

# BLOODLETTER

## CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES

### Chapter News

## EXCELLENT PROGRAMMING CONTINUES ON ZOOM

By Nina Mansfield

Have you attended one of our chapter meetings on Zoom lately? If not, you are missing out. Well, that's not entirely true. Chapter members can now watch replays of many of our Zoom meetings via a password protected Vimeo link. These links can be found in the Members Only section of our website. So if you feel too Zoomed out to join a meeting, you can catch it at a later time. And I will say, our meetings have been really incredible!

In September, chapter member **Laura Joh Rowland** interviewed **Sujata Massey** about **Historical Mysteries and Unrepresented Voices**. Massey is the author of the Perveen Mistry novels, and the Rei Shimura series. Her novels have won the Agatha, Lefty and Macavity awards and have been finalists for the Edgar, Anthony and Mary Higgins Clark prizes. During the interview, Massey discussed her writing journey and how she went from journalist to mystery writer, and the type of reading and research she needs to accurately write historical mysteries set outside the United States. Massey recalled reading books like the *Secret Garden*, which was an important book in her youth, but one that had very puzzling depictions of Indian people. She also found that Indian women were also often erased from fiction. Her next book, *The Bombay Prince*, set in 1921 when multiple riots against colonial rule were occurring in India, will be out this summer.

In October, authors **Donna Andrews**, **Brad Parks**, and **Timothy Hallinan** convened for a panel entitled **A Light in the Darkness: Humor in Suspense Writing**, moderated by chapter member D.M. Barr. Even before the panel began, it was clear we were in for an entertaining evening.



Award winning Author Sujata Massey joined our chapter via Zoom in September.

### Making the Most of Your SinC-New York/Tri-State Membership

- Join us on Zoom for our monthly programs.
- Check out the Members Only Section of the Website to watch missed meetings and for other helpful information.
- Submit a book cover for our website.
- Follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook—and make sure we follow you too!
- Join our GroupsIO ListServe to hear and share news.
- Submit a short story to our anthology.
- Participate in events like Open Mic Night and Brooklyn Book Festival.
- Contribute to *Bloodletter*.

## *Criminal Enterprises Continued*

It's hard to summarize this panel in one paragraph, as there were so many great pieces of advice and fabulous one-liners throughout! New York Times Bestselling author Donna Andrews said she looks for "comedy that has heart in it." Brad Parks, the only author to have won the Shamus, Lefty and Nero awards, declared, "The number one way not to be funny is to try really hard to be funny." Edgar, Shamus, Macavity and Lefty nominee Timothy Hallinan said, "You can't write a great joke for a character that really isn't in the character's voice." He also cautioned that humor and suspense were "kind of opposing forces." The evening was an absolutely delight!



Acclaimed Authors Donna Andrews, Brad Parks and Timothy Hallinan joined us via Zoom in October.



Professor Keith Cruise joined us on Zoom in November to discuss Forensic Psychology.

In November we were joined by Professor Keith Cruise, who spoke to us about the **Forensic Psychology: The Intersection of Law and Science**. Cruise discussed what it is forensic psychologists actually do—as opposed to what we often see them do on television. Spoiler alert: it usually does not involve profiling serial killers. "Psychological profiling is not scientific," Cruise stated. Cruise often works with youths who are charged with a crime, to help determine their competency to stand trial. Chapter members were particularly interested in how often defendants try to fake insanity defenses, and Cruise shared some of his tips for figuring out if someone is trying to falsely plead insanity. Perhaps the most heart wrenching and powerful moments of Professor Cruise's talk were when he discussed two cases he had worked on. The State of Tennessee vs. Tyshon Booker is an extremely tragic case in which a juvenile, whose life may have very well been in danger, received a mandatory life sentence. Cruise also discussed the case of Ethan Windom, who as a teenager killed his mother. The details of these cases were upsetting, and Cruise urged us to remember, "Every criminal offender was a kid some time."

As mentioned previously, recording of all three of these meetings are currently available to chapter members.

## **Justice for All: Murder New York Style**

### **ANTHOLOGY SUBMISSIONS**

**Deadline February 1, 2021**

Submission guidelines can be found in the members only section of our website.

*Remember, you must be a member in good standing of both the Sisters in Crime National, and our local chapter to submit. So don't forget to pay your dues!*

### **Missed a meeting?**

**Recordings of many of our Zoom meetings can be found in the Members Only section of [www.nysinc.org](http://www.nysinc.org).**

# INTERROGATION ROOM

## An Inquisitor Questions Our Members

### SinC Participation: Don't Get Bored, Get (on the) Board!

By D.M. Barr

The one thing I've learned regarding group membership is that to take full advantage, you must get involved. For me, that's never been truer than with Sisters in Crime, New York-Tri-State. As a newsletter contributor and member at large, I've had the honor of meeting, networking with, and befriending many of the top authors in the genre. I've enjoyed our monthly board meetings, both in-person and virtually, as well as our planning emails. How rewarding it's been to watch our website, newsletter, events, and programming continue to blossom! The education and support have been invaluable.

As the second year of our term winds down, Leadership wanted to share a little about ourselves, our positions, and the benefits we've derived from participating, so other members can decide if they'd like to run for a position in the 2021-2023 Board. When the nomination process opens in the spring, we hope you'll step up and benefit from the experience as we have!



**President: Alison von Rosenvinge (writing as D.A. Bartley)** is the author of the critically acclaimed Abish Taylor mysteries set in the Wasatch Mountains of Utah. Before writing, Alison worked as an

attorney and political scientist in Manhattan. She and her family split their time between the Upper East Side and Upstate New York. She is currently working on a new stand-alone novel set far away from the Intermountain West.

**The Job and its Benefits:** Without a doubt, the most rewarding aspect of serving as president of the New York Tri-State Chapter of Sisters in Crime has been the people. Over the past year and a half, I've gotten to know some of the most remarkable human beings from across the crime writing spectrum, from fellow board members to chapter members to chapter presidents from across the country. I feel more connected to this supportive writing community than ever before.

As president, I'm involved in a little bit of everything: the logistics of running a non-profit organization, creating a new website, coordinating social media,

publishing an anthology, planning programming, and thinking ahead to what will best serve our members in the months and years to come. The best part of the position is that I work alongside truly gifted writers who are generous with their time, their experience, and their creativity.

I was impressed at my very first board meeting with the breadth of writing experience we have in our chapter. Just listening at our board meetings is an education in craft, the ins and outs of the publishing industry, and the practice of writing. Every month has brought different challenges, and I've learned so much in meeting those. On top of that, I now feel that I have a group of accomplished colleagues I can turn to for advice or just a little friendly support.

### Co-Vice Presidents: Lori Robbins and Nina Mansfield



**Lori Robbins** is the author of *Lesson Plan for Murder*, which won the Silver Falchion for Best Cozy Mystery and was a finalist in the Readers' Choice and Indie Book Awards. Her *On Pointe* Mystery series, published by Level Best Books, is set in the world of

professional ballet, and her latest work, *Murder in First Position*, was released in November 2020. When she isn't writing, Robbins is teaching English or taking a ballet class.

**The Job and its Benefits:** My duties include communicating with current, former, and potential members, maintaining the membership list, collecting dues, and forwarding them to the treasurer. I'm involved in outreach and I take part in all membership-related activities, including organizing staffing/participation for the Brooklyn Book Festival.

The best part of being on the NYSinC Board was getting the opportunity to work with, and learn from, so many talented and creative people. All are deeply committed to the writing community, as well as the larger community. They are also extremely generous in sharing their expertise on every aspect of what it means to be a writer. At board meetings we focus on improving the chapter and adding value to the NYSinC experience. We take our jobs seriously. But we don't take ourselves too seriously. As a board member, you become personally invested in the

## ***Interrogation Room continued***

success of our local chapter. You also gain a deeper connection to the writing community as a whole. Listening to the shared experiences of other writers, and having them as a resource, was a benefit that transcended the monthly meetings. The best part was that acquaintances became friends.



**Nina Mansfield** is a Cos Cob, CT based writer. Her young adult mystery novel *Swimming Alone* was published by Fire & Ice YA in 2015. Nina's short mystery stories have appeared in various publications including *Ellery Queen Mystery*

*Magazine*, *Crime Syndicate Magazine*, *Mysterical-E* and various anthologies including *Where Crime Never Sleep: Murder New York Style 4*. Nina is also a published and produced playwright. Her plays have been produced throughout the United States and the world.

**The Job and its Benefits:** I attend monthly board meeting and I oplay part of chapter decision making. I manage the SinC-NY Twitter site, the website and I put out our chapter newsletter, *Bloodletter*. These aren't necessarily VP duties, just roles I've picked up along the way because I wanted to get more involved.

I really believe in the motto "It's not what your chapter can do for you, but what you can do for your chapter." Managing the chapter Twitter has really helped me get to know our chapter members, at least virtually. I've enjoyed putting together our quarterly newsletters and managing the website for the same reason. SinC-NY is here to help us help each other as we navigate the various stages of our writing careers, and it is really fulfilling being a part of a team that is helping fellow writers.



**Secretary: Laura Joh Rowland** is the author of *Portrait of Peril*, the fifth book in her mystery series set in Victorian England, starring photographer Sarah Bain. Her other series features 17<sup>th</sup>-

century Japanese samurai detective Sano Ichiro. Her work has been published in 21 countries, won RT Magazine's Reader's Choice Award, and made *The Wall Street Journal's* list of the five

best historical mystery novels. Laura is also a cartoonist. When she's not writing mysteries, she's working on a graphic novel based on the life of the poet Sylvia Plath. She lives in Queens with her husband Marty.

**The Job and its Benefits:** I'm the secretary of the chapter. My main duty is taking the minutes during board meetings, typing them up, and emailing them to the other members. I occasionally organize and present programs, such as the recent interview with author Sujata Massey. Serving on the board has helped me strengthen my connections with the members of the board and chapter. Writing is a solitary pursuit, but the support of our fellow authors is a wonderful benefit of SinC.

**Treasurer: Stephanie Flaherty** has been writing for many years, first with romantic suspense, including being a Golden Heart finalist from Romance Writers of America; and continuing into straight mystery with memberships in MWA and Sisters in Crime. Her short story from the Sisters in Crime anthology from 2014 was an "Other Distinguished Mystery Stories of 2014" in *The Best American Mystery Stories* series of 2015, edited by James Patterson. She still works with Sadie, her favorite amateur sleuth who is based in her native Brooklyn neighborhood. In romantic suspense, she writes as Stephanie Marie Wilson; and in mystery, Stephanie Wilson-Flaherty.

**The Job and its Benefits:** I have been the Treasurer of the chapter for several years. As a former banker and having a Bachelor of Science in Accounting, I have found that the work is quite simple for anyone who knows debits and credits or who even has bookkeeping experience. These days, most deposits are made via PayPal and any checks or physical banking is done through TD Bank. The job requires keeping track of bank balances, writing checks for expenses, and accounting for income from dues or anthology expenses or income. Each spring, we file a few simple forms for non-profit tax authorities, and that's it.

The best part of the job is being on the Board of the chapter and helping guide our activities in the most positive way for our membership. It has been my privilege to join with our many active volunteers who also serve on the Board to create wonderful activities, workshops, speaker events, and our anthologies to promote the careers of all our membership. That is Sisters in Crime at its best!



## Interrogation Room continued

### Members at Large:



**Dawn M. Barclay (writing as D.M. Barr):** A former award-winning journalist, Dawn always saw fiction as the final frontier. Now with three thrillers

published (*Expired Listings*, *Slashing Mona Lisa*, and *Saving Grace: A Psychological Thriller*), she enjoys her role as president of the Hudson Valley RWA chapter, and her membership in SinC, MWA and ITW. She considers herself a satirist trapped in the body of a mystery and romance writer.

**The Job and its Benefits:** The job is really what you make it. I've volunteered to write the Interrogation Room section of the newsletter primarily because I thought it would be a great way to meet my fellow members (and it has!). I also volunteered as the chair of programming and learned that the one good thing about the pandemic is that it opened up opportunities to book speakers from around the country (and with Elizabeth Mannion's help, from around the world!). Interviewing the authors for SinC inspired me to launch my own YouTube author interview series, Author-Groupie.com. My next and greatest challenge will be co-editing our upcoming anthology alongside Joseph DeMarco. Being part of the board has instilled a greater appreciation of just how talented our membership is!

**Cynthia Benjamin's** mystery stories have appeared in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, *Blackcat Mystery Magazine*, and two SINC anthologies. She's the author of a dozen children's books. She's a daytime and prime time television writer and developed a daytime serial for CBS.

**The Job and its Benefits:** I'm responsible for reserving our meeting room at the Jefferson Market Library and forwarding information about our events to the library manager. I also organize the annual holiday party at Salam.

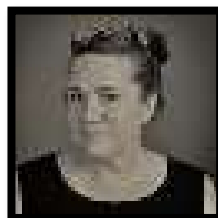
Serving on the Board is an important way to give back to an organization that does so much for its members by providing incredible events and a warm and welcoming environment for anyone who loves to write and read mysteries.



**Mariah Fredericks** was born and raised in New York City, where she still lives today with her family. She is a graduate of Vassar College with a BA in history. She has written several novels for young adults; her novel

*Crunch Time* was nominated for an Edgar in 2007. *A Death of No Importance* was her first mystery for adults.

**The Job and its Benefits:** As a member-at-large, my job is primarily to support the work of the officers on the board. I manage the chapter's Facebook page, help in recruiting other authors and publishing people for speaking engagements, and serve as part of the set-up and breakdown crew for larger events. It's a pleasure to serve and see the ingenuity, hard work, and creativity that goes into building a successful chapter.



**Elizabeth Mannion** is a teacher and researcher with a focus on drama and an interdisciplinary range of Irish studies. She is the editor of *The Contemporary Irish Detective Novel* (Palgrave

Macmillan, 2016), co-editor of *Guilt Rules All: Irish Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction* (Syracuse Univ. Press, 2020) and the author of *The Urban Plays of the Early Abbey Theatre* (Syracuse Univ. Press, 2014). As Sarah-Jane McKenna, she is the author of the Kate Doyle series, including *Dreaming in Irish* and *Traces of Irish*. The third title will be out in January 2022. She holds a PhD from Trinity College Dublin and teaches at Baruch College, City University of New York.

**The Job and its Benefits:** I joined the Board, as a member at large, in 2019. I run our chapter Instagram account. Being a Board member of our chapter has been an eye-opening experience. I am in awe of the hours our Board devotes to maximize membership, support our writers, and secure compelling programming. COVID-19 could easily have made everybody slow down—I think our members would have understood if it did—but these mad months raised the bar, thanks in no small part to the dedication of the women on this Board and the energy of our chapter.

## *SinC Participation continued*



**Cathi Stoler:** Award-winning author Cathi Stoler's mystery/suspense fiction includes the *Murder On The Rocks* Series featuring The Corner Lounge owner, Jude Dillane in *Bar None* and her most recent release in the series, *Last Call*, published.

by Level Best Books. She's also written the suspense novels, *Nick of Time* and *Out of Time*, and the *Laurel and Helen New York Mysteries*

**The Job and its Benefits:** I've been a member of Sister in Crime for ten years and have served on the board for seven. So, I guess you could say, I'm totally committed. As a member at large, I work with the rest of the board to develop programs and events that help our members with all the aspects of their writing from self-promotion, to querying agents, to understanding forensic psychology. I often suggest guest speakers and panelists who can add to our knowledge. This year, I think we've done a fantastic job with the variety of our online Zoom meetings, and we have a great list of ideas for meetings through next June.

Participating in the Board has been a truly amazing experience. My SinC board member sibs are totally incredibly supportive and offer encouragement every step of the way. We all really want to help each other, and the chapter members, to succeed. Whether it's through the programs we present, or something more personal like a critique or a review, or how to post on Twitter or Instagram, everyone is happy to share what they know. The advice I've gotten has helped make my books the best they can be, and that's something we want to do for each member.

### **WE ARE LOOKING FOR A SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR**

Board elections will be held in the Spring. We will be designating one of the At-Large board roles as Social Media Coordinator. This role will be tasked with coordinating our expanding presence on multiple platforms. More on this will be shared with the call for board members goes out in the Spring.

### **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:**

**Pinterest:** @NYSinC

**Instagram:**

@NYTriStateSinC

**Twitter:** @NYSinC

**Facebook:** @NYSinC

Don't forget to retweet, like, comment, and share our posts! Let's support each other on social media!

Interested in joining our chapter? Visit [www.nysinc.org](http://www.nysinc.org) to learn how. Remember, you should also be a member of Sisters in Crime National.

Do you have good news to share in our next *Bloodletter*?

Check on the Members Only Section and share your news there!

If you would like to contribute an article to *Bloodletter*, email [nina@ninamansfield.com](mailto:nina@ninamansfield.com).

## A Zoom Holiday!

By Nina Mansfield

In 2019, we changed up our holiday party tradition. In lieu of a sit down dinner, we opted for a cocktail party, featuring guest of honor Kellye Garrett. This year, because of Covid-19, our holiday tradition was altered once again. Rather than convening at Salam, we toasted each other on Zoom, helped along by a drink recipe provided by member-at-large Cathi Stoler.

We then welcomed Agatha Award winning author Jane Cleland on Zoom. She discussed “Four Things I Wish I’d Known at the Start of my Writing Career.” And wow, what an informative talk!

Cleland’s first point was “build meaningful relationships.” “I hate the word networking,” she said, and she urged authors to “Be nice to everyone,” and to consider what we could do for others rather than always asking for help. Her second point was that authors should “understand the complexities of the publishing business.” She gave pointers on how to write a good query letter, and how to find and work with an agent.

Next, Cleland gave advice about promotion. “I don’t like to promote things without giving value,” she said. She urged authors to “get to know booksellers, librarians and influencers.”

Cleland’s fourth point was that writers should, “Write better books.” She discussed the importance of pacing and voice. She also talked about the way she continues to study books she admires in order to improve her craft.

Cleland had something for everything—from those in the midst of writing series, to those just starting out. It was a wonderful way to enjoy a snowy evening.

**Jane Cleland has provided us with a handout with the key points from the evening. You can find this in the Member’s Only Section of our website.**



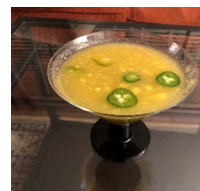
Agatha Award  
Winning Author  
Jane Cleland.



Our chapter celebrates a toast on Zoom.

### Recipe of The Jalapeño Envy

Courtesy of Cathi Stoler



2oz. Jose Cuervo Tequila\*

1 oz. Agave Syrup

¼ Ripe Mango (peeled and diced into small pieces)

Squeeze of lime

Jalapeño pepper cut into thin rings

Place tequila, agave syrup and mango in blender or food processor with half dozen ice cubes.

Blend until smooth.

Pour into cocktail glass and add a squeeze of lime. Float jalapeño pepper rings on top.

\*For the non-alcoholic version of Jalapeño Envy, substitute 2 oz. pineapple juice.

## THE POLICE BLOTTER

### Member News

**Elizabeth Crowens** was one of two recipients of MWA-New York Chapter's 2020 Leo B. Burstein Scholarship.

**Sharon Linnea's** *Death by Gravity*, Book 2 in the Bartender's Guide to Murder series was published by Arundel Publishing December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Terrie Farley Moran's** short story "It Ain't Me, Babe", is published in the anthology, PEACE, LOVE AND CRIME, crime fiction inspired by the music of the '60s.

**Constance Meccarello-Gerson's** third mystery in the series Hassle High, *French Cruises Can Kill You* is on kindle today and will be on Amazon.com in paperback the end of the month.

**Lori Robbins's** short story "Accidents Happen" will appear in the 2021 Malice Domestic Anthology. *Murder Most Diabolical*.

**Nina Wachsmann** has signed a 3-book deal with Level Best Books for *The Gallery of Beauties*, a novel of 17th century Venice, where women of talent, ambition and beauty become subjects of a portrait gallery and the target for murder. The first book is scheduled to come out in 2022.

## DISTURBING THE PEACE

### Upcoming Chapter Events

All events will be hosted on Zoom. Chapter members will receive a link. See our website for additional information.

Wednesday, January 27, 2021 @ 6:30PM:  
Annual Open Mic Night

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 @ 6:30PM  
Making the Cut: Editors Talk Editing

Saturday, March 21, 2021 @ 2:00PM  
An Afternoon with Irish Crime Writers

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 @ 6:30PM  
From Hollywood to the Halls of Publishing: Ellen Byron Speaks with her Agent Doug Grad

May 2021  
Pitchfest: Members will have a chance to submit pitches for critique.

June 2020  
Recapping the year, and Meet the New Board  
(And maybe a party?)