



Crime Scene

A Sisters in Crime — Toronto Chapter Publication

September 2019

President's Message: Share Your Enthusiasm

By Kate Freiman

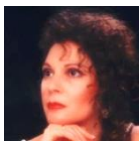
Ah, September! Autumn is in the air, so you have lots of recommendations for reading on cool nights after our July “field trip” meeting. Thanks to Ben Freiman and Bakka-Phoenix Books for hosting us as some of us tried to imitate Ben McNally’s “Twenty Books in Twenty Minutes” format. It was, to my recollection, the best attended field trip to date!

I hope to see lots of members at our September meeting, with Rosemary McCracken speaking. Crown Prosecutor Nicole Bailey joins us in October for a glimpse into the lighter side of

her work. Check our website and Facebook page for more details about future meetings.

I also hope to see lots of members at Word on the Street at Harbourfront on Sunday, September 22. Volunteer if you can. Even if you can’t, come by our table in the “Writers’ Block” and schmooze with visitors, sharing your

enthusiasm for crime fiction, especially the books written by women. Check the schedule for which member authors are selling and signing their books and support them! And don’t forget, if you renew your membership at Word on the Street, you can pay the old dues rate of \$35. (Otherwise, the rate goes up to \$40, still a bargain at \$3.64 per meeting.)



Kate Freiman is President of Sisters in Crime Toronto. She has written eight novels and several short stories, one of which can be found in the mystery anthology *Villainous Vacations*.

Inside this issue of *Crime Scene*: Notes on our **June meeting with inspiring special guest Marcia Talley**; pics and recommended reading lists (plus a recipe!) from the **summer field trip and pot luck**; a report from **E. Terri Dixon on Women Killing It**; an **interview with Joseph Mark Glazner**; **Lorna Poplak on Revving Up Your Research Engines** in Write On, Sister; **Jane Burfield on Reigniting Memories**. Plus more member news and notices of upcoming events.

Sisters in Crime Toronto Upcoming Programs

Location for our monthly meetings:

Northern District Branch, Toronto Public Library,
Room 200, 7 pm, 40 Orchard View Blvd.,
416-393-7610.

Interested in supper before the meeting? Starting at 5 pm, some of us get together for dinner at the **Pickle Barrel**, 2300 Yonge St., just around the corner from the library.

Thursday, September 19, 2019

Sister **Rosemary McCracken** will talk about traditional mysteries and the Christie legacy. Agatha Christie’s books follow 22 elements of traditional mystery novel structure. Do you know what they are?

Thursday, October 17, 2019

Crown Attorney Nicole Bailey returns to share stories of the funny side of being a defense and prosecution attorney.

Thursday, November 21, 2019

Is historical fiction a good way to learn about history? Hear from SinC authors **Nate Hendley, Lorna Poplak, Ann Shortell, Caro Soles** and **Sylvia Warsh**.

For more details and the latest news, go to:



[Sisters in Crime – Toronto Chapter](#)



[@SinC_Toronto](#)



www.TorontoSistersinCrime.ca

Marcia Talley: Inside the Mind of a Mystery Writer

By Kathleen Fraser

Sisters in Crime Toronto, June 20, 2019

“All writers start as readers.” Thus began SinC author **Marcia Talley** in explaining her early start as a writer to the assembled group at our June meeting of Sisters in Crime Toronto. “And I was an insatiable reader.”

To say we were honoured to have Marcia at our gathering is putting it mildly. Marcia Talley is the Agatha and Anthony award-winning author of 16 Hannah Ives mysteries, including *Daughter of Ashes*, *Mile High Murder* and *Tangled Roots*. Marcia’s short stories appear in more than a dozen collections and include the multi-award-winning story “Too Many Cooks,” a humorous retelling of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* from the viewpoint of the three witches, “Driven to Distraction” which won the Agatha Award and was nominated for an Anthony, and “Can You Hear Me Now.” She is also the editor/author of *Naked Came the Phoenix* and *I’d Kill For That*, both star-studded, collaborative serial novels about murder.

Marcia’s early writing was first influenced by her Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys reading, then by the classics of the Golden Age, including Christie, Sayers, Tey and Allingham. She grew up in a military family and was an adventurous reader: among her favourite reads was Robert A. Heinlein’s 1956 novel *The Door Into Summer*, a sci-fi time-travel mystery set in the year 2000.

Her ambitions as a writer took a back seat as she worked as a teacher librarian, had two daughters, and life got busy. Then in 1983 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Facing her own mortality, she says, “gave me permission to lie back and do something for myself.” She began writing for herself. And then she decided to apply for the **Sewanee Writers Conference** and was accepted. “It was a competitive two weeks with incredible writers as mentors.” Thus encouraged, she entered the manuscript of her first novel, *Sing It to Her Bones*, in a Malice Domestic grant contest for unpublished writers, and won – and from that opportunity she got an agent and a three-book deal!

Where do Marcia’s ideas come from? Reading, friends, family, eavesdropping, dreams. Real life. Her Hannah Ives stories are set in real and



imagined places in Annapolis, Maryland. “I like to set scenes in interesting places.” And Hannah the character is also a breast cancer survivor. *Sing It to Her Bones* was inspired by a real case in Kentucky, in particular, the photo in a news story of a husband and wife standing by the well where their daughters’ body was found, years after she disappeared.

Sometimes – and Marcia smiled as she told us this – her stories become occasions for revenge. In one, “I bumped off the woman who married my father after my mother died ... and made her beautiful red hair a wig.”

But Marcia also does lots of research, taking notes, creating diagrams, consulting guidebooks and maps, for example, for a truer depiction of First Night Annapolis (a New Year’s Eve celebration) at the latest turn of the century. It may be “old fashioned,” she says, “but I write things in a notebook.”

In Marcia’s latest novel, *Tangled Roots*, Hannah Ives’s DNA results are totally unexpected. Her next, expected in 2020, is *Done Gone*: “Hannah is having a dinner party and her neighbour guests just disappear.”

After Marcia’s inspiring presentation, while others were enjoying the cake (see photo), I picked up an autographed copy of *Sing It to Her Bones* and *Tangled Roots* and now am looking forward to reading the next instalment in Hannah’s adventures and everything in between! SinC Toronto members and guests all had a fabulous evening with Marcia and we are grateful to her for having travelled to Toronto to speak with us, SinC Inc for sponsoring her trip and Marilyn Kay and her team for organizing the event.



Notes from a Field Trip to Bakka-Phoenix Books

From Dorothy Birtalan, Kate Freiman,
Helen Nelson and Lorna Poplak

Sisters in Crime Toronto, July 18, 2019

The challenge of this summer's field trip, which took place at [Baaka-Phoenix Books](#), was to share the vital details of five favourite books in a minute each. The goal was to cover 20 books in 20 minutes! Capsule descriptions indeed! Extra points given for recommending cross-genre mysteries. Well, we may have taken a little longer than a book a minute. And it was awfully hard to restrict ourselves to five books each. Four Sisters rose to the challenge and have generously shared their lists (and some extra recommendations) with our readers.



Dorothy Birtalan provided an extensive list and shared details about seven titles/series she especially recommends (*starred below).

Hard-boiled cross-genre

- *The Caves of Steel* by Isaac Asimov
- *Tea from an Empty Cup* by Pat Cadigan
- *When Gravity Fails* by George Alec Effinger
- *Pattern Recognition* by William Gibson
- *Ex-Kop* by Warren Hammond
- *Gun, with Occasional Music* by Jonathan Lethem*
- *The Automatic Detective* by A. Lee Martinez*
- *Breaking Strain (Venus Prime #1)* by Paul Preuss (female protagonist)*
- *Red Planet Blues* by Robert J. Sawyer
- *To Say Nothing of the Dog* by Connie Willis*

Cross-genre Detective/PI series

- Lola Starke series by S. G. Wong (Canadian writer)*
- Alex Versus series by Benedict Jacka
- Lord Darcy series by Randall Garrett
- Dave Brandsetter series by Joseph Hansen, winner of the 1992 Lifetime Achievement award from the Private Eye Writers of America
- Garrett Files series by Glen Cook (first: *Sweet Silver Blues*)*
- The Dresden Files by Jim Butcher*
- Sandman Slim series by Richard Kadrey
- Anita Blake series by Laurell K. Hamilton – only the early few books
- Peter Grant series by Ben Aaronovich (though he is, in fact a London cop)*

Cross-genre Noir/Grimdark

- “The Dreaming City” by Michael Moorcock
- Glen Cook’s The Black Company series
- *The Fifth Season* by N. K. Jemisin
- *Jade City* by Fonda Lee

- *A Crown for Cold Silver* by Alex Morgan
- *The Court of Broken Knives* by Anna Smith Spark
- Joe Abercrombie’s works
- *Noir* by K. W. Jeter
- *Weird Noir* edited by K. A. Laity – anthology of short stories
- The Dark Tower series by Stephen King, features The Gunslinger (Idris Elba in the film)

Honourable mention

- *The Girl Was Trouble*, edited by Kelley Armstrong: All written by Canadian women crime writers!
- *The Exile Book of New Canadian Noir*, edited by Claude Lalumiere and David Nickel: All Canadian writers, some surreal, futuristic.

Kate Freiman provided enticing descriptions of the following seven titles:

- *Mistress of the Art of Death*, a historical mystery by the late Ariana Franklin. “The year is 1171. King Henry II is unhappy.”
- *The Broken Girls*, a standalone novel by local author Simone St. James. This is a moody, atmospheric historical gothic set in Vermont in both 1950 and 2014.
- *Cat on the Edge*, a feline-inhabited cozy mystery, by Shirley Rousseau Murphy, the first book in the Joe Grey Mystery series
- *If Walls Could Talk*, by Juliet Blackwell. Blackwell writes cozy mystery series, all with a paranormal twist. First in the “Haunted Home Renovation Mystery” series.
- *Rosemary and Rue*, by Seanan McGuire, offers a fairy tale with a kick-butt protagonist: “Toby, a changeling–half fae, half human–used to be an private investigator in San Francisco before two nasty full-blooded fae turned her into a fish in the koi pond of the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park.”

- In Patricia Briggs’s *Moon Called*, we meet Mercedes Thompson, car mechanic and sometimes coyote shifter:
- *Magic Strikes*, by Ilona Andrews, in which Kate Daniels is a mercenary who makes a living cleaning up the paranormal problems magic leaves in its wake when technology rises again.

Lorna Poplak recommended:

- The *Complete Sherlock Holmes*, by Arthur Conan Doyle. Note Lorna’s props for the presentation – the *Complete Sherlock Holmes* downloaded on her phone and a 3D model of the famous detective.



Women Killing It!

By **E. Terri Dixon**

**Prince Edward County,
Labour Day Weekend 2019**

Set amid the bucolic beauty of flora and wine, the third annual [Women Killing It Crime Writers Festival](#) took place to a sell-out crowd of enthusiasts. The brainchild of Vicki Delany and Janet Kellough, the county’s very own mystery writers, this year’s five events were held in the lovely St Andrew’s Church, the historic Glenwood Cemetery and the Andrew Carnegie styled Picton Public Library.

The eight authors showcased ranged in work from cozies with Vicki Delany’s *Body on Baker Street* and Ginger Boulton’s Deputy Donut series to gritty local crime with, S. M. Hurley’s *Blackwater Bluff* and Brenda Chapman’s *Butterfly Kills*.

Iona Winshaw’s amateur detective, Lane Winslow in *Killer in King’s Cove*, came to life through the author’s recollection of her mother’s wartime work in espionage, and Ausma Zehanat Khan’s *The Unquiet Dead* brought back my memories of working in Bosnia after the war of 1994. Joy Fielding delighted us with tales of her latest in a cache of over 50 written to date, *Scandal in Scarlett*, and Hannah Mary McKinnon’s family suspense, *Her Secret Son*, rounded out the panoply of delectable offerings.

Opening night, *One Corpse Too Many*, featured table hopping where all eight authors gave each of eight tables a five-minute synopsis of their work.

Saturday morning, Vicki Delany held an excellent workshop on plotting that another of our SinC members, Gertie Witte, attended and found to be very helpful. The venue was the seminar room at the library.

Helen Nelson sang the praises of the following seven mysteries:

- *In a Cottage in a Wood*, by Cass Green
- *Jar of Hearts*, by Jennifer Hillier
- Mr. Mercedes series, by Stephen King
- *The Widows of Malabar Hill*, by Sujata Massey
- *American by Day*, by Derek B. Miller
- The Retrieval Artist series, by Kristine Kathryn Rusch
- *The Chalk Man*, by C. J. Tudor

Of course, we are all book lovers, totally unable to restrict ourselves to a small handful of recommendations!



Saturday afternoon tea at St Andrew’s, entitled *The Sanctuary Sparrow*, provided mouth-watering treats by the ladies of Friends of Rose House, a local historic museum in the county, along with a myriad of intriguing tales.

A Morbid Taste for Bones was appropriately held in the evening in the historically spooky chapel of the Glenwood cemetery.

The final event was a workshop by Brenda Chapman, held in the library and which I found very useful in my search for the absolutely correct POV (point of view).

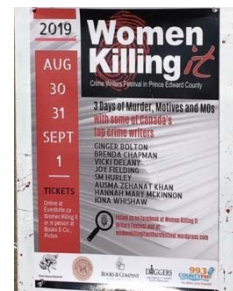
David and Barbara Sweet of Books and Company (www.pictonbookstore.com) were on hand to sell all of the authors’ books in their usual friendly, efficient manner. Since the festival the books are available in the Mystery section and displayed in the front window

I would highly recommend everyone look for next year’s Women Killing It Crime Writing Festival 2020 as it continues to support and showcase Canadian women mystery writers.



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E. Terri Dixon has served on the Executive of the Toronto chapter of Sisters in Crime and is a keen SinC promoter.



Summer Potluck

By Helen Nelson

Sisters in Crime Toronto, August 18, 2019

If you've never been to a Sisters in Crime Summer Potluck dinner (or even if you have), you should mark it in your calendar for next year,



Usually held in August, this dinner is always an amazing feast (just look at the picture of that cake). And this year was no exception. We had it all – meaty mains, vegetarian delights, nibbles, side dishes, salads (and more salads), wine, dessert and more!

First servings, second servings. And if you

wanted it, you could even have had third and fourth servings! And there were plenty of leftovers to take home to nibble on there.

There were about 20 of us. And rather than sit at the individual tables for four that the early arrivers set up, we pulled all the tables together and sat banquet style. All of us getting to know each other a little better.



Thanks once more to Jane Burfield for the use of her condo party room – and for helping both set up and clean up. Thanks also to the setup and clean-up crew, which in the true Sisters in Crime spirit, included almost everyone.



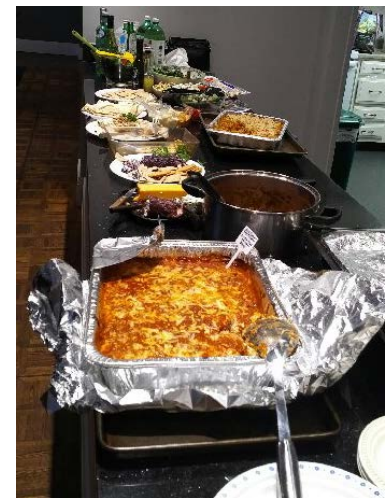
Almost every year we've had the Santa Fe Chicken casserole... And almost every year someone asks for the recipe. So, back by popular demand, here it is: Santa Fe Chicken

This is the easiest dish! And it doubles, triples, quadruples ... easily. And freezes like a charm. Best of all, there is only a limited amount of cutting and chopping

- 3 cups cooked brown rice
- 2 cups cooked white chicken meat (cut into bite-size pieces)
- ½ cup diced onion (I nuke these for a couple of minutes to soften them)
- 3 1/2 oz can diced green chiles (or more if you want spicier)
- 1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup jarred salsa (use mild, medium or hot according to your taste)
- ½ cup crushed baked nacho chips

Preheat oven to 350 F

In a large bowl combine rice, chicken, onion, chiles ¾ cup of the cheddar and the salsa. Pour into a 9 x 13 baking pan. Sprinkle with remaining cheese and chips. Bake 30 to 40 minutes or until the cheese is bubbly.



Helen Nelson has been an active member of SinC Toronto and the wider mystery community for many years. She was co-chair of Bouchercon 2017. Her short stories have appeared in several mystery anthologies, including all three of ours: [The Whole She-Bang](#), [The Whole She-Bang 2](#), and [The Whole She-Bang 3](#)

Criminal Intent

Featuring Joseph Mark Glazner

Interviewed by Arlene McCarthy

Joseph Mark Glazner is an internationally acclaimed American-Canadian author who has published seven crime novels written either under his own name or his pen name Joseph Louis. Madelaine (by Joseph Louis, Bantam Books, NY, 1987) was nominated for both the Shamus and Arthur Ellis Awards for 1987.

His self-published memoir, Life After America: A Memoir About the Wild and Crazy 1960s, was his first new published book in 29 years. It is a darkly humorous autobiographical account of Glazner's first two years in Canada (1967–1969) as one of the first war resisters to leave the United States during the Vietnam War. It is the story of starting over as an ex-pat American in Montreal, set against a backdrop of Montreal's budding counterculture, its nightlife, student protests, separatist bombs, and the rise of Pierre Trudeau.

In the memoir, Glazner also describes his stint writing scandalous stories for the notorious Montreal tabloid Midnight (second only to the National Enquirer in circulation in North America at the time) providing us with a rich insight into the beginnings of the tabloid world we find ourselves living in today.

The third act of his memoir – his recounting of his week-long stay with John and Yoko at their iconic Bed-In for Peace (Montreal 1969) during one of John Lennon's most creative weeks in his life – offers a unique look at Lennon, the artist, musician, peacenik, and marketing genius. Glazner made rock history during that event by giving John Lennon the idea for John and Yoko's later War Is Over campaign which will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its launch on December 15, 2019.

*Glazner's latest work, **MurderLand, A Crime Novel** (Joseph Mark Glazner, Publisher, Toronto, 2018), is his first published mystery in 30 years.*

You can find out more about Joseph Mark Glazner on [Facebook](#), on [Amazon](#) and at his website: <https://glazner.webs.com/>. To contact him, email josephlouis@sympatico.ca.



Q: Harry Holiday, the protagonist of *MurderLand*, is both endearing and unscrupulous. Did you set out to create such a complex antihero?

A: Harry Holiday started life as another character with another name in another story in another medium – a film script set in a generic winter resort in the Rockies during the days leading up to a winter tournament where the antagonist in the story cooks up a foolproof way of killing his chief rival and manages to put the blame on someone else. Think *Animal House* meets Hitchcock or the Coen brothers in snow country. Although the film never was made, I kept thinking about the basic theme – a character in deep trouble, who is tempted to cross the line and commit the perfect crime for personal gain. In the film script the innocent hero (a likeable, oddball drifter) gets accused of the murder, flees town, and returns with his looks altered to try to clear his name and because he has fallen for a woman who doesn't even know he exists.

For the novel, I combined the original good guy and bad guy into one character – the prodigal son returning to town. Harry is young, wild, and looking for action. At times, he's amoral, weighing the odds of crossing the line and not getting caught. He's in deep trouble – much of it of his own making, and he's living life at a pace that would give most people a nervous breakdown. He is also a loving son, trying to find out who almost killed his father and left him in a coma. Harry has a genuine soft side that belies the side of him which is about to commit murder.

In short, he's half good and half bad. Flawed characters are always fun to work with because they are unpredictable for the readers as well as for me as the writer. Pushing the good and bad to a fifty-fifty balance provides much more opportunity for surprises but also is much riskier. If you push the character too far to the bad side, you risk alienating too many readers.

Q: Tell us why you chose to set *MurderLand: A Crime Story*, in Niagara Falls, Canada.

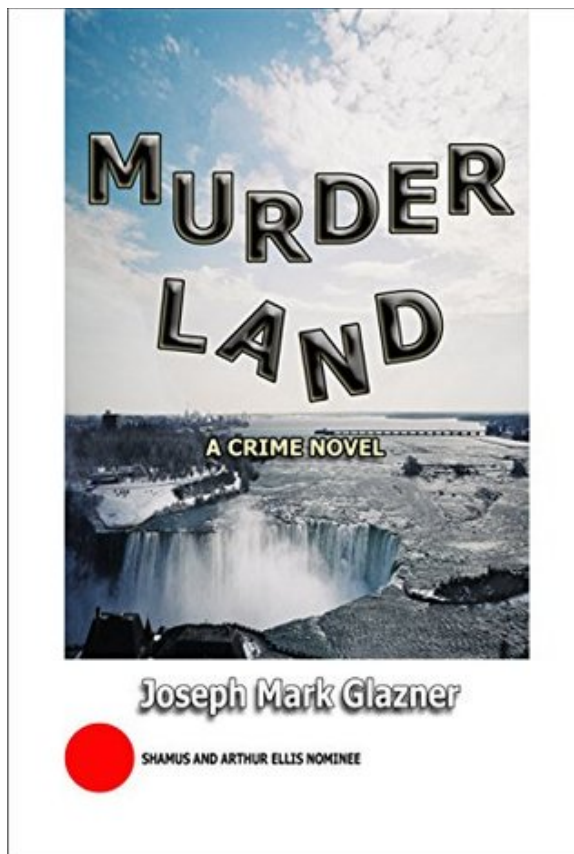
A: The choice of location came after I started developing Harry Holiday and the storyline. Around that time, my wife and I frequently took driving trips through the States to visit friends, relatives, and places where I lived before coming to Canada. We often returned through Niagara Falls over the Rainbow Bridge to avoid the truck traffic, and regularly stayed a few days in the Niagara region as a finale to our trips before returning to Toronto. One day while touring the Niagara region in the early 2000s, it hit me that it was a perfect place to set an edgy story like the one I was developing. The falls have strong elements of danger and mystique. Daredevils have walked over the falls on tightropes and gone over the falls in various contraptions. Some have died.

It is an iconic place for both Americans and Canadians, the two audiences I identify most with. Niagara is a border town. Smuggling has long been a part of its culture. Niagara is world famous as both a spot of natural beauty, and as one of North America's oldest tourist traps. Twelve million tourists visit each year from all over the world. Niagara (pop. 85,000) and the small towns and villages around it are small enough to allow a lot of interaction between characters who grew up together and share past histories. The Niagara region is filled with history, particularly bloody battles of the War of 1812. It is said to be one of the most haunted places in Canada.

The nightlife – a mainstay of edgy crime novels – includes three casinos, one run by Native Americans on the US side and two government-owned casinos on the Canadian side as well as ample requisite strip joints and bars that cater to drunken losers. The Clifton Hill entertainment district overlooking the falls offers similar low-brow amusements and exhibits I recalled from visits to Coney Island, Atlantic City, the Santa Monica Pier, and other amusement parks in my youth in the 1950s and 60s.

By contrast, the world-famous Shaw Festival and award-winning wineries, upscale restaurants and stores, luxury bed-and-breakfasts and hotels in the region, offer high-brow shopping, entertainment, and accommodation for the carriage trade.

In short, Niagara is like my main character: complex with a great mix of good and bad qualities.



Q: Harry initially sees his women – Melanie Wickers and Alice May – mainly in sexual terms. Why do you think his attitudes toward them become more complex?

A: Harry is young and high on hormones, alcohol, drugs, gambling, danger, and thoughts of revenge, love, and sex. He is an antihero. He doesn't conform. He doesn't care what anyone thinks about his sexuality. He cares only what the people he's having relations with think about him. That's who he is. He makes his own rules. He lives by norms in his head that we, as readers, sometimes agree with and sometimes don't.

The women he is pursuing or having relationships with are seeing him in sexual terms as much as he is seeing them that way. They give as good as they get. That's what makes the

story work and gives it part of its authentic grittiness. The men and women are equal opportunity exploiters, and yet underneath, almost everyone is hunting love to some degree, and they are, to some extent, using sex in hopes of finding love.

Q: The *MurderLand* museum is a character in itself. It is housed in an old building threatened with demolition and with failing infrastructure, and at the same time, it is filled with treasures and secrets. What was the inspiration for this repository of secrets for many of America's greatest unsolved gangland slayings?

A: *MurderLand* itself was inspired by many things. As a child, I always loved the wacky museums like the famous Ripley's Believe It or Not museum in Atlantic City (with its two-headed cow and a car made in the Soviet Union), and Hubert's Dime Museum & Flea Circus on 42nd Street in New York's Time Square, which boasted, in addition to its garish displays, live performers like a sword swallower and a musician named Tiny Tim.

For nearly a year in the early 1980s I worked as a consultant and writer for Ripley's Believe It or Not on a book about money when the company was headquartered on Price Street in Toronto. My temporary office was located beside a room full of old exhibits including several shrunken heads salvaged from one of their museums that had been closed.

Another part of the inspiration for the *MurderLand* museum came from my mother, an inveterate collector of

antiques, vintage clothes, costume jewellery, art glass, books, coins, stamps, ephemera, and anything broken she thought she might, one day, fix or sell in her own store which she never opened. She filled our house with her collections, which grew larger and larger in her old age until some of the rooms in the house were crammed so full of boxes of treasures and furniture stacked on furniture that they were impassable. I inherited the collecting gene from my mother. As a child, I collected coins as well as anything related to war and guns. By the time I left rural New Jersey for California at 18 (1963), I had amassed a substantial collection of arrowheads (some dug up locally by me); muskets; carbines; rifles; swords; and handguns, mainly nineteenth century, as well as old photographs and historic newspapers and magazines depicting famous events such as the assassination of President McKinley and the election of President Kennedy.

The museum was also a small business with all the headaches of a small business, not unlike the headaches my father endured as a glove manufacturer. In my teens I worked on the shop floor as a cutter and presser. The business declined along with my father's health from his early onset Parkinson's and I saw my father go from a healthy athletic man to a worn out shell of his former self, just as Harry experienced after someone tried to kill Ralph Holiday, Harry's father.

Q: If you could only write one more novel in your life, what would it be about?

A: Right now, I am working through the inventory of books I have written in the past 30 years, including three additional crime-novel manuscripts (at the editing stage) and an outline for a sequel to *MurderLand* (in a very early stage of development).

Simultaneously, I am also editing three memoir manuscripts – two prequels to *Life After America* and a sequel. The four standalone memoirs will be my tribute to midcentury modern North American life between the 1940s and 1970s. One of the most worthwhile parts of writing so many projects at once over such a long period is that the writing gets better and new synergies develop from one story to the other.

Q: What is your worst writing habit? Best?

A: Worst: Believing I will live forever and have time to finish all the books I want to write or have already written, which still need editing.

Best: Sticking with it, always looking for ways to make my writing better.

Q: Tell us what book or author has most influenced you as a writer?

A: I have been influenced by so many books and so many authors that I always have trouble narrowing it down. Any

and every kind of story in every medium has influenced me at some point or another – from *Dumbo the Flying Elephant* (first book that I remember) and *The Wizard of Oz* (first movie) to all the stories that came alive at the flick of the channel changer when our first television arrived in 1949 when I was four.

I absorbed storytelling from the folk songs sung around the campfire at Boy Scout and YMCA camps. I loved the stories from the old spirituals, blues, country and western hits, and the first years of rock, which I heard over the radio at home or riding with my parents to visit relatives in Newark and New York.

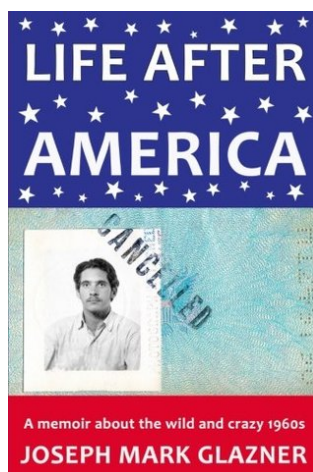
I had the good fortune to go to an experimental public high school in rural New Jersey run under the watchful eyes of several important Bell Labs scientists who recruited the best teachers they could find in the country from places like Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Swarthmore, Amherst, and other top schools. For my first two years, I had a Princeton-educated teacher fresh out of the Wesleyan College masters writing program who taught us everything he had just learned because he didn't know what else to teach us.

When I started out at the University of Southern California in pre-med I dreamed of writing novels on the side. I ended using every opportunity I could to develop my writing skills by writing poetry, journalistic accounts, short stories, songs, letters, plays, movie concepts, and chapters of novels of books that never got written.

In a burst of energy during the Summer of Love (1967) (right after graduation from USC, BA, psychology, magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa), I pounded out my first novel – a poor stepchild of John Fowles' *The Collector* and *The Magus*. It was not very original, but it was good enough for me to get a top literary agent in Hollywood. That same summer, one of my short stories received a rejection from the managing editor of the *Evergreen Review* and a note of praise from the famous beatnik-era writer, critic, and *Evergreen* consulting editor, Seymour Krim, who called the work authentic and fought to get it published.

By the time I was 22, I thought I could earn a living at writing. I was a copyist at the very least – someone who could read something – from a novel to a newspaper article to the print on the back of a cereal box – and imitate the style and purpose. Writing was portable. The completion of my first novel gave me the confidence to leave the United States during the Vietnam War and start over in another country as a writer.

Ironically, I never did rewrite that first novel. Over the years I wrote for a daily publication put out by a think tank. I wrote film treatments and scripts for several small film companies. I knocked out garish stories about



Jackie O. and UFOs that kill people and sheep for a tabloid. I was the associate editor and journalist of Canada's premier business magazine, *Executive*, in the 1970s. I wrote executive speeches, annual reports, and forecasts for major Canadian and US companies and governments. On the side, I wrote songs, short stories, and treatments and scripts for film and TV, and new chapters of uncompleted novels.

One of the projects I developed during the mid-1970s was a TV series (unproduced) about a young, independent, streetwise investor who gets entangled in financial crimes related to his investments and personal contacts. A producer at CTV who gave me development money and tried to greenlight the project to the pilot stage, told me I had to read John D. McDonald, someone the producer had once worked with on a film in Florida. It didn't take me long to read dozens of McDonald's novels and write my first mystery *Smart Money Doesn't Sing or Dance* (Warner Books, NY, 1979) featuring a streetwise investor who ends up solving crimes related to his business associates and deals.

The point is that while writers are influenced by other writers, they are also perhaps more importantly influenced by the sheer act of writing. Call it the Malcolm Gladwell factor (*Outliers, The Story of Success*), the idea that a person has to put in at least 10,000 hours at something to achieve competence and success.

Q: Thirty years between your last crime novel (*The Trouble with Stephanie*, Joseph Louis, Bantam Books, NYC, 1988) and *MurderLand*, (Joseph Mark Glazner, publisher, Toronto, 2018) hints at a very busy life or one huge writer's block. Please share with our readers the 'why' of that time gap.

A: I wrote quite a bit during those three decades – unproduced film scripts for producers like Robert Lantos, press releases for the opening of McDonald's Russia, and articles about new innovations that produced the internet and smart phones. I wrote backroom papers for government and industry regarding corporate mergers in banking and new communications technologies and applications. I made it into Hansard Canada with a tax idea that was developed by others into the Tax Free accounts.

Throughout these years, I continued to write crime novels, and I began to write memoirs. I worked with several New York agents and had offers from several publishers on a number of the books I turned out, but for one reason or another, I decided the money wasn't right, the contract gave away too many rights, or in one case, my agent died before we could close a sale.

During these years I also began to go through my own archives. I began reading through more than a thousand letters to and from me that spanned the 1950s to the early 1970s, and many hundreds of pages of diaries, journals, and old writings I had accumulated through the years. I researched many of the events I had witnessed, and

interesting people I had crossed paths with, to gather new insights. I began to talk with scores of people from the past, whom I had never lost touch with, and I hunted down and interviewed many others whom I had lost touch with decades ago but who had memories of the past lives and times we had shared together. I developed my own writing style for the memoirs by vetting the reactions from dozens of readers. I used many of the techniques from writing mysteries and suspense to keep the memoir reader turning the page.

I also watched the evolution of independent publishing and found it exciting. It gave the author total control over the finished book – something I'd never had before. Realizing that I needed to start getting the books I had written over three decades into print or they might remain on my computer and end up in a landfill when I died, I plunged into independent publishing in 2017 with *Life After America*. I did my own cover on Photoshop. I worked with several international artists and designers to backstop me in selecting typefaces and general design concepts. I hired outside editors, and when they were done, I went through and revived all my own old editing skills (from Southam and my think tank and tabloid days) to put an even higher finish on the story. I hired a very competent freelancer for formatting and interior design. I learned how to promote the book on Amazon through an expert in Poland (recommended by KDP), and I sold enough copies of my first memoir to produce *MurderLand* in 2018.

The plan now is to try to publish at least one memoir or mystery a year for the next several years. I am a little behind schedule at the moment.

Q: Complete the following sentence: "Because I write mysteries..."

A: Because I write mysteries I find novel ways to get rid of my nemeses on paper rather than get my hands dirty in real life.

Q: How has being a member of Sisters in Crime affected you?

A: I don't socialize much outside of close friends and family. So for me, the local chapter of the Sisters in Crime has been a way to keep in touch with the Canadian crime writing community and other writers. I enjoy the camaraderie of the members, some of whom I have known for 15 years or more. It's simply a great group of people who are very welcoming and supportive of writers and readers alike. While I don't go to many meetings, it's a great feeling to know that the group helps promote and support Canadian crime writers and literature in general in Canada. I am most grateful for the support and friendship that have been extended to me by the members, several of whom read and provided valuable comments on early drafts of *MurderLand* and *Life After America*

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Write On, Sister

Revvng Up Your Research Engines

By Lorna Poplak

Arthur Ellis, arguably Canada’s most prolific hangman, wore a frock coat and a flower in his lapel to executions. Another notorious executioner snored like “a traction engine” the night before a hanging. Elizabeth Popovitch’s brother was devastated when his bus was late and he couldn’t say goodbye to her before she was hanged. Ronald Turpin, one of the last two men hanged in Canada, had just stolen \$632.84 from the Red Rooster Restaurant in Scarborough when his car was pulled over by the police officer he subsequently shot and killed.

Details, details, details.

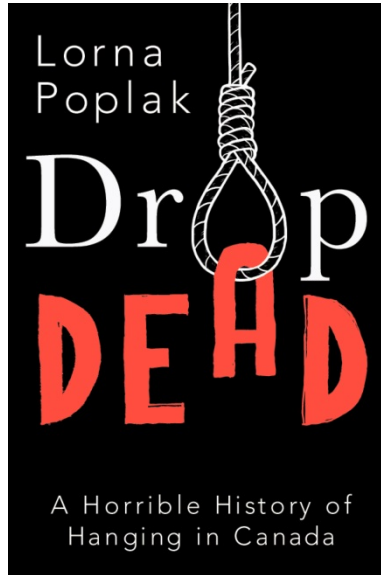
It’s all about finding, and sharing with your readers, tidbits of information to make your story spring to life.

Research is fundamental to all types of writing. If you’re into crime fiction, for example, you puzzle over whether your suspect could drive from Point A to Point B in just 20 minutes. Meticulous research is crucial in non-fiction, where you struggle to get your facts as straight as is humanly possible.

In *The Romanovs: 1613 – 1918*, Simon Sebag Montefiore gives thanks to the “galaxy of scholarship”—researchers, historians, authors, stylists, and editors—that helped him avoid mistakes in his spectacular and sweeping 748-page chronicle of the Romanov dynasty in Russia.

How I envy Montefiore for all those teams of experts backing him up.

In writing my debut non-fiction book, *Drop Dead: A Horrible History of Hanging in Canada*, and now as I work through my second book, I’ve been very fortunate in having an array of writers, readers, editors, and experts ready and willing to offer useful suggestions and insights to help me sharpen my work. But when it comes to in-depth research, there is only me, a team of one, often sitting at my computer until late at night, poring over my materials.



I’ve turned to many of the traditional sources of information available to researchers: statutes and other government documents, secondary sources such as books, articles, and visual and audio materials, and, most enthralling and rewarding of all, archival newspapers. In earlier times, both before and after the introduction of newer media such as radio and television, people relied on print, especially newsprint, to find out what was happening in their world. In this modern age, the pleasure is to have many of these resources, including newspapers, literally at your fingertips.

It’s not that visits to libraries and bookstores are entirely a thing of the past. Although many titles are available

as e-books, you still have to borrow (or buy) books and spend hours in the reference section of the library perusing material you can’t find elsewhere. But the system is streamlined today; for example, you can request books online and pick them up from the library of your choice. And reference sources warehoused in the library stacks may be requested in advance and be waiting for you on arrival.

So, if you have a non-fiction topic you’re burning to explore, fire up your research engines and get ready to enjoy the ride!



Lorna Poplak is a Toronto-based writer, editor, and researcher with a fascination for the stories behind historical events. After studying law and English and French literature at university, she worked in information technology, then technical communications. Lorna has written creative, technical and scientific

articles for online and print publications. Her debut non-fiction book, *Drop Dead: A Horrible History of Hanging in Canada*, was published by Dundurn Press in July 2017. She is currently working on a second book for Dundurn, which focuses on the dark side of Toronto’s history.

Join the Sisters in Crime Toronto Chapter now – in person at our next meeting or online anytime.

Annual chapter dues are \$40: only \$3.63 per meeting! Don’t forget to also **join SinC, Inc.**, as a **Professional or Active member**. If you are a new member or guest, please introduce yourself at the Membership table on your way in.

Did you do something great?



Have an announcement to make? Or an idea for a column or news story for *Crime Scene* magazine?

If you don’t share it with us, we can’t celebrate it with you! Send us your news and ideas at newsletter@torontosistersincrime.ca. **Reminder: The deadline for our next issue is November 1, 2019.**



Reigniting Memories

By Jane Burfield

Your life and experiences are a great source for writing ideas. When I am reading and, particularly when

I am writing, I like to use strong images which give the writing a sense of authenticity. I think of it as the Method form of creating. *Be* your characters walking through your settings. Imagine what your character might have been thinking about, dreaming about when they were jettisoned into a dangerous situation. And when it gets predictable, memories help with ideas on how to increase tension.

We are all a soup of memories, but sometimes it's difficult to zoom in on ones pertinent to your writing. There are many ways to recover fuzzy memories. Looking at old magazines, talking to friends, watching vintage TV or old movies, and researching your character's interests take you back and invigorate your writing.

Looking at old photographs of your family and life can ignite old memories, which can become a great source

of ideas for your writing. I've been going through photos recently for an upcoming documentary on the Mesdames of Mayhem. I've looked through my parents' and grandparents' photo albums, and viewed slides of our life when I was small. I discovered I could remember how clothes felt, how food smelled, how we spent our time. And these discoveries will help me in the story I am currently working on.

How do you recover your memories? I'd love to hear what works for you.

Talk to family members. Friends. Visit places you've been to recapture the physical essence of the place: how does it smell, and look. How does a favourite meal taste and who cooked it? What do you remember about it and what have you forgotten?

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Jane Burfield is a longtime member of Sisters in Crime and of the Mesdames of Mayhem. You can reach her at janeburfield@gmail.com.

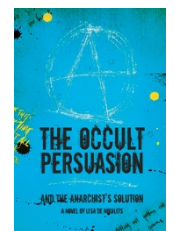


Crime and Congratulations

- Extra-high fives to our Sister **Joyce Woolcott** for her novel, *A Nice Place to Die*, placing first in the Unpublished Manuscript Division for the Mainstream Mystery/Suspense category of the 2019 **Daphne du Maurier Awards for Excellence in Mystery/Suspense**. Check out this [Writers Who Kill](#) interview with Joyce.

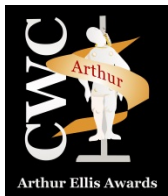
- Sister **Melodie Campbell's** latest in the Orca Books Sounding series, *Crime Club*, which she describes as "Scooby-Do meets the Sopranos," is available now. Official launch and media event at Eastgate Mall, Hamilton, on October 4. For more info, check out her blog at <http://funnygirlmelodie.blogspot.com/>.

- Sister **Madona Skaff** has a short story, "Backbone," in the multi-genre anthology *Nothing Without Us*, to be released in October 2019. It features disabled characters who are the heroes, not the sidekicks. How refreshing!
- Congratulations to Sister **Judy Penz Sheluk** on the release of *A Fool's Journey: A Marketville Mystery*.
- Sister **Ann Shortell** is on a roll, talking up her Clara Swift Tales at TIFF this month.
- Congrats to Sister **Lisa de Nikolits** on the publication of her new novel, *The Occult Persuasion* and *the Anarchist's Solution*. See the following page, *A Murder Is Announced*, for an invitation to the launch.



A Murder Is Announced

- **Word on the Street** is on **September 22** in Toronto. A number of our author members will be enjoying the opportunity to sign, sell and buy books and to be part of our SinC outreach. Join us!
- Sister **Lisa de Nikolits** is happy to invite Sisters and Brothers to the launch of her new novel, *The Occult Persuasion and the Anarchist's Solution*. **Thursday, September 26 at Queen Books**, 914 Queen St. E., Toronto, 6 pm to 8 pm.
- Sharp-eyed Sister **Dorothy Birtalan** noticed that the Toronto Police Dog Services Unit is having its **30th Anniversary Open House** on **Saturday, October 5, 2019**, 10 am to 4 pm.



- **Crime Writers of Canada** tells us that **submissions are open for the 2020 Unchanged Arthur Ellis Award**, sponsored by **Dundurn Press**. Click [here for submission rules](#). Unchanged Arthur submissions (for unpublished authors) must be postmarked or courier dated no later than October 15, 2019.

- Cheryl Freedman reminds us that the **2020 Bloody Words Light Mystery Award (aka the Bony Blithe Award) is now open to submissions**.

“We’re not looking for books with gravitas that make us think; we’re looking for fun-to-read books that entertain us and make us smile.” Check past nominees and winners (and submission rules) at <http://bonyblithe.com/>.

- Sister **Nanci M. Pattenden** reports that the **York Writers Conference, Saturday, October 26, 9 to 5, in Newmarket**, still has spots open. “We’re taking registration until up to October 25. No at-the-door registrations.” Register at www.cyor.ca/conference.

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