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Sisters in Crime is an international organization of women and men whose purpose is to promote mysteries written by women and to combat discrimination against them. Speakers include published mystery authors and technical experts who help writers craft better mysteries, and readers enjoy what they read. Meetings are free and open to all.

For more information, check out the Sisters in Crime website at www.hotxsinc.org



Sunday, April 13, 2008

2:00 p.m.

**David Ciambrone, D.Sc.
Using Toxic Substances in Mysteries**

Westlake Barnes & Noble bookstore
located in The Village at Westlake shopping center
at the southeast corner of Loop 360 and Bee Cave Road
512.328.3155

Writers love poisons. Guns are noisy and messy. Knives are hard to use and bring the killer too close to the victim. Most killers don't have the stomach for strangling and bludgeoning. But, a poison? Simply slip a bit into food or drink, and walk away. No fuss, no muss. Poisons are simple and clean. Almost civilized.

So, where do writers find the poisons they use in their tales? The medicine cabinet would be a good place to look. Or under the sink. A pharmacy or chemical supply house are good, too. But, the best place just might be your backyard or your local nursery.

Where can writers learn about all these household and backyard poisons? Enter David Ciambrone, D.Sc. and his lecture on untraceable poisons and his new book: *Handbook of Poisons for Writers*. Join us when Dr. Ciambrone shares his extensive knowledge on all things toxic in a clear and concise format. Discover how writers learn the poisons that fit their plot needs, how the poison works, and how it will affect their unfortunate victims.

This program and Dr. Ciambrone's book are musts for both writers and readers of crime fiction. For writers, it will tickle that part of their creative mind that asks: *What if?* And that's where the story starts and the fun begins.

This meeting is free and open to anyone who enjoys writing or reading mystery or True Crime.

Upcoming Chapter Programs

May 1-31 - Texas Mystery Month

May 11 - Mystery Author Earl Staggs will speak on **The Reasons for First Writing Short Stories**.

May 18 - Texas Mystery Month Event/
The Fourth Annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event.

June 8 - Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo will speak on the **Visions and Goals for the Austin Police Department**

July 13 - Travis County Detective **Greg Lawson** - **Criminal Investigations and the Mentally Ill**

August 10 - **George Wilhite**, author, *Texas Rodeo Murder*, and Chapter Potluck (Indoor Picnic/Potluck)

September 14 - **Mike Cox** will speak on **The Texas Rangers: Wearing the Cinco Peso, 1821-1900**

November 9 - **Gary Payne**, Founder and Producer, will present a program about the **Capital City Mystery Players**

May Spotlight ...

... will shine on the **Aspiring Writers and Author Mentors** participating in the Fourth Annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event in the May edition of **HOTSHOTS!**



News and Announcements

Dave Ciambrone Chosen for Sage Award

Congratulations to David Ciambrone, D.Sc. on his selection as the Second Annual Sage Award recipient, bestowed by The Barbara Burnett Smith Mentoring Authors Foundation.

The award is given annually to the Mentoring Author who demonstrates an outstanding spirit of service in mentoring, sharing and leading others in the mystery writing community.

Dave will be honored for his service at the Fourth Annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event, Sunday, May 18, 2008, at Barnes & Noble Westlake in Austin, Texas at 2:00 p.m.

Tenth Annual 2008 Texas Mystery Month

Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter is pleased to announce the Tenth Annual 2008 Texas Mystery Month in May. The purpose of Texas Mystery Month is to spotlight Texas Mystery Authors.

Texas Mystery Month events include panel discussions, book signings, author presentations and more.

Houston, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Georgetown, Lockhart and San Antonio have all joined Austin in celebrating Texas Mystery Authors during previous celebrations of Texas Mystery Month.

Austin-area programs already on the Texas Mystery Month 2008 schedule include:

Saturday, May 3rd at 2:00 p.m. Laura Griffin, signing, author of *One Wrong Step* at Barnes & Noble- Round Rock. The store is located in the La Frontera Village at the intersection of IH 35 and SH-45.

Sunday, May 11, 2008 at 2:00 p.m., Mystery Author **Earl Staggs** speaking on **Writing Short Stories First**, at Barnes & Noble Westlake.

Saturday May 17, 2008, 2:00-6:00 p.m. - An Afternoon of Mystery Writing Using Screenwriting Techniques by **Marcia Spiller**, at Barnes & Noble Westlake.
Recommended reading: *Writing for Emotional Impact* by **Karl Iglesias**.

Visit www.hotxsinc.org for more information, or e-mail hotxsinc@yahoo.com

Volunteer Opportunities

Opportunities are still available for volunteers wishing to participate in the 2008 Texas Mystery Month in May. Individuals do not have to be members of Sisers In Crime to be involved. Below are committees seeking volunteers:

*Aspiring Writers Committee
Mentor Authors Committee
Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Project Committee*

For for information about these or other opportunities, please contact Chapter president Sarah Ann Robertson at hotxsinc@yahoo.com



**FRIDAY,
APRIL 25, 2008**
is the deadline for **News, Announcements and Submissions** for the April 2008 edition of **HOTSHOTS!**

Send all information, including digital copies of book covers and photos, to Micqui Miller at micquim@yahoo.com.

Your comments and suggestion are always welcome.

(News and Announcements, Continued on from Page 2)

New Feature Beginning Next Month - Bookshop HOTSPOTS!

For readers and writers alike, what is more fun than discovering a new bookstore in your neighborhood, an "indy" tucked away at a favorite vacation spot, or a surprise in a newly opened shopping mall? Beginning with the May edition of **HOTSHOTS!** we'll spotlight a bookstore each month in a new column called **Bookshop HOTSPOTS!** We'll introduce you to their staff, and highlight their mystery selections. During these visits we hope to find many of the fabulous books written by members of Sisters in Crime/Heart of Texas Chapter, and also learn more about our good neighbors and their vision for their place in the community.

We'll begin the series by spotlighting our own Barnes & Noble at Westlake Mall. Many of you already know Jo Virgil, Community Relations Manager, from her fine support of our chapter, but we may discover a few things about Jo and her store that we didn't know and that will entice us to stop by even more often than we already do.

If you have a favorite bookstore you'd like highlighted, please send the name of the store, contact person, address, phone number and e-mail address or website URL to Micqui Miller at micquim@yahoo.com.

Book Sales Rise in the New Year

Book sales tracked by the Association of American Publishers for the month of January saw an increase of 7.2 percent for the month.

The Adult Hardcover category was up by 4.2 percent in January with sales of \$94.4 million. Adult Paperback sales rose 37.6 percent for the month (\$135.2 million).

The Adult Mass Market category rose by 17.3 percent for January with sales totaling \$65.3 million.

Audio Book sales posted an increase of 16.8 percent for January compared to last year's figures, with sales totaling \$13.5 million. E-books sales rose by 26.1 percent for the month (\$3.1 million). Religious Books rose 1.1 percent for the month with sales of \$47.5 million.

The Children's/YA Hardcover category saw a decrease of 21.9 percent for the month with sales of \$33.6 million. The Children's/YA Paperback category was up by 28.2 percent in January with sales totaling \$34.0 million

Sales of University Press Hardcover books were up by 4.7 percent in January with sales of \$7.1 million. University Press Paperback sales posted a slight decrease of 1.5 percent for the month with sales totaling \$10.2 million. Sales in the Professional and Scholarly category were up by 0.7 percent in January (\$46.9 million).

According to the Business of Consumer Publishing, the net revenue from retail sources in the U.S. accounted for \$6.31 billion in 2006. Romance sales accounted for \$1.37 billion or 21% of the overall sales just behind religious/inspirational sales which accounted for \$1.68 billion. According to the Association of American Publishers, religious/inspirational sales includes the sale of Bibles.

Science fiction/fantasy \$495 million
Classic literary fiction \$448 million
MYSTERY \$422 MILLION
Graphic novels \$128 million

Out and About in April with Our Members ...

David Ciambrone, D.Sc.

April 12: The Final Twist, Sisters in Crime Chapter, Spring TX, speaking about poisons, 10:00 a.m.

April 13: Heart of Texas, Sisters in Crime Chapter, Barnes and Noble Bookstore, West Lake Mall, speaking about poisons, 2:00 p.m.

L. C. Hayden

April 10: Radio Interview on 88.5 FM - 12:30-1:00 p.m.

April 26: Artist and writers Showcase, El Paso Saddleblanket Co., 6926 Gateway East, El Paso, TX, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Karen MacInerney

April 25-27: Malice Domestic, Arlington VA

Micqui Miller

April 16-20: Romantic Times Booklovers Convention, Pittsburgh PA

April 19: signing *Morning Star* at RT Convention Book Fair, Hilton Hotel, Pittsburgh PA

Sylvia Dickey Smith

April 15: Rotary Club, Thibodaux, LA, Noon

April 15: Cherry Book Store, Thibodaux, LA, 2-4 p.m.

April 19: Crawfish Festival, Spring, TX, all day

April 24: Hill Country Writers League, Cedar Park, TX, 7:00 p.m.

April 26: FUMC Women's Retreat, Salado, TX, weekend

Resources for Mystery Writers

As a regular feature, we will list resources for mystery writers. If you know of links, publications or special events, please forward them to micquim@yahoo.com.

WOMEN IN CRIME INK **www.womenincrimeink.blogspot.com**

Profiling the nation's most intriguing criminals . . . interviewing killers, survivors, witnesses, and lawyers . . . arresting suspects . . . prosecuting and locking up serial and sexual killers . . . safeguarding civil liberties and urging government accountability . . . recreating faces on skulls to help identify victims and solve cases . . . witnessing executions on Texas Death Row . . . covering the nation's top crime stories . . . and uncovering truth in the face of jail time and death threats.

These are the daily tasks of the women who make up Women in Crime Ink (WCI). On March 10, they began sharing their day-to-day adventures and behind-the-scenes stories that are always stranger than fiction. WCI also features interviews as well as book and film reviews. Expect guest contributor blogs from those impacted by crime and a "Mystery Man" column, written by men in the crime biz. Additionally, WCI host live chats with selected crime authors promoting their books.

Women in Crime Ink has assembled an impressive lineup of award-winning true-crime authors, print and broadcast journalists, crime novelists, a producer for CBS News, television personalities, and criminal justice professionals – including a forensic artist, a criminal profiler, a murder prosecutor, a police officer, a criminal defense attorney, a sex-crimes prosecutor, and a private investigator.

From the West Coast to the Eastern Seaboard, they have crime covered. Meet the women of Women in Crime Ink:

PAT BROWN is a nationally renowned Criminal Profiler and author of *Killing for Sport*.

ANDREA CAMPBELL is a forensic artist who writes books about forensic science and law.

KATHRYN CASEY is a true-crime author whose first Texas Ranger novel debuts this summer.

TINA DIRMANN is a crime and entertainment reporter, a commentator, and a true-crime author.

STACY DITTRICH is a police officer and a crime novelist who's worked numerous murder cases.

DIANE FANNING is the Edgar-nominated author of 7 true crime books and 1 mystery novel.

JENNA JACKSON is a producer for 48 Hours whose first true-crime book was recently released.

VANESSA LEGGETT is a writer jailed by the Justice Dept. for protecting sources for a book.

MICHELE MCPHEE is a best-selling true-crime author and host of a talk-radio show.

DONNA PENDERGAST is a prosecutor who put away the most prolific serial killer in U.S. history.

ROBIN SAX is a deputy district attorney, a criminal law professor, a legal analyst and an author.

KATHERINE SCARDINO is an attorney who won Texas' first capital murder acquittal. in 25 years.

DONNA WEAVER is a P.I. whose career began with her husband's disappearance and murder.

Crime Scene Investigations **<http://www.feinc.net/cs-inv-p.htm>**

All You Ever Wanted to Know About Crime Scene Investigations and More ...

This site is owned and maintained by Hayden B. Baldwin, BS, F.B.I.N.A., CS. Director of Forensic Enterprises, Inc. He retired in 1998 as a Master Sergeant with the Illinois State Police. He graduated from the Illinois State Police Academy in 1970. He worked as a Patrol Officer, Field Training Officer, and Crime Scene Technician. He was promoted to Crime Scene Supervisor in 1987. As a Crime Scene Supervisor his responsibilities include the daily supervision of 7 crime scene investigators in the Chicago area. His crime scene unit handled several hundred death investigations each year. He has more than 18 years experience in crime scene investigations, the last 11 years as the supervisor.

He teaches courses in Crime Scene Processing, Crime Scene Investigation, 1st Responder, Forensic Evidence for Managers, Crime Scene Photography, Death Investigations, Crime Scene Management, the Recovery of Human Remains and Forensic Computer Composites. He has guest lectured on several occasions at symposia, conferences and seminars. He trained the Illinois State Police Crime Scene Investigators and played a major role in developing their training manual and training program.

David Ciambrone. D.Sc.
April 2008 Spotlight Author

David Ciambrone, D.Sc., is a retired executive, scientist, oceanographer, archaeologist, professor, magician, US Treasury Commissioner and author living in Georgetown, Texas. He also writes a helpful hints newspaper column, titled, "Ask Uncle Dave" for the Williamson County Sun. Dave has published five Virginia Davies Mysteries: *Laguna Treasure*, *Napa Nights*, *Pelican Cove*, *Castle Finlaystoke*, and his latest, *Left at Georgetown* (L&L Dreamspell, Nov. 2007).

Dr. Ciambrone has also published two technical books that have sold well at home and internationally and another management book, *Effective Transition from Design to Production*, (Taylor and Francis Publishing, Sept. 2007).

He has worked for police departments, been a consultant on poisons to police agencies, and with chemical weapons. He has been a speaker at writers groups, schools and colleges and mystery writers' and technical conferences internationally. His topics include how to commit murder right (Murder 101), Poisons, Forensics, and other writing topics. Dr. Ciambrone weaves his background in archaeology, anthropology, forensics, police procedures, magic, science and engineering into his stories.

He has served as past vice president of Sisters In Crime/Orange County (CA) Chapter, has been a member of Mystery Writers of America, Texas Writer's League, Austin Mystery Writers, Texas Mystery Month Author Chairperson 2006-2008, member of Sisters in Crime, Heart of Texas Chapter, and President of the San Gabriel's Writer's League in Georgetown.

MM: Please tell us about your academic background, and what is your science specialty?

DC: I have a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a doctorate in chemical engineering. I'm also a fellow of the International Oceanographic Foundation.

MM: When did you decide to combine your scientific background with writing?

DC: I started writing nonfiction management books and then thought I'd like to try fiction. I incorporate a number of my interests and background in the stories because I think it adds something and, to be honest, it's fun to do.

MM: What made you decide to write a poisons compendium?

DC: I have been interested in poisons for years and a number of years ago went around the country giving talks on poisons to writers at meetings and conferences. I thought writers should have accurate information to use. Sylvia Dickey Smith suggested I turn my poison lecture into a book. Her publisher was interested and it happened.

MM: What is your favorite part about this book?

DC: I guess it is both the start of it and the part where I list the poisons and the time to kill.

MM: Who is "Uncle Dave" and what do you do in that persona?

DC: Uncle Dave is the name of my newspaper column. It's devoted to handy hints and answers questions related to the house and home. For awhile it included science-type questions but I've gotten back to the handy-hints material. As Uncle Dave, I try to provide answers to questions people have or give ideas on inexpensive ways to do things. I've had questions about things from septic systems to washing bathtubs to water softener issues. I've even discussed various food questions.

MM: You write both fiction and non-fiction. Which do you prefer?

DC: The nonfiction is easier to propose and sell and really easier to write but the fiction is more fun and can be more interesting to me. It can be more creative and this is what I like.

MM: What would you say is your most interesting writing quirk?

DC: I can't type. I type using two fingers and circle the keyboard until I find the right key. I can go pretty fast now — lots of experience.



(Spotlight Author, continued from Page 5)

MM: *Are you working on anything at the present you'd like to share with us?*

DC: I've just started another mystery novel and another non-fiction book on aspects of murder for writers. One just went to the publisher last week and I've started a new mystery book and another handbook for mystery writers.

MM: *How many novels have you written? Are they all mysteries? How many series?*

DC: I now have five novels published and a new one at the publisher for a total of six. They are all mysteries.

MM: *I presume you write non-fiction using an outline, but do you outline your fiction, too, or are you a "panster"?*

DC: Nonfiction requires not just an outline but a detailed view of the content of each chapter. As for my mysteries, they come to me as I write. I write a brief description of the basic story then go for it by the seat of my pants. I know certain things are going to be in it. I let the hero tell me when to use them. I rewrite some and fix the problems I create doing it this way, but it works best for me

MM: *Do you have a process for developing your characters?*

DC: I make up a complete description of my main characters with everything from a description, to birthday to birthplace, school history, family history and what parents do and are they alive, military service, vices, likes and dislikes and so forth. I create a whole "real" person".

MM: *Rumor has it that authors write themselves into their characters. Is there any part of you in your characters and what they would be?*

DC: There is a lot of me in Andy – Virginia's husband in the Virginia Davies series. In the new Adam Thomas series, there is a great deal of me in him.

MM: *Do you write every day? Do you set your goals by word count or hours?*

DC: I guess I'm now a full time writer. I try and write every day. I use chapters as a guide. I will try for a chapter a week, sometimes a chapter a day, depending on my mood and what's going on.

MM: *What is your favorite guilty pleasure?*

DC: Chocolate.



MM: *What struggles have you had on the road to being published?*

DC: Finding publishers. Dealing with some egotistical agents and some who were all hot air. Discovering the world of small publishers. I love my new publisher, L&L Dreamspell. I found my publisher for the management books on my own as well, and they are a *huge* New York firm. Didn't need an agent but I used a rather unusual way to approach the acquiring editor. I called him on the phone!

MM: *We're told to write what we know. Are your fiction sleuths scientists, too?*

DC: I don't believe that. Write what you know if you want to, otherwise do a lot of research!! My lead character is not a scientist. Her husband is.

MM: *What the best part about being published?*

DC: For me it is a couple of things: the satisfaction of having gotten published, seeing my books sell, hearing from fans that they like my book, and just being published

MM: *What do you want readers to remember and carry with them after reading your novel?*

DC: I would like them to like the book and like the main characters and want to read more of her adventures. I like the fact that I have created a strong female lead character who is smart, pretty, adventurous and caring and loving and is someone readers want to relate to.

MM: *Would you like to tell us about your family or your pet(s)?*

DC: I have been married to a great lady for 41 years. Kathy is very supportive and likes the fact that I'm an author and write the newspaper column. Kathy and I have two daughters and six grandchildren. One daughter and 4 grandkids live in Austin, the other daughter and her family including two grandkids live in California. We had a great cat but she passed away.

MM: *I don't know where you'd find the time, but do you have hobbies?*

DC: Besides writing, I like astronomy, fishing, travel, sailing and magic. I'm a member of the Order of Merlin of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

(Spotlight Author, Continued on Page 9)

Mystery, murder and medicine: reading the clues

By Frank Davidoff, MD, FACP

(From the September 1995 ACP Observer, copyright © 1995 by the American College of Physicians.) Reprinted with permission.

Murder mysteries and medicine have a lot in common. The most obvious affinity lies in the similarity between detection and diagnosis: observing keenly, asking the right questions, seeing patterns. Sherlock Holmes's pronouncement, "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth" (*The Sign of Four*, published in 1890), eloquently articulates the kind of hypotheco-deductive reasoning used by both doctors and detectives⁽¹⁾; it is arguably the example medical writers quote most often (some would say too often) in affirming this special shared way of thinking. This mutual fascination with puzzling things out turns up in mystery fiction again and again, as in a 1928 Dorothy Sayers story involving her aristocratic detective, Lord Peter Wimsey:

"It must be fascinatin', diagnosin' things," said Peter thoughtfully. "How d'you do it? I mean, is there a regular set of symptoms for each disease, like callin' a club to show you want your partner to go no trumps? You don't just say: "This fellow's got a pimple on his nose, therefore he has fatty degeneration of the heart—"

"I hope not," said the doctor dryly.

"Or is it more like gettin' a clue to a crime?" went on Peter. "You see somethin'—a room, or a body, say, all knocked about anyhow, and there's a damn sight of symptoms of somethin' wrong, and you've got just to pick out the ones that tell the story?"

"That's more like it," said Dr. Hartman⁽²⁾.

But these links are just the beginning; the closer you look, the more intricate the relationship becomes. The first clue to deeper connections comes from the peculiar observation that so many (presumably) normal, decent people are dedicated murder mystery fans.

Question: Why are they so endlessly fascinated by tales of killing and blood and mayhem?

Asked to explain this baffling addiction, aficionados of the genre answer without hesitation:

Murder is the ultimate creator of disorder — anxiety, terror, disruption.

Bringing the perpetrator of a murder to justice is deeply satisfying because it restores order, Q.E.D.

Or, in Ms. Sayers's words, "The desire of being persuaded that all human experience may be presented in terms of a problem having a predictable, final, complete and sole possible solution accounts, to a great extent, for the late extraordinary popularity of detective fiction"⁽³⁾.

A second parallel between medicine and murder mystery now emerges, since:

Even apart from its occasional role as a killer, disease is also a notorious perpetrator of "disorder" in patients' bodies and in their lives. (Recall that "disorder" is a principal synonym for "disease.")

Restoring order means making broken things whole again, and the verb "to heal" comes from a root meaning "to make whole," Q.E.D.

Restorers of order

Detectives and doctors, then, are more than solvers of puzzles: both are also restorers of order, particularly in the face of violence done to the body. So far, so good. But there's violence and there's violence, and the reaction varies accordingly.

The violence of boxing, hockey and other sports, for example, brings rewards — huge crowds and equally huge salaries; even killing on the battlefield brings honor. Murder, in contrast, is universally feared and despised, an abominable, shameful and degraded act, worthy of the worst punishments imaginable, including death.

Question: Why the difference?

Here language provides the clue, for the word *murder* originally "denoted *secret* murder, which in Germanic antiquity was alone regarded (in the modern sense) a crime, open homicide being regarded a private wrong calling for blood-revenge or compensation"⁽⁴⁾.

Detectives of the unknown

From this perspective, diagnosis in medicine takes on something of the same moral quality as detection in murder mysteries; both neutralize the malevolent, guilty quality associated with "unknown causes." The way this works is itself a bit mysterious, but both diagnosis and detection depend for their effect on at least three major acts: naming, predicting and explaining.

(Mystery/Medicine, Continued on Page 8)



(Mystery/Medicine, Continued from Page 7)

It is secrecy, then, that makes the violence of murder so heinous. Secret acts are cowardly, guilty acts; a murderer, being anonymous, is not an individual and is therefore less than human; and the evil you don't know is always more threatening than the evil you know. It is secrecy, then, that makes the violence of murder so heinous.

Secret acts are cowardly, guilty acts; a murderer, being anonymous, is not an individual and is therefore less than human; and the evil you don't know is always more threatening than the evil you know. By the same token, detection—finding out “who dunnit”—is ultimately a moral act, since it converts the unknown, a faceless creature who cannot be called to account, into the known, a flesh-and-blood killer now answerable for his or her crime. A third, most subtle link to medicine is thus revealed. For while disease is not murder, undiagnosed illness shares some of murder's immoral qualities: threatening, or shameful, or degrading exactly *because* the “perpetrator” is secret ⁽⁵⁾.

... the evil you don't know is always more threatening than the evil you know.

The most immediate goal in both detection and diagnosis is, of course, to identify specifically who (or what) is responsible for the violence—to give him (or it) a *name*: the personal identity of the murderer, or the diagnostic entity responsible for a patient's distress. By giving form to the formless, the act of naming itself carries great power, for better or worse. Recall the old apocryphal story about the patient who was so relieved when his doctor told him that his sore tongue was “glossitis.” And recall the benefits, and the risks, that result when real patients are labeled with medical diagnoses ^(6,7).

But naming, general or specific, does more than bring tangible things out of the void. The story is told that students of the great Swedish taxonomist Linnaeus played a practical joke by hanging a huge moosehead over the old master's bed at night while he was asleep. When they woke him up he glanced up at the moosehead, said “Antlers; grinding teeth; herbivore; won't bite me,” and promptly went back to sleep. Naming lets you classify, and classification lets you predict what will happen.

However, rational and effective intervention, whether it is preventing a murderer from killing again or forestalling a relapse of congestive failure, ultimately demands more than classification; it requires explanation

For the homicide detective, this equals knowing the means, motive and opportunity of a murderer; for the doctor this means understanding the etiology, anatomy and pathophysiology of a disease—and it is here that science enters the picture. It can hardly be an accident, after all, that Arthur Conan Doyle, himself a physician, created the modern genre of mystery fiction just at the time science had begun seriously to influence medicine.

Discoverers of creative solutions

Unfortunately, the rational, scientific approach used in both detective fiction and diagnosis is also a source of serious distortion, described by Dorothy Sayers in her extraordinary essay, “Problem Picture” ⁽³⁾. Detective fiction writers, she notes, are bound by a rigid canon of “the mathematical or detective problem,” i.e., that the detective problem is 1) always soluble (i.e., constructed for the express purpose of being solved), 2) completely soluble

(i.e., no loose ends), 3) solved in the same terms in which it is set (i.e., without stepping outside its terms of reference), and 4) finite (i.e., when it is solved, there is an end to it). But at the same time, careless use of the words “problem” and “solution” leads to distorted ways of thinking about problems, like real diseases in real patients, that don't fit this narrow, artificial mold. As Ms. Sayers puts it: “We continue to hug the delusion that all ill-health is caused by some single, definite disease, for which there ought to be a single, definite and complete cure without unfortunate after-effects. We think of our illness as a kind of cross-word *of which the answer is known to somebody*: the complete solution must be *there*, somewhere; it is the doctor's business to discover and apply it.

“But the physician is not solving a cross-word: he is performing a delicate, adventurous and experimental creative act, of which the patient's body is the material, and to which the creative co-operation of the patient's will is necessary. He is not rediscovering a state of health, temporarily obscured; he is remaking it, or rather, helping it to remake itself.”

The lesson here is that medicine is not a candidate for membership in the “Detection Club,” where the terms of the problem must never be violated. Medicine (like life) usually sets its problems in terms, which must be altered if the problem is to be dealt with at all.

(Mystery/Medicine, Continued on Page 9)

(Spotlight Author, Continued from Page 6)

MM: Are you a home chef, or do you leave that particular "science" to your wife?

DC: I love to cook and I enjoy cooking with my wife as well. She's a great cook.

MM: Do you play any sports? What sports do you enjoy watching and who are your favorite teams?

DC: I used to play at golf. Haven't in a long time. I like football and I'm a Green Bay Packers fan. I also like the New York Yankees.

MM: Are you a collector?

DC: I have a collection of old milk bottles and skulls (Human—know anyone who'd like to donate theirs?)

MM: What is your dream car? Are you driving it now?

DC: I use to be the navigator in road rallies in a Ferrari. I'd love to own one. Next to that—a Honda van and Pilot. I have both of them, complete with nav systems, GPS and built-in movies.

MM: If you could wish for anything, what would you wish for?

DC: I'd love more money and a second home in California but I'd definitely keep my first and primary home here in Texas! I'd like to travel more I guess.

MM: Where can readers find a copy of your books?

DC: *Left at Georgetown* is at Barnes and Noble—West Lake, Hill Country Books in Georgetown, and Hastings Books in Round Rock. The poison handbook is at Hill Country Books. West Lake Barnes and Noble may get it. You can go online and get them.



Publisher: L&L Dreamspell
Release date: March 2008
Price \$7.95
ISBN: 978-1-60318-030-6
Distributed by Ingram

Chemist and mystery writer Dr. David Ciambrone has brought his knowledge of poisons to mystery writers. This book is targeted for mystery writers as a reference and guide to poisons that the average criminal or person could obtain and not leave a trail back to him or her. The book uses terminology that is understandable to the general public and not a general medical type reference book.

**Visit Dave Ciambrone at www.davidciambrone.com
or blog with Dave at www.davidciambroen.blogspot.com**

(Mystery/Medicine, Continued from Page 8)

Question: Does the promise, however unrealistic, that diagnosing diseases will be like solving the rigorously defined problems found in detective fiction explain the powerful attraction of medical diagnosis?

Final question: Do real homicide detectives like to read detective fiction?

Frank Davidoff is Editor of Annals of Internal

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