

The Purloined Newsletter



A CAPITAL CRIME WRITERS PUBLICATION

Volume 20, Issue 1 – January 2008

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Capital Crime Writers is an organization of writers working in the mystery field, and readers who love the genre.

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.

CCW Program Committee Announcements:

January 9th, 2008 Meeting: Identity Theft

RCMP Sgt. Chaghan Garvey will speak on identity theft. Sgt. Garvey was formerly with the RCMP fraud section, and has recently been seconded to the proceeds of crime division.

February 20th* 2008 Meeting: Characters with Character

Come to the February meeting and hear our very own all-star panel talk about how to build interesting and believable characters. **Tom Curran**, **Barbara Fradkin** and **Mary Jane Maffini** will tell us about how they create characters for their novels, the essence of their principal protagonists, and the role of sidekicks. This is a session you won't want to miss.



Thomas Rendell Curran



Barbara Fradkin



Mary Jane Maffini

*Please note that due to other commitments the Library and Archives Canada is not available to us on our usual meeting date. The February meeting will take place on the 3rd Wednesday instead of our usual 2nd Wednesday.

Your Program Committee
Ken Gibson, Bev Panasky and Deborah Gyapong

From the Chair – Brenda Chapman

January 2008 – Hard to believe. We had an excellent holiday dinner at Biagio's on December 12th with a room all to ourselves, good food and Giles Blunt sharing the inspiration behind his novels. Giles proved to be an engaging speaker who gave us a glimpse into his creative process as well as to the characters and plotlines in his novels. His talk will inspire us to look for ideas and connections in the unlikely of places. A huge thank you to Bev Panasky for organizing the evening and for finding us such a great location.

January is also time to start working on stories for the Audrey Jessup short story contest. We've raised the entry fee slightly to help cover costs, but we've also increased the prize money. Darlene and I are trying to find sponsors for the contest and will advertise any donations - if anyone can help with ideas or sponsors, please let us know. I'm also pleased to announce that our judges this year will be Barbara Fradkin, Thomas Curran and Jane Crosier.

Guy Mercier and Katherine Hobbs have been working hard on the website design and content and the new site www.capitalcrimewriters.com is constantly evolving. Please be sure to check it regularly and to send Guy your feedback and suggestions. Guy has some exciting ideas planned for the new year which he highlights in his message in this issue.

Well, as New Year's resolutions go, rather than giving up something, it might be good to resolve to write every day instead – preferably while eating chocolate, drinking beer and skipping the workout. You never know, this might be the formula for producing the great Canadian mystery novel. I hope you will all join me in giving it a shot.

All the best in 2008 and beyond.

Brenda



The CCW Executive

Chair – Brenda Chapman
Chair@capitalcrimewriters.com

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vp@capitalcrimewriters.com

Past Chair – Barbara Fradkin
pastchair@capitalcrimewriters.com

Treasurer – Rachel Pitcher
Treasurer@capitalcrimewriters.com

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Quotes on Writing:

A creative person is not limited in his thinking to "what everyone knows." "Everyone knows" that trees are green. The creative artist is able to see that in certain lights some trees look blue or purple or yellow. The creative person looks at the world with his or her own eyes.

(S.I. Hayakawa)

Editor's Notes – Katherine Hobbs



The Purloined is heralding in the New Year with a couple of brand new regular features. First – a member profile each month to get to know a little bit more about each other. Rachel Pitcher is the featured member this month; she's also the new treasurer so this is a good opportunity to get to know the person who's taking our money and handling it with care!

The other new feature is Forensic Corner. This month's topic is: *A is for Autopsy*. This is all the info you'll need in order to provide those gory but oh so real details for your books. All that without having to endure the scent of formalin in a cold, white-tiled room with a corpse lying on a stainless steel table and the sound of running water in the background.

On a cheerier note I attended a CAA workshop in November on dialogue and provide the highlights on page 6. Guy Mercier has an overview on what's new on the website and Darlene Cole provided an update on membership. And thanks again this month to Paul Sadler for the write-up of the December Meeting with Giles Blunt, Denis St-Jean for the quotes in this issue, and Linda Wiken of Prime Crime Books. It's great to get your submissions and put your words in print -- it serves to make the newsletter a much better tool for all of us to use all the do dah day and New Year long!

Katherine

Announcements



OPL announces its **Noon Hour Reading Series** with eight of Ottawa's finest authors reading from their latest books on Wednesday's from January 16 to March 5, 12 – 1 p.m. Main Library, 120 Metcalfe street Auditorium Lower Level. CCW Members: **Mary Jane Maffini** on Feb. 13, **Rick Mofina** on Feb 20 and **Barbara Fradkin** on March 5. For more information on the noon hour reading series, please call (613) 580-2940 or check www.BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca

Murder By the Book: Court TV®, provides a window on the American system of justice. The Court TV Web sites can be accessed via www.courtstv.com and www.courtstvnews.com. This season, thirteen masters of the American crime novel, including authors Sandra Brown, Harlan Coben, Elizabeth George and Lisa Scottoline, present true crimes that have inspired them to write, or simply shocked them to their core. Watch this group of writers recount their memories, speculations and personal connections to the real-life mysteries and headline-making crimes that haunt their dreams at night. See a preview of Harlan Coben's episode at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9Of667sBeo> For more info click on: http://www.courtstv.com/onair/shows/murder_by_the_book/index.html

Ottawa Romance Writers Association (ORWA) Meeting: Writing Modern Medicine Jan 6 at the Ottawa Citizen Building, Baxter Road (Pinecrest Exit off the Queensway).

Plunkett's Anatomy: Writing modern medicine with retired nurse Tammy Plunkett What would your heroine see, hear, and smell if she watched her grandmother die of organ failure vs a gun shot wound? What deadly drug would your killer use? Do M&M rounds involve chocolate? In this presentation, Tammy Plunkett, a nurse who specialized in Intensive and Cardiac Care, as well as Cardiac Surgery, shares what really goes on in a modern hospital, from morbidity and mortality rounds to illicit encounters in the utility closet. (\$10 guest fee)



Canadian Author's Association (CAA) Meeting Jan 8: Book Trends – Past and Present at the Ottawa Public Library, Main Branch Auditorium, 120 Metcalfe at Laurier (parking available below the building) from 7:00 to 9:00. Christopher Smith, Manager—Collected Works Bookstore, will speak about market trends, past and present. Christopher Smith, is a native of Ottawa, a pianist and architect by training, and has been a bookseller since 1982. (Meetings are free to members; \$10 for non-members)

Canadian Author's Association Workshop: Enhancing your Writing Skills through Spirituality, Poetry and Ancient Teachings with Albert Dumont on Saturday, **January 26th** at Algonquin College. Contact Arlene Smith somertonsmith@yahoo.com to register.

OIW Meeting January 29 - CBC Radio broadcaster and playwright **Alan Neal** is the OIW guest speaker in January. The meeting takes place at the Library and Archives Canada Building, Room 156, 395 Wellington St., at 7 p.m. Socializing begins at 6:30 p.m. Free for OIW members; \$10 for guests.

Algonquin College School of Part-time Studies has recently introduced a **Creative Writing Certificate**. There are three sixteen-week courses, led by Nancy Darryl, being offered this winter as a part of this certificate: Writing Grammatically (ENL0011); Writing Short Stories (ENL 0014) & Writing - Project Management (ENL 0012) Other Writing Workshops (not part of the certificate program) are: Crafting a Novel (ENL 5039) & The Business of Writing (ENL 5040). For more information or to register, visit <http://www.algonquincollege.com> or call Algonquin at 613-727-0002.

The 2008 Audrey Jessup Award

Here's an early heads-up for the ninth annual **Capital Crime Writer's Mystery Short Story Contest** for the Audrey Jessup Award, open to members of Capital Crime Writers, and all published and non-published residents of the National Capital Region, including Gatineau, aged 18 and over.

SUBMISSIONS

The deadline for submissions is April 1, 2008. Blind judging will be done by authors Barbara Fradkin and Thomas Rendell Curran, and Jane Crosier, host of CKCU Literary Landscape.

Your story should be:

- Fiction featuring a crime
- No more than 3500 words
- In English
- Typed double-spaced on white paper, two-sided is fine
- Without any identifying information on pages containing the story

PRIZES will be awarded at a Capital Crime Writers event later in the spring. First Prize - \$150.00
Second Prize - \$75.00 Third Prize - \$50.00

You must send or deliver **three copies of your story** submission to the following address:

Audrey Jessup Contest
560 Roosevelt Avenue
Ottawa, ON K2A 2A1

Please include a cheque payable to Capital Crime Writers for

- \$10 as an entry fee
- \$25.00 includes entry fee plus critique

An e-mail acknowledgement will be sent out upon receipt of your submission.

Be sure your submission is postmarked **no later than April 1, 2008.**

Include your name and contact information, including e-mail address, on a separate sheet of paper — do not include your name in the headers of your manuscript.

There is a limit of **one story per person.**

For those taking advantage of the critiquing service, please be sure to enclose an SASE so that we can return your critiqued manuscript.

Forensic Corner: A is for Autopsy

By Katherine Hobbs

Autopsies are performed by the medical examiner or the coroner on victims to rule on the cause and manner of death, as well as to identify the victim. A forensic autopsy is an autopsy that has legal implications. The word autopsy is derived from the Greek word *autopsia*: "to see with one's own eyes."

"Autopsy rooms are kept sterile and often found in the basements of hospitals. The floors are tiled to make mopping easy. The room has to be kept at 3C to slow down decomposition. The autopsy table is surrounded by a ridge to retain all the body fluids, with a basin that catches these fluids which are rinsed away with a pump. A hanging scale is found at the foot of the table to weigh the organs. There is a strong smell of bleach, preservatives and putrescence which clings to your hair and clothes when you leave."¹

The first step in an autopsy is an external exam, noting any tell tale suspicious marks, for example the noose like rope patterns on the neck of a hanging victim. An internal exam will follow, scrutinizing all internal organs one by one. If, while examining the heart, there appears to be a large amount of blood in the sac surrounding the heart (pericardium) then the examiner may suspect cause of death to be blunt force trauma to the chest area.



The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp, by Rembrandt

Large areas of dead liver cells, giving the organ a knobby appearance, may be caused by poisoning. Degeneration of the kidneys may mean the victim was a chronic cocaine abuser. The trachea is examined for soot if smoke inhalation is suspected. And lungs full of water will indicate drowning (although it is possible for the lungs to be clear, as sometimes the airways can close spontaneously which stops water from entering them).

...this place is where death rejoices to teach the living...

If neither an external nor internal examination reveals a cause of death, forensic toxicologists may be called in to examine the body fluids for lethal doses of chemicals. Blood, urine, bile and eye fluid are collected. Spot tests can be performed to instantly determine the presence of a suspected chemical.

A highly sensitive machine, the Gas Chromatograph, can detect even the smallest traces of substances. Mass Spectrometry is also used to identify substances by calculating molecular mass. Multiple samples are needed for this of blood, liver and kidney as these are the organs that primarily hold traces of chemical substances in the body. A toxicology report can take six weeks after the autopsy before it is available for the prosecution to make its case.

It is tradition in western culture to have over the door of the post mortem room the words "*Hic locus est ubi mors gaudet succurrere vitae.*" It means "This place is where death rejoices to teach the living."

Footnotes: 1. <http://www.medicinenet.com/autopsy/page2.htm>

Web Resources:

Autopsy: Post Mortem Examination

www.medicinenet.com/autopsy/article.htm

Well presented information from a group of US doctors on the subject of autopsy, why it is in decline and what effect this is likely to have on the medical profession.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autopsies>

<http://www.hbo.com/autopsy/index.html> From the HBO documentary series, Dr. Michael Baden, former Chief Medical Examiner of NYC, shows how forensic science and "detectives of death" cracks homicide cases.

<http://www.channel4.com/science/microsites/A/anatomy/index.html> In Channel 4's *Anatomy for Beginners* you can see a real and spontaneous demonstration of human anatomy. Anatomical guides are Dr. Gunther von Hagens who dissects the bodies and pathologist Professor John Lee who explains how they work in health and in disease.

<http://www.channel4.com/science/microsites/A/autopsy/index.html> Following on from *Anatomy for Beginners* which concentrated on the anatomy of life, anatomist Dr Gunther von Hagens and pathologist Professor John Lee now turn to the process of understanding death. Attempt an Autopsy and try your hand at determining the cause of death from post mortem findings. Trace the long history of anatomy from Galen of Ancient Greece to Gunther von Hagens of modern Heidelberg.

Autopsy: The Boy Who Died Too Fast

www.jhu.edu/~jhumag/295web/boy.html

Fascinating account of an authentic post mortem carried out on a 14-year-old boy who died just three hours after being admitted to hospital in 1994. It is written by the senior editor of the *Johns Hopkins Magazine*.

Forensic Pathology

www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=444

The Royal College of Pathologists gives a summary of what a career in forensic pathology would involve.

The Forensic Science Society

www.forensic-science-society.org.uk

For forensic professionals or the layman. You'll find a wealth of information here.

History of the Forensic Science Service

www.forensic.gov.uk/forensic/entry.htm

Good background information on the development of forensic science during the 1930s.

Virtual Autopsy

www.le.ac.uk/pathology/teach/va/titlpag1.html

Produced and run by students and staff from Leicester University, this site lets you examine areas of a cadaver and carry out an online autopsy until you are confident of the cause of death. There are also mini-tutorials on related areas.

Virtual Body

www.medicdirect.co.uk/virtual_body/default.ihtml

Allows you to see sections of the body using the latest body scanners, takes you through the fascinating world of the body's cavities, reproduces the main body parts using 3D interactive animation and gives you the opportunity to explore the human body. With text, images and downloadable videos.

What is an Autopsy?

www.deathonline.net/what_happens/autopsy/index.cfm The what, why and how of autopsies explained.

Body Evidence:

Rigor Mortis: Is the stiffening of the joints and usually sets in about 30 minutes to three hours after the time of death.

Position of the Body (Lividity or Ligor Mortis): When a person dies, their blood stops flowing and the heart settles, so if a dead man is found on his back, but his chest is very pink, it suggest that the body was moved because if he'd died laying on his back, the blood would have rushed to his back.

Stomach Contents: Food remains in the stomach for up to three hours before it passes through the small intestine, which can take another five hours of travel. This can help determine the time of death if the dead man in question was seen eating food before he was murdered. If the small intestine is found empty, it means the deceased ate more than eight hours before the time of death.

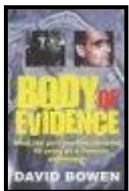
Body Bags: Body bags are usually white, not black, to show hairs and other fibres easily. They are only used once.

Luminol: Luminol is a chemical used to test for the presence of blood. Luminol reacts to iron in haemoglobin which is found in red blood cells. When it comes into contact with blood, it glows. As an important forensic tool, it can reveal small traces of blood that are invisible to the eye.

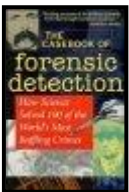
Body Locard's Exchange Principle: When two objects come into contact, there is an exchange in material. An example would be that when the killer leaves the body of his victim behind, he's unknowingly left some of himself with the body, and has taken some of the victim with him.

Sexual Assault: If there is suspicion of sexual assault, the pathologist will probably take an ultraviolet light to the victims clothes to find semen, which will appear in a purplish white color.

Read more about forensic autopsies...



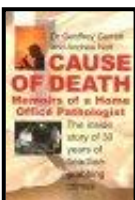
Body of Evidence: What the post-mortem revealed – 40 years as a forensic pathologist
by David Bowen (Constable and Robinson, 2003)



The Casebook of Forensic Detection: How science solved 100 of the world's most baffling crimes
by C Evans (John Wiley, 1998)



Stiff: The curious lives of human cadavers by Mary Roach (Penguin, 2004)



Cause of Death: Memoirs of a Home Office pathologist by Dr Geoffrey Garrett
(Constable and Robinson, 2001)

From the Web Master – Guy Mercier



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Guy Mercier, the new web master for Capital Crime Writers. I am a graphic designer and multimedia developer. I presently work as a web developer for Health Canada and also run a small home-based company providing graphic design and multimedia services.

It would be ideal to promote all of our members on the site and to that end I've created new pages that will be launched in January; they'll be password protected at that time. A sample screenshot of the page is below, but you can see what I've created so far by accessing the link: <http://www.capitalcrimewriters.com/pages/ccwmember.html>. These pages were put together by visiting members' web sites. All CCW members are invited to provide any information they'd like for the creation of a page, or that they want to have added to their page – maybe if you have published material or if you provide writing services you'd like to highlight for example. Simply send an email to me at webmaster@capitalcrimewriters.com. I'll gladly post it until this feature is fully automated.

I'm aiming to launch a revised site that will include both public and CCW member password protected pages by January 1st. CCW members will have access to more information online. You'll also have access to an on-line e-Version of the Purloined Newsletter. Your comments and suggestion are important. I'm here for all the members and welcome your suggestions for a website that works as well as possible for you.

Kind regards,
Guy Mercier
Capital Crime Writers Web Master

CCW MEMBERS Books are available in most book stores.

Alex Brett
www.alexibrett.com

Published Books

"Alex Brett delivers a lucid page-turner that illuminates and obscure chapter in Cold War history." Nairne Holtz, *Lambda Book Report*

Barbara Fradkin
www.barbarafradkin.com

Published Books

Member List:
Alex Brett
Barbara Fradkin
Brenda Chapman
Joyce Sullivan
Karen Irving
Selena Robins
Katherine Hobbs
Mary Jane Maffin
Rick Mofina
R. J. Harlick
Suzanne Kingsmill
Thomas Curran
Alina Popp
Allen Hahn
Bev Panasky
Bill Newman
Bradley Pascoe
Brenda Chapman
Bruce Cairns
Carol Newhouse
Catherine Collins
Cheryl Freedman
Claire Suzanne Goulet

Spice up your dialogue



The following tips were garnered from a full day workshop presented by Harold Rhenisch in November. Rhenisch was an arts columnist for the 100 Mile Free Press and won the B.C. and Yukon Community Newspaper Association Award for Best Arts and Culture Writing. In 1980, the University of Victoria awarded him the Rosalind Hewlett Petch Memorial Prize in Creative Writing, and he won Arc Magazine's first Confederation Poetry Prize, as well as their prizes for best long review of poetry and for poem of the year. He has given many lectures on poetry and conducted workshops for teachers and students. In '96 he was writer in residence at Douglas College in New Westminster, and taught at the Victoria School of Writing in '03 and '04. He actively mentors writers from across North America. Find out more about Harold at www.haroldrhenisch.com

Harold Rhenisch

Here are some of the tips from Harold for writing great dialogue:

1. Chop it up and give it to other characters.

FROM:

"She actually thought she looked good," Emma said.

TO:

"She actually thought she looked--"

"Good," Beth said.

2. Don't forget to add time in, and set the scene. Remember a conversation is taking place in a context, so what they say comes from somewhere. We have to see the scene.

FROM:

"I don't want to go to school."

"Why not? I thought you were looking forward to dressing up like Star Wars for the Halloween party today with Emily."

"Emily doesn't want to. She says it's a lame idea. She decided to dress Goth with Amanda."

TO:

"I don't want to go to school." Beth popped the toaster down.

Her daughter talking at the breakfast table? Maybe things aren't going to be the same this morning as they usually were. "Why not?" I turned from the dishes and looked at her. Her toast popped and Beth slathered too much butter on top. Hmm, maybe it was going to be the same type of morning after all. I tried again, "I thought you were looking forward to dressing up like Star Wars for the Halloween party today with Emily."

"Emily doesn't want to. She says it's a lame idea. She decided to dress Goth with Amanda."

3. Make sure you add the appropriate action at the appropriate time and not at the end of the dialogue if it pertains to what the character is saying.

FROM: "I told you to do that, and you haven't yet," she tapped her foot with each word.

TO: "I told you to do that," she tapped her foot with each word, "and you haven't yet."

OTHER TIPS:

- Spice up your manuscript by translating any reported speech into active speech.
- Use internal dialogue for contrast.
- Try taking all the punctuation out of a sentence and see how it changes the pacing, and even the idea of the sentence. Run a whole paragraph together without punctuation and read it aloud. It's like poetry!

The Top Ten List of Books from Baltimore

What's a New Year without a top ten list? You can find them on just about everything, including the top ten shoes of the year. Following is a top ten book title list from 2007 I stumbled across while aimlessly searching the web for news on books. It's from Baltimore's *City Paper* critics John Barry, Raymond Cummings, Eric Allen Hatch, Joab Jackson, Bret McCabe, Zak M. Salih, and Wendy Ward. Encouraging news is two of the noted books are in the mystery genre – Laura Lippman's *What the Dead Know*, and Michael Chabon with *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*.

For the full review of each book check out <http://www.citypaper.com/special/story.asp?id=14962>.

1. Tom Perrotta *The Abstinence Teacher* (St. Martin's Press)
2. Laura Lippman *What the Dead Know* (William Morrow)
3. Don DeLillo *Falling Man* (Scribner)
4. Junot Diaz *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Riverhead)
5. Martin Amis *House of Meetings* (Knopf)
6. Michael Chabon *The Yiddish Policeman's Union* (HarperCollins)
7. Steven Hall *The Raw Shark Texts* (Canongate)
8. David Michaelis Schulz and Peanuts: *A Biography* (Harper)
9. William T. Vollmann *Poor People* (Ecco)
10. Jennifer Belle *Little Stalkers* (Riverhead)

Update from the Membership Secretary – Darlene Cole



There is great news this month. I'm happy to report that we currently have 61 Capital Crime Writer members. I encourage you to invite fellow writers, and readers who love the genre to join because as you know, "murder loves company".

You can check out the details of joining CCW on www.capitalcrimewriters.com and click on the JOIN CCW link. Please email me at secretary@capitalcrimewriters.com if you have any questions or concerns about your membership.

Thanks, **Darlene**

Giles Blunt – December Meeting Overview

By Paul Sadler

Giles Blunt was our guest speaker for the December dinner, and gave us all early gifts under our writing trees. In a candid and personable narrative (just like his books!), he shared with us an overview of his inspirations in writing five different novels, one stand-alone and four in the John Cardinal series.

For *Cold Eye*, he came up with the idea for the story based on an intersection of disparate items. First, there was a photograph in the *New York Post* of a man jumping off a building that made Giles wonder about how the photographer happened to be there, on the scene, before the young man jumped from the building. Later, he heard about a photographer who was the first to have a police scanner in his car, and who was able to show up at crime scenes sometimes before the police got there, thus getting some amazing shots. He fused these together, kind of like Philip K. Dick's story that was the basis for the movie *Minority Report*, to create a photographer who could arrive at crime scenes before the crime even happens. To give the photographer more resonance with the reader, he made him a struggling artist who deals with very violent and stylized subject matter, but who doesn't really hit the big time until a strange psychic starts advising him where and when future crimes will take place. Giles further focused on the "moral jeopardy" aspects of the novel to build interest and suspense, and had the photographer focus on how he could lose everything by picturing his life without him in it. The title, *Cold Eye*, came from Giles wondering how cold an eye you would need as a photographer to film all these horrible things, such as the original inspiration who shot the photo of a man jumping from a building.

For his second book, *Forty Words for Sorrow*, Giles replicated his knack for using disparate inspirations. He read about the Moors murders in England, and was fascinated by the idea that a young couple could appear quite normal, yet be capable of horrible, terrible things. He also heard an interview with Graham Greene where Greene talked about an idea for a story where a detective is himself the subject of an internal investigation, and you don't know who the other investigator is. Finally, Giles went jogging while visiting family in North Bay, and on a cold, foggy day, he saw the a gray outline of an old mine shaft out on one of the nearby islands and thought it would be a great place for someone to find a body. As he worked on weaving these sources into a story, Giles started a pattern that he has used for his other books in the same series. As Giles was uncomfortable with Hollywood's typical portrayal of police detectives as nearly invincible, he wanted to go in a different direction in order to show a vulnerable side. For his protagonist, Giles created Detective John Cardinal and put him to work in a small northern town, Algonquin Bay. He also gave him a difficult marriage and an attractive female partner to tempt him. Initially, Giles viewed the book as a great one-off story; he was right, obviously, as it was awarded the Macallan Silver Dagger for fiction in 2001. However, he also knew if he pitched it as having the potential for a series, it might be more attractive to publishers, and he beefed up more on the potential conflict between various police forces working in the area, and built up subsidiary characters. While Giles works out the basic elements of the crime in detail, he tends to leave all the personal psychological aspects of his characters unplanned.



Giles' third book, *The Delicate Storm*, was inspired by the giant ice storm that hit the area in 1998. He was attracted to the idea of the setting by the combination of beauty and danger in the storm, and relied extensively on his clipping file for descriptions of sounds during the storm. He also relied on a story about some real-life thugs who had killed a man who owed them money, and then used the body as bear-bait while hunting. Finally, as Giles was beginning to flesh out ideas for the story, it was the 30th anniversary of the FLQ crisis in Montreal. So he combined all three together starting with partial remains of a body being used for bear bait, adding in the discovery that the remains belong to someone who was involved with FLQ, and setting it against the backdrop of a deadly ice storm. The result? *The Delicate Storm* received the 2004 Arthur Ellis Award from the Crime Writers of Canada.

The fourth book, *Blackfly Season*, started out based on a combination of two stories. The first came to Giles from a doctor in an Emergency Room, who talked about treating a young woman with amnesia. While amnesia is difficult enough, he found something even more intriguing about her case – she was suffering from a gunshot to the head, and it was the bullet wound that was causing the amnesia! The second story came from real-life news articles about a Mexican drug gang headed very briefly by a voodoo medicine man or shaman. The shaman was practicing ritual sacrifice to convince the drug gang members that they were protected by the darkest of magic, thus making them

invincible. They weren't invincible, unfortunately for both them and their victims, but it did give Giles an idea for a gang element to happen in Algonquin Bay, linked to a young red-haired woman suffering from a GSW and amnesia.



Mary Jane Maffini talks with Giles Blunt and his wife Jenna at the CCW December dinner.

condition (she suffers from manic depression), and early in the series, she was non-verbal and hospitalized. Later in the series, Giles showed her emerge from the depression and welcome readers as an warm and vibrant woman worthy of John's devotion and loyalty. By the end of the fourth book, she was slipping back and forth from functional to dysfunctional, from so-called "normal" to deep depression or mania. For Giles, it was time to end the continually sad storyline for this secondary character, and at the start of book five, she has committed suicide (don't worry, Giles swears this is not a spoiler – it happens in the first chapter, and is indicated on the back of the book!). But as an author, Giles' real challenge was to link the two separate storylines. To find out how he did it, though, you'll have to buy the book.

In terms of his broader process, Giles uses a full index card system for outlining his story (although, as noted above, he outlines the details of the crime more so than the psychology of the characters). Like an early storyboard for a movie, it gives him a destination but not the route. He also engages in a great deal of additional research to flesh out the crime details. For *The Delicate Storm*, this meant a lot of historical research on the FLQ; for his latest entries in the series, it has meant research ranging from neuro-psychology to the ability of entymologists to profile the DNA of bugs.

He has several future novels coming to bookstores in the next few years: at least two more John Cardinal novels (he promises!); a novel set in the U.S., inspired by the Washington beltway sniper trial and the relationship between an older criminal and a younger protégé; and a literary political novel, complete with death squads, tentatively entitled *Breaking Lorca*.

As we enter the New Year, Capital Crime Writers can take heed of Giles' approach to writing – "all psychology, with a dash of special effects!"

No personal experience is automatically fascinating, no matter what it is. Someone can go around the world and write a boring essay, and someone like Henry Thoreau could walk a mile and write a fascinating essay. (Robert Atwan)

Member Bio: Rachel Pitcher - CCW Treasurer



Born and raised in a small town in New Brunswick, Rachel Pitcher has spent most of her life outdoors playing in the woods and going fishing. Reading books wasn't part of her life. As a teenager she divided her time between school (which she lacked the enthusiasm to excel at) and sports. Still she couldn't understand why people wasted their time reading when they could be enjoying being outdoors. Sometimes she would catch her mother crying while sitting on the sofa under a light reading a novel. Her Poor mom. She had to put up with her middle child laughing and making fun of her, while thinking to herself, "If only this one would read."

Well, time came for Rachel to leave home and go to university. This child, who never read, God help her, would have to survive in a jungle of books, papers to write, and exams. Still, reading was not part of her life. She restricted her readings to the necessary requirements to make the grades. Rachel survived university and in 1981 moved to Ottawa for work and the beginning of her adult life. Here she discovered a whole new world of opportunities. You could do anything in this big city. It had it all. Sports, sports and more sports.

Soon, she observed a phenomenon. She would see people reading everywhere, on buses, sitting under a tree even while waiting in lines. "What was going on? What is it with people and reading?" she thought. One day, sitting on the sofa looking at the books on the shelf she got curious. Tentatively she picked up *Kramer vs Kramer* and decided to give reading a try. Rachel has since been reading book after book after book and crying through many of them. She has called her mom to apologize for all those times she laughed and made fun of her. Books are now a big part of her life.

Rachel lives in Ottawa with her husband of twelve years and their ten year old son, who by the way has been reading since the age of four and is still going strong. Mom and son are often found together in bed, before lights out, reading their own novels side by side. About two years ago, looking for a new hobby, Rachel got curious about how a novel was written. After reading a couple of books on how to write a book, she decided to look on the Internet and see if Ottawa had any writing groups. There, she found Capital Crime Writers and has been a member now for almost two years. Her writing interests are in short stories and novels of crime, suspense and thrillers. She often takes writing classes and workshops to hopefully one day have some of her work published and call herself a writer.

Rachel's all-time favourite book, which makes her cry every time she re-reads it, is Jeffrey Archer's *Kane and Abel*.



BOOK REVIEW

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

THE WRITING DIET

by Julia Cameron, \$24.00

Who but Julia Cameron, the guru of writing and meditation, could come up with a combination like this? She relates eating and foods to writing, suggesting ways to fulfill both desires while trimming back the non-essentials. Good tips for writing, too. As always, Cameron has an inviting writing style that makes this an enjoyable read, especially after a Christmas of many a tad too much of too many things. Even if you're not thinking of dieting, perhaps your writing style needs to go on a diet. Hmmm.

And remember, all CCW members receive 10% off purchases at Prime Crime!