

Civilians Who Write Cops: How They Do It

A panel discussion with authors Reggie Nadelson, Robert Knightly and Reed Farrel Coleman

by Maggie Schnader

“Cops can always find a parking place,” said **Robert Knightly**, former President of MWA/NY, at a lively panel discussion sponsored by the Mercantile Library Center for Fiction on September 26th, 2007.

Brenda Wegener, head librarian at the Mercantile Library (17 East 47th St.) introduced the panelists:

- Robert Knightly retired from the NYPD as a Lieutenant in 1987 after 20 years on patrol. Since then he has been an attorney with the Legal Aid Society. Bob's first story was in *Brooklyn Noir* in 2004. He contributed to *Manhattan Noir* and was included in *McMillan's Best American Short Stories 2007*. He is editor and contributor to *Queens Noir* (due January 2008).
- Brooklyn native **Reed Farrel Coleman's** first novel, *Life Goes Sleeping*, was published in 1991. His latest book, *Soul Patch*, is available from Bleak House. www.reedfarrelcoleman.com.
- **Reggie Nadelson** is a New Yorker who also makes her home in London. She is the author of six novels featuring the detective Artie Cohen. Her non-fiction book, *Comrade Rockstar*, the story of the American who became the biggest rock star in the Soviet Union, is to be made into a film starring Tom Hanks. Her most recent book is *Fresh Kills*.

On the question of what is true and what is myth about cops, Bob Knightly told us it is true that cops are like a secret society. They are a tribe just like other professions, he said, and once a cop, always a cop. The “blue wall of silence” does exist, but cops are people, like everyone else, and the reality is that when a police officer is out there in very

difficult situations, he (or she) has only his partner to depend upon.

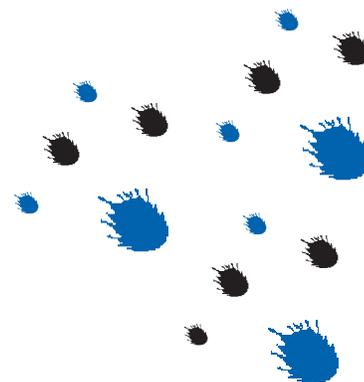
How realistic do fictional cops have to be? The three panelists agreed that although a cop like Reggie Nadelson's Artie Cohen, who travels around the world solving criminal cases, never existed in the NYPD, he is, nonetheless, a great character and could exist in the fictional world as it was created. All that matters is that the books are good.

The three panel members and the audience then entered into a spirited discussion of the relationship between genre mystery writing and literary fiction.

- Reggie Nadelson asserted that she would have written a girl meets boy novel (with much pride and prejudice) that lasted for two hundred years if she could have written such a novel. She chose to write crime novels because it was what she thought she could write.
- Reed Farrel Coleman disagreed. He considers that he is a literary writer who writes crime novels because he believes this is the best way to write what he wants to say. He argued that writers should write the best book that they can, and whether or not any novel is good enough to become a literary classic is not something the author himself can judge at the time. (Coleman does not appear to include cozies in the class of potential literary classics.)

Civilians Who Write Cops was an excellent and ‘literary’ panel discussion. I look forward to round two.

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



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THE NOOSE
NEW YORK





IMPORTANT DATES

Nov 7: In One Shot – Jack Reacher and his author at November chapter meeting
Nov. 15: “The Big Read” – Rochester, NY
Nov. 17: Deadline for receipt of Mentor Program submissions
Dec. 5: Winter Revels – chapter holiday party
Dec. 19: True Crime in the City – Mid-Manhattan Library
Jan. 3, 2008: Homeland Insecurity, January chapter meeting
Jan. 11-14, 2008: Mid-Winter American Library Association conference Philadelphia, PA

PRESIDENT’S LETTER



Hello all,

Communications

With this newsletter, MWA/NY inaugurates a monthly schedule. You’ll note that, for most of you, the newsletter is being sent to you via e-mail – a time- and cost-saving tactic. It means we can publish ten times a year instead of quarterly and add four-color photos, all for less money. (You can, of course, still get the newsletter via snail mail, but it will be printed in black and white, and you’ll receive it long after those of us who are getting our copy via e-mail get ours.) Thanks to our newsletter editor, **Marie Hannan-Mandel** for undertaking the expansion.

Increasing the frequency of communication is a priority for us. We want to ensure that you are able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise – without delay. To that end, you’ll notice that we’re sending out more e-mail blasts. For example, we’re reminding everyone about our monthly programs via e-mail. (We’ll still mail postcard announcements, at least for awhile.)

And don’t forget the Yahoo group – it’s available to us all. I encourage you to post your news and ask your questions. You can sign up via our website: www.mwa-ny.org.

The Black Orchid Novella Award

As many of you know, in addition to serving as the president of MWA/NY, I’m also the chair of the Wolfe Pack’s literary awards. (We’re the folks who award the Nero.) The Wolfe Pack, in partnership with Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine (AHMM), is pleased to announce our second annual Black Orchid Novella Award (BONA) contest. We’re seeking novellas in the tradition of Rex Stout’s Nero Wolfe mysteries, tales that demonstrate literary excellence. The deadline for entries is May 31, 2008. The winning novella will be published in AHMM – and the author will receive \$1,000 and, if he or she is able to attend, they’ll be feted at the 2008 Black Orchid Winter Banquet in New York City.

Interested in submitting an entry? Listen to Linda Landigran, editor-in-chief of AHMM, who says, “The novella offers particular challenges and rewards. While the plot of the novella can be more complex, the writing must still be as taut as a short story.

Through the contest we hope to encourage people to explore the potential of this form.”

Details of the contest, include the rules, are available on the Wolfe Pack’s website: www.nerowolfe.org.

Library Events

The other big news is our increasing focus on library events for our members.

First, **Charles Benoit** spearheaded our presence at this year’s New York Library Association Conference in Buffalo. He had a great idea – he had MWA-NY branded bags printed. We used them to distribute all the promotional materials you sent.

Second, **Rosemary Harris** approached the Board with a proposal that the Chapter get a booth at the American Library Association Mid-winter Conference in Philadelphia this coming January. The Board enthusiastically embraced her idea. If you can’t attend the conference, send Rosemary your promotional materials. Great idea, Rosemary!

Third, on behalf of the MWA/NY chapter, I’ve organized six panels at the New York Public Library, Mid-town branch. Moderators include **Alafair Burke**, **Elizabeth Zelvin**, **Kevin Borean**, **Robert Knightly**, **Peggy Ehrhart**, and me. We’ll be sponsoring additional panels, so keep your eyes open for announcements in case you want to participate!

Fourth, watch for an expanded Library Relations presence on our website. **Ken Isaacson** is working with our Web Mistress to expand the information available online.

MWA/NY Board Meetings

You are all invited to attend our monthly Board meetings. We run a transparent operation, and if you’re so inclined, come on down. Meetings start at 5:15 p.m. each day that we hold our monthly programs. The meetings are always held at the National Arts Club on Gramercy Park South in Manhattan, and you’re always welcome to sit in and observe our work.

With regards,

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Dear MWA/NY members,

It is with great pleasure that we launch e-Noose and ask that those of you haven't already done so add your email address to the list. Anyone worried about security should get a dedicated email address from any of the free providers and that way you can join us in our new multi-colored medium without any concerns at all! And if you're like me, you'll want access to your old e-Noose newsletters and you'll have it. The issues will be archived and details of this will be available to members on the MWA-NY website. Another possible glitch is your spam blocker getting in the way of your receipt of e-Noose. A good way around this is to add the Vertical Response address (that's the group that sends the emails) to your spam blocker's "white list". Once you are receiving e-Noose, you'll be glad you made the switch! The Noose is now ten-monthly and we're continuing to add new features. I'm particularly excited to have the very experienced media attorney, Bob Stein join us as our resident lawyer. He is the husband of an MWA member and he's here to answer your questions.

Within the next few months Jim Weikart will be stepping down as chapter treasurer. Jim has done amazing work and has contributed greatly to the success of our chapter. Dr. Ken Labriola, who will be taking over the position, has practiced medicine for thirty-five years and has served as a state senator. He is the author of seven mystery novels and co-author with famed criminologist, Dr. Henry Lee, of three books dealing with forensic science.

So now enjoy keeping up with all the "noose" and please get in touch letting me know what you think about our changes! Suggestions are always welcome at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com.

Marie Hannan-Mandel

(pronounced as the Irish do, Marry, rhyming with Larry)



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BLOODLINES EDITOR

Send all submissions to Peggy Ehrhart • Email: pehrhart@sprynet.com

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ASK THE LAWYER

Dear Bob,

I have just received a letter from an agent who is interested in representing my first book, a masterpiece called, Only With My Socks On, but he wants me to sign a one year contract, renewable and the contract says that he has a right to represent all the fiction I write. Should I sign?

Sincerely,
Perplexed.

Dear Perplexed:

You might consider asking him or her to limit the contract to book-length fiction. Agents cannot make enough money from the sale of a story to justify much effort, and there is no reason why they should take 15% if you, rather than the agent, sell the story. Similarly, for non-fiction, I would also exclude textbooks, since most agents do not handle them well, or at all in many cases.

While I prefer an agency contract to specify the book or books covered by the contract, I see no real problem with a contract which covers all novels you write and sell during the term of the contract, so long as you have the absolute right to terminate the contract with respect to any books which have not been sold by the end of the year (or the end of the renewal year, as the case may be).

Beware of references to option books or to books which are sold after the termination of the agency agreement, having been offered or negotiated during the term of the agency agreement. Option books should not be commissionable, and post-termination sales should only be commissionable if sold within 0-4 or -6 months after termination, on terms substantially similar to those negotiated by the agent during the term.

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 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



CALLING ALL ...

- ⇒ **WRITERS** interested in attending the American Library Association Mid-Winter meeting in Philadelphia, Jan 11-14, 2008, contact Rosemary Harris, ALA Mid-Winter Event Chair at rovideo@aol.com.
- ⇒ **MEMBERS** with legal questions to do with their writing. Send your questions to mhannanmandel@yahoo.com, putting "Ask the Lawyer" in the subject line.
- ⇒ **MANUSCRIPTS** Send your 50 page submission to the Mentor Program (see article in this issue) by Nov. 17th.
- ⇒ **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.

- ⇒ **CONTRIBUTORS** Anyone interested in contributing to **The Noose** should pitch ideas to the editor at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com, putting "Ideas for Noose" in the subject line.
- ⇒ **WRITERS** in need of a place to work. The Mercantile Library, 17 East 47th Street has a newly refurbished Writers' Studio with space available for a modest fee. For more information, contact the Library at (212) 755-6710 or www.mercantilelibrary.org.

Those interested in responding to any of the calls for contributors above should email the Editor at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com

WHO ARE YOU WRITING FOR? (PART 2)

by T.J. Straw

What advice do these successful writers give on writing for a specific audience?

Steve Hamilton: "Too much focus on satisfying some external group of readers is going to show through and weaken the writing."

Jane Cleland: "Don't be influenced by every opinion, but DO listen."

Jim Fusilli: "The job is to serve the readers' needs. Do all you can to be sure they will understand precisely what you mean."

Linda Fairstein: "Relish any chance for input from smart readers. People who know the genre have good insights and add nuggets of wisdom that are worth thinking about when you're back at the computer."

Chris Grabenstein: "Listen to feedback from a core group of trusted 'early readers' to find out if you're confusing or boring them."

Carol Lea Benjamin: "Write the story you see and not the story someone else advises you to write."

Larry Beinhart: "If you aim to be Hammett, Shakespeare, Faulkner, you'll never get through your first page."

Justin Scott: "Readers pick up on subconscious things you didn't mean to get in your way, such as reluctance on the part of a character to join the novel."

Noreen Ayres: "I take comments of (my) shortcomings very seriously."

Annette Meyers: "Never follow the market. It changes radically almost overnight."

Judith Kelman: "The market is fickle and unpredictable. Produce the best book you can."

Evan Marshall: "It's your book, but it's also your readers' book. Make the writing process interactive...Listen to the criticism as carefully as you listen to the praise. Do your readers want more humor? More danger? As you plan your stories, make a conscious effort to build in these elements."

T. J. Straw, Member of the MWA-NY Board, 2002-2006, author of Body Parts, Dancing on Razor Blades

BLACK ORCHID LAST HOORAH • August 16, 2007

On August 16th the Black Orchid Bookstore held its 13th Anniversary Party. Unfortunately, this will be the last as the store closed down at the end of September. As a tribute to Bonnie Claeson & Joe Guglielmelli's importance to MWA members and the affection we all feel for them, some of our best-known and loved authors and editors came to the event including **Jane Cleland, Michael Connelly, Otto Penzler, and Ellen Edwards**. *Photo and text credit: Jillian Abbott, Vice-President MWA-NY.*



Otto Penzler



(l-r) Michael Connelly,
Alafair Burke



(l-r) Jane Cleland, Reed Farrell Coleman,
Ellen Edwards, Executive Editor NAL



Bonnie Claeson

Editor's Note: It is with great sadness that the Chapter says good-bye to The Black Orchid and we wish Bonnie and Joe every good wish for the future. Thank you for all you have done for mystery fiction.

REMINDEERS



* **The Big Read** – join **Charles Benoit, Ruth Furie, Robert Knightly, Miriam Grace Monfredo** and **Gary Earl Ross** at “Bird Hunting” Mystery Authors Stalk the Maltese Falcon”, Nov. 29th at 7pm at Writers & Books, 740 University Avenue, Rochester, NY. For more information call (585) 473-2590, x107.

* Join us on the newsgroup and give the chapter the opportunity to serve you better with e-Noose, email newflashes and a forum to discuss your work with other writers. Join at MWA-NY@yahoogroups.com.

* The November chapter meeting takes place on November 7th at the National Arts Club at 6:00 pm. Meet “Reacher” and his NY Times best selling creator, Lee Child.

* Deadline for submissions to the Mentor Program is November 17th.

* Anyone wanting bookmarks, postcards, chapbooks, etc. (100-200 pieces) to be distributed at the American Library Association Mid-Winter Meeting in Philadelphia should send them to **Rosemary Harris** at 276 Chestnut Hill Road, Stamford, CT 06903 by November 20th. Nothing will be returned.

* Payment due Dec 2nd for the annual holiday party – **Winter Revels**. Send checks for \$40 to Rosemary Harris, 300 E 59th St, #3506, NY, NY 10022. The party will be held on Dec. 5th at Sotheby's Institute 570 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor, 6-8 pm. Numbers strictly limited, no email or phone reservations and no walk-ins. Festive dress encouraged!

* Mark your calendar for the series of mystery writing panels to be held at the Mid-Manhattan Library: 12/19 – True Crime in the City; 2/27 – New York Noir: Urban Crime; 3/18 – New York, New York, It's a Hellava Town to Die In; 4/30 – Professional Thrillers: Legal and Medical Murder; 5/20 – Late Bloomers Dream Big: Publishing a First Mystery in Midlife; 6/17 – Murder and Mayhem at Work: Deadly Antiques, Cooks, and Gardens.

* The National Arts Club is closed January 2nd and the January MWA-NY chapter meeting entitled: “Homeland Insecurity” will be held Thursday, January 3rd at 6:00 pm.

Blood**LINES** MWA In Print • FALL 2007

BOOKS

Cynthia Baxter, *Right from the Gecko*, Bantam Books 2007; *Who's Kitten Who?*, Bantam Books 2007.

Philip Cioffari, *Catholic Boys*, Livingston Press 2007.

Lynn Harris, *Death By Chick Lit*, Berkley/Penguin 2007.

Julia Pomeroy, *Cold Moon Home*, Carroll & Graf 2007.

SHORT STORIES

Peggy Ehrhart, "Death Gig," Mouth Full of Bullets Fall 2007. Reprinted from Flashing in the Gutters.

Rosemary Goodwin, "Deadly Ink," Deadly Ink 2007 Short Story Collection, ed. Debby Buchanan, Deadly Ink Press 2007.

G. Miki Hayden, "Imported From Africa," Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine Sept. 2007; "The Right Thing to Do," Back Alley Magazine Vol. I, No. 1 2007.

Anthony Rainone, "Power of the Gods," Demolition Winter 2007; "Hollow," ThugLit Sept. 2007.

ARTICLES

Anthony Rainone, "Nirvana: The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books," Crimespree Sept. 2007; "The Serial Talents of Steve Hamilton," Crimespree, Sept. 2007.

OTHER

Jack Getze will be guest-editing the Winter issue of Spinetangler.

Submit items for "Bloodlines" to Peggy Ehrhart at pehrhart@sprynet.com.

Peeking Under the Writer's Veil

By Rosemary Harris

Braving the muggy 90-degree weather, seventy-five die-hard mystery fans and writers packed the New York Public Library's Mid-Manhattan branch on August 7 to hear MWA-NY President **Jane K. Cleland** moderate a panel of five "Women of Mystery" who promised, and delivered, a Peek Under the Writer's Veil. Panelists **Mary Jane Clark**, **Robin Hathaway**, **Mary Anne Kelly**, and newcomer **Elizabeth Zelvin** shared stories and fielded questions.

Writing tips:

- ↻ **Use what you already know** – each of these writers has drawn heavily on her past or present career for material.
- ↻ It is possible to eschew gratuitous violence as all of these writers have done, preferring to let the anticipation of death or disaster provide the chills. As Mary Jane Clark puts it, "the real world is scary enough – I don't feel the need to gross everyone out."
- ↻ **It is never too late** – Liz Zelvin "started late in life" and waited until she felt she had "age and experience and something to share." When Robin Hathaway's husband urged her at age 50 to write a novel – after many "depressing [short] stories that nobody liked" – she wrote three in as many years, ultimately winning the St. Martins Malice Domestic Contest.
- ↻ **Zelvin advises writers to keep it simple** – "strangle, drown, shoot, and get on with the story!"

- ↻ **Think like a journalist** – Clark believes that working in journalism, where the story needs to be told in one or two minutes, helps her to "get to the point" in her fiction writing.
- ↻ **Read the greats** – Hathaway cites Josephine Tey, Dorothy Sayers and Patricia Highsmith as early influences. Other recommendations were Trixie Belden and Alfred Hitchcock.
- ↻ **Start with the word** – Mary Ann Kelly told of "the high" she gets from "sitting with her thesaurus and finding just the right word."
- ↻ **Consider a change** – Jane Cleland, after two bestselling books and another on the way in her mystery series, is sinking her teeth into her first thriller. As she puts it, she's enjoying the opportunity to play a little rougher than in her traditional mystery series.

At the end of the evening, as fans clustered around the panelists, NYPL Principal Librarian Deborah Hirsch and MWA-NY President Jane Cleland agreed that this month's discussion, coupled with last month's event, moderated by Chris Grabenstein, were resounding successes and marked the beginning of a continuing relationship between the two organizations.

For more information about the writers:

Jane K. Cleland at www.janeceland.net
Mary Jane Clark at www.maryjaneclark.com
Robin Hathaway at www.robinhathaway.com
Mary Ann Kelly at www.maryannkelly.com
Elizabeth Zelvin at www.elizabethzelvin.com

Rosemary Harris is a former bookstore manager and video producer. Her debut novel, *Pushing Up Daisies* (St Martin's Feb. 2008) is the first in the *Dirty Business* mystery series featuring amateur sleuth/master gardener Paula Holliday. Visit her at www.rosemaryharris.com.



The Innocence Project

by Marie Hannan-Mandel (via pod cast)

Introduced by chapter Program Committee member **Kevin Berean**, winner of the *New York Law Journal* legal fiction writing contest, the September chapter meeting had the opportunity to hear from Ms. Alba Morales, staff attorney of the Innocence Project (www.innocenceproject.org) and Mr. Barry Gibbs, one of the Project's exonerees.

Did you know?

- The Innocence Project was founded in 1992 by Barry Scheck at Cardozo Law School in New York City.
- The Innocence Project only works on cases where there is biological evidence that might exonerate the accused.
- The Project has exonerated 207 prisoners, 15 of whom were on death row. Each served an average of 12 years.
- The Project is currently working on approximately 250 cases and has thousands of cases in the pipeline.

Ms. Morales, formerly a civil rights attorney and public defender, has valuable insight into the criminal justice system. She walked the meeting through the Innocence Project procedures:

1. **Rigorous intake process** takes place before the cases reach the lawyers.
2. **Evidence search** – does it still exist? Is it available for testing?
3. **Fight for testing** – often difficult to convince those in possession of the evidence to allow testing.
4. **Analysis of results** – are they valid, is there contamination, or degradation?
5. **If the results can be verified** – EXONERATION.
6. **Joy leads to frustration** – How could this have happened?

The Innocence Project has a Policy Department, which works for legal reform, and a Communications Dept. with a staff of 48 who work to inform the public and raise awareness of injustice.

Ms. Morales explained that Mr. Gibbs's case was atypical for the Innocence Project in that he wasn't cleared through DNA testing but through a series of events so extraordinary as to defy belief.

Barry Gibbs, a postal worker from Brooklyn was arrested in

1986 for the murder of Virginia Robinson, a woman whom he'd met briefly months before. He had never been in trouble with the law. He was arrested by Louis Eppolito a much decorated NYPD detective, stood trial (where he was advised by his law not to take the witness stand) and was convicted on the evidence of one eyewitness.

In 1999, all legal remedies exhausted and all his money gone, Mr. Gibbs was prepared to die in prison. When he had almost given up he contacted a lawyer friend who convinced the Innocence Project to take a look, but there was no DNA evidence available. The Innocence Project handed over Mr. Gibbs's case to the Second Look Project and things may have stayed that way had a retired NYPD detective not been arrested in Las Vegas in 2005 – one Louis Eppolito. As Mr. Gibbs put it: "There is a God." The NY Attorney General's office investigated Gibbs's case and found that Eppolito had Mr. Gibbs's case file in his house in Las Vegas. What was in that file is a mystery to Mr. Gibbs but it got him out of prison – 19 years after he'd been convicted on the eyewitness testimony of a man who now went on 60 Minutes and admitted he had lied at Mr. Gibbs's trial.

Mr. Gibbs is suing both the city and state of New York. He ended the meeting by saying that "If anybody is interested in writing my book, they can." Ms. Morales, ever the defender added, "But talk to him first."

Writing Tips:

- ☞ As Ms. Morales pointed out, the reason she and so many other litigators enjoy reading crime fiction was because as she quoted P.D. James as saying: "Mysteries are not about murders, they are about restoration of order".
- ☞ In New York State an accused person has two opportunities to tell his or her story in court – once in the Grand Jury and then again at trial.
- ☞ Ms. Morales spoke of the unreliability of eyewitness testimony and her own experience of the way such testimony "evolves" over the course of a case.

Promote Yourself to the Media! Print, Broadcast, Blogs

by Maggie Schnader

"Authors are now taking more responsibility for promoting themselves," said Linda Landrigan, editor-in-chief of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* on introducing the five panelists at the second chapter dinner of the season on October 3, 2007.

Panelists:

- **Jillian Abbott** is a journalist who receives hundreds of press releases each week and must decide which handful to pursue.
- **Megan Underwood Beatie** is vice president and senior account executive at Goldberg McDuffie Communications where she publicizes both literary and commercial fiction and non-fiction books, specializing in mysteries and thrillers.
- **Kate Stine** is editor and co-publisher of *Mystery Scene Magazine*, which provides extensive coverage of the crime and mystery genre.



- **Sarah Weinman** is a crime fiction columnist for the Baltimore Sun. A new column, “Dark Passages,” will appear monthly at www.latimes.com/books. She also writes about crime fiction at her blog, “Confessions of an Idiosyncratic Mind.” www.sarahweinman.com.
- **Kate White** is editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* magazine and author of the mystery series featuring crime reporter Bailey Weggins.

While there is no doubt that opportunities for traditional print reviews are dwindling, the panelists suggested many other ways in which authors may promote themselves and their books.

Megan Underwood Beatie said that in today's world book promotion is a partnership between publisher and author and the author should be prepared to offer promotion ideas. To start the author on that path, she suggested making a list of your personal contacts in the media. She assured authors that they will find they have many more contacts than they think they do.

In a similar vein, **Kate White** recommended that authors collect as many contact names and ideas as they can. Then they should do triage and select those that will get the most ‘bang for the buck’. For example, an advertisement in your college alumni magazine may not reach many mystery readers. With respect to *Cosmo*, Kate White said that they do not review books but sometimes will excerpt from a sexy thriller. She said always read a publication first, before contacting them. Then, suggest the magazine to your publicist.

Jill Abbott talked about the advantages and opportunities for promotion locally such as writing articles for a local newspaper. She recommended writing about something in your book that would be of interest to the community, rather than writing about your book. The advantage of this type of promotion is name and talent recognition within the community.

Kate Stine told us that each issue of *Mystery Scene Magazine* covers 60 hardcover, 30 paperback originals, a few short story publications 10 small press books, in addition to reference books, audio books and TV shows. They try to balance the type of book covered and like to give coverage to new writers.

Mystery Scene Magazine accepts books for review only from publicists. Ask your publicist to send the book. If you want to write an article for *Mystery Scene*, write about something that interests you in your book, perhaps something in the background, or, a subject related to the story.

For her column, **Sara Weinman** chooses books to write about which suit a particular theme. She will cover a range of sub-genres, but then only writes a line or two about a specific book. On her crime fiction blog she likes to look at everything including deals, trends in crime fiction and conferences. Sarah prefers relating to publicists rather than to authors.

Kate White thinks your website should have a lot on it to interest the reader. Set the site up to be picked up by Google using appropriate titles, tag lines and blurbs. You might use the website to test titles and cover art, researching with your own, homemade focus group.

On the subject of websites, **Sarah Weinman** advises lots of pictures of you and of places and things related to your books. For example, if you write about antiques, then you in front of an antique store. The photos should be available for downloading.

Writing Tips:

- ☞ Broadcasters are interested in the author, not the book.
- ☞ Leverage something in your book. Talk about a subject on which you have some expertise.
- ☞ Have a tag line.
- ☞ Broadcasters and editors want a human-interest story. Give them one.
- ☞ Work in partnership with your publicist.

Maggie Schnader is currently writing a British-American mystery called The Counter Intelligence Corpse.

The Mentor Program is back!

It's time to polish up your pages and get a second opinion from an established published writer. The program will be accepting works-in-progress, finished novels, and short stories. Some participants in the program in years past have ended up being published, so don't hesitate to leap in. The committee will be forwarding the three submissions that our mentors deem most ready for publication to established literary agents. In late February, we will hold our ever-popular panel discussion at the Mercantile Library. It will feature a panel of published writers who will talk about how they got their publishers – direct queries to presses, queries to agents who then sold to presses, winning a contest, etc. – and the steps in the submission process. We will also give participants in the program an overview of the comments from the mentors.

The deadline to submit your fifty-page submission is November 17th and the cost is still a bargain at \$50. Look for a packet in the mail with directions for emailing your submission and mailing your check to the program. Any further questions, contact the chair of our mentor committee, Peggy Ehrhart, at pehrhart@sprynet.com.

Meredith Cole is a member of MWA Mentor Committee and is the 2007 winner of the St. Martins Press/Malice Domestic contest. Her novel, Posed for Murder will be published in spring 2007.