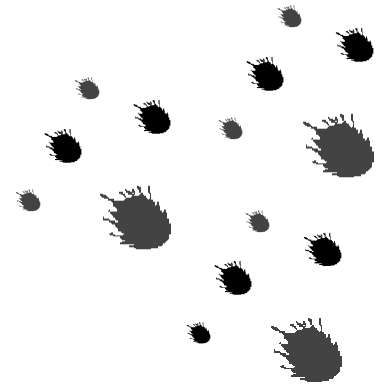


NEIBA

MWA New England and SincC New England members seen at the New England Independent Booksellers Association on Sept. 19-20: Front from left: Jane Cleland, Elizabeth Zelvin, Judy Copek, Toni Kelner, Hank Phillippi Ryan, Meredith Cole, Sheila Connolly (aka Sarah Atwell). Back from left: Sibylle Barrasso, Rosemary Harris, Dana Cameron.

Photo Credit – Elizabeth Zelvin



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

THE NEW YORK
NOOSE



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear MWA/NY Members,

The Noose continues to evolve thanks to our editor, Marie Hannan Mandel, and her excellent team. Their focus is on beefing up the content... please let us know what you think.

Our new season of library programs at the New York Public Library Midtown branch is up and running. There's still availability for our Active Members to join a panel from March to June 2009. Please check out the library page of our website for information about the topics. Let Cordelia Frances Biddle, our coordinator, know your preferences. Her contact info is on the website, too.

We're just back from attending conferences at NEIBA and NAIBA where our stellar teams organized and staffed the MWA/NY Chapter booths. Thanks to Jeff Cohen, Meredith Cole, and Rosemary Harris. We distributed hundreds of members' promotional materials. Thanks also to the many members who came to sign at our booths.

The MWA/NY Speakers Bureau is close to launch—stay tuned.

This year's Winter Revels, on December 3, 2008, will be held at the National Arts Club. I hope to see you there, or at another program.

With regards,

Jane Cleland
President MWA-NY

IMPORTANT DATES

November 3 – Deadline for MWA/NY Mentor Program
November 5 – Investigating Medical Murderers -
Chapter Meeting – National Arts Club
November 18 – Changing Careers: Writing Mysteries
Later in Life – Mid-Manhattan Library
December 3 – Winter Revels – National Arts Club
December 16 – Literary Mysteries: Creating Order
From Chaos – Mid-Manhattan Library
January 7, 2009 – What They Want From You Now:
Top Mystery Editors Reveal All – National Arts Club
January 2009 – American Library Association Meeting,
Philadelphia, PA

MYSTERY MANUSCRIPTS WANTED

The deadline for the MWA/NY Mentor Program is November 3. Details have been mailed to all members and are available on the MWA/NY website. This once-a-year program offers members an opportunity to have the first fifty pages of their mystery manuscript or a short story critiqued by an active member of the chapter. The three most highly rated submissions (completed novels only), will be read by a literary agent.

We invite submissions from unpublished writers and from published writers looking to take their careers in a new direction.

MWA Mentor Program Committee, Catherine
Maiorisi, Chairperson.

Table of Contents

Surfing for Mystery Writers, Part VII... pg 2; Secrets of Grand Central Terminal Revealed... pg 3; Ask the Writer... pg 4;
A Tribute to Jerry A. Rodriguez... pg 5; What's Noose... pg 5; Library Conversations... pg 5; Ask the Lawyer... pg 6;
Set a Scene in Grand Central... *Terminal*... pg 6; Meeting Notes—The New Ethnic Detectives... pg 7; NEIBA... pg 8

EDITOR'S LETTER



Hi all,

The challenge facing me, as editor of *The Noose*, is making sure that this newsletter keeps you informed about all the chapter's activities—both ongoing and in-the-works, as well as providing fun and enlightening items. I hope that you readers will continue to keep *The Noose* informed of all that is interesting and of relevance to our chapter members.

In addition to our regular columns—*Ask the Lawyer*, *Surfing for Mystery Writers* and an *Ask the Writer* interview with the late Jerry A. Rodriguez—in this issue we have reports from the Grand Central Terminal visit. On August 8th ten lucky chapter members got to see what Grand Central Station hides from view. Two members of the visiting group have written their reactions to this rare treat.

There's room for your ideas and suggestions at *The Noose*. I look forward to hearing from you at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com

Slainte!

Marie

(you know, Marry rhyming with Larry)



EDITOR: Marie Hannan-Mandel

ART DIRECTOR/DESIGN/PRODUCTION: Stephen Hausler

WEB MISTRESS: Miki Fujiwara

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Evelyn David, E.W. Count

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Peter Watson, Lisa Cotoggio, Penelope Karageorge, Thelma Straw, Maggie Schnader, Lois Karlin,

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE: Ken Isaacson, G. Miki Hayden

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VICE-PRESIDENT: Jillian Abbott

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WHAT'S NOOSE EDITOR

Peggy Ehrhart - send all entries to pehrhart@sprynet.com

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SURFING FOR MYSTERY WRITERS PART VII

by P.J. Watson

Fall is a great time for nestling up to a good book, or writing one, or even basking in the warm rays emanating from your computer screen. This month's column presents a mixed bag of eclectic sites and lists that you may find interesting.

www.livescience.com/strangenews/080502-strange-humans.html

I've sent readers to this site before, but the page I'm listing deals with many of the emotional qualities that make humans, well, human. Things like: why we tell lies, procrastinate, eat, cheat, gossip, chase immortality. Grist for your writer's mill.

www.sciencedaily.com/articles/matter_energy/forensics/

Check out the Forensics section, which highlights new developments in this sexy, bloodlusty branch of science, along with all kinds of other discoveries. Ignore the ads telling you how to get rid of stubborn belly fat. Learn why solving crimes with fingerprints will soon be rather déclassé.

www.reviewingtheevidence.com/default.html

Here we have a comprehensive site containing thousands of book reviews. Hosted by Barbara Franchi, the reviews are submitted by 30 people from around the globe, all of them avid fans of mystery. Moreover, no tie-ins with publishers, so the reviews are honest. One enjoyable feature here is a regular column called "Sixty Seconds With..." in which a long list of mystery authors answer a short series of questions. These mini-interviews give fun insights into the inner workings of mysterious minds, some of them MWA members.

www.time.com/time

This is the online version of Time magazine. Except for the fact that you can't stuff it in your coat pocket, it seems just about as good as the magazine. It's condensed. Better still, it's free.

www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/crime-fiction-around-the-world-in-80-sleuths-873660.html

The Independent is a British newspaper. The url will take you to a webpage in the Books section, where you'll find a list that can take you around the world in 80 mystery books. Do this in full and you'll likely be reading for several years. By way of compensation, you'll explore the world and meet many compelling detectives. I can personally recommend Robert Camilleri's Inspector Montalbano (Sicily), Karin Fosse's Inspector Sejer (Norway) and Henning Mankell's Inspector Kurt Wallendar (Sweden) to name but a few.

www.hardcasecrime.com/

The site is all-American, but has nothing to do with Mom and apple pie. Charles Ardai is famous as a writer/publisher who spearheads the movement that aims to keep hardboiled fiction alive and kicking. Hard Case is his publishing company, and this is his website. The book jacket artwork alone is worth perusing at leisure. You'll also be exposed to many great titles by authors you may know (King, as in Stephen), or could get to know better.

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

Query Shark and hostess of this blog is Janet Reid, a literary agent. She's not only helpful in her assessments of query letters that aspiring writers send in for evaluation, (she doesn't post anything without express permission), but Reid is acidly funny in her critiques. She should probably be writing comedy. In the meantime, she must be a great agent.

Peter Watson is an advertising copywriter and author of *All the Wrong People*, a mystery novel he's hoping to see published one fine day. Questions, comments to: Peter@watsoncrime.com



The New Ethnic Detectives

by Maggie Schnader

At the September 3rd dinner meeting at the National Arts Club **Robert Knightly** moderated a panel of five award-winning novelists whose mystery series feature ethnic detectives.

Did you know?

- Ethnicity is complicated today; the challenges are as much gender and class as ethnicity. Today's demographic trends suggest that ethnicity is fast becoming the new majority.
- **Joseph Trigoboff** told us that street fighters in East New York (where he grew up) and Brownsville were not bothered by the taking of a life. Killing a person was considered a good character trait.
- In the East New York of Mr. Trigoboff's experience, women were given out to the toughest street fighters. Mr. Knightly opened the session by asking each of the panelists how they came up with the protagonist for their novels.
- **Suzanne Chazin** writes about a female in a typically male job; her sleuth, Irish-American Georgia Skeeahan, is a NYC female firefighter turned fire marshal who is more gender challenged than ethnically challenged.
- **Joanne Dobson**, herself an academic, created Professor Karen Pelletier as a character of French-Canadian heritage with street smarts because she wanted a conflict between her protagonist and the New England academic culture around her.
- **Joseph Trigoboff**, a poet, decided to use what he knew best—his own background—in his mystery novels. His Polish detective, Alvin Yablonsky, who works Manhattan's seamy East side, grew up in East New York in a culture totally alien to middle-class values where, as did his creator, he had to get along in a world of street fighters and war lords.

- **Persia Walker** wanted a sleuth who felt in exile as she did when she lived in Germany for ten years. Her female protagonist, Leonie Price, a society reporter of Harlem's power vortex during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, is an anomaly for her time.

- **K.j.a. Wishnia** wanted to get far away from himself so he chose an Ecuadorian-born PI, Filomena Buscasela, a female, who pursues justice in Corona, Queens. (Wishnia admits his wife is Ecuadorian.)

The moderator, Robert Knightly, noted that while there were three women and two men on the panel, there were four female protagonists and only one male. He asked the panelists to comment on the problem of writing from the point of view of the opposite sex. He also asked if the women were ever tempted to choose a male sleuth.

Suzanne Chazin said for her female protagonist tension comes from always wondering if she can trust the guy. (Ms. Chazin was told by one agent that it is easier to promote yourself in the same gender.)

By using a woman instead of a man as his sleuth, K.j.a. Wishnia increased for himself the sense of being an outsider and alien to the culture. He talked about drawing upon his own sense of vulnerability and applying that in creating his female "outsider." Mr. Wishnia is now working on his first male protagonist.

Joanne Dobson revealed that the Lieutenant, Karen Pelletier's love interest, walked into the novel one day and "hasn't shut up yet." She says everyone is in love with him; even men like him because he is a model of working-class nobility.

Persia Walker's first protagonist, a male African-American lawyer in the 1920s, is both a woman's dream man and a man's man. Ms. Walker made sure that her male characterization was honest by checking him out with a male friend. Ms. Walker said that an important feature of her historical novels is showing how blacks are prejudiced among themselves, the prejudice being of class, not racism.

Writing Points

- ☞ K.j.a. Wishnia says that if you are too comfortable with your protagonist you may not have chosen him/her well.
- ☞ Joanne Dobson's advice to new writers is not to marry the inspector and the female protagonist in the first book; play out the tension in future books.
- ☞ Although Mr. Wishnia's first Filomena Buscasela novel, a self-published book, was nominated for both an Edgar and an Anthony, he cautioned the audience that self-published novels are no longer eligible to be nominated for an Edgar.

Maggie Schnader reports on the very British experience in "The Empress of Blandings Was a Sow" in Plum Lines, the quarterly journal of the Wodehouse Society, Vol. 28, No. 3, Autumn 2007.



ASK THE LAWYER

Dear Bob,

A publisher wants to publish my book, which is great. My friend, who is an artist, and I always promised that we would help each other out when we became successful and I wondered if I can insist that the

publisher use her artwork for my cover. Is it OK to ask?

Can I have it written into my contract?

Thanks for your advice,

A Friend in Need.

Dear Friend in Need:

It is highly unlikely that you will succeed, unless perhaps the publisher falls in love with your friend's artwork.

Only the most successful authors... i.e. those whose books earn the most money for themselves and their publishers... are able to obtain cover approval in their contracts.

Even in those cases, I have never seen a clause in a book contract which permitted the author to force the publisher to use artwork selected by the author on the cover of the book (as opposed to exercising an approval right to force the publisher not to use a particular cover design).

In contract negotiations, you are more likely to get (i) consultation, which means the publisher will wave the cover in front of your face and ignore anything you have to say about it, or (ii) "meaningful consultation", which probably means that the publisher will pretend to listen to anything you have to say, without any obligation to abide by your comments.

The reason is simple: the publisher wants to sell books. That is the publisher's primary consideration, and it will select a cover design which it believes (whether or not correctly) is most likely to sell the most copies of the book.

So you can ask, but you probably will not receive.

Here's a thought: Pay a photographer to take a picture of you with the artwork just next to you. Ask the publisher to use that photo as the author photo on the back cover or inside flap of the book. You have a better chance of success there than on the front cover.

Before you put your friend's artwork on (or in) any book, be sure to get your friend's written permission to do so. The publisher will want to see it, and you can't afford to take the chance that your friend will be offended, rather than pleased, by your reproduction of his or her copyright-protected work.

Best,
Bob

Advice given in this column is general and brief, and is not based upon a thorough review of facts and considerations in any given instance. You should consult your attorney if you need personal 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 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**

Set a Scene in Grand Central... Terminal

Don't call that bustling building on 42nd Street Grand Central Station, warned Metro North's press rep, Daniel Brucker. The turn-of-the-last-century structure, saved as a landmark after the glorious old Penn Station was demolished in the 1960s, can only be described as a *terminal*. A total 1996 refurbishment, and a grand vision of the shopping/transportation mecca the terminal could become, brought the complex into a whole new existence—a place more than half a million New Yorkers and travelers alike visit daily.

Brucker kindly regaled MWA members with stories of the secret life above and below, as well as inside, the main terminal hall. During an August tour and extraordinarily detailed presentation by the guide, Buckner explained how:

On September 11, 2001, a team of employees who hold the location of every piece of transportation machinery in their heads got diesel equipment up and running in the wee hours of the 12th. This allowed the otherwise downed Metro North railroad to deliver stranded commuters to their Westchester homes.

The Metro North police, after a train was boarded and robbed by masked gunmen, tracked down witnesses on the platform and reconstructed the scene, later finding and arresting the evildoers.

The Lost and Found is run precisely. Every single item found on the trains and subways is logged in by train number, car number, and other details that make it possible to return possessions to their owners. This group of workers leaves no stone unturned in getting people back their property, up to and including calling phone numbers listed anywhere on the piece or inside a found computer. And rest assured, no Metropolitan Transit Authority trainman will run off with your three-dollar black, emergency umbrella. That and all other items discovered on the trains are safe and waiting for you to call.

When MWA offers the tour again, jump on that low-priced invitation. Guide Brucker knows everything about the terminal and will reveal what happened there during World War II—and take you into many of the parts of the place inaccessible to the general public.

G. Miki Hayden, author of *The Naked Writer*, a comprehensive style and composition guide.

Secrets of Grand Central Terminal Revealed

by Robert Quackenbush

In August, ten MWA members were treated to a tour that revealed colorful secrets of the world's largest railway station. Organized by **Andrew Peck**, the tour was led by master guide **Daniel Brucker** from the terminal's public relations office. Here are a few highlights:

- Secret #1:** The iron eagle on top of the Lexington Avenue and 43rd Street entrance once adorned the first Grand Central Station in 1898. Construction of Grand Central Terminal was completed in 1913.
- Secret #2:** The zodiac mural of the terminal's Sky Ceiling is depicted backwards because French artist Paul Helleu worked from a medieval manuscript that showed the heavens from outside the celestial sphere.
- Secret #3:** A small black spot on the arch above the 75 ft. high right west window in the main concourse is the last evidence of the dirt and grime that was removed during the 1996-97 cleaning of the concourse.
- Secret #4:** Bridges installed before the giant windows of the main concourse connect to terminal offices on each side of the concourse.
- Secret #5:** Nearly 700,000 people pass through the terminal each day.
- Secret #6:** A rare jewel in plain sight is the clock on top of the information booth in the main concourse with four glass faces made of opal that has been valued at between \$10 million and \$20 million.
- Secret #7:** Underneath the upper level information booth is a hidden circular staircase that leads to the lower level information booth.
- Secret #8:** The terminal's basement is ten stories underground and so off-limits that it doesn't even appear on blueprints. During World War II, a US Army battalion was stationed there to defend New York City.
- Secret #9:** Every square inch of the terminal is guarded. Video cameras can even read the serial numbers on bills being given at ticket booths.
- Secret #10:** The domed entrance to the terminal's lower level is a whispering gallery. The whisper of a person facing one corner of the dome can be heard echo clear by someone facing an opposite corner.
- Secret #11:** Look to the right when your train leaves the terminal and you will see an abandoned platform called Waldorf-Astoria Platform. Years ago it was used by notable guests of the hotel such as FDR.
- Secret #12:** In a huge private chamber in the terminal offices is the Operations Control Center. Along one wall all tracks are shown and computer technicians sit in front and guard the course of each train.
- Secret #13:** The most unusual item claimed in the terminal's Lost and Found was a vase containing the ashes of a woman's dead husband.
- Secret #14:** The acorn, a symbol of growth and prosperity, is the main decorative motif over doorways and passages throughout the terminal.





ASK THE WRITER

A CONVERSATION WITH JERRY A. RODRIGUEZ – PART ONE

by Lisa Cotoggio

Thanks for sitting down to talk today Jerry, as a newly published author, with many congrats on your first book, THE DEVIL'S MAMBO and it's recently released sequel, REVENGE TANGO, I thought we might start off with your experience securing an agent. What was that process like for you?

The best way to get an agent is through a referral. Somebody who knows the agent and is willing to talk to them about your work and get them to read at least a partial manuscript. I even got signed to William Morris that way. That's why even if you're an unpublished writer, you have to go conferences like Bouchercon and get to know people but you can't be shy about it and that's tough on a lot of writers. But nothing in this business is easy. Ironically, I sold this series without an agent. I sent an unsolicited manuscript to Kensington and the editor called me two days later and based on the first two chapters, decided to sign me. They eventually gave me a three-book deal. How crazy is that? Yet five years before William Morris tried to sell *The Devil's Mambo* to publishers around town, couldn't, and eventually lost interest.

Any advice for our unpublished, unagented authors?

Yes. Make sure your writing is up-to-snuff. Be dedicated to your work. Be ambitious. Be relentless. Ask every friend and relative if they know somebody who knows somebody who can help you. Make as many professional contacts as possible, through email and conferences. Ultimately, write because you love it, not because you just want to sell it. I hear too many writers talking about selling and promotion but not about craft.

Okay, so Kensington buys your book; what's next? Can you take us through the publishing phase from manuscript to printed book?

This phase lasts a year or so. You get your editorial notes and do revisions. The cover is designed and back cover copy is written. Author and editor solicit blurbs from established authors. Author completes manuscript and editor accepts, and off it goes to your Copyeditor. You come up with ideas on how to best publicize your book and discuss with editor. Always, always ask your editor what you can do to help. You get back the copyedited manuscript, have a couple of weeks to go over it and approve or delete changes and then you send it back. Cover flats and proof pages are sent to you. You get to see what the cover and the back copy and blurbs look like. You go over page proofs with a fine-tooth comb because that is the last chance to catch any typos. Finally, the galleys/ARC's are printed and sent out to reviewers. You wait and pray that a critic will actually read your book and like it.

You try to set up as many local and regional bookstore readings as possible. Don't expect the publisher to do this for you. You're new? Forget about a tour. The book is released. Have a party. Then you do as much as you can afford to help support the book. You start writing the next novel and go through the same process all over again.

Do you find yourself facing promotional budget restraints because you are a new writer as opposed to say a writer who's out there with ten books under his belt?

Promotional budget restraints? That's a cute way of putting it. Unless you're a new writer who was given some huge advance, most of the promotional burden is on you.

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?

I'm new at this so I'm still trying to figure it all out. The big advantage these days is Internet. How do you use it? From Myspace to Facebook to blogging and all the rest, you have to see what works for you and how much time it takes up.

Did you ever reach a point on your way to publication where you thought about giving up? If so, what kept you going?

Plenty of times I thought about giving up. Not writing but getting published. Before this novel, I wrote another novel and I got an agent. This was back in '90. It never got sold. I'd also been a filmmaker and did a lot of theater. What kept me going was this love for the work itself, no matter what the medium. I wanted to be a comicbook artist. Then I discovered playwriting. The reason I became a writer was when I saw *American Buffalo*, David Mamet's play about three petty criminals planning a robbery and it was a revelation. He turned profanity into poetry. After that, writing became a natural thing. I wrote and directed plays for a lot of years and stopped drawing. Eventually wrote screenplays and made short films. Wrote plenty of short stories. As good as I believed I was at the other arts, I thought fiction was the toughest, because there were no actors, or lighting, or music or editing to rely on, it was all on me. My words and nothing else. I just love the creative process and that's what kept me going. Stephen King said that if they outlawed writing and the punishment was death, writers would still go into their dark basements and write. All artists would.

Part Two of this interview will appear in the Jan/Feb issue of The Noose.

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 <mailto:lisa@lisacotoggio.com>.

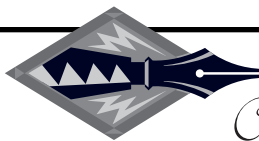
A TRIBUTE TO JERRY A. RODRIGUEZ

by Jason Starr

I met **Jerry A. Rodriguez** at Bouchercon in Madison in 2006. I was in the book room, finishing up a signing, and he approached me nervously (I'd tease him about this later), offering me a DVD of the book trailer of his first novel, *The Devil's Mambo*. We talked for a while and it turned out that we went to the same high school, Midwood in Brooklyn, several years apart. Jerry had also met Ken Bruen and later the three of us went down to the bar and had a drink—okay, drinks. Jerry had a wonderful dark, dry, sarcastic sense of humor.

In New York, I watched his book trailer (it's still up on My Space) and was enormously impressed. It's not the typical book trailer—it's more like an extremely well-executed short film. I learned that Jerry had worked in film and video for years—in the eighties, he created one of the first ever rap videos—and he also wrote and directed a couple of Off-Broadway plays. Then I read his novel and was blown away; I thought it was one of the best debuts of recent years. I saw him in the city a few times, including at the MWA Christmas Party in 2006. He was very excited about his career as a crime writer, always talking enthusiastically about the novels and comics he wanted to write. He was dedicated to his craft, working hard even when his illness made it difficult for him to get around. He rarely talked about being sick, even when he must have been in extreme pain. He was by far one of the bravest men I've ever known. I know how badly he wanted to get out there and market his books and get involved in the mystery community and I wish others had gotten the chance to know him the way I did. He left us with two terrific crime novels to help remember him by, but his life was way way too short.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This interview with Jerry took place last March, long before the news of his untimely death reached us. We thought publishing this two part interview, as planned, was the best way to memorialize his life as a writer. We all join Jason in sending our sympathies to Jerry's family. He is a great loss to our chapter.*



Library Conversations- *Calling All Writers*

The slate for our terrific 2008 New York City library panels are full. However, here's still room for authors in 2009. Below is the list of available topics and dates. Sign up today!

Wed, Mar 25: Fictional Private Eyes: Why Would Anyone Take This Job?

Wed, April 22: Paranormal Mysteries: Ghost Stories, Psychics, Vampires, and Things That Go Bump in the Night

Wed, May 20: Contemporary Traditional Mysteries: Fair Play Puzzles in the Modern World

Wed, June 17: Killers on the Loose: New York Thrillers

All programs are at the Midtown Manhattan branch unless otherwise indicated.

WHAT'S NOOSE

New books out. . .

James R. Benn's latest Billy Boyle World War II mystery, *Blood Alone*, appeared in September to great reviews from Kirkus and Booklist, among others. Jim launched *Blood Alone* with a signing at the Lyme Public Library on September 5.

Alafair Burke's latest, *Angel's Tip*, was released by Harper on August 19. The second in Alafair's new series featuring NYPD Detective Ellie Hatcher, *Angel's Tip* received starred reviews from both Kirkus and Publishers Weekly and will be taking Alafair on an extensive tour. Learn more about the book, the tour, and Alafair's new blog at www.alafairburke.com.

Marty and Annette Meyers' (Maan Meyers) new Dutchman historical *The Organ Grinder*, is just out from Five Star/Gale. It is set in 1899, and is a sequel to *The House on Mulberry Street*. Marty and Annette will be at Bouchercon on separate panels, and they'll be signing *The Organ Grinder* at Otto Penzler's Mysterious Book Shop on Thursday, October 23, between 6:30 and 8 p.m.

And a few articles from **Peggy Ehrhart**. . .

"You Can't Always Get What You Want," Mystery Scene, Summer 2008 and "Musical Mystery Tour," Crimespree, July/August 2008.

Please submit items for "What's Noose?" to Peggy Ehrhart at pehrhart@sprynet.com. You are encouraged to submit them in the form you'd like to see here.