



BLOODLETTER

CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES

Chapter News

Chapter Meetings Move to Zoom

By Nina Mansfield

After postponing our March event because of Covid-19, our chapter has moved its meetings online to Zoom. This was certainly new territory for many of us, but overall, we were pleased that we could adapt and continue to offer quality programming for our members.

Our first Zoom event was in April with Mary Higgins Clark award winning author Carol Goodman, who discussed her process and tips for writing psychological suspense, and answered questions from members. The week after presenting to us, Goodman was awarded the 2020 Mary Higgins Clark award for her novel, *The Night Visitors*.

In May, we hosted a short story panel, featuring the managing editor of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* and *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, Jackie Sherbow, short story writer and editor Nick Kolakawski, Anthony Award nominated author Jen Conley, and managing editor at Akashic Books, Johanna Ingalls. The panel discussed a wide range of topics, from what types of stories editors are seeking out these days, to how to deal with, and write about, our quarantined state.

Normally, in June, we would wrap up before the summer with our annual party. However, since a party was out of the question, we continued on with our Zoom programming with a very dynamic presentation from agent Paula Munier, who discussed best practices for

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CHAPTER SENDS DONATION TO NAZ

The New York-Tri State Chapter has recently made a \$450 donation to Northside Achievement Zone. The chapter and individual members contributed to this donation.

As per their website, "The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) exists to permanently close the achievement gap and end generational poverty in North Minneapolis. Together with our partner organizations, we are walking side by side with low-income families as they put their children on a path to college."

To learn more about NAZ, or to make your own donation, please visit their website. www.northsideachievement.org.



Author Carol Goodman, two-time winner of the Mary Higgins Clark Award, presented at our very first chapter event via Zoom.

(Chapter Meetings Move to Zoom Continued)

querying. July's Zoom event was *Self-Promotion is not a Dirty (Hyphenated) Word*. The panel featured author Gianna Simone, who presented affordable ways to market one's books on Amazon; marketing guru Israel Romand of Those Marketers, who spoke about affordable Facebook advertising; and Sarah Miniaci from Smith Publicity, who discussed ways for authors to promote themselves on social media.

All of these panels and presentations were well attended and delved into areas of interest of our members. While many members are eager to be able to meet in person again, the Zoom format offers advantages. Speakers who would not normally be able to join us in person can now join us virtually. Chapter members who cannot always commute into the city for a meeting can now attend with ease from their own homes. Some of our Zoom events have already been posted to the members only section of our website!

Programming is already underway for the fall. The chapter plans to hold meetings on Zoom through the end of 2020. Will we be able to meet in person in 2021? Hopefully so! But even when in-person meetings are again a possibility, the Zoom format might continue to be used for certain meetings, so that we can provide the best, and most accessible programming for our chapter members.

Nina Mansfield is a co-vice president on the NY-Tri State Chapter of Sisters in Crime. Her debut novel, Swimming Alone, a YA mystery, was published by Fire & Ice YA in 2015.



Agent Paula Munier spoke to our chapter via Zoom in June.

THE INTERROGATION ROOM

An Inquisitor Questions Our Members

In this edition of The Interrogation Room, we'll be discussing something that's on everyone's minds—the COVID-19 pandemic—and how it's affecting us as writers. Thanks to the three Sisters in Crime who have weighed in:

Triss Stein describes herself as a small-town girl from New York State's dairy country who has spent most of her adult life living and working in New York City. She herself is inspired by Brooklyn's ever-changing, varied neighborhoods and their rich histories, and her urban historian heroine, Erica Donato, has reasons to ask questions all over her native borough. Her titles include *Brooklyn Legacies*, *Brooklyn Bones*, *Brooklyn Graves*, *Brooklyn Secrets* and *Brooklyn Wars*, each set in a different Brooklyn neighborhood.

Alison von Rosenvinge (aka D.A. Bartley) is the author of the critically-acclaimed Abish Taylor mysteries. Before writing fiction, Alison worked as an attorney and political scientist. She is currently serving as president of the New York Chapter of Sisters in Crime and is a member of Mystery Writers of America. She and her family split their time between the Upper East Side and upstate New York.

Dawn M. Barclay (yours truly, aka D.M. Barr) is what Billy Joel described in *Piano Man*—a real estate novelist. When she's not selling houses or originating mortgages, Dawn participates as president for the Hudson Valley Romance Writers, is programming chair for our chapter of Sisters in Crime and is a member of Mystery Writers of America. Her newest rescue dog is a Pit Bull/Lab mix named Harley and her third novel (fourth book overall) is domestic suspense titled, *Saving Grace: A Psychological Thriller*, which debuts in October.

(Interrogation Room continued.)

How has COVID-19 affected your writing? Are you more prolific because you have more time on your hands, or less prolific because you are preoccupied? How are you overcoming the challenge?

Triss: Badly. I have been distracted and unfocused, even though no one I love is sick or working on the front lines. It's hard to explain, even to myself, but I know I am in good company! I've been less prolific, obviously, in spite of my initial good intentions. It is complicated by the fact that I am in limbo in career terms due to my publisher (Poisoned Pen Press) merging with Sourcebooks. Nothing is clear but it looks like I will have to start over. Somewhere. Find an agent. It is harder to be productive when I don't know what my goal is.

To overcome the challenge, I am trying hard to stay focused on new ideas. I took an online writing workshop to help sharpen up skills. I am trying to write a very full synopsis of a new idea. That's a challenge in itself since I am very much a seat-of-the-pants writer. Sometimes it is kind of thrilling; sometimes I wonder, what is the point? (Then I go bake something) The answer is what it always is in the writing life: glue my seat to my desk chair and write words. Then re-write them. Then write more.

Alison: For me it's been an evolution. During the first few months in isolation, the best I could do was edit and revise. Knowing of all the suffering everywhere on the planet made it very difficult for me to be creative. The term *Weltschmerz* is apt. Now? I still have moments of feeling overwhelmed by the suffering related to COVID and to racial and social economic injustice, but I have found a way to my writing again. Now more than ever, I'm taking solace in the clicking sound of the keyboard.

Dawn: My dream has long been to have unlimited time on my hands to write, but now that I have it, I haven't written a word. I won't say I've wasted all those hours not commuting, but I've found a million ways to distract myself from writing.

I'm high-risk and so is my husband, so my focus has been on continuing to live, and making life as normal as possible.

I try to remain positive, focus on the good that's come from the pandemic, like Zooming with friends I haven't heard from in years, or being able to recruit speakers for our meetings, no matter where they are located. I've caught up on continuing ed for my business and have learned to do presentations remotely. I've joined a virtual Weight Watchers group. And I rescued Harley, my Pit Bull/Lab mix, and the time I spend correcting her chewing, digging, barking (add annoying habit here), takes my mind off everything else. Plus when I hug her, it calms me.

Will you be incorporating the pandemic into your writing going forward (assuming you write contemporaries) such as people wearing masks and why or why not?

Triss: No, I won't. It is too soon to write about it usefully, there is no perspective yet, and what may seem current today will seem stale and dated by the time something is published. I took the same approach post 9/11.

Alison: I was discussing that very question with my agent earlier this week! I'm currently working on a novel set on the Upper East Side—trading Abish Taylor's Wasatch mountains for the streets of NYC—and I am not including masks. However, as I've revised and edited chapters I wrote before March, I find my sensibilities have shifted. Topics that seemed amusing to me then seem tone deaf to me now.

Dawn: I'm planning to set any future thrillers in 2019, pre-COVID, to avoid the issue.

Do you think the public has a taste for pandemic-themed books and stories?

Triss: Does anyone ever know what the public wants? But I think there is a strong case to be made that such books are the last thing anyone wants right now, and stories that provide a few hours of escape are a gift.

Alison: What people want to read during the pandemic? I have no idea. I'm re-reading *The Glass Bead Game* by Hermann Hesse, which is one of my favorite books; *A Way to Garden* by Margaret Roach, and *The Biggest Bluff* by Maria Konnikova. Nothing too heavy. I tried reading *Song of Solomon* last month and put it aside for another time when I'm more ready for the genius of Toni Morrison.

Dawn: Maybe. I know that Polis Books just put out *Lockdown: Stories of Crime, Terror, and Hope During a Pandemic* and I'm curious about the different takes the authors will take, so I may pick that up. Personally, I've been beta-reading for other authors and diving into the Eddie Flynn series by Steve Cavanagh, which are legal thrillers. I need an escape from the barrage of depressing news on television these days.

How do you envision the writer's life changing post-pandemic? Will there be fewer conventions, in-person pitch sessions, etc?

Triss: I believe conventions, etc. will resume next year if the pandemic seems over. They are popular, even beloved. Again, I think of 9/11. I was at Bouchercon that year. It was less than 2 months later. In DC! Of course it was affected and there were many cancellations. In fact, I was a last-minute moderator of a panel, filling in for someone afraid to travel. But that was not forever. As to how it will affect overall publishing? I think we all know it will be affected, but how will only unfold over time, along with the rest of the economy.

Alison: Until there's a vaccine, life will be different. I imagine all of us will be making internal trade-offs concerning risk, and those calculations will change over time. Zoom is a wonderful tool, but for me it's no substitute for real human contact.

Conventions must be appropriate for the state of the world, which currently is not hospitable to large gatherings of people travelling from across the country and globe. I know this too shall pass, but I must confess to feeling ever-so-slightly impatient. I miss the writer community!

Dawn: It's certainly made absorbing conference content more affordable. I've attended Thrillerfest, The Locked Up Festival (mostly U.K. writers) and will be at Murdercon (Writer's Police Academy) as well as a virtual get together that's replacing Crime Bake. I miss the personal interaction but I'm happy to view the content and chat with other authors remotely. I'm hoping that in the future, when things do open up, conferences adopt a hybrid approach, videoing or streaming sessions live so that people who can't afford or aren't physically able to travel can still attend. Same for our own meetings—with a remote component, we can attract new members and offer content we couldn't have otherwise provided.

Dawn M. Barclay, writing as D.M. Barr, is proud to be on the board of Sisters in Crime's NY/Tri-State chapter, heading up programming. Her latest domestic suspense novel, Saving Grace, will be published by Black Rose Writing in October, 2020.



The Inquisitor, aka author D.M. Barr.



Author Triss Stein



Alison Von Rosenvinge, aka Author D.A. Bartley

THE POLICE BLOTTER

Member News

Tina deBellegarde's debut novel *Winter Witness*, the first in her Batavia-on-Hudson series, will release September 29, 2020 with Level Best Books.

Guilt Rules All: Irish Mystery, Detective and Crime Fiction, edited by **Elizabeth Mannion** and Brian Cliff, was published by Syracuse University Press, July 2020.

Nina Mansfield's short story "A Surefire Hit" was published in the Spring/Summer 2020 issue of *Mysterical-E*.

Constance Meccarello-Gerson's new book *French Cruises Can Kill You* will be out in September.

Terrie Farley Moran will write the next four books in the *Murder, She Wrote* series based on the long-running television show of the same name.

Lori Robbins' mystery *Murder in First Position*, will release November 24, 2020, with Level Best Books. It's the first book in her On Pointe Mystery series and is set in the world of professional ballet.

Cathi Stoler's first book in the *Murder On the Rocks Series, Bar None*, launched on July 28th. It will be followed by *Last Call* on October 13th. Her flash fiction story, "Fried Zucchini Sticks," will be published in the October 15th issue of *Yellow Mama* ezine and her short story, "A Grave Conversation" will be included in the *Bould Anthology* this fall.

Death in the Family by **Tessa Wegert** (Berkley/Penguin Random House), the first book in the Shana Merchant series of mysteries, will publish in paperback in North America on August 18, 2020.

MEMBERS ONLY

Have you visited the members-only section of the website? You'll find:

Recordings of our latest Zoom Meetings
Social Media Tips
Additional resources for writers

And don't forget to connect with us on social media! We love to share member news.

Pinterest: [@NYSinC](#)
Instagram: [@NYTriStateSinC](#)
Twitter: [@NYSinC](#)
Facebook: [@NYSinC](#)

Interested in joining our chapter? Visit www.nysinc.org to learn how. Remember, you should also be a member of Sisters in Crime National.

DISTURBING THE PEACE

Upcoming Chapter Events

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

An Evening with Sujata Massey: Historical Mysteries and Unrepresented Voices

Join us via Zoom

(Zoom invitation to be sent via email to chapter members.)

Program begins at 6:30PM

Sujata Massey is a British-American mystery writer and historical fiction novelist best known for her Rei Shimura mystery series. Her debut novel, *The Salaryman's Wife*, won the Agatha Award for Best First Novel in 1997. In 2000, her novel *The Flower Master*, won the Macavity Award for Best Mystery Novel.

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

A Light in the Darkness: Humor in Suspense Writing

Join us via Zoom for a panel with Donna Andrews, Tim Hallinan and Brad Parks.

(Zoom invitation to be sent via email to chapter members.)

Program begins at 6:30PM

NY/TRI-STATE SISTERS IN CRIME MEMBERS:

If you would like to submit news for the Police Blotter, please visit the members only section of our website.

BLOODLETTER IS ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL MEMBERS TO JOIN OUR EDITORIAL TEAM. PLEASE CONTACT NINA MANSFIELD AT NYTRISTATESINC@GMAIL.COM.