

The Purloined Newsletter

A CAPITAL CRIME WRITERS PUBLICATION

Volume 19, Issue 7 – September 2007

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Capital Crime Writers is an organization of writers working in the mystery field.

We meet on the second Wednesday of each month to discuss writing and crime, with the exception of July and August when meetings are suspended for the summer.

Membership is \$30 per year, \$15 corresponding.

Meetings are held in Room 156 at the Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street.

There is a meet and greet from 7:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., prior to every meeting.

Next Meeting: September 12, 2007

Girls Gone Bad

We're kicking off the new CCW season on September 12th with a presentation from Shelley Brown who is a professor in the psychology and criminology departments at Carleton University. Dr. Brown's research includes gender differences in criminal offence patterns and the psychology of female criminal conduct. Dr. Brown has experience in correctional issues pertaining to female offenders. She will talk to us about whether or not "girls really have gone bad", gender differences and similarities in criminal offence gestalts (e.g., motivation, methods, offence severity, criminal offence types), and issues regarding the provision of gender-responsive correctional assessment and treatment.

We'd also like to welcome Deborah Gyapong to the program committee. Deborah is the author of *The Defilers*, a suspense novel about a Mountie in Nova Scotia. She is also a freelance journalist who covers religion and politics for Catholic and Evangelical newspapers. She worked briefly in the opposition leader's office for Stockwell Day and John Reynolds. Before that she spent 17 years at the CBC, most of that time as a television producer of news and current affairs. She lives in Kanata with her husband Tony.

**Your Program Committee
Ken, Bev & Deborah]**

Meet the Audrey Jessup Award Winners:



(l-r) Mike Strong, Ken McBeath, Gail MacDonald, Jane Watson and Sheila Gallant-Halloran

Get more information about the winners on page 4, and read the in-depth interview with winner Mike Strong on page 9!

From the Chair – Brenda Chapman

I hope that everyone managed to relax and take a break from the work routine this summer to recharge the creative batteries. Our program committee has been busy drawing up another stellar list of guests and panels for this year's meetings. I would like to welcome Deborah Gyapong who has joined Ken Gibson and Bev Panasky on the program committee.

We had an entertaining evening of readings at the RA Centre in June including announcement of the winners of the 2007 Audrey Jessup contest. Congratulations again to Mike Strong who placed first with his entry "Just One of the Guys" and to the other winners in order of placement: Gail

MacDonald, Ken McBeath, Jane Watson and Sheila Gallant-Halloran. Well done to all who entered.

Katherine Hobbs will be continuing as editor of The Purloined Newsletter and she welcomes submissions from our members. Please feel free to discuss any ideas, as this newsletter is stronger with your participation. You will notice this issue Katherine has worked with a designer to draw up a new template that incorporates the top banner and font found on our website. Branding is a powerful tool used in marketing and publicity. The use of consistent branding is one way we can promote Capital Crimewriters in future publicity.

If you have any suggestions or comments throughout the year about Capital Crimewriters, I welcome your input and can be reached through our website. Know that the committee is committed to responding to any issues as we move forward as an organization.

September is a great month to bring a friend to the meeting and to promote our group. It's also a good time to reconnect with old friends and discuss our latest writing projects or share ideas. I look forward to seeing everyone soon. Until then, may the writing force be with you.

Brenda



The CCW Executive

Chair – Brenda Chapman

VP – Susan Gates

Past Chair – Barbara Fradkin

Treasurer – Sheila Gallant Halloran

Programs & Workshops – Ken Gibson, Bev Panasky & Deborah Gyapong

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Memorable Quotes from Writers:

I leave out the parts that people skip.

If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it.

Elmore Leonard (b. 1925)

Editor's Notes – Katherine Hobbs



There's no rest for the wicked. So the phrase from the Book of Isaiah goes. But for CCW members it might be stated more aptly as — there's no rest for the writer! It appears to have been a busy summer for quite a few CCW members. A writer's debate was held May 30, involving seven of our members. The Audrey Jessup award winners were lauded in June at the CCW pub nite, where they read from their stories. Sandra Nikolai penned an article for this issue, Linda Wiken wrote a book

review and Thomas Rendell Curran visited a local book club. Find all these stories inside this issue.

I worked a bit too, and this issue is the result — a new look for the newsletter. Designer Guy Mercier created a professional template to complement the website and heighten the profile of the CCW. Take a look at www.guymercier.com, especially if you're interested in creating a website for your writing business. Finally, any comments you have are welcome — let's work together to make your newsletter better.

Katherine

Announcements

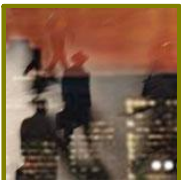


Ottawa Public Library: The Ottawa Public Library provides a monthly electronic update on programs and services. It's a good resource for those living in the Ottawa area. Check it out at <http://www.bibliottawalibrary.ca>

Ottawa Romance Writer Meetings: The Ottawa Romance Writers group is pleased to announce two meetings presented by bestselling Canadian authors. On **September 9**, Nancy Warren will present a pair of workshops: Writing Sexual Tension and Screenwriting Secrets for Dialog. On **October 14**, Kelley Armstrong, author of the popular Women of the Otherworld series, will share her techniques for Writing Fantastical Fiction. Workshops start at 2 pm, at the Ottawa Citizen building on Baxter Road in Ottawa. A \$10 guest fee applies. More details are available at <http://www.ottawaromancewriters.com/join/index.htm#meetings>.

Ottawa Independent Writers: The OIW have a perpetual digest that is updated regularly. New items have been recently added at: <http://www.flora.org/books/digest.html>

The CBC Literary Awards: The 2007 CBC Literary Awards Competition for original unpublished works is now open. The deadline for submissions is November 1. You can find out more at www.cbc.ca/literaryawards



Web Resources:

www.Writing-World.com – A site from the UK with a wealth of information for writers around the globe. The newsletter is issued on the first Thursday of each month. New articles are frequently added to over 825 pages of writing information. Writing-World.com covers every writing genre and lists calls for writers. Hosts a free, fully search-able contests database.

www.barbarafister.com/BloodattheSource.html Research tips for mystery writers by Barbara Fister. Tricks of the trade from a librarian who writes mysteries. This selective guide is about how to get the most out of libraries and the web. It's primarily to do with crime, criminal justice and general research.

Blogs: Writers come hither! Francis Ford Coppola's immensely generous gift to the writing community offers review exchanges and excellent discussion forums — all completely free: <http://www.zoetrope.com/>.

Setting your novel in a hospital? Join "Running a Hospital", the blog of the CEO of a large American medical centre. It's informative, funny and controversial, and even includes the occasional recipe: <http://runningahospital.blogspot.com>.



And the 2007 Audrey Jessup Award winners are:

Mike Strong, pictured left, took first place in the CCW short story contest for the Audrey Jessup award for his story "Just One of the Guys". Read the in-depth interview with Mike about this winning story, and his writing life, on page 9.

Gail MacDonald (2nd Place) – Unfortunately Gail was out of the country and unable to provide a bio for this issue. We hope to find out more about her later!

Ken McBeath (3rd place) – Born in India of Scots parents and brought up in the small fishing village of Cullen in the North East of Scotland. Magic place, lousy weather. Served an apprenticeship in electronics. Bored rigid, so went oil drilling in the Middle East. Much better.

Gained a Geology degree at Aberdeen University, and moved to South Africa with my wife and two sons to work on the deep gold mines. Then looked for gold in Rhodesia in the middle of the war there. Beautiful country and interesting times. Came to Canada in 1979 and settled at Otty Lake near Perth. Currently I work for Ontario Works in Brockville.

Jane Watson – (Honourable Mention) Jane Watson is a retired English teacher who doesn't, fortunately, have to depend on what she earns from writing short fiction. Otherwise she'd be a very thin retired English teacher. Although she doesn't stick to any one genre of fiction, she does seem to lean towards murder. There's nothing like a little gore to spice up a depressingly law abiding life.

Sheila Gallant-Halloran – (Honourable Mention) Sheila expatriated from her Newfoundland home to live in Ottawa, where she and her husband are raising two young daughters. Working as a government actuary, she numbed herself daily counting deaths. She's enjoyed her time in the nation's capital considerably more since she started adding a few bodies to the statistics (on paper at least). Sheila's stories have won acclaim with the Scene of the Crime and the Bloody Words conferences, as well as the Audrey Jessup contest; and she's been published in *Storyteller Magazine*. She holds membership in the Crime Writers of Canada, Capital Crime Writers, and Crimestarters.

An excerpt from "Just One of the Guys", by Mike Strong:

...I opened the glove box to check for a map, and something heavy fell out, bouncing painfully off my shin. Ratchet's burly arm reached across to grab it. I froze at the sight of a black automatic pistol in his hand, and closed my eyes as the car skidded to a stop.

When my senses returned, I saw Ratchet laughing, wiping away a tear. "Only Coope would be dumb enough to loan somebody his car without taking the gun out of the glove box," he grinned. He held it a moment, feeling the weight, then pulled out the clip. "He left it loaded. The safety isn't even on. Somebody could get killed," he said in a sinister voice, his eyes bugging out. He leaned towards me as he said this, but I was already pushed back so hard the door handle was making a permanent depression in my back...

The Hardboiled versus Cozy Smackdown: An overview of the debate held at the Nepean Public Centrepont Library, May 30,2007

By Katherine Hobbs

Alex Brett moderated a lively debate on the cozy mystery versus the hard-boiled crime novel with R.J. Harlick and Mary Jane Maffini representing the cozy side, and Barbara Fradkin and Rick Mofina on the hard-boiled side.

"There are powerful and fundamental differences between cozies and hard boiled that go to the very heart of literature and why we read books," Alex said. Then she got right down to it with a most interesting first question....

Alex Brett: What exactly do people eat in a cozy mystery?

Mary Jane Maffini: Chocolate.

Robin J. Harlick: My protagonist likes to cook something gourmet generally. They eat well.

Alex: And what do the protagonists eat in a hardboiled mystery?

Rick Mofina: They are carnivores. Flesh eaters. Deep fried. A lot of take out. They eat at greasy spoons with dead flies on the window sill to tempt them while waiting for their order to come through.

Barbara Fradkin: Inspector Green doesn't think about eating much. He remembers he hasn't eaten on the way home when his stomach is grumbling, then he stops at the Ottawa Bagel shop for a smoked meat. Basically, he eats when he has time. No gourmet.



Pictured (l-r) R.J. Harlick, Mary Jane Maffini, Alex Brett, Barbara Fradkin and Rick Mofina.

Alex: What makes a hard boiled work? And what makes it different than a cozy?

Barbara: Sex, blood and lots of swear words.

Alex: How is blood generally depicted in cozies – is it generally on scene or off scene? I recall Barbara has a wonderful scene in her book with a chain saw.

Mary Jane: There are two rules in cozies. No chain saws — and never kill a cat. Three rules, I guess, never kill a cat with a chain saw.



Vicki Cameron reads from "Lady in Violet Satin"

Alex: What about setting?

Rick: I tend to set mine in urban, metropolitan setting. Cozies for the most part I believe are rural, and for me those are dumping grounds from the urban violence. The congestion of the city adds to the tension, not that there can't be tension in a small community as well, but it offers a good dark well to draw from.

Barbara: I don't think it's the setting, so much as the treatment of the setting. The country can be very bleak and very brutal in a noir kind of book, or softer and pretty in a cozy. I write not only about the drug infested inner city in Ottawa, but the stone houses in the Glebe with the sinister secrets and the darkness that lies in ordinary people's minds.

Robin: I use the great Canadian outdoors with its natural elements that can suddenly turn against you. In "Red Ice for a Shroud", Meg has to deal with the ice storm at the same time there's a killer on the loose. The setting then heightens the mystery and tension within the novel.

Mary Jane: I think the most important thing in cozies, even if it is set in New York City, is a focus on a small community, or a closed community, where most people know each other.

Alex: Let's talk about pets. They seem to play quite a different role in cozies versus the noir?

Rick: My guy has pets - tropical fish. He doesn't talk to them, they don't talk to him. They don't actually solve crimes or nod to clues. They just keep him company much like tropical fish would.

Barbara: Inspector Green has a 100 pound lab, Rottweiler mix that thinks she's a Chihuahua. She was thrust into Green's life from an earlier case with a victim. The dog doesn't solve anything, it's there for him to reflect on. And noir authors run the same danger with a pet — any mystery writer kills a pet at their peril.

Alex: Mary Jane and Robin, you both have more conflicted relationships with pets. They don't talk, but they play plot roles, right?

Mary Jane: They don't talk, but have you bought dog food lately? It's expensive. I have two dogs in my book. They have to play a plot role, everyone earns their keep.

Robin: I have a poodle, a big standard poodle. He does get in to trouble and has played a role in both books. In the first book he gets kidnapped. You have to have a dog in a book.

Alex: Another thing fundamentally different is the different occupations of the protagonists. Rick, your guy has a job you are very familiar with...

Rick: He's a crime reporter. He comes from the wrong side of the tracks — he's an underdog, a loner — and adheres to the code of the classic detective. I draw from my own experiences, at least I know what the framework is in terms of setting up a story and having it play out with a crime reporter as the lead — the newsroom structure and the anatomy of how a story is pursued, tension between a reporter and law enforcement and how that would play in the community as well.

Alex: Mary Jane, your new sleuth has an occupation that allows her to go in some dark corners?

Mary Jane: The occupation of the sleuth makes a big impact. Mine's a professional organizer. I thought it was important she could get in anyone's house, look under anyone's bed, look in anyone's underwear drawer. It's her job!

Alex: As writers of more hardboiled books, who's the ideal killer and what's the ideal murder weapon?

Barbara: My ideal killer is the person next door – I always look for the enemy within. Ordinary people driven to desperate ends. That's much more interesting to me to look at than to go with someone with a very warped or sick background. A way of casting a light on how we act in our darkest hour, and ask the question what would we do in that circumstance? About the ideal murder weapon, I'm not settled. I've tossed people off towers, but my killers are not usually terribly methodical, they haven't figured it out much in advance. But the weapon of choice is bare hands, up close and personal.

Rick: Murder weapon? Being eaten alive by a big snake, killed by a spear, something bizarre. I like phobias. It's cruel but gives you something to play with — maybe being put in a room of spiders and dying of fright. People like to squirm sometimes when they are reading.

Alex: Who's the ideal cozy murderer and what does he or she use as an ideal weapon?

Robin: An ordinary person dealing with extraordinary situations. A cozy wouldn't use a serial killer. It's more fascinating to understand what makes an ordinary person kill somebody.

Mary Jane: The killer is the last person you'd expect. A cozy is more a game and puzzle between the author and the reader. If we don't fool you we get sick and take to our bed for a week. In terms of weapons, usually nothing very grisly. The ideal weapon could be an everyday item such as a hairdryer. I killed someone with a stuffed animal in a staircase. That was hard work. But there's not a lot of emphasis on the violence. It's off camera.

Alex: I wanted to ask what's the worst word you can use in a cozy or a hardboiled, but I was worried about



Brenda Chapman reading from "Where Trouble Leads"

embarrassing people, so instead I'm going to ask about the differences with your audiences? Does the same audience read both? And, are the reader's expectations different?

Robin: I think there is a difference. There are expectations from the reader of the hardboiled of a lot of violence. I think it's a different kind of reader. Some people want the violence.

Mary Jane: I read both. But I believe you can always get people at either end of the bell curve that will only touch one or the other.

Barbara: Chain saws aside, the violence in my books is not that extreme. What is more extreme in my books and noir books in general, is the emotional gut wrenching that doesn't tend to happen in cozies. You have to be in the mood. Sometimes you just want to be entertained. Each one serves a purpose and I read both, and I love everybody's work at this table.

Rick: The most important aspect of it no matter what particular part of the continuum your story is set on — is a strong story, empathetic characters and a compelling plot. That's the type of story a reader looks for. And maybe a few jolt factors here and there!

Hyphenation: Adjectives and Participles and Nouns – Oh My!

by Sandra Nikolai

Even the finest writers struggle with indecision when it comes to hyphenating compound adjectives, participles and nouns. Given the diverse standards in reference materials that line our bookshelves, it's no small wonder. The following pointers, adapted in part from *The Canadian Style*, can help you in your journey along the page:

1. A noun-plus-adjective compound term (in this order) takes a hyphen when it precedes a noun or when used to modify the noun after a linking verb.

interest-free loan

The loan is interest-free.

2. An adjective-plus-noun compound term takes a hyphen when it modifies another noun or when used to modify the noun after a linking verb.

small-scale project

The project was small-scale.

3. A noun-plus-participle compound term usually takes a hyphen. Exceptions include *handmade* and *handwritten*.

oil-exporting country

This country is oil-exporting.

4. An adjective-plus-participle compound term takes a hyphen, whether used before or after the noun it modifies.

an odd-sounding name

The name was somewhat odd-sounding.

5. A compound made up of an adjective plus a noun to which the ending *ed* has been added always takes a hyphen.

short-sighted

strong-willed

red-haired

level-headed

6. Chemical terms used as adjectives do **not** take a hyphen.

a sodium chloride solution

a calcium nitrate deposit

7. Proper adjectives that form a true compound take a hyphen, but a proper adjective combined with a simple modifier does **not** take a hyphen.

Anglo-Saxon period

North American interests

SANDRA NIKOLAI, a member of CCW, has worked as an editor for more than a decade. Two of her short stories appear on *Mysterical-E* and *Orchard Press Mysteries* Web sites. From novellas to novels, memoirs to mysteries, she can give your work the finishing touch it deserves. For more information, contact Sandra at snikolai@sympatico.ca

An Interview with Mike Strong, winner of the Audrey Jessup Award

Katherine Hobbs: How did you find out you could write, that you had this way with words?

Mike Strong: My job is mainly analysis; basically writing. I think that's why I got into fiction writing, because I do it so much. People would tell me "you write purty". But I'm the opposite in terms of what you'd expect a writer ought to be. I just finished the latest Harry Potter, but I don't find a lot of other books that I like. I do read a lot, just not books — more short fiction. (He smiles.) There's not as much investment in it. It takes me forever to read something, I'm not a speed reader. I read every word, and if I don't get it, I go back and reread. In high school English was my worst subject. I took as much math as possible and scraped through English. People would explain to me what was in a book because I'd help them with math. I think I always wrote well, I just didn't necessarily enjoy it that much when I was younger. But as you get older you realize it's something you're able to do.

KH: The violence in "Just One of the Guys" is off scene. What's the degree of violence you generally want in your stories?

MS: What I want to write doesn't necessarily correlate with what I read or see at the movies. I like movies where everything explodes, but I don't want to write heavy stuff, it's mostly light and it's funny. I want to write about ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. And I like happy stories. It's good to have a certain amount of emotion to draw you in, but people dying doesn't draw me in, unless they are dying in very interesting ways.

KH: If you like happy, where did these disenfranchised, edge-of-society guys come from?

MS: It's true that Just One of the Guys is not a happy story, but it's a fun story. Yeah the guy is going through terrible things, you feel a little sorry for him, but you aren't moping about. My family were in Virginia about ten years ago visiting a woman we knew. Her husband was in the military. He stood a head taller than me, and he was huge. He gave us a tour around the base and talked about diffusing bombs, and how Navy Seals were pansies. I was absolutely terrified I might say something to set him off. I don't often feel that way — I'm a pretty big guy, and people are more likely to feel that way around me than the other way around. It was weird to have that feeling. That's where the thought came from to take a little guy and put him in with big guys.

KH: In "Just One of the Guys", the character's fear was a strong foreshadowing that something horrible would happen. How do you develop that strong feeling of fear?

MS: I will never write a story if I don't have an ending. There has to be a trick to it somehow that the reader doesn't see coming — a bit of twist at the end, like the old Hitchcock series. I have to know where I'm going. The most important thing to me is the ending, and I fill the story in later.

KH: Many writers tell me it's easier to write a novel than a short story. But you have a knack of making short stories seem easy. How do you do that?

MS: I take a structured approach to doing things. I won't sit down and write the story from start to end. I sit down and write little pieces of it. I write this part and this other part, then I may get stuck on one part and come back to it later. It's never one flow for me. Not that hard with a short story, there aren't that many parts. But a novel? It has lots of parts. Right now it's not a priority for me to write a novel.

KH: Is there a particular piece of good advice you've received?

MS: Melanie Fogel (editor of Storyteller Magazine) advised me to give some sort of imagery at least once a page. Not to focus on it all the time, but don't forget to do it either. So now when I'm done a story I go through it and ask myself, "Did I remember the senses?"

KH: What are your thoughts on the development of your writing career moving forward from the Audrey Jessup Award? What's next for Mike Strong?

MS: If I had all the time in the world, and didn't have to work for a living I'd sit around and write novels for sure. But right now the commitment is just too big. For now I'm working towards having a number of good, solid stories behind me.

Reading Thomas Rendell Curran Mysteries



By Marilyn Langstaff

The Words & Pages Book Club of Ottawa decided summer was the right time for a mystery novel and wanted to read a Canadian mystery. CCW member Thomas Rendell Curran graciously accepted an invitation to join us to talk about his book "Undertow". Thomas was in his element having eight professional women as a captive audience.

We weren't as critical of his book as we typically tend to be, and we were very quiet which is very unusual for us, but we were fascinated to learn about the process of writing. Thomas's openness and honesty, his anecdotes about Newfoundland where he grew up, the real people that added depth to his characters, and his fascination with names and history made the evening not only very enjoyable but also educational.

We loved the first two novels and can't wait to read the third one. We will be telling all our friends about the evening and the mysteries that Thomas has authored! The experience so enjoyable and revealing that we are considering inviting a mystery author as an annual event each July.



BOOK REVIEW

by Linda Wiken, Prime Crime Books, 891 Bank St. Ottawa

WRITING IN AN AGE OF SILENCE

by Sara Paretsky \$28.50

If you're a Sara Paretsky fan, this book is a wonderfully written account of her life and her writing. She discusses what influences led to her creation of V.I. Warshawski and the finding of a voice in writing. Paretsky being who she is, it takes a shot at US politics and social injustice. But mainly it's a combination of memoir and encouragement, that will also appeal to the writer who may not have heard of Paretsky.

Learn to do just about anything...

Howtotothings.com presents expert-contributed information on a wide array of topics. Writers can learn about topics such as How to Write a Theatrical Review, How to Write a Press Release or How to Find Writing Jobs. Check out <http://www.howtotothings.com/hobbies> for more information.