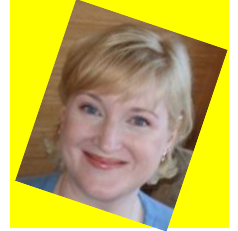


Bloodletter

New York /Tri-State Chapter of Sisters in Crime

Fall 2010

President's Note from Clare Toohy



I don't have enough time or space to wax rhapsodic, and it's all your fault, Sisters! Weren't the dog days of summer supposed to be lazy?

For our officers and board members, the summer "cooling off" period between programming seasons has been filled with planning and behind-the-scenes organizing. (NOTE: There may be significant juggling of meeting locations and dates required by NYPL municipal budgeting, so keep up with updates on the [SinCNY] Yahoo Group or online at www.nysinc.org) Our anthology editor, Terrie Farley Moran, has been doing a great job running the short-story submission and blind judging processes. (Strictly between us, she told me this much. We're destined to have a very fine collection, and I know that's all your fault, too.) Members are involved in panels, conferences, special appearances, book tours, blog tours, sequels, and debuts. There's been tons of action both in social media and online magazines. Whenever I find myself less than inspired, keeping up with what other local Sisters (and Misters) are doing is a source of excitement and fresh ideas.

Yes, there are "disruptive" emerging technologies and new venues for crime fiction operating very differently than anything before. Yes, traditional publishing is facing drastic changes and competition, and no one can tell how or where it'll all shake out. Perhaps here, in one of the major media centers of the country, we're even more aware of the hyperactive buzz. Maybe, at times, the future for the fiction we love seems hopelessly confused. But the core of our organization's strength remains, as always, its members. We can reach out to each other with our questions, for commiseration, or to share a cup of coffee with another person who understands the shiver of potential lurking within four little words: Tell me a story.



Bloodletter is your newsletter, and if you'd like to write an article, make announcements, or promote events, e-mail leighneely@yahoo.com. I reserve the right to edit and to refuse to publish, but with this talented group, it shouldn't be a problem.

Poison Pen Musings . . .

When is it time for a change?

By Anne White

For the last ten years, I've written a series called Lake George Mysteries and set the last four in a small, imaginary town in upstate New York with a distressingly high number of murders. Loren Graham, the mayor of the sleepy, lakeside village of Emerald Point, can't resist investigating the crimes that take place there – and there've been a lot of them. I've tried to move a few to other sites, but Emerald Point has been hard hit. Loren's sleuthing dismays the county sheriff's investigator and tries the patience of her fiancé, but she keeps at it. Bad habits are hard to break.

I've loved creating life-threatening predicaments for Loren and for my first protagonist, writer Ellen Graham, and enjoyed the challenge of rescuing them. But now after five books set at Lake George I'm wondering if it's time for a change of venue.

I realize other authors often keep a series going much longer; some even manage to juggle two series simultaneously. In fact, I recall a post once from a writer who worked with one set of characters in the morning and another in the afternoon. If only I were that disciplined. When I give Loren the boot, I'm afraid she and her charming lakeside community will be deep-sixed for good.

The setting I'm considering now is another upstate New York town, this one on the Hudson River, only a few miles from Lake George. I'd like to set a new series in Glens Falls where I live, but I'll make enough changes to protect the innocent and keep me from being run out of town. If you remember *The Last of the Mohicans*, when Hawkeye, Chingachgook and Uncas hide Cora and Alice Munro in a cave under the falls in the Hudson, you'll agree even James Fennimore Cooper, an author far more famous than I can hope to be, saw potential here.

Glens Falls, originally known as Wing's Falls, was founded by Quakers in the mid-1700's. During the Revolution the settlers were forced to abandon their homesteads, but in true, hardworking Quaker fashion, they returned when the war ended to make a fresh start.

The community prospered thanks to efforts of industrious folk like Abraham Wing and his descendants, but in 1864 a disastrous fire swept through the downtown, destroying many of the buildings and wiping out much of the business district. Undaunted, the store owners rebuilt quickly, often on the ruins of the old buildings, leaving some scary sub-basements and interconnected cellars, perfect for a mystery writer's purposes. And let's not forget that cave under the falls.

Starting over with a new series will require not only a new protagonist, but one with fresh demons from the past to haunt her. And I'll have to come up with a whole new set of friends and neighbors for her, maybe a love interest or two, and of course, a murderer; actually, a number of potential murderers, if I want to keep the series going.

I'd love to hear from other authors who've faced this problem – and solved it. How did you know when it was time to switch gears and start over? Have you found it harder or easier to launch a second series? And when should I stop spinning my wheels and get on with it? Any and all answers will be appreciated.



Anne White's Lake George Mysteries are *An Affinity For Murder* (Oak Tree Publishing, c2001, Harlequin Worldwide Book Club, Kindle), *Beneath The Surface*; *Best Laid Plans*; *Secrets Dark and Deep*; and *Cold Winter Nights* (last four from Hilliard and Harris and Harlequin Worldwide, also being considered for Kindle).

Promoting Out of the Box

by Peggy Ehrhart

Mystery conferences, library appearances, book signings—and, increasingly, blogs and tweets—all are tried and true ways to promote books. But writers are often advised to “think outside the box” when it comes to book promotion. I recently had a chance to do just that.

Who hasn’t fantasized about pulling up in front of a theater to find one’s name in lights? I certainly have. I’ve always loved those lines from Chuck Berry’s “Johnny B. Goode.” And my fantasy came true last August 19—at least true enough to be pretty thrilling. My name wasn’t in lights, but it was a heady experience nonetheless—showing up at the Bound Brook Library in Central New Jersey to be greeted by a big sign: “Free Blues Tonight”—and knowing that the free blues were courtesy of my band, Still Standing.



**“Maybe someday your name
will be in lights,
Saying Johnny B. Goode
tonight.”**

I had contacted library director, Paul Schroeder, last fall about speaking at the library and we arranged for me to give a talk. But he’d read my blues mystery, *Sweet Man Is Gone*, and knew it grew out of my experience with my own band, so he asked whether we’d like to play the following summer as part of an arts-appreciation program.

Sure, I said. The Last Stand Band, which inspired *Sweet Man Is Gone*, broke up in 2002, but for the past three years I’ve gotten together every week with a bass player (Howie) and a keyboard/harmonica player (Steve), who’s also my brother in law, to jam in Steve’s living room. We’d only played one previous gig, sitting on the deck of my house in New Jersey and providing background music for a barbecue my husband did for his department. But at this point we had a pretty big repertoire—and the guys are both veterans of other bands and experienced musicians.

When we practice, we use a drum machine instead of a human drummer. When I play in public, though, I like all the instruments to be real, so we recruited Steve’s friend Yuki Furui to accompany us with a conga drum and a few cymbals. We were to play in the main reading room of the library, so I thought a toned-down sound would be the best route, rather than a full drum kit. We brought all our own equipment, including a PA system, and we arrived two hours early to set up. I’d prepared a handout with a blurb about our program’s theme—popular music’s debt to African musical traditions—and a brief write-up about each of the 14 songs we planned to do: blues classics like “Cross Cut Saw” and “Key to the Highway,” the soul hit “Bring It on Home,” and even the Beatles’ “I Saw Her Standing There” as a nod to the program’s title, “Blues, Beatles, and Beyond.”

The gig was a huge success. Fifty-six people came, and a local access cable station taped it for Somerville Television. Paul Schroeder posted a note on Facebook the next day about how pleased a library director is when people leave a library event with huge smiles on their faces. We had some nice conversations with blues fans who professed to be delighted by our performance, and I got a complimentary email the next day from someone who tracked me down through my website. I also sold some copies of *Sweet Man Is Gone*. It was certainly a case of promoting out of the box, and terrific fun too.



Besides *Sweet Man Is Gone*, whose title is taken from a Muddy Waters song, and academic projects, Peggy has published stories, essays, and translations in print media and online. Her second book in the Maxx Maxwell series is due out from Five Star in January, 2011.

Empire State Book Festival

On April 10, Peggy Ehrhart drove up to Albany to participate in the First Annual Empire State Book Festival, sponsored by the New York Library Association. It was held at the Empire State Convention Center, a futuristic complex directly off Route 787 as one comes into Albany and dominated by The Egg, Albany's Center for the Performing Arts, which indeed looks like a gigantic egg.

The festival was devoted to books of all kinds, not just mysteries—but our genre was well represented. Jane Cleland and Peggy made a joint presentation billed as “How Is It Done? Taking the Mystery Out of Mysteries.” They had forty-five minutes to tell the audience how to write, sell, and market a mystery! The other mystery session was “Laugh or I’ll Kill You,” also featuring Jane, along with Donna Andrews and chapter member Rosemary Harris. The keynote speaker was Gregory Maguire, who was actually born and raised in Albany and whose novel *Wicked* inspired the Broadway musical.

Blackwood and Brouwer handled the book sales, and a signing area featured tables clearly marked with authors' names and signing times. The festival brought out a huge crowd, including lots of families with enthusiastic children in tow—which bodes well for the future of reading. Peggy talked to several attendees who told her how grateful they were to the authors who had “come all the way to Albany” for the event. Sisters in Crime members rub shoulders with so many writers in the Tri-State area that we forget it's a thrill to many people to meet someone who has actually published a book.

Peggy learned of the festival from a notice that made its rounds on the Internet early last fall. She followed up; filled out an application form, and heard several months later that she had been selected to participate. Here are links for those who are interested in participating next year:

New York Library Association site: www.nyla.org

Empire State Book Festival: <http://empirestatebookfestival.wordpress.com>

The mission of Sisters in Crime is to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry.

SinC (affectionately pronounced sink) was founded by women authors at the 1986 Bouchercon convention. Since then, we've grown to over 3,600 members in 48 chapters worldwide.

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Most chapter meetings are held the third (3rd) Thursday of the month at the Muhlenberg Public Library in Manhattan, 209 W. 23rd Street (near 7th Avenue)**

Join us for socializing at 6 p.m., with the business meeting and program from 6:30 till 7:45. Afterward, members who wish usually gather for dinner at a nearby restaurant. Unless noted, meetings are free, open to the public, and guests are cordially invited to attend. In the event the meeting date or time is changed, it will be noted on the group's website www.nysinc.org.

**NYPL budgetary changes this month may require long-term revision of our schedule. There are no meetings in July or August. Parties in December and June frequently occur outside 3rd Thursdays, and we also do adjust around holidays and major conferences. The online calendar will always have the latest information.

I love being a writer.

What I can't stand is the paperwork. ~Peter De Vries

News and Notes

Brooklyn Book Festival

Sunday, September 12, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Brooklyn Borough Hall and environs

NYSinC is sponsoring a covered vendor table at the festival. www.brooklynbookfestival.org. To participate as an author or chapter representative, e-mail nysinc@ymail.com

Panel Discussion

Tuesday, September 14, 6:30 p.m., Kips Bay Library, 446 3rd Avenue

Chapter members will participate in a panel discussion of “Murder in Manhattan” at the Kips Bay Library. The event’s open to everyone.

Chapter Meeting

**Thursday, Sept. 23, 6:30 p.m., Muhlenberg Branch Library
209 W. 23rd Street (at 7th Ave.)**

Guest speaker: **Dr. Kostas A. Katsavdakis, forensic profiler**. Dr. Forensic, as he’s nicknamed, provides threat assessments and risk analysis for defendants, both adult and juvenile, charged with violent sexual and nonsexual crimes. Working both privately and for the courts, he’s presented to law enforcement, criminal attorneys, and mental health professionals. He also teaches undergraduate and graduate-level courses in the psychology of criminal behavior and forensic psychological testing at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. www.drforensic.com

Public Fiction Readings from Chapter Members

Astoria/LIC International Film Festival, October 23rd

This inaugural festival will take place in Queens from Oct. 22-24. The website www.astorialicff.com has event info. We will call for chapter readers once details about times and location emerge.

Chapter Meeting

Thursday, October 28th, 6:30 p.m. Location TBA

Guest speaker: **Frank A. Ahearn, skip tracer and international “privacy consultant”**. His latest book, co-authored with partner Eileen C. Horan, is titled *How To Disappear*. We’ll hear about famous cases of his tracking people down and learn how paid professionals help set up new identities and habits for people who want (or need) to get lost. www.frankaahearn.com

Members on Long Island

A new local chapter launched in August on Long Island. For details, contact Marilyn Levinson at marilev4@optonline.net

Murder, They Wrote . . .

News and Notes cont'd

Summer Book Releases

Crossing the Lion

Bantam Books has released Cynthia Baxter's ninth book in the Reigning Cats & Dogs mystery series, which features Long Island veterinarian, Jessie Popper.

The Long Quiche Goodbye

The debut mystery by Avery Aames (aka Daryl Wood Gerber) is now available. This is the first of the Cheese Shop Mysteries with Berkley Prime Crime.

Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle, and the Bookman

S.E. Dahlinger with co-editor, Leslie Klinger, has organized and annotated the witticisms, reviews, letters, and commentary relating to the world's greatest sleuth for Gasogene Books, an imprint of Wessex Press.

Congratulations to all!

Upcoming NYC Book Signings

Tuesday, Sept. 28th, 7 p.m.

Partners & Crime, 44 Greenwich Avenue, Manhattan

Hilary Davidson will launch her debut crime novel with Forge, *The Damage Done*, with a party and signing. More information at www.crimepays.com

Wednesday, Nov. 10, 7 p.m.

McNally Jackson, 52 Prince St., Manhattan

Kathleen Ryan will be signing books to celebrate the release of W.W. Norton's *Hint Fiction: An Anthology of Stories in 25 words or Fewer*. More details at www.mcnallyjackson.com

If you'd like to see your news here, e-mail the Bloodletter editor or make an announcement to our members-only Yahoo Group by sending to SinCNewYork@YahooGroups. Blurbs made there get used as chapter website posts, Facebook updates, and Twitter feeds, so spread the word about what you're doing!