

*Sisters
in
Crime*



Heart of Texas

Chapter

www.HoTXSinC.org

HOTSHOTS!

July 2008

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**Criminal Investigations and
the Mentally Ill**

Mystery Author and
Travis County Sheriff's Detective
Greg Lawson

**Sunday, July 13, 2008
2:00 p.m.**

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

On July 13, Detective Greg Lawson will speak about Criminal Investigation and the Mentally Ill. Greg began his career in law enforcement in 1986. Since then he has been assigned to the Patrol Division, Mental Heath Unit, Lake Patrol, the Underwater Recovery Team, SWAT Team, and as an instructor at the Academy. Greg currently is assigned as a detective in the Major Crimes Unit of the Travis County Sheriff's Department.

Greg is also an author, and his mysteries are infused with his real-life work experiences. He writes bizarre law enforcement thrillers including **The DisOrient Express** and **The Carrion**. Greg lives with his wife in Georgetown.

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

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

Upcoming Chapter Programs

(For more program previews, please turn to Page 2)

August 10 - George Wilhite, Texas Mystery Author, *Texas Rodeo Murder*, and Chapter Potluck (Indoor Picnic/Potluck at the Ciambrones)

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

October 12 - P. J. Nunn, founder of Breakthrough Promotions, will present a program on *What You Don't Know About Book Promotion*

November 9 - Gary Payne will present a program about the *Capitol City Mystery Players*

December 14 - Author Woody Falgoux will present a program on *The Book Marketing Pyramid: Product, Publicity & Distribution*

January 11 - Orange, TX Chief of Police Sam Kittrell will present *CSI Mayberry: Big city policing in small town America*.

Future Spotlight Member

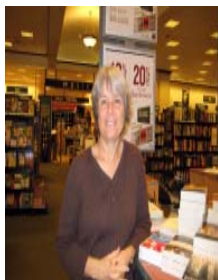
Founder and First Coordinator of TexasMystery Month **Laura Call** will be spotlighted in a future edition of **HOTSHOTS!**



News and Announcements

A time to say hello ... again!

Our good friend **Jo Virgil** has been named Community Relations Manager for the Barnes & Noble Sunset Valley bookstore, 5601 Brodie Lane, Austin, TX 78745.



You can reach Jo at 512.899.3370; by fax at 512.891.0529, and by e-mail at crm2928@bn.com

The Sunset Valley Barnes & Noble Mystery Book Group will meet Tuesday, July 15 - 7:30 PM. This month's title for discussion is *The Collaborator of Bethlehem* by Matt Rees.

Applause, please!



Congratulations to HoTxSinC member **Kaye George**, whose short story, *Retransformation*, won first place in the *Murder and Mayhem at a Writer's Confab Muse* contest and appears in the Summer 2008 issue of *Mysterical-E* online at mysterical.com.

Please turn to Page 6, to read an excerpt from *Retransformation*.

Out and About with Our Members

Weslynn McCallister
Writing as Jamie Cortland

Thursday, July 3, 2008
Radio interview - The Ken Hudnall Show
KHRO-FM/AM 1650
7:00 p.m. (CDT)



Thursday, July 17
1:00-3:00 p.m.
Signing *Skin Deep*
Barnes and Noble Booksellers #2624
4916 S. Broadway Avenue
Tyler TX

Friday, July 18 - 2:00 p.m.
30-minute television interview
CCTV BOOKS IN REVIEW

Saturday, July 19, 11:00 a.m.
Signing *Skin Deep* at The Bookworm
3245 Main Street, Suite 225, Frisco TX

Dave Ciabrone, Sc.D., FIOF

In June, **Dave Ciabrone, Sc.D.**, led a discussion on poisons at a meeting of the **Los Angeles Chapter of Mystery Writers of America**. In July, he returns to California to speak to the **Sisters In Crime/Orange County Chapter**.

Photograph taken at the MWA meeting in Los Angeles. Left to right: **Dr. Doug Lyle**, author of *Forensics for Dummies*, **Dave Ciabrone, Sc.D.**, and MWA Chapter President **Les Klinger**.



NOTE: The Ciabrones have graciously agreed to host this year's Indoor Picnic Potluck/August Chapter Meeting on August 13.

Directons to the Ciabrone residence and the day code for the gate is available upon request. Please contact Micqui Miller at micquim@earthlink.net.

Please be sure to read Cyber Safety on Page 5 regarding Internet security.

(News and Announcements - Continued from Page 2)

The Georgetown Public Library Writer's College

The Georgetown Public Library and the San Gabriel Writer's League are sponsoring a writer's college this fall. The objectives are to bring experienced published authors to teach the fundamentals of creative writing in various genres, as well as to provide insight into how to write and sell your work. These classes are designed for the novice and for those who have works in progress. The classes will use lectures and writing exercises, and handouts will be provided. Some will be seminar style with work to be assigned and critiqued. The idea is to inspire, teach the "ropes" of the writing process and provide feedback on the students' efforts and work. The classes will be inexpensive and fun.

Faculty includes best selling and award winning authors and HoTxSinC members **Dave Ciambrone, Sc.D, Sylvia Dickey Smith, Joan Upton Hall** and other top authors.

The introductory course, *Everything the Unpublished Writer Needs to Know But Is Afraid to Ask* will be presented on Monday, September 8, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Cost: \$20.00

Other classes will focus on:

Memoir Writing (2-hour class, once a week for 3 weeks)

Historical Nonfiction (2-hour class, once a week for 3 weeks)

Writing the Short Story & Flash Fiction

(2-hour class, once a week for 4 weeks)

Proposal Writing (2-hour class)

Other Elements in Fiction Writing:

Self Editing - The Top Three Strategies

(2-hour class, once a week for 3 weeks)

How to Write a Synopsis (2-hour class)

Marketing for Fun and Profit - To Market To Market (2-hour class)

How to Win Contests & Then What? (2-hour class)

How to Start and Run a Critique Group (2-hour class)

For further information, contact:

Richard Groves, Adult Services Librarian,
Georgetown Public Library, 402 W. 8th Street,
Georgetown, TX or call at 512.931.7620, or
visit the library's website at:
www.library.georgetown.org/



Bookshop HOTSPOTS! returns soon.

Upcoming Chapter Programs

(Continued from Page 1)

February 8 - Renowned Forensic Artist

Lois Gibson, named in the Guinness Book of Records as the World's Most Successful Forensic Artist.

March 8 - Author **Vallie Fletcher Taylor** will present *Putting the Paranormal in Your Mysteries*.

April 12 - Author **Micqui Miller** will lead a panel discussion on e-books, entitled, *Go Green! Read (or Write) an e-Mystery and Save a Tree!*

2009 Texas Mystery Month

May 10 - T.B.D.

May 17 - **Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event**

June 14 - HoTxSinC Member **Marcia Spillers**

Make the Summer Sizzle with Mystery and Comedy at Spaghetti Warehouse!

The **Capital City Mystery Players**, who will present a program to the Sisters in Crime/Heart of Texas Chapter in November, invite you to join them at Spaghetti Warehouse for another comedy whodunit with dinner.

The show is *The Linguini Code*, a wild and wacky romp that includes riddles, a murder and more. You'll laugh yourself silly while enjoying a delicious three course Italian meal.

Show dates are June 14 & 28 and July 12 & 26. The evening starts at 7 and the price for dinner AND show is still only \$29.95 per person, plus tax and gratuity. For reservations, call 512.404.9123.

The Reason for First Writing Short Stories

By Earl Staggs

Presented May 11, 2008 at the regular meeting of the Sisters in Crime/Heart of Texas Chapter

Reported by Kaye George

If you missed the regular meeting of the Sisters in Crime/Heart of Texas Chapter on Sunday, May 11, you missed an excellent presentation by mystery author Earl Staggs. Do not despair! HoTxSinC member **Kaye George** has graciously provided us with this indepth summary of Mr. Staggs's presentation.

Earl Staggs, former editor of *Futures Mystery Anthology Magazine*, former President of the Short Mystery Fiction Society, Derringer Award winner, insurance salesman, peddler of business forms, and Merle Norman consultant (really!), and – most importantly – writer, spoke to the Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter about the benefits to a novel writer of pursuing short stories.

He first addressed the difference between a novel and short story. A novel is bigger, he says. He went on to explain this. A novel is not only longer, it has more characters, more plot lines, and a larger story.

Earl himself started out writing short stories and thinks they can help to train a person to write a novel. He outlined six reasons for writing short stories, or six benefits to be derived from doing so.

(1) It can be a way of getting to know your characters. He pointed out that you don't really get to know people until you've lived with them. You can put them into short stories and develop them that way.

(2) The short story allows a writer to experiment with different styles. Maybe, through doing this, you will find a better fit. It's like dating, he said. You try out different styles until you find that special one. Elmore Leonard describes his own unique style (which isn't for everyone, of course): he leaves out the parts no one reads. In other words, he's short on description and narrative. Other writers put in lots of description. Different styles work for different people and everyone has to find his or her own.



Earl Skaggs holding his novel,
Memory of the Murder
photo by Kaye George

(3) You can also try out different genres, saving the time of writing a whole novel. If you find that a particular genre is not for you, you haven't wasted so much time if you've only written a short story in it.

(4) It's a good way to build publishing credits since there are quite a few places to publish short stories. Many of them don't pay, but someone has to approve your story before it's put into the magazine, which lends credibility. These are good credits to put at the bottom of your query letter for your novel.

(5) Getting short stories published gets your name out there. If someone has seen and liked a story of yours, they'll probably buy your book, too.

(6) This is the one he made us wait for: Let the Fat Lady sing. This is the most important reason to work on short stories, Earl says. He explained it like this: a book takes months and months (at least) to write; a short story, maybe a month at the most. Writing a novel, the Fat Lady will have little sisters before you hear her sing, but she'll peek from behind a comma in a short story. You can hear her sing every month or two. Writing a novel, the Fat Lady will have little sisters before you hear her sing, but she'll peek from behind a comma and belt out a tune when you finish a short story, too. You can hear her sing every month or two. Writing novels, you only hear her every year or two.

For those who have trouble writing short stories, Earl had this advice. Recognize that the novel, as he said in the beginning, is bigger. Not just in words or pages, but also in story. He took a plot as an example and demonstrated how to outline it as both a short story and a novel.



Cyber Safety **By Wendy Lyn Watson**

(This article first appeared originally in the July edition of the North Texas Chapter/Romance Writers of American newsletter. Reprinted with permission from the author.)

Many authors—particularly those who are e-published—use websites, message boards, blogs, and chat rooms to build relationships with other writers and readers. A web-presence is a great asset, but it can also leave us open to cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking.

Cyber-Stalking: A Serious Threat

Once upon a time, I considered cyber-stalking a sort of nuisance crime. Unwanted e-mails? Just delete them. Harassing posts on a message board? Ask the site administrator to intervene. Small problems with easy fixes.

Then, while I was working in the federal court system, I sat in on the first prosecution under the federal cyber-stalking statute. I won't get into the grizzly details here, but the defendant's behavior escalated from online abuse to letters and e-mail. When he was arrested, authorities found evidence suggesting he intended to show up at the victim's house. Suffice it to say the hell the defendant put his victim and her family through left the jury shaken and concerned for their own safety. The victim's daughter had to change her name before starting college, and the victim's family felt compelled to sell their house and start over in another state.

That case was extreme, but it brought home to me that cyber-stalking and harassment could be every bit as serious as the "regular" kind. Most states and the federal government have criminal statutes prohibiting cyber-stalking and cyber-harassment. However, a prosecution and conviction will be cold comfort after you've been victimized.

Since watching that horrific trial, I have tried to protect myself as best I can while still enjoying the social and marketing opportunity the web provides. Some "best practices" are not feasible for those of us who use the Internet as a marketing tool; for example, in an ideal world, we would use gender-neutral screen names instead of our actual names when we're online. Still, there are some safety precautions we can take to reduce our risk of victimization.

(See Cyber Safety - Continued on Page 6)

Retransformation **By Kaye George**

Following is an excerpt from **Kaye George's** winning entry, *Retransformation*, a humorous werewolf story.

The contest was sponsored by *Mysterical-E*, and comes out four times a year. They often run theme-based contests. This contest was for this year's summer's issue and titled, *Mayhem and Murder at a Writer's Confab*. This is Kaye's second story for *Mysterical-E*.

She had entered one of their previous contests, a story with a Bloody Groundhog Day theme. The judges did not select her story, but the editor, Joe DeMarco and "some of the others" liked it so much, he published it in the next issue. Kaye adds that this also prompted *Mysterical-E* to institute Honorable Mentions, which they now list along with the three contests winners.

"They are open to other stories, of course," Kaye says. "I find I like to write for themed contests. It gives me something to think about I probably wouldn't have come up with on my own."

An Excerpt from **Retransformation** **By Kaye George**

Isabel Musik, former werewolf, knew she had to be on the right scent. Her nose was still keen even though she could not transform anymore.

There was no mistaking the odor that hung around that woman three stools away. Isabel eyed her, giving nothing away with her quick glance; a good-looking woman, with a mane of dark curly hair worn loose and to her shoulders. But the musk clung to her like dog hair on wool slacks.

Her name was Alice Jolie and she was the most famous author at the conference, since her last three children's books had hit number one on the New York Times list. Soon, Isabel knew, she wouldn't be doing these conferences. She would be charging whatever she wanted, wherever she wanted to go. Cruises, seminars in Hawaii, whatever....

(See Retransformation - Continued on Page 6)



(Cyber Safety - Continued from Page 5)

Cyber-Safety Tips

(1) Do not give out any personal information on public message boards or web pages. Your chapter's message board or the members-only section of its website may be reasonably safe, but do not post your address or phone number on public loops or on your website.

(2) Do not post your children's names or pictures anywhere. Ever. It may seem like a great way to bond with potential readers, and you make real friends on the web—people you want to share your life with. But your children's pictures can be manipulated into some nasty stuff, and the scariest folks on the web have an unnatural interest in little kids.

(3) Don't respond to aggressive or harassing e-mails or message posts. Even efforts to smooth over ruffled feathers or respond reasonably to anger may escalate the situation; remember, people who are inclined to stalking behavior are, by definition, not rational. At a minimum, a response will engage the individual and may be seen as an invitation to continue a relationship.

(4) On occasion, use a search engine to search for your own name. If your name is common, search on name/city and on name/phone number. If a stalker has posted false information or pictures on the web with the intent of provoking others into contacting you, your name and either your address or phone number will likely be posted along with it.

(5) Even if you write erotic romance, avoid flirtatious or seductive posts. You may understand that it's not real, that you're just playing a part, but (again) disturbed people aren't rational. Avoid the suggestion that your work arouses you personally, or that you enjoy particular sexual activities. A general statement made to the world at large may be construed by a would-be stalker as an invitation.

(6) Remember that online communication lacks the sort of contextual cues we routinely rely upon to give our exchanges meaning. You tell a joke at a party, and people laugh. You post the same joke on a message board, and the readers—who don't have the benefit of your body language, your tone of voice, your smile—may be highly offended. Keep that in mind when you are posting or e-mailing.

(7) By the same token, remember that the person on the other end of the ether may be misrepresenting himself or herself to you. You get an e-mail from a friendly soccer mom who tells you about her husband's snoring, and you plan to shoot back a saucy response. Would your response be different if you were e-mailing a middle-aged man who lived in his mother's basement? Then think twice about sending it.

Wendy Lyn Watson, a member of North Texas Romance Writers and Dallas Area Romance Authors, is not usually so serious. She writes comedic cozy mysteries . . . because what could be funnier than murder? And despite her concern for cyber-safety, she maintains a web presence at www.wendylynwatson.com. You can e-mail Wendy at wendylynwatson@gmail.com.

(Retransformation - Continued from Page 5)

Alice spoke softly, but not so low Isabel couldn't hear. "It's getting awfully late. Why don't we go up to my room? I could show you some things."

The young man said he'd like that. Isabel saw them as far as the elevator, but she couldn't very well follow them into the hotel room. She hoped the guy made it through the night.

Nothing could touch Alice Jolie this afternoon. She was satisfied, sated. Her panel had gone well and people were lined up in the signing room fifteen deep for her signature. Alice signed with her usual flourish, put on her Famous Author Smile, and handed a copy of *Wally Visits the Zoo* to the shy girl. A mother pushed her pudgy little son forward and he thrust a copy of *Wally Goes to the Dentist*, her newest, at her.

"Say please," urged the mother

The boy murmured something that may have been "Please."

"That's all right." Alice Jolie gave the little doughball her Understanding Author Smile and opened the book.

~*~

(Earl Staggs - Continued from Page 4)

The basic plot: Bill Brown calls 911 because his wife has been murdered. The detective investigates. Bill is the #1 suspect. He has an alibi, but the detective breaks it and nails Bill.

A short story doesn't need to know why he's a murderer. It needs a crime, a solution, and to put the bad guy away. You don't need to know much about the victim. She had an affair with the neighbor, but you don't need to know why. You do have to develop the protagonist to a degree. You have to make people like the detective, otherwise they won't want to read about him. You need a crime, a hero, an investigation, and an ending.

As a novel, this story would have the same plot, but the characters would need to be three-dimensional. The novel would explore the killer and the victim. Their lives and their baggage become subplots. For instance, why would Bill Brown suddenly murder his wife when he could have divorced her for having an affair? He has a business that is on the skids. Plus a domineering mother. Now he has failed both his mother and his wife. Maybe he's striking out at his mother, taking it out on his wife.

The victim, Betty Brown, is a soccer mom and PTA president. Why would she fool around with the neighbor? Bill has been neglecting her, spending long hours at his failing business, and she needs intimacy.

Betty's lover is Steve, but Steve suspects Betty is about to end their affair. His wife, Sally, has just found out about it. That makes them suspects also.

Bill and Betty have a seventeen-year-old daughter, Brittany, a Goth dresser who is also being neglected by Dad. She is the key to his alibi. The detective feels sorry for Brittany and wants to help her. He feels responsible. Why? He himself has been spending too much time at work and neglecting his own fourteen-year-old daughter. His daughter has been blaming him of neglect, in fact.

Now the story is bigger and the characters are bigger. The writer must bring all the subplots together for the ending. How to do this? Bill is going to jail. Betty is dead. Brittany has been helped by the detective and is off the streets. The detective sees from Brittany that he could have done better for his own family. He, the protagonist, has learned and changed.

Some of Earl's work: a short story called, *The Missing Sniper*, about Adam Kingston, a former FBI agent. Earl's novel, *Memory of the Murder*, has been re-released.

Earl writes a short story in about a month. He works on it for a week, then puts it away for two weeks. He then revises and gives it one more pass. A few of his favorite writers are O. Henry, Lawrence Block, and Mark Troy, who was present at the meeting. He also introduced his wife Carol who accompanied him to the meeting.

Some questions and discussion followed.



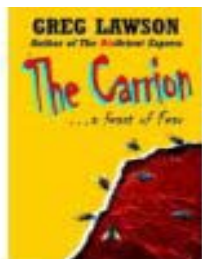
**FRIDAY,
JULY 25, 2008**
is the deadline for News,
Announcements and
Submissions for the
AUGUST 2008 edition of
HOTSHOTS!

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.

CARRION

By Greg Lawson



Publisher: AuthorHouse
Release date: February 2005
ISBN-10: 1418498475
ISBN-13: 978-1418498474
Hardcover: 316 pages

From Greg Lawson, the author of *The DisOrient Express*, comes another bizarre law enforcement thriller: *The Carrion*.

After working as a police officer in Austin, Texas, Brett Blackburn trades in his police shield for a sheriff's star. Returning to his hometown, Brett hires on as a sheriff's deputy and tries to adjust to the small-town, slower paced police work. What he hadn't realized was that going back home meant confronting the past. Everyone's past. As Brett falls into the routine of rural law enforcement, he has the opportunity to see the community through an outsider's eyes. During the course of a few months, Brett responds to a series of strange investigations, all of which seem to have the same three things in common: Dr. William Clayton, the University Extension Service Dean of Veterinary Medicine, Natureszyme Feed Products, and *The Carrion* they produce

Three years ago, Naturalzyme Incorporated released their first generation animal feed and water-conditioning products. With the help of Dr. William Clayton, the University Extension Service Dean of Veterinary Medicine, the Naturalzyme field-control test animals passed all USDA and FDA regulations on their initial trial. What Dr. Clayton didn't count on was a combination of three contributing factors: the unique Naturalzyme feed and watering compounds, the local slaughtering process, and irradiation of the packaged meat. These three things create *The Carrion*.

The Carrion is a disturbing tale of human manipulation and biological mutation revealing the startling similarities that all living organisms share, predator as well as prey.

THE DISORIENT EXPRESS

By Greg Lawson



Publisher: Authorhouse
Release date: February 2004
ISBN-10: 1414021542
ISBN-13: 978-1414021546
Paperback: 244 pages

Disorient Express: A bird's eye view of real police work. Mental Health Officers are the street officer's last resort to bring help to the social outcasts of our society. Mr. Lawson's book vividly describes the looks, smells, surroundings and gallows humor that enforcement officers work in everyday.

Most mental health professionals don't get a chance to work with their patients in their natural surroundings. Surroundings that are usually squalid and potentially lethal.

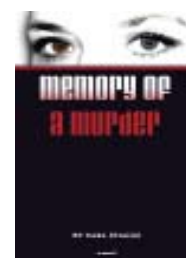
I am looking forward to Mr. Lawson's next publication. After thirty years in law enforcement I enjoyed reading a COP book that was realistic and tells it the way it is.

*Jamie R. Page, Lieutenant
Travis County Sheriff's Department
Austin TX*

MEMORY OF A MURDER

By Earl Staggs

Published by: Cornell
Maritime Press/Tidewater
Publications
Release date: 2008
ISBN 978-0-87035-604-1



Paperback: 208 pages
Price: \$13.95 USD

After a near-fatal accident, Adam Kingston, a former FBI profiler, develops psychic powers that allow him to "see" things most people can't.

A killer is leaving a trail of terror and death from Baltimore to Ocean City, and only Adam Kingston can stop him.

Only Adam can "see" what really happened, but will his visions lead him to the killer or will his gift lead him to his death?