject line.
- ⇨ **CONTRIBUTORS** interested in contributing to *The Noose*. Pitch ideas to the editor at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com, putting "Ideas for Noose" in the subject line.



Mystery Writers of America
New York Chapter
32 Broadmoor Lane
Westbury, New York 11590

THE NEW YORK NOOSE





IMPORTANT DATES

Mar. 31: Philly is Murder – Philadelphia, PA.
Apr. 2: Chapter Meeting: Musings on Mystery Readers, Markets, and the Future of Publishing.
Apr. 3: Authors Talk: The Influence of the Maltese Falcon on Your Writing, Mercantile Library
Apr. 8: Tough Gals: The Influence of Sam Spade on the Contemporary Female Detective, Mercantile Library
Apr. 15: Letting Go: Books Into Film, Mercantile Library
Apr. 29 & 30: Edgar Week Crime University, New York
Apr. 30: Professional Thriller: Legal, Medical and Other Murderous Professions, Mercantile Library

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello MWA-NY members,

April is a big month for the chapter. We're running programs at the Mercantile Library (the Merc) and the New York Public Library, and of course, it's Edgar week!

We're partnering with the Mercantile Library www.mercantilelibrary.com to offer three panels. The Merc won a NEA grant as part of its Big Read program. The book the Merc chose is *The Maltese Falcon*. Our panels are: **Authors Talk: The Influence of *The Maltese Falcon* on Your Writing** moderated by Chris Grabenstein www.chrisgrabenstein.com; **Tough Gals: The Influence of Sam Spade on the Contemporary Female Detective** moderated by Jane K. Cleland www.janecleland.net; **Letting Go: Books Into Film** moderated by Jonathan Santlofer www.jonathansantlofer.com. The panels are free and open to the public. If you're in town, we'd love to see you.

We'd also love to see you at the MWA/NY-sponsored panel at the New York Public Library on April 30. Robert Knightly, former president of the chapter and editor of *Queens Noir*, will moderate the panel on **Professional Thriller: Legal, Medical, and Other Murderous Professions** www.mwa-ny.org/pdf/thrillers430.pdf.

Our monthly meeting, on April 2, 2008, features Andy Martin, publisher of St. Martin's Minotaur www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.php. Don't forget that the program will be available as a downloadable podcast www.mwa-ny.org/pastmeet.php within a week of the meeting. The podcasts are for members only, so you'll need the password. (User name and password are the same—mwanyc.)

The Edgars fall on May 1, 2008. National is expanding the symposium into a longer, more robust Crime University www.theedgars.com/symposium.html.

I hope to see you there! I'll be moderating the Agents panel on April 30, 2008, at 3:20 **Meet the Agents: Why Are They and What Do They Do?** www.theedgars.com/symposium.html.

With regards,

Jane

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Hi all,

Since I became editor of *The Noose* last June many things have changed and this has, inevitably, led to excitement and even confusion. I have found this position invigorating, challenging and an opportunity to develop new ideas. I've been very touched by the willingness of all of those involved to try, to change, to work and to donate their time unstintingly. *The Noose* is a work in progress and we're striving to make it the best membership tool it can possibly be. I appreciate your bearing with us during this time of growth and experimentation—please continue to let me know what you think at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com.

Slainte!

Marie
(you know, Marry rhyming with Larry)



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Surfing, for Mystery Writers: Part IV

by Peter J. Watson

Each month, I chop the Internet into bite-sized pieces. My preference is for sites that aren't overloaded with marketing, but if I happen to know the people from the MWA, I might toss their URLs into the mix anyway.

Here, you'll find a grab bag of blogs and sites that are generally concerned with writers, writing and publishing. But it's a little more subjective than that, so you'll also see a couple of random entries. Please don't spend too much time on them. (I do.)

<http://bookbitch.blogspot.com/>

Belying the stage name, Bookbitch seems like a nice person. Her content is enthusiastic, funny and visceral. Apparently, she's a voracious reader who spends a lot of her life creating this blog, which is filled with news, reviews and contests. She's also conflicted about the inordinate amount of time that she spends in keeping her site interesting. We love over-achievers.

<http://www.poesdeadlydaughters.blogspot.com>

This is a group-produced blog for mystery lovers, featuring the combined talents of Sandra Parshall, Lonnie Cruse, Elizabeth Zelvin, Sharon Wildwind, Julia Buckley, and Darlene Ryan along with guest blogs and interviews. Topics range from the travails of writing to the joys of reading. Named "one of eight top mystery blogs" by Library Journal.

<http://www.cronaca.com/>

The webmaster/head honcho here is a personal friend who lives in Providence, RI. David Nishimura deals in antique writing instruments, e.g. pens and such. His blog has a bias towards art history and archaeological matters and is a treasure trove of the arcane. Unique and stimulating, the site is always surprising and fun to visit.

<http://www.mediabistro.com/galleycat/>

Galleycat covers the publishing biz from an insider's point of view, and one often finds more scoop here than one does in the conventional press. It's not particularly snide and the writing is authoritative. As with all of the sites I list, you can find links to other smart blogs.

<http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/books/>

Nice. English. Well-designed and informative, the books section is about contemporary culture and book marketing. The Brits just know how to do this journalism thing right, don't they? Grab a cup of tea and a chocolate bicky and you can access audio pieces from the BBC's Radio 4, provided your computer has RealPlayer.

<http://www.sarahweinman.com/>

Also known as Confessions of an Idiosyncratic Mind: Crime Fiction, (and more), this highly-rated site is the home of Sarah Weinman, a New York writer and columnist who has a Masters degree in Forensic Science. She provides exceptional coverage on wide-ranging panoply of dark subjects. If you have time to visit only one of my references, make it this one.

<http://www.livescience.com>

So what if you didn't get the high school physics prize? You can make up for it now. This site is a rich repository of scientific facts, trivia and news, all in one. Their Top Ten lists are cool. Lately they've installed more ad banners in place, but you can easily skip these by clicking aggressively.

<http://detectivesbeyondborders.blogspot.com/>

Peter Rozovsky, a copy editor in Philadelphia, must have ink-stained hands. The site discusses the work of a host of international crime writers in considerable, thought-provoking detail. It's depressing how many fantastic books are being published every day by great writers, especially if you're trying to live, read, be a civilized human being, pay the bills and write a few books of your own. But if you visit places like this, you'll find the things you like, faster.

Next:

Sites that show some of the newer types of book marketing, from book trailers to community-building MySpace sites. Reactions or suggestions to Peter@peterwatsonworld.com

One Story's Far Journey

by Bill Chambers

My short story "If I Quench Thee..." has just been published as an Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Classic in the April 2008 issue which went on sale the end of January. This is a story about a racially motivated murder that ironically mystery magazines like Hitchcock, Queen, Shayne, etc. wouldn't publish in the 70's because with the murder of President and Senator Kennedy and Dr. King, the Civil Rights movement was turbulent and race relations were sensitive.

I had been studying the work of O. Henry back then in order to hone my skill regarding irony and create a story that ended with a (hopefully) breathtaking twist. I am not sure what possessed me to weave race relations into the plot except perhaps that this was a major news topic of the time. Anyway, many editors liked the twist but wouldn't touch the story. So, I shelved it and went on to other mysterious endeavors. But it annoyed me that this story just sat in a drawer. Luckily, Bill Pronzini came into town from San Francisco for the Edgar awards and I mentioned my frustration to him. Bill was intrigued and explained that he and Joe Gores were putting together a hardcover anthology for MWA. So he asked me to mail a copy to him and to Joe. I did and they courageously accepted it for publication in

Tricks and Treats, Crime Club, Doubleday, 1976.

This story achieved no further acclaim until 1984 when Collins Publishers UK acquired it for inclusion in educational anthology, *A Question of Blood*, which became required reading in the London secondary school (high school) system. I figured my story had run its course until Allison & Busby, London, published it in crime anthology *Red Handed* in 1989. Now in 2008, "Quench" has sprung to life again with its Hitchcock publication and in an educational textbook by Hodder and Gibbons, (Scotland, UK) titled, *Intermediate 2 English*. Starting in January 2008, this book, complete with CD-ROM, will become mandatory reading in public schools throughout Scotland for students ranging in age from 15 to 17.

Apparently, various publishers are on the lookout for stories to reprint. Alfred Hitchcock Editor, Linda Landrigan summed it up this way: "I usually look for classics that are in the public domain. Your story was a little unusual for us, but I thought it captured our society in a moment in time and I think it's good to be reminded of our old attitudes from time to time, lest we fall back into them again. And on top of that, I felt it was an excellent, well-written story."

SEX AND THE MYSTERY NOVEL

by Lisa Cotoggio

To be or not to be... That is the question, is it not? In today's society, SEX is still a dirty word, and although this is not true in many European cultures, most of us are not writing for the European market – so what's an author to do?

I, for one, believe that sex, like curse words, belong in a story only if it is absolutely necessary – if no other word fits or if sex is a must to drive the story forward. Once this necessity is determined, a writer has no choice but to commit.

How does one decide, you ask?

With the mystery genre now covering such a wide array of categories from amateur sleuth to hard-boiled detective; from cat to techno-thriller—the task of figuring out what type of mystery novel you are writing can be a daunting one – let alone trying to decide if your story warrants sex scenes or not.

What defines necessity?

This is where common sense comes in. If you are writing what would be classified as a Cat, Classic, Disaster, Holiday, Medical, Religious Fiction, Supernatural, Techno-Thriller, Vampire, Young Adult or Young Reader novel, you might want to refrain from adding sex scenes simply because they might seem out of place in your story. But if you are penning an Espionage, Historical, Humorous, Married Couple, Police Procedural, Secret Agent or Thriller, you seriously need to consider inserting sex scenes, not just because they are viable in this type of setting, but because sex sells, especially in these type of books.

Have you ever been deeply enthralled in a story where you feel the tension and anticipation build? You read on, it's coming, you're about to reach the part where the two main characters finally come together, you swallow hard and turn the page...only to be disappointed by that one boring sentence. They made love.

I know I have, countless times I might add, and it makes me wonder—what was the author thinking? What's a writer to do if he or she finds writing about sex scenes difficult and the temptation to skip over with one line is overwhelming?

Experiment:

How did they make love? There are many forms of lovemaking, just as there are many forms of marketing; you have your soft sell, your hard sell, and everything in between. I suggest you take the less is more approach by knowing your protagonist. Whether the protag is male or female, amateur sleuth or detective, they must all share a common denominator—humanity.

Try this exercise:

Breathe, close your eyes and relax. Think back to a time, a place, a person, a moment. Let yourself see it, feel it, live it, until it comes alive in your mind as if you are there experiencing it all over again. Now open your eyes, and write. And remember, when it comes to writing sex scenes, the choice is not entirely yours if you truly let your characters come to life with all the experiences that implies.

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

HOW THE WRITERS GUILD STRIKE SETTLEMENT MAY AFFECT YOU

Okay, you've read about our sloshing around in the snow and rain with picket signs for nearly four months. But how does that affect the writer of mystery novels? Very much, if you're also a member of WGA as a good number of whodunit scribes are. However if you're not a member, WGA can still help you.

Let us say that your novel has been sold to a company that wants to adapt it for television/movies/and/or the Internet, and that your agent has succeeded in getting you first adaptation rights. You are now a screenplay/teleplay writer eligible to join the Writers Guild of America which as a result of the strike has won jurisdiction over material written for the Internet. The Guild can ensure that you are fairly compensated in the new media as well as in the traditional ones.

But the best is yet to come. Starting in the 3rd year of the contract (2010) you would then receive a percentage of distributor's gross each time your work is shown on the Internet once certain conditions have been met. Never before has a percentage of gross been achieved by writers, actors, directors, or anyone else.

There is the fabled story of an actor known as the king of Hollywood, who won an unprecedented percentage of profits for his role in a blockbuster movie (yes, the one about the Civil War.) In terms of dollars, his percentage turned out to be zero, zilch, nada. By Hollywood sleight-of-hand (a/k/a creative accounting) a movie can make no profit and yet be one of the highest grossers in history. We learned our lesson. Percentage of gross is what we demanded in the new media, and what we achieved.

If you are asked to write for the Internet or any other on-screen media, or if you want to inquire about Guild eligibility you may call Ann Toback, Assistant Executive Director of the Guild, for guidance about your particular case. The Guild number is (212) 767-7800.

Jerome Coopersmith, Member MWA, WGA
Former Vice President of the Writers Guild of America East
Council Member for three decades



REMINDEES

- * Join us on the newsgroup and give the chapter the opportunity to serve you better with e-Noose, email newsflashes and a forum to discuss your work with other writers. Join at MWA-NY@yahoogroups.com.
- * Don't miss **Philly is Murder!** at The Irish Pub, 1123 Walnut Street, 2nd Floor, Philadelphia., PA 19107, Monday, March 31st 6:30pm. For details, contact stacialand@verizon.net.
- * Join us at the National Arts Club on April 2nd to meet Andrew Martin, publisher of St. Martin's Minotaur: "**Musings on Mystery Readers, Markets, and the Future of Publishing.**" Don't miss this opportunity to hear from one of the world's leading mystery publishers about: market trends—what St. Martin's Minotaur is buying now, what they expect to buy in the future, and how e-publishing is likely to affect St. Martin's Minotaur and its authors looking forward; getting published—what makes for a mystery standout, and how contest opportunities differ from "going over the transom"; breaking out—what it takes to break through the noise, how to get national reviews, and what an author can do to help or hinder sales; and reaching readers—how the marketplace is changing, how audience make-up is shifting, and what St. Martin's Minotaur is doing to grow the market.
- * An opportunity to discuss the influence of *The Maltese Falcon* is available as part of the MWA/NY and Mercantile Library's **BIG READ** program. Three panels are being held at the Mercantile Library www.mwa-ny.org/library.php – 4/3 – **Authors Talk: The Influence of *The Maltese Falcon* on Your Writing**; 4/8 – **Tough Gals: The Influence of Sam Spade on the Contemporary Female Detective**; 4/15 – **Letting Go: Books Into Film**.
- * Mark your calendar for the series of mystery writing panels to be held at the Mid-Manhattan Library, 40th Street and Fifth Avenue at 6:30 p.m. on the sixth floor 4/30 – **Professional Thrillers: Legal and Medical Murder** www.mwa-ny.org/pdf/thrillers430.pdf; 5/20 – **Late Bloomers Dream Big: Publishing a First Mystery in Midlife** www.mwa-ny.org/pdf/late520.pdf; 6/17 – **Murder and Mayhem at Work: Deadly Antiques, Cooks, and Gardens** www.mwa-ny.org/pdf/murder617.pdf.



ASK THE WRITER

A CONVERSATION WITH LINDA FAIRSTEIN – PART II

by Lisa Cotoggio

What's it like touring with *Killer Heat*?

It's impossible to put enough enthusiasm into this answer. I just love touring! Many of my friends can't stand it, and some won't do it. The travel is grueling these days—that's just a given. But for me, it's a chance to meet the readers who have given life to Alex and Mike with their enthusiasm, and to engage with the booksellers who introduce these characters to new readers with every book. I've got loyal readers—friends now—who have come to every signing since the first tour in 1996—at the Poisoned Pen or High Crimes or Murder by the Book or M is for Mystery and on down the wonderful road of bookstores all over the country. I look forward to seeing them, to learning from their comments what they like—or don't like—about the new book, and to lift a glass of wine (or Dewar's) to celebrate the 10th in the series. I love a great book tour, and my friends at Doubleday have lined up an exciting one for me, which will be on my website on March 1 www.lindafairstein.com.

Any tips for writers who want to get out there and promote their books, but don't have the opportunity to because of budget restraints?

There are so many things we can do now to self-promote. Many are opportunities provided by the web, of course—very accessible and free.

- 1) I started with a modest website—and you can still have those made for a reasonable amount of money. Everything on the web becomes pretty viral—whether it's a site, or blogging on some of the mystery blogs and listserves all around.
- 2) I've found that alumni magazines and contacts are hugely useful—and free. Send your latest publication to your college alumni magazine with the jacket art. Worst that happens is that they plug the book (my college alumni magazine publishes quarterly, and each time has a list of alumni authors and publications), and best is that they may do a feature article.
- 3) Same for grad schools. It reaches thousands and thousands of alumni, you don't need a publicist to do it, and it's free.
- 4) How about friends in the business? We tend to be a very chummy, kind group of folks. If you started out with someone who's made it further than you...reach out and ask her/him to help.
- 5) MWA chapter associations—and the national—are great for that. I know how hard it is to get started, and I love to help someone who hasn't had the lucky break yet (and no, each of us can't do it for everyone...but for some). I can remember every single writer who was good to me at the outset, and that's a gift I'll only be able to repay by helping someone trying to come up behind me.

Anything you can suggest to new writers in terms of what they should do to gain the attention of their publisher, so the marketing department allots them a bigger budget?

I don't think anyone can do anything about this—unless you give them a terrific, polished product to work with, and perhaps if you have a strong agent who is in your corner and willing to fight for you. You should already *HAVE* the attention of your publisher since they bought the book, and only the authors at the very top of the heap will have much to say about a piece of the marketing budget. We're the creative end, so the best you can do is give them the best book you can, and let your agent deal with the business arrangements.

Was there ever any point in your development as a writer where you may have handled things differently if you knew then what you know now?

I can't think of many things I'd do differently, but that's such a personal call. I started as a prosecutor in 1972...ancient history. Thirty years later, when I left the office in 2002, I had a hard time stepping down. I loved every minute of my job—like Alex does—constantly challenging, evolving (I was one of the first prosecutors in America to be introduced to DNA in 1986, before it was ever accepted for use in the criminal justice system), and helping survivors triumph in the courts and regain their dignity. My salary when I left the office was less than a graduating law student was paid that year by the big law firms in New York. So my first advance for the two Cooper novels was greater by far than my salary. It was enough to let me leave public service and devote myself to writing full time. But for me, it wasn't about the money, and so I stayed in the office for another six years, because I had these two passions—the law and literature—and here I was, able to do both at once! There's no question in my mind that the writing of the early books suffered by that decision. They aren't as well-written or as well-paced as the later books, and there wasn't one a year (a real gift if you're doing a series, because fans truly attach to the characters they like if they can see them on a regular basis). But I simply wasn't ready to give up my work as a district attorney. For many others, the choice would be different. I think my career might be in a different place today, but it's a decision I don't regret for a minute. It represents the kind of choice that many writers have—or will be offered—as they try to advance their careers.

Well, you've been very gracious with your time, thank you, and best of luck to you and *Killer Heat*.

Thanks so much for inviting me to talk with you. I love keeping current with all my MWA friends through *The Noose*.

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



PAUL DOYLE: UNDERCOVER DRUG AGENT AS DYNAMO

by Penelope Karageorge

Zam! Pow! Dancing like a boxer, occasionally punching the air with his fist for emphasis, Paul E. Doyle, former federal undercover agent for Dangerous Drugs Enforcement (DDE) mesmerized New York's MWA members as he took them inside the world of pimps, pushers, and dangerous drug dealers. Doyle's the author of a memoir published by Northeastern University Press, *Hot Shots and Heavy Hits: Tales of an Undercover Drug Agent*, a true crime story documenting his dangerous career on the front lines of law enforcement.

According to Doyle, an undercover agent must possess two important assets. "First, you have to be honest. And you have to be flexible. You have to be able to adapt. No matter what you're doing, you're always thinking ahead. But there's no controlling events. You don't know what you're going to do until you're in situations. You can have discussions of what everyone's going to do. But things never go that way."

His experiences took him throughout the United States, infiltrating the Cosa Nostra, the Irish mob in Boston, motorcycle gangs, drug cartels, and the Chinese mob. He spent one summer posing as pimp with a real-life prostitute/pusher, Lulu, who had turned informant. His goal: to close down a huge Boston Chinatown operation that was importing the purest heroin from Hong Kong, a drug known as "China White." After months of harrowing work, Doyle was able to write "mission accomplished." Doyle observed: "At the time I wasn't nervous. I felt

invincible. But looking back, I don't know if I could do it again."

What motivates a pusher like Lulu to turn informant? "Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, they want to stay out of jail. It's either money, or freedom," he pointed out.

Doyle began life as an orphan. When he was five, a Boston couple, a truck-driver father who read Dostoyevsky and Cervantes, and a laundry-worker mother, adopted him. As a kid, he took up boxing, and in 1967 became the Heavyweight Champion of New England. Attending Rutgers University on a full football scholarship, he was looking forward to graduation, getting married, and pursuing a professional career as a boxer, when tragedy struck.

His younger brother, a paratrooper with the 101st airborne, was killed in Vietnam. Heartbroken and outraged, Doyle joined the services, became a paratrooper, and eventually a Green Beret. Volunteering for duty in Vietnam, he was sent to Korea. Ready to re-up, he heard that, "the DDE was looking for young men with top secret clearances and combat experience, who could work with the government undercover."

Doyle checked it out. "The interview process was like nothing I've ever seen. A bunch of scruffy-looking men of all ethnic persuasions and nationalities sat around a table and talked. Before I realized it, I was matching wits with these guys. I liked them. When I was overseas, a number of young guys I knew had become addicted to drugs. I felt that as an individual soldier, I wasn't going to change the world, but maybe doing this, I could make a difference."

Doyle assumed the street name of Paulie Sullivan. Arriving home in undercover mufti, he would read bedtime stories to his four daughters, who had no idea what he did. Married to an understanding woman, he managed to keep his worlds separate.

"I had the fancy suits, the long hair, the coke spoon, the Rolodex watch, the diamond ring, the hat, the beard. My appearance would change according to the group I was working with. One day a friend, an assistant U.S. Attorney, asked me to show a couple of actors who would be playing undercover agents how to hold guns like professionals. The actors pointed out to me that if they made a mistake, they could do another take. If I made a mistake, it was all over. It occurred to me then that we were actors, on a really big stage."

Doyle is currently at work on a novel.

Penelope Karageorge, a freelance journalist, is the author of *Murder At Tomorrow* (Walker) and is currently at work on a new crime novel, *The Hype Artist*.

ASK THE LAWYER



Dear Bob,

I have finished my mystery novel and am now looking for representation. The book is set in New York but those who have read it say it seems to be more like the English mystery writers than American ones. Someone suggested sending my book to English as well as American agents. I have two questions about this: are there any legal repercussions in working with an overseas agent? As I am American would I be better off with an American agent or should I broaden my search?
— English Miss

Dear English Miss:

I can only think of a few possible repercussions, and none of those is so severe as to discourage you from seeking representation/publication in the UK:

A UK publisher is not likely to be familiar with US copyright registration requirements. So you'll have to register your own copyright on publication of your book. This is only a minimal inconvenience and expense... you can find the necessary form and instructions at www.copyright.gov/forms/formtxi.pdf. You will need a copy of the UK edition to deposit with the Library of Congress (to be submitted together with the copyright application).

For the same reason, you will also need to ask the UK publisher to include a US copyright notice on the reverse of the title page of your book: "Copyright © 200_, [your name]"

If you will be receiving payments directly from your UK agent or publisher, you should ask an accountant (or the IRS help line) whether the IRS will accept any kind of evidence other than a standard 1099 form, because I doubt that the UK agent or publisher will routinely issue such form.

You should also ask your bank what fees it will charge for receiving and converting UK pounds (or euros) into dollars.

From somewhere around the beginning of time until 1986, it was illegal to import into the United States English language literary works by US authors which had been printed outside of the US or Canada. While that provision of the Copyright Act is no longer enforced, continuing sensitivity of US Customs officials to the piracy concerns of US publishers might conceivably result in difficulties importing carton quantities of UK-published copies of your book. I'm not sure what one can do to avoid such problems, but it can't hurt to anticipate the worst.

Finally, the UK home market is a lot smaller than is the US market. So a sale there is not likely to generate the kind of advance and royalties you'd hope to receive from a US publisher. While it is not at all impossible for a UK literary agent to make a sale to a US publisher, I think it is less likely to happen than if you use a US literary agent for that purpose.

For that reason alone, I would test the waters with US literary agents before crossing the pond, and only if you cannot find a US agent, or if your US agent cannot place your book with a US publisher, would I then seek representation and publication in the UK.

Dear Bob,

Can contest editors legally require writers to give them an exclusive right to consider the publication of a novel submitted to them during the lengthy time it takes to decide the winner of the contest?

— A Worried Writer

Dear Worried:

Yes, a contract between two parties can be binding on both parties, where there is mutuality of consideration (i.e., promises running both ways) and where public policy is not violated. For additional information about contests, see my letter response in the December 2007 issue of *The Noose* www.mwa-ny.org/members.php.

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.

Please send your legal questions for Bob to mhannanmandel@yahoo.com