

Important Dates:

- Aug 8: Mid-Manhattan Library – “Women of Mystery”**
- Sept. 4: Rebound Grant Application due**
- Sept. 5: Chapter Meeting – The Innocence Project**
- Sept. 26: Mercantile Library – “Civilian Cops: How do they do it?”**

PRESIDENT’S LETTER



Dear MWA/NY Members,

In my role as president of MWA/NY, I would suggest that one of our most important functions is serving as part of your cheerleading team: When you have good news, post it to our news group: MWA-NY@yahoogroups.com.

If you’re not yet signed up, please join us! Don’t forget that our website chair, Ken Isaacson, is eager to post your good news online!

Another important function of MWA/NY is helping you reach your good news goals – so if you have questions or are unsure how to overcome an obstacle, you might want to post those queries to our Yahoo group, too. Members are generous with their responses.

You’ll notice that the newsletter has a new look and feel – that’s thanks to our new newsletter editor, Marie Hannan-Mandel. Look for her explanation of the reasons behind the changes in this issue. One last hearty thank you to G. Miki Hayden for her years of service as our past editor and a warm welcome to Marie!

I’m going to the New York Library Association conference this year in October! (October 17-20) Charles Benoit, our Library Relations Committee chair, explains how you can join us in an article in this issue – and what you can expect when you do so. Charles has done a masterful job in orienting our presence to suit librarians’ needs. We have a “table top” in the trade show so we can display your promotional materials. Jill Abbott, MWA/NY vice president, is coordinating that effort. We’re also spon-

soring a presentation. And this year’s Author’s Garden is located near the bookstore! I hope you’ll join us – participation in the Author’s Garden is free!

Also, don’t forget to take advantage of our stellar programming. If you’re close to New York City, or are in for a visit, I hope you’ll join us at our monthly meetings (next up is September). If you’re not able to attend in person, I hope you’ll listen to the meeting pod casts. MP3 recordings of all meetings since January 2007 are available for download on our website www.mwa-ny.org.

I’m hope I’ll see you at September’s meeting on the 5th. Kevin Berean, a board member from Connecticut, has organized an extraordinary presentation – a recently released prisoner and that prisoner’s lawyer-advocate from the Innocence Project will describe the ordeal and what it feels like to finally be free. Hear how DNA analysis righted a decades-old wrong. Sneak peeks for October and November: Linda Landigran, editor in chief of Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine, moderates a panel on “How to Promote Yourself to the Media.” And coming in November – Bob Knightly, past president of MWA/NY introduces Lee Child, one of the best selling thriller writers in the world. Many thanks to Ellen Count, our Programming Committee chair who helps us maintain this level of quality. Details on all programming are available on our website: www.mwa-ny.org.

With warm regards,

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Dear MWA/NY members,

I am thrilled to be taking over the editorship of this newsletter from G. Miki Hayden, who has made the transition as smooth as she possibly could. Everyone who knows Miki knows her generosity and dedication to this organization.

By way of a brief introduction, I was born in NYC, raised in Ireland and now live in Upstate NY. I have just completed an MFA and am an adjunct faculty member at Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY. That's enough about me, let's talk about us. You will notice that more than just the editorship of *THE NOOSE* is changing and over the coming issues you will see a number of new features and fun new graphics. **Ask the Lawyer** and **Ask the Writer** are just two of the new items in store. Anyone interested in becoming involved as a contributor can find full details in the **Calling All ...** section in this issue.

Do please let me know what you think. Suggestions are always welcome. This newsletter is for every member of our chapter – those who live in NYC and those who, like me, live far away (in Elmira Heights, NY, to be precise.) Enjoy the rest of your summer and keep in touch at mhannanmandel@yahoo.com

Marie Hannan-Mandel

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



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What's So Funny About Murder?

Mid-Manhattan Library, July 17th.

by Marie Hannan-Mandel

A wonderful collection of very funny writers kept the large audience entertained with tales of the trials and jubilations of writing mysteries with a comedic flair. Chris Grabenstein led Jeffrey Cohen, Lynn Harris, last minute guest, Tom Straw, Chuck Zito and writing partners Meredith Anthony and Lawrence Light through their paces with questions about writing mysteries with a comic sensibility. The audience had plenty of time to ask their many questions. The talk was informative both for the mystery writer and reader alike and the writers kept the good ideas and tips coming. All these writers are great speakers and made me want to run out and buy their books. Check them out at the websites listed below.

Useful Tips:

☞ Don't set out to be funny. Humor, as Mark Twain says, is the good-natured side of truth.

☞ When asked how he came up with plots for MASH, Alan Alda explained that he took one character each week and decided what kept them sane. Then he took it away and wrote about the consequences.

☞ A TECHNIQUE FOR PRODUCING IDEAS by James Webb Young is an excellent book for fixing broken ideas and generating new ones.

☞ Murder isn't funny. The comedic mystery writer slows down the pace to indicate the seriousness of the crime before returning to the faster paced comedic action.

☞ As with stand-up, pacing is everything. Using funny words at the end of sentences can make a passage funny. Apparently, words with "k" are the funniest and a study has shown that the funniest word in the English language is "duck". Do with that information what you will.

☞ The mystery is a "whodunit". The thriller is a "How can we stop him doing it again?"

For more information about the writers:

www.meredithanthony.com;

Jeffrey Cohen www.aarontucker.com;

www.ChrisGrabenstein.com;

Lynn Harris - www.miss-media.net/;

www.lawrencelight.com; <http://tomstraw.com>;

Chuck Zito - www.midnightinkbooks.com



CALLING ALL ...

Lawyers. *The Noose* needs a lawyer well-versed in the laws governing all aspects of the publishing business to write a column answering member questions called **Ask the Lawyer**.

Non-NYC members. We need members to contribute the new area reports feature, e.g. Northwest New York State, Philadelphia, area, West Virginia etc.

Contributors. Writers needed for the monthly **Meeting Notes**, especially those who

have written up meetings in the past.

Contributors. Writers needed for the **Ask the Writer** feature which will spotlight published authors and get valuable tips on the three important aspects of our business – technique, promotion and writing.

Published Authors. A great marketing opportunity exists at the NY Library Association Conference. Details available from crbenoit@hotmail.com and in his article in this issue of *The Noose*.

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 Mercantile Library at (212) 755-6710 or www.mercantilelibrary.org.

Manuscripts. Details of the 2007-2008 Mentor Program will be coming to you in September.

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

MWA OFFERS \$1,000 GRANTS TO AUTHORS IN NEED

Have you recently been dropped by your publisher? Has your series been cancelled? Were you orphaned when your publisher went under?

For authors in need, Mystery Writers of America offers one-time grants of \$1,000 under our Rebound Grant Program. Up to six grants are awarded each year. It may not sound like much money, but sometimes a struggling writer can save a career with just that little extra boost. One author (name withheld) said: "Thank you! This helped me more than you know. I was able to pay the bills and get back to writing."

Here's what to do: If you are an Active Category (published) member of MWA, and your dues are paid for 2007-2008, go to the MWA website and log in to the page on Rebound Grants. (If you've forgotten the password, contact the National office.) You will find all the rules clearly set out. Basically, you tell us why you need the grant and how you will use it in your career. The deadline for submissions is Tuesday, September 4, 2007, sent via US mail to the Rebound Grants Committee. Requests will be logged in, all contact information removed, and then submitted blind (anonymously) to the committee. Good luck!

Check Out This Library Opportunity

MWA-NY at annual librarians' conference

by Charles Benoit

Forget the Masons or the Knights Templar or Opus Dei – it's a little known fact that it's librarians who secretly control the world. And thanks to MWA-NY's participation in the NY Library Association annual conference, you can meet scores of these influential and frighteningly powerful people by signing up for this year's Author Garden, Friday October 19th in lovely Buffalo, NY.

Librarians from across the state will be flocking to Buffalo for workshops, seminars and the opportunity to meet a handful of authors in the informal Author Garden setting. Located next to the main bookstore, the Author Garden offers NY authors the chance to sell books, sign autographs and generally get in good with the folks who can turn you into a star. Participation is free but you need to pre-register. For more information contact Library Relations Chair, Charles Benoit at crbenoit@hotmail.com.

This year the MWA-NY will also have a presence on the main exhibition floor, letting librarians know who we are and why they should fill their shelves with our books. If you are unable to attend the Author Garden you can still have a presence at the conference – contact NAME for details.

The librarians' annual conference is known for its numerous outstanding sessions and this year attendees are in for a real treat as MWA historian and archivist Barry Zeman presents Building THE BEST Mystery and Detective Fiction Collection.

Participation is limited so make plans now to attend. Remember, they're librarians. They know everything.

Charles Benoit is the author of OUT OF ORDER and the Edgar nominated RELATIVE DANGER. His next mystery, NOBLE LIES, will be published by Poisoned Pen Press in September.

REMINDEES



- Anyone who has not paid their annual dues, please do so as soon as possible so that we can start September with an up-to-date membership list with accurate personal information.
- Join us on the newsgroup and give the chapter the opportunity to serve you better with email newsflashes and a forum to discuss your work with other writers. Join at MWA-NY@yahoogroups.com
- **The September chapter meeting takes place on Sept 5th at the National Arts Club at 6:00 pm.** Vanessa Potkin, from The Innocence Project will speak about her work finding justice for the wrongly convicted. More details available at www.mwa-ny.org/meetings.
- The Mercantile Library (17 W. 47th Street) is holding a panel entitled **Civilians Writing Cops: How they do it.** Led by Bob Knightly, Reed Farrel Coleman and Reggie Nadelson discuss their work at 6.30 pm on Sept. 26th.

BloodLINES

Bloodlines: MWA In Print • June/July 2007

BOOKS

- Helen Barer**, *Fitness Kills*, Five Star, an imprint of Thomson Gale 2007.
- Claudia Bishop**, *The Case of the Tough-Talking Turkey*, Berkley Prime Crime 2007.
- Philip Cioffari**, *A History of Things Lost or Broken*, Livingston Press 2007.
- Chris Grabenstein**, *Whack a Mole*, Carroll & Graf 2007.
- Kathryn Miller Haines**, *The War Against Miss Winter*, HarperCollins 2007.
- Parnell Hall**, *Hitman*, Pegasus Books 2007.
- Gary Lovisi**, *West Texas Wars And Other Western Stories*, Ramble House 2007.
- Wendy Markham**, aka **Wendy Corsi Staub**, *Love, Suburban Style*, Warner Forever 2007.
- Ilene Schneider**, *Chanukah Guilt*, Swimming Kangaroo Books 2007.
- Steven Torres**, *The Concrete Maze*, Dorchester Publishing 2007.

SHORT STORIES

- J. F. Benedetto**, "Fast Fingers & Coffee," *Futures Mystery Anthology Magazine*, Jan./Feb. 2007.
- Hilary Davidson**, "Anniversary," *ThugLit*, Issue #17.
- Kevin Egan**, "Big Jim's Winter Dream," *Rosebud Magazine*, Spring 2007
- Peggy Ehrhart**, "Mile-Square Murder," *Crime Scene: New Jersey II*, ed. Pat Marinelli, Clued In Press, 2006; "Custom Floor," *Crime and Suspense*, December 2006; "Stone Cool," *Demolition*, Winter 2007; "Bloodlines," *Spinetingler*, Spring 2007; "Silver Lining," *Crime and Suspense Anthology I*, ed. Tony Burton, Wolfmont, 2007.
- Steven Torres**, "Early Fall," *Bronx Noir*, ed. S.J. Rozan, Akashic Books 2007; "Viktor Petrenko, We Will Make You Beg," *Demolition*, Summer 2007.
- Lina Zeldovich**, "A Well Penned Revenge," *Deadly Ink 2007 Anthology*, Deadly Ink Press 2007.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE, JUNE 2007

- Lawrence Block**, "A Vision In White,"
- James Lincoln Warren**, "Heat Of The Moment,"
- Edward D. Hoch**, "Leopold Undercover,"
Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, July 2007
- Edward D. Hoch**, "The Problem Of Suicide Cottage"

YOUNG ADULTS/ JUVENILE BOOKS

- Marco Conelli**, *Matthew Livingston And The Prison Of Souls*, May Davenport Publishers

MYSTERY SCENE ISSUE NO. 99, SPRING, 2007 ARTICLES:

- Steven Torres**, "An Artist's Eye"
- Brian Skupin**, "What's Happening With Teri Holbrook"
- Kate Stine**, "At The Scene"
- Bill Chambers**, "From Controversial to Classic: How A Rejected Story Became A Mystery Classic"

ARTICLES

- Jill Abbott**, "Step By Step: How to Turn a Short Story into a Screenplay," *The Writer*, August 2007.
- Steven Torres**, "Interview with Con Lehane," *Crimespree*, July 2007; "Interview with Al Guthrie," *Crimespree*, July 2007.

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



Dinner Speakers Give Inside Look at Small-Town Policing

by Peggy Ehrhart

Sixty years ago, policing in Holmdel, New Jersey, was handled by a part-time constable whose other job was driving a school bus. Not quite the mean streets of New York City or the stuff of a gripping crime novel. Today, according to MWA/NY's April 4 dinner speakers, Sergeant Louie Torres and Detective Eric Hernando, Holmdel's police force numbers forty, and that force responds to over 21,000 incidents a year. Judging from their stories, policing in Holmdel could now inspire a small shelf of crime novels, ranging in tone from the gritty to the comic.

Sergeant Torres joined the force in 1982. One night soon after, he encountered his first homicide. The scene featured a full moon, a remote house, a trail of blood, a crying woman, and a .357 magnum. Though forensics evidence ultimately revealed that the gun had gone off by accident in the hands of a man who was drunk, Sergeant Torres still recalls the impression the incident made on him. "It didn't seem real," he reports.

The family tensions that make for great back-story came into play in a 1994 case. Still officially only a missing persons case, and still unsolved, the case involved two brothers feuding over the family's tree farm. Chris Zahl was

growing marijuana as well as trees, and his brother tipped off the police. The brother wanted to buy Chris out. Then Chris vanished. Police found his car at the Red Bank train station, wiped clean of fingerprints. To complicate matters, Chris had been having an affair with his best friend's wife.

Sergeant Torres continues to work on the case and has even consulted psychics about the whereabouts, above or below ground, of Chris Zahl. Every year he tries to get a reference to the case in the newspaper on the anniversary of the disappearance.

Like Sergeant Torres, Detective Hernando told a "new guy on the force" story, but the mood of his story was humorous rather than scary. Four months into his career, he pulled a driver over for a routine traffic stop and smelled marijuana. He was then distracted by two more cars pulling over. A man climbed out of one car, indicated the driver of the other car, and said, "That guy just pointed a gun at me."

Detective Hernando nervously drew his gun. The driver of the other car climbed out but refused to put his hands up, stating that he was a federal agent.

"You're going to be a dead one," Detective Hernando muttered. An officer in plain clothes, he noted, should always defer to an officer in uniform.

Detective Hernando disarmed the man, who was carrying his gun in a holster in the small of his back. It turned out that he was a federal agent – a US postal inspector, drunk and on his way home from the shore. Meanwhile, the pot suspect, terrified at the sight of Detective Hernando's gun, had curled up on the ground behind a tire.

The postal inspector subsequently lost his job.

Sergeant Torres and Detective Hernando are at opposite ends of their careers. After twenty-six years on the job, Sergeant Torres says he knows he should slow down, but he still enjoys the challenge. Detective Hernando is three years into his detective career after seven years as a patrolman. He has a vested interest in Sergeant Torres' remaining on the force because, as he put it, he's "fortunate to be learning from Louie."

Peggy Ehrhart's blues mystery, SWEET MAN IS GONE, is due in 2008 from Five Star. Her story, "Silver Lining," appears in the new Crime and Suspense anthology (Wolfmont, May 2007).



WENDY CORSI STAUB ON 'WHAT IT TAKES'

by Lois Karlin

Wendy Corsi Staub expected chick lit to be a flash in the pan. Not wanting her name attached to her first title in the genre, she invented the pseudonym Wendy Markham. The rest, as they say, is history.

At the June 6 dinner meeting, Staub shared what led to the success of her numerous series and stand-alone thrillers. "I'm prolific. I'm patient. I've never gotten over the feeling it could all go away tomorrow." From day one she's said yes to impossible deadlines, and to sustain her books' popularity, continues to put in thirteen to fourteen hour days, seven days a week.

Staub writes thrillers and mysteries, women's fiction, and young adult novels. Currently under contract with five major publishers, she has published sixty-five books of fiction in an award-winning career that spans two decades. In the eighteen-month period ending this fall, she'll have published ten books. It appears that she's just hitting her stride. Her psychological suspense novels for Zebra Books have hit the New York Times best-seller list and her women's fiction novels, written as Wendy Markham, are frequent USA Today, Barnes and Noble, and Bookscan bestsellers.

Pseudonyms allow her to brand three lines of books, each with distinctive cover art. She courts different reviewers and audiences for each. Staub says branding is key. "My readers want to know what to expect. They don't want to find [my protagonist] is shopping for shoes when they expect her to get bumped off."

The tagline, "Another Wendy Corsi Staub. Another sleepless night," displays on promotional items she offers booksellers. When launching a new book, her publicist arranges for Staub to hit four or five stores a day. She meets the sellers, signs the stock, then moves on to the next store.

Her advice to new authors? Be prolific. It's more important to write the second novel than to sell the first immediately.

Finding an agent is all about personal relationships. She advised immersing oneself in the business. "The best thing I did was decide to move to New York and become an editor. I knew peoples' names, knew who they were."

Staub is methodical about deadlines, and calculates the daily quota of pages required to meet them. "I revise my books as I go. When I reach the last page I'm done. Then my husband gives me notes for another quick edit."

How does she manage the volume? "I love it. I don't want to lose my momentum. I work so much better under pressure."

Lois Karlin is a freelance writer for technology firms. She lives and writes in Warwick, NY.

Be prolific.

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WHO ARE YOU WRITING FOR? (PART 1)

by T.J. Straw

How do some MWA-NY published authors target their audience? What advice do they have for new writers?

Steve Hamilton, Linda Fairstein, Jim Fusilli, Annette Meyers and Stuart Woods write the kind of book “I myself would enjoy reading,” says Woods, “If I like it, maybe somebody else will. It seems to work.”

Lawrence Block says, “Write to please yourself.”

Jane Cleland: “My target readers enjoy traditional, fair-play mysteries.”

Jim Fusilli: “I presume a certain level of cultural awareness and social sensitivity – the hardest choices a writer has to make – to decide what to leave out.”

“The potential readers are crucial. If a book doesn’t juice me or excite ME – how can it work for a reader?” writes Reed Coleman. “So as not to get completely self-insulated, I have a group of first readers whose opinions I trust implicitly.”

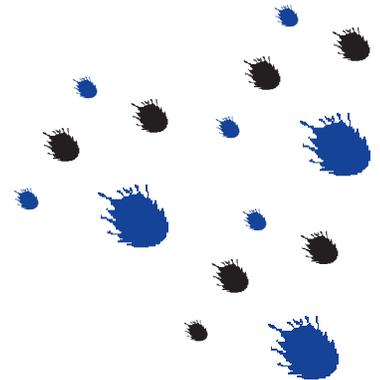
Cynthia Baxter’s goal is to “Create something that feels as if it’s been done right. In the end I’m the one who has to make that judgment.”

Evan Marshall’s readers are mostly 40+ women. “The core audience for cozy mysteries.”

Judith Kelman writes with the reader in mind and seeks to develop compelling characters and a plot that can keep a reader engaged. “It is a mistake to prejudice which segment of the population might relate to your work.”

(Part 2 will appear in the next issue.)

T.J. Straw, Member of the MWA-NY Board, 2002-2006, author of BODY PARTS, DANCING ON RAZOR BLADES



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