

*Sisters
in
Crime*



Heart of Texas
Chapter
www.HoTXSinC.org

HOTSHOTS!
May 2008

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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

2008 Texas Mystery Month

Sunday, May 11, 2008

2:00 p.m.

Meet Mystery Author

Earl Staggs

The Reasons for First Writing Short Stories

Sunday, May 18, 2008

2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Fourth Annual Barbara Burnett Smith

Aspiring Writers Event

and Presentation of the

2008 Sage Award

to

David Ciambrone, D.Sc.

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

For details about these meetings and other
Texas Mystery Month events, please turn to Page 2.

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

Upcoming Chapter Programs

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*

For more program previews, please turn to Page 3.

Sunday, May 11, 2008

2:00 p.m.

Meet Mystery Author

Earl Staggs



In honor of Texas Mystery Month, we are hosting two meetings. The first is Sunday, May 11, at 2:00 p.m., when our special guest speaker will be Earl Staggs.

Mr. Staggs will answer the ages-old questions: *“What are the differences between writing short stories and novels and why an aspiring novelist should write short stories first.”*

“Since I write short stories as well as novel length,” Staggs says, “I’ve been asked, ‘What’s the difference between them?’ I always respond, ‘One’s bigger than the other.’ That usually gets a chuckle, but I don’t mean simply bigger in number of words and pages. I mean bigger in the amount of story being told.

“To illustrate this, I like to take a single incident and plot it out both as a short story and as a novel. Since we’re mystery writers, let’s make the incident the finding of a homicide victim. In both formats, the protagonist, the victim, and the killer will be the same. The short story will be totally complete and satisfying at 4,000 words, and the novel length version of the same story will be complete and satisfying at 70,000 words.

“When we’ve finished the exercise, if anyone ever asks you, ‘What’s the difference between a short story and a novel?’ you’ll be able to say with a straight face and in all seriousness, ‘One’s bigger than the other.’

“After that, we’ll talk about the six BIG reasons why EVERY novelist SHOULD write short stories.”

About Earl Staggs

Earl Staggs spent most of his life in Maryland and working as a salesman. When he and his wife gave up the cold winters of the north and moved south – first to Florida and now in Fort Worth – he decided to try something he’d always dreamed of. He wanted to be a fiction writer. That was in 1995, and the first step was to join a class at the local community college in Gainesville, Florida. The class happened to be about writing short mystery stories, so that’s where he started. And that’s where he stayed. No, not in Florida, but in short mystery stories.

Over the next few years, his stories appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies. One of them brought home a Derringer Award in 2002 as Best Short Mystery of the Year.

He joined the Short Mystery Fiction Society and served as its Vice President, then President. He also served as Managing Editor of Futures Mystery Anthology Magazine, a role he feels was a great help in developing his own writing abilities.

After honing his skills with short stories, Earl wrote a mystery novel, *Memory of a Murder*, which was first published in 2005. The protagonist in the novel, Adam Kingston, first saw life in a short story Earl began writing in that writing class in Florida ten years before. *Memory of a Murder* is now available in a second edition.

Earl still loves short stories and plans to continue writing them in addition to continuing the Adam Kingston novels. He also has a standalone thriller in the works. He welcomes comments and questions at: earlstaggs@sbcglobal.net

Please see Page 17 to read more about *Memory of a Murder*.

Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event **Sunday, May 18, 2008**

2:00 p.m.

Laura Call, Founder and First Coordinator for Texas Mystery Month, will be recognized for her contributions in showcasing Texas Mystery Authors. As President of Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter in 1999, Laura surveyed member authors to see how the Chapter could help. Texas Mystery Month is the result.

Dr. David Ciambrone, D.Sc., will be honored by



The Barbara Burnett Smith Mentoring Authors Foundation and presented with the Second Annual Sage Award in recognition of his outstanding spirit of service in mentoring, sharing and leading others in the mystery writing community.

Following the presentation of his award, Dr. Ciambrone will offer the Keynote Speech.

The event will continue with “Murder in Four Parts,” ‘Best Worst First Lines of a Mystery,’ and the introduction of the Mentor Authors and Aspiring Writers participating in this year’s Annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Project.

At the conclusion of their introductions, each Mentor Author will meet one on one with his/her Aspiring Writers.



News and Announcements

No place like home!

Congratulations go to **Sylvia Dickey Smith**, who was asked to submit an article to the new Greater Orange (TX) Chamber of Commerce for inclusion in a magazine they will use in their new marketing campaign. The title of her article is "Falling In Love All Over Again."

The article discusses how she happened to choose Orange as the setting of her Sidra Smart mystery series, and how, in her research, she learned more about her home town than she'd ever discovered before, and how her research led her to fall in love with the town all over again.

Austin: A Place of Healing by Marcia Spillers

On April 6, 2008, one of our HOTXSIC members, **Marcia Spillers**, was featured in the Austin American Statesman in the Insight section, under Tales of the City. Marcia wrote an essay titled, **Austin: A Place of Healing**, which chronicled her life after moving to Austin from Fort Lauderdale, Florida after her husband, Al, died in 2002 from lung cancer. The article can be found by going to Statesman.com and searching the archives for Austin: A Place to Heal.

Marcia is currently finishing up her first mystery novel, *Deadly Heart of Palms*, which takes place in Key West, Florida.

She has been a member of HOTXSINC since 2004, and is presenting a workshop in May for Texas Mystery Month, *Writing a Mystery Novel using Screenwriting Techniques*.

Hardboiled Heroes & Cozy Cats

Sylvia Dickey Smith will be a presenter at **Hardboiled Heroes & Cozy Cats** in Dallas, June 13 and 14. Her breakout session is on *Setting: Capturing the Flavor*. She will also be a panelist for a session titled *Writing the Female Sleuth*.

Hardboiled Heroes & Cozy Cats is the Southwest Chapter of Mystery Writers of America. This year, they will hold their conference in Dallas, June 13 and 14.

Jeffrey Marks will be the Keynote Speaker; Jan Burke, the Guest of Honor and featured speaker. There will be a number of speakers and panels designed to polish the craft of aspiring writers and published authors alike.

The basic registration fee is \$125 for MWA members, \$135 for non-members. That includes Friday lunch, Saturday lunch and the program booklet. The conference hotel is the Holiday Inn Select-North Dallas. For more information, visit <http://www.mwasw.org/conf.html>.

SBCT Playwriting Contest

Sam Bass Community Theatre is soliciting submissions of original full-length plays.

Submissions will be reviewed by a committee of experienced SBCT directors. The six finalists will each receive a two-performance reading open to the public.

The winning play will receive a fully mounted production during SBCT's 2008-09 season. Submissions must be previously unproduced to be considered. See the SBCT website for details.

Send your plays to: Frank Benge, P.O. Box 767, Round Rock, TX 78680

Deadline: *May 31*.

www.sambasstheatre.org

Upcoming Chapter Programs

(Continued from Page 1)

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 Falgoust** will present a program on **The Book Marketing Pyramid: Product, Publicity & Distribution**

January 11, 2009 - Orange, TX Chief of Police **Sam Kittrell** will present a program titled, **CSI Mayberry: Big city policing in small town America**

February 8, 2009 - Renowned Forensic Artist **Lois Gibson**, named in the Guinness Book of Records as the World's Most Successful Forensic Artist.

We are pleased to launch a new series of spotlight articles in **HOTSHOTS!** known as **Bookshop HOTSPOTS!** Each issue will profile a bookseller in Central Texas and their thoughts and support of mystery fiction and members of Sisters in Crime. We begin the series with our good friends, the **Barnes & Noble bookstore at The Village at Westlake**, and **Jo Virgil, Community Relations Manager**.



Jo Virgil
Community Relations Manager
Barnes & Noble Bookstore
Village at Westlake

Following the last chapter meeting, I had the pleasure of visiting with Jo. Not only is she wonderfully supportive of Sisters and Crime and the Heart of Texas Chapter, she shared details of an exciting new writing project of her own.

MM: *Jo, we've seen that CRM designation beside your name. What are the duties of a CRM, and do you really work 24/7, or does it just seem so?*

JV: CRM stands for Community Relations Manager. It's part public relations, part marketing, and means that generally I'm the "go to gal." I work with the schools and public libraries and I coordinate all of the in-store special events. I especially enjoy working with local authors.

Smiling she added, "And no I don't work twenty-four/seven. Sometimes it just seems that way."

MM: *How long have you held this position?*

JV: I've been here for eight-and-a-half years. This store has been here for about 12, so even though there's a lot of new development around us, we've been a part of this community for quite some time.

MM: *How would you characterize B & N's corporate philosophy about their place in the community.*

JV: Being a good neighbor is a very high priority for us. We're very supportive of our local authors; we participate in community events, like those sponsored by the public schools and libraries. We like to feature new work by local authors, and we make sure that when a customer comes in, she'll have her questions answered by a knowledgeable staff member. We insist that our staff is not only familiar with our inventory, but can make suggestions for other books our customers might enjoy. We never want to be known only as a retail outlet where the sales staff knows nothing more about our books, or the books customers are looking for, than what they find on the computer. We like to think of ourselves as an integral part of Westlake and plan to stay that way.



MM: *Did you have a background in book sales when you took this job?*

JV: I have a Master's in Journalism, and was working as a freelance reporter for the Fort Worth Star Telegram when I met the woman who had this position in my local Barnes & Noble. I always thought it would be a terrific job. When my husband and I moved to Austin, I learned the position had just become available here at this store.

Laughing this time, she said, "I was new in town and got so lost. I kept looking for the store and at one point wondered if they'd given me a fake address. Now I make sure to tell everyone who calls for directions to look for the pink flamingos on the corner."

MM: *And we're awfully glad you found your way. You've been so generous with us and with our members. How would you gauge mystery fiction's popularity among your customers?*

JV: Popular fiction ranks first, and then probably children's fiction and non-fiction. We don't do a lot of events for the kids simply because Westlake kids tend to be very busy with extracurricular activities. Mystery is right up there with general fiction and science fiction. Romance sells well, but for some reason romance events aren't terribly successful. Mystery events always are.

MM: *Who are some of your best selling mystery authors? Some of our members, I hope.*

JV: Karen MacInerney, of course. Ben Rehder grew up in this area, and Susan Wittig Albert, to name a few.

(Bookshop Hotspots! - Continued from Page 4)

MM: *What about Jo Virgil, the person, not just Jo Virgil, CRM?*

JV: I'm an avid reader, and I'm also a writer. Along with my Master's in Journalism, I minored in Environmental Sciences, and am almost finished with a non-fiction project I've titled, *Rock, Water, Sky, Green: What Nature Tells Us About Our Friends*.

MM: *You've piqued my curiosity, please tell us more about it.*

JV: This really builds on my interest in the environmental sciences as well as my experience as a journalist, and life experience as well. I discovered over the years that you can tell a lot about people by the elements they gravitate toward.

For example, if I asked you to describe your dream vacation, and you said a weekend at the ocean or the Gulf, I'd know you were one of the Water people. My book describes the traits and characteristics of each group. For instance, we know that Water people are very goal-oriented and project driven, but when they take time away from work, they are able to relax and let go.

Rock people are strong emotionally and physically, but they're also emotionally cautious. Sky people tend to be more spiritual and more keyed into mysticism. And Green people, more nurturing and family oriented. It's amazing how true our choices reflect our character.

MM: *This book sounds like a best seller in the making. How much longer until we see it in print?*

JV: I hope to have it completed by the end of April, and I have an agent waiting for it. I'm very excited about it.

MM: *And so are we, Jo. We wish you great success, and look forward to the day we're invited to attend your signing!*



Jo checks the inventory to make sure she has more of Sylvia's books!



Jo helps Sylvia find her book on the shelf!



Sylvia signs a copy of her book for Susan Toalson



Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Village at Westlake
Mystery Selection

Jo Virgil, Community Relations Manager and
Author Sylvia Dickey Smith

At April's meeting

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



(Could that serpent on the wall behind Dave be shopping for a new poison for his apple?)

Presenter
David Ciambrone, D.Sc.
and his
Chart of Poisons



Celebrate Texas Mystery Month with Sisters in Crime

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 and San Antonio are joining Austin in celebrating Texas Mystery Month in May. Below is the current calendar of events.

Saturday, May 3 – 2:00 p.m.

Laura Griffin, Signing, author of *One Wrong Step* 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 – 2:00 p.m.

Earl Staggs, HoTxSinC Program

Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Village at Westlake-Austin, 701 S. Capital of Texas Highway, #P860 512.328.3155

For more information, visit: hotxsinc@yahoo.com

Wednesday, May 14 – 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

How to Write a Mystery: Session One – presented by **David Ciambrone, Sc.D.**

Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Village at Westlake-Austin, 701 S. Capital of Texas Highway, #P860 512.328.3155

Thursday, May 15 – 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

How to Write a Mystery: Session Two – presented by **David Ciambrone, Sc.D.**

Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Village at Westlake-Austin, 701 S. Capital of Texas Highway, #P860 512.328.3155

Thursday, May 15 – 6:30 p.m.

Ben Rehder signing

Murder by the Book, 2342 Bissonnet St., Houston 713.524.8597/888.4.AGATHA

Order@murderbooks.com or www.murderbooks.com

Friday, May 16 – 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

How to Write a Mystery: Session Three – presented by **David Ciambrone, Sc.D.**

Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Village at Westlake-Austin, 701 S. Capital of Texas Highway, #P860 512.328.3155

Saturday, May 17 – 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Writing a Mystery Novel using Screenwriting Techniques – presented by **Marcia Spillers**

Recommended reading: *Writing for Emotional Impact* by Karl Iglesias.

Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Village at Westlake-Austin, 701 S. Capital of Texas Highway, #P860 512.328.3155

Saturday, May 17 – 2:00 p.m.

Dave Ciambrone & Sylvia Dickey Smith, Signing

Barnes & Noble Northwoods San Antonio 18030 Hwy 281 N, Suite 140 San Antonio 210.490.0937 or crm2927@bn.com

Saturday, May 17 – Time: T.B.A.

Rick Riordan Signing

Murder by the Book, 2342 Bissonnet St., Houston, 713.524.8597/888.4.AGATHA

Order@murderbooks.com or www.murderbooks.com

Sunday, May 18 – 2:00-5:00 p.m.

Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event

Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Village at Westlake-Austin, 701 S. Capital of Texas Highway, #P860 512.328.3155

Thursday, May 22 – 5:30 p.m.

Karen Hanson Stuyck, signing her new novel, *A Novel Way to Die* (Five Star)

Murder by the Book, 2342 Bissonnet St., Houston, 713.524.8597/888.4.AGATHA

Order@murderbooks.com or www.murderbooks.com

Friday, May 23 - 7:00 p.m.

Jamie Cortland (Weslynn McCallister) signing *Skin Deep*

Barnes & Noble Hill Country Galleria, RR 620 & Hwy 71, Austin, Stina Hill, Community Relations Manager, 512.263.2406

Saturday May 24 – 4:30 p.m.

What comes first? Panel with Sisters in Crime Final Twist Chapter

Murder by the Book, 2342 Bissonnet St., Houston, 713.524.8597/888.4.AGATHA

Order@murderbooks.com or www.murderbooks.com



2008 Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event

Sunday, May 18, 2008

2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

at the

Barnes & Noble Bookstore

In The Village at Westlake Shopping Center

Welcome

Sarah Ann Robertson

2008 Texas Mystery Month Coordinator

Recognition of

Laura Call

Founder and First Coordinator

Texas Mystery Month

Sarah Ann Robertson

Presentation of SAGE Award

Barbara Burnett Smith Mentoring Authors Foundation

to

David Ciambrone, D. Sc.

Gary Petry and W.D. Smith

Keynote Address

Mentoring: It's a Tough Job But Somebody's Got to Do It!

David Ciambrone, D. Sc.

Murder in Four Parts

Judy Egner

With Kimberly Sandman, Vallie Fletcher Taylor, Russ Hall

Introduction of Esteemed Mentor Authors and Valued Aspiring Writers

Mentor Author

Aspiring Mystery Writer

Greg Lawson

Julie Speaker

Karen Swartz MacInerney

Robin Allen

Weslynn McCallister

Dolores Sullivan

Micqui Miller

Kathy Waller

Peary Perry

Sharon Richardson

Jack Rosshirt

Jaime Lynn Roton

Vallie Fletcher Taylor

Amber Novak

Best Worst First Lines of a Mystery Story

Refreshments and Book Signing

Mentor Author/Aspiring Writer One to One Consultations

Closing

Sarah Ann Robertson

**Meet the Mentor Authors and Aspiring Writers of the
Fourth Annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event**

Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter is pleased to announce the Texas Mystery Month Mentor Authors and Aspiring Writers.

In May, as part of Texas Mystery Month, seven Mentor Authors will honor the late mystery writer Barbara Burnett Smith by volunteering their time and expertise to help Aspiring Mystery Writers.

The mentoring will culminate at the fourth annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event (BBSAWE) to be held at the Barnes & Noble Westlake (701 Capital of Texas Highway South, at Bee Cave Rd., in Austin) on Sunday, May 18, 2008, 2:00-5:00 p.m.

Mentor Author: Karen Swartz MacInerney

Karen is the author of the Agatha-nominated *Gray Whale Inn* mystery series and the creator of *Tales of an Urban Werewolf*, a new paranormal trilogy that debuted in February from Ballantine. The first book in the Tales trilogy, *Howling at the Moon*, is currently in bookstores; the second installment, *On the Prowl*, will be on the shelves in November along with *Murder Most Maine*, the third book of the *Gray Whale Inn* mysteries.



Karen also co-authored *Beads of Doubt* with her mentor, the late Barbara Burnett Smith, and was the recipient of the 2007 SAGE Award for Mentoring Authors. When she's not at her favorite coffee shop working on her next novel, Karen often teaches workshops on writing and publishing. You can find her online at www.karenmacinerney.com.

For more about Karen's book, please see Page 16.

Aspiring Writer: Robin Allen

Robin is a writer, copy editor, yoga instructor, knitter, and barista. Her flash fictions have placed or been honorably mentioned in many fiction contests.



Her essays have been published in both national and regional publications, including *Texas Co-op Power*, *flashquake*, *WritersWeekly.com*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *WRITERS' Journal*. Her essay, "The Things He Didn't Carry," was awarded third place in *The Writer Magazine's* 2006 Short Memoir Contest.

And her mystery novel, *If You Can't Stand the Heat*, was awarded first place in the Mystery category of the Writers' League of Texas' 2007 Manuscript Contest.

***If You Can't Stand the Heat*
By Robin Allen**

When world-famous chef Évariste Bontecou is found dead at a party to celebrate his Texas debut at Markham's Steakhouse, public health inspector Poppy Markham is mired in suspects and motives ranging from simple jealousy to multi-million dollar real estate deals.

After Poppy gave up her job as head chef of her father's restaurant, her spoiled stepsister, Ursula York, took over. Because it's Ursula's knife sticking out of Évariste's chest, Ursula is arrested for murder.

With her father in the hospital with heart problems and Ursula in jail, it's up to Poppy to prove Ursula's innocence and save the family business.

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued on Page 9)

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued from Page 8)

Mentor Author: Micqui Miller

Micqui wrote her first novel at 12, and earned her first byline as a sports writer for a local Detroit newspaper at 15. Since that time, she has published more than 100 articles and short stories and three novels.



She won the prestigious Golden Heart from Romance Writers of America for her first novel, *The Killing Hour*, and “the silver” in 2003 as Best New Author for her novel *Morning Star*, recently re-released by Cerridwen Press.

Another of Micqui’s current releases, *Sweet Caroline*, is the forerunner to the *Caroline Spring Mystery Series*. The first book of the series is “A” *Is for Avatar*.

On February 1, 2008, Micqui signed a contract for the adaptation of *Sweet Caroline* into a screenplay by Hollywood screenwriter/producer Dan Gaurdino, and Rolling Seas Productions.

Micqui and her husband Bill live in Waco with their two spoiled tom kitties, Vlade and Peja.

Visit Micqui’s website at www.micquimiller.com.

For more about Micqui’s book, please see Page 16.

Aspiring Writer: Kathy Waller

Kathy always loved to write. Aside from authoring her junior class prophecy and a satirical account of life in the faculty lounge at the high school where she worked, however, she wrote no fiction until nine years ago when another member of her writing practice group challenged her to bring a finished piece to read the next week. To her surprise, Kathy did. The next story she wrote, *Stop Signs*, won first place for fiction in the 2000 North Texas Professional Writers Association Writing Contest.



A retired librarian, she served as director of library services for the Marion Independent School District in Marion, Texas, and was founding director of the Marion Community Library. She has B.A. and M.A. degrees from Southwest Texas State University and has taught English at the secondary and university levels. She recently left a position as legal assistant with the Office of the Attorney General to focus on completion of a mystery novel.

Kathy enjoys reading, writing with the Writing from the Heart practice group, corresponding with her Story Circle Network e-circle, attending writing workshops, going to plays and movies, and painting. A native of Fentress, Texas, Kathy lives in Austin with her husband and their two cats, Chloe and Alice B. Toeclaws.

You can reach Kathy at chloeabdavis@yahoo.com or wallerk@rocketmail.com

With Rue My Heart Is Laden
By Kathy Waller

Paralegal Rue Cameron retires early to open a café in Cottonwood, the small Central Texas town she left twenty-five years ago. Her cousins’ proposition outweighs her misgivings – if she’ll oversee renovation, they’ll run the café while she completes a novel. Before Rue opens, an anthropologist is found on the riverbank, murdered.

Authorities suspect Matt Franklin, a disabled veteran whose “Arrowhead Museum” the anthropologist had threatened to close. Rue, however, sees other suspects – a professional rival, an ex-wife, a Snowbird who has overstayed his welcome. Finding the killer, Rue battles ghosts from her past and reclaims Cottonwood as her home.

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued from Page 9)

Mentor Author: Vallie Fletcher Taylor

Writer, speaker, teacher, poet and former journalist, Val Taylor was named "A Visionary" by the Brain-Mind Institute of Los Angeles in 1989. "As a small child," she states, "I was surrounded by adults who were avid readers. They included me in conversations as they discussed ideas generated by their reading material. As soon as I was able to form sentences, I was encouraged to take an active part in these discussions. Later, they wrote down fledgling stories I dictated.



"Though my comments and imaginary tales were less than profound, they were always responded to with confidence-building remarks. This was a gift I grew to appreciate more as I grew older. It is also the way I work with my adult students today as I teach 'The Story of You' at a fine arts conservatory in Clifton. Most of my students are not interested in becoming published writers, but they each have amazing stories to tell and deserve to share them within a community of respectful listeners.

"I've always enjoyed sharing what I have learned with other writers," Taylor continues, "but more than anything, I encourage them to enjoy finding and using their unique brand of creativity... unveiling their own voice."

For more about Val's upcoming release, please see Page 18.

Aspiring Writer: Amber Novak

Amber Novak has spent the majority of her adult life exploring the people, places, and stories of Texas while traveling the state as a freelance photojournalist. Her work has been published in the New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Chicago Tribune, Austin American-Statesman, Texas Observer, and Texas Highways magazine.



After a lifetime of attempting to quiet the make-believe voices of an oft-inappropriate and always overactive imagination, Amber finally acquiesced to their demands last summer. Setting aside her cameras she commenced in earnest to embrace her truest nature and write fiction.

The result is a literary mystery titled *Ursuline Sisters of the Gone*. She is in the rewriting stages of her novel and plans for it to be completed soon, if not before then. *Ursuline Sisters of the Gone* is set in Austin, Texas and intertwines multiple story lines spanning almost a century.

Amber Novak holds a Bachelor's of science in psychology from Brown University and a Master's in journalism from the University of Texas. She is a member of the Austin Novels in Progress group and was recently awarded a writing residency at The Wildacres Retreat.

She is thrilled to participate in the Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event and would like to thank the Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter for providing such a unique opportunity.

Ursuline Sisters of the Gone
By Amber Novak

When Key Montgomery quits her job as a newspaper reporter and returns home to Austin, she assumes graduate school will be a welcome distraction from watching her elderly mother die. Instead, her academic work plunges Key even further into the emotional waters that surround their relationship. Researching her family's history, she unearths passions and horrors that have been carefully buried for generations.

With the unexpected assistance of an out-of-work architect who prefers microbrew to blueprints, Key discovers that the Montgomery women didn't just keep secrets behind tight lips - but also inside walls and under floorboards.

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued on Page 11)

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued from Page 10)

Mentor Author: Peary Perry

Peary Perry has been a tank commander, an undercover vice and narcotics cop, private investigator and president of several successful businesses. He has been writing a weekly column entitled "Letters From North America" for over 25 years for 80 newspapers in the country.

Peary's first novel, *Manuel Muldoon* was published in 2005. *Loving and Liking Aren't the Same* is a collection of poems from his crazy period of 20 years and was published in 2006. *Words Spoken Softly* is his second volume of poems in his post-crazy (read: mature) era and was published in 2008.

His second novel, *A Stitch in Time* is finished and awaiting edits. He is working on a non-fiction book as well as a sequel to *A Stitch in Time*.

Perry lives in Austin, Texas with his wife of 36 years, has 4 grown sons, 2 granddaughters and 2 very needy dogs.

His latest achievement is to graduate Summa Cum Laude from St. Edwards University in Austin, after a hiatus of only 41 years. He currently is the new projects director for BGI Corp. and is responsible for locating and identifying new projects for investments or operations.

You can visit Peary at www.pearyperry.com. All of Peary's books are available at Amazon.com.

For more about Peary's work, please turn to Page 17.

Aspiring Writer: Sharon Lee Richardson

Sharon's writing interests over time have moved to the more symbolic in mystery, using speculative fiction. However, she started as a teenage writer for a way to express herself, characterizing horror and science fiction in a short story series. She

has infused her current writing with a pronounced level of social commentary to discover what it would be like if ...

Her focus on the mystery in art as a multimedia artist drew her to the surrealist movement in the past, a cohesive combination with fascination of the unconscious. This interest led her to complete her dissertation on "Consciousness in Art" in 1997 for a Master's Degree. These dedicated years of study and research exemplified interest in symbolism and imagery and the consciousness it arises.

She holds a Masters in Psychology and is currently a VP of Human Resources for a software company. She has traveled extensively around the world capturing ideas, notes and art sketches of her experiences.

Her creativity as a painter merged into amateur moviemaker, where she has infused some of her paintings and sketches into her current films and documentaries. She plans to use those experiences in her writing.

Erased**By Sharon Richardson**

2012 AD. End of days. Cultures predicted closure with cataclysmic events and the age of unprecedented peace. It starts with Yellowstone Park erupting and searing many living creatures.

4012 AD. Daren Mildere is out of options in solving the town's mystery. After two thousand years of peace, a murder. Despite suspects' memories verifying guilt or innocence, the killer eludes discovery. Daren discovers truth and doesn't recognize himself. His friends' secrets reveal cracks in his peaceful world. What is creating chaos in Pompeia's utopian society? Daren must discover the answer before his own memory is erased forever.

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued from Page 11)

Mentor Author: Jack Rosshirt

Jack Rosshirt, a retired Austin resident, spent most of his career as a lawyer representing his employer negotiating agreements with oil producing countries in Africa and the Middle East.



He and his wife of 51 years, Alana, lived in Iran, Kenya and Denmark (as well as Houston) and traveled to over fifty other countries. Their five sons lived with them in Iran.

After retirement Jack served as a mediator, *pro bono* attorney and tennis umpire as well as participating in various civic groups. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and its law school but holds in high respect the athletic teams of all colleges and universities of the Lone Star State.

Jack has published a mystery novel, *Kenya Quest* set in Texas, Europe and Africa as well as an eclectic collection of short stories entitled, *Return to Dublin*, set in Ireland and other, mostly European countries Jack has visited.

He has recently been awarded honorable mention in The Texas Bar Journal's short story contest, for his story, *Senior Counsel*.

For more about Jack's work, please turn to Page 17.

Aspiring Writer: Jaime Roton

Jaime Roton lived in Albuquerque for 25 years, earning an MFA in studio art from the University of New Mexico.



In 1999 and 2000, she and her husband ran Locked Room Theater, an interactive mystery adventure company for which Jaime wrote the scripts.

Dada Death is the third in a series of (unpublished) cozy mysteries set during WW II and featuring Morgan Jeffries, a young woman artist turned sleuth.

Jaime moved to Texas in 2001 and now lives in Georgetown with her husband, Will Welsh, and their pug, Maude.

Dada Death
By Jaime Roton

Desperate trouble. Need your special talents.

The telegram from her friend sends Morgan Jeffries hurrying to a secluded lodge in the mountains of southern New Mexico. A war-time project called Artists for Victory has reunited seven members of the dada art movement.

But as soon as Morgan gets there, her friend wants her to leave. Morgan can see something's not right. As one of the artists confides, everyone is acting strange.

Morgan refuses to abandon her friend. And a good thing too. As the bodies pile up and the artists find themselves trapped, they need clear-headed Morgan to find the truth before a killer strikes again.

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued from Page 12)

Mentor Author: Weslynn McCallister



Who is Jamie Cortland?

You may have read one of Jamie's novels or perhaps an award winning poem or two. She has written novels of romance, sci-fi, time-travel, and poetry under her given name, Weslynn McCallister.

Skin Deep, by Jamie Cortland, is the first of her romantic suspense novels. She is currently working on another which is a sequel to *Skin Deep*.

She is now a full time author, but once worked as a high fashion model, a secretary, and a sales person in real estate. When she's not writing or researching a novel, she enjoys browsing through art galleries, boating, traveling, and going to music events. Did she mention reading? All authors love reading and she is no exception.

Jamie belongs to several professional writing organizations. Among them are Sisters in Crime, Romance Writers of America, and the National Association of Writers. She is also one of the founding members of the Florida Writer's Association.

Educated in the fine arts, she has lived most of her life in the Sun Belt. Currently, she lives near Lake Travis in Austin, Texas.

You can visit Weslynn on line at www.weslynn.com

For more about Weslynn's work, please turn to Page 16.

Aspiring Writer: Dolores Sullivan



Like most kids who grew up before television, Dolores loved the library and the fantasies its books provided. Ever the dreamer she cast herself in starring roles from Nancy Drew to Queen Elizabeth. The dominant theme was always that of sleuth extraordinaire,

glamorous, and in cahoots with a hero who resembled the movie star of the moment.

Dolores has worked in advertising for most of her career, which she began as an assistant to the creative staff, a proofreader and researcher. Later she handled a number of freelance writing and editing assignments. Currently, she is working on a collection of short stories chronicling the life of modern-day "catvocate," known as The Mooney Tales, and starring a tuxedo tom named Mooney, a member of a highly trained corps of four-pawed furry critters "who serve fellow felines, and sometimes their humans, when a helpful paw is needed."

Until recently, when she began writing more seriously, Dolores enjoyed a career in advertising, public relations and as a special events coordinator. She and her husband Leo live in Waco. They have two children, three grandchildren, an ancient cat, and two big dogs.

You can visit Dolores online at: www.mooneytales.com

Chloe's Conundrum
By Dolores Sullivan

A child in peril ... a tabby kitten that overhears a terrifying phone conversation, and discovers she understands every word humans speak.

Chloe happily lives with Lauren Moore and her daughter Shelby. After Chloe experiences frightening sensations, she ponders her mother's advice: "Stay vigilant always, because cats know things sooner than their humans."

Shelby is in danger but Chloe can only communicate telepathically. She knows her only hope of saving Shelby is to warn her little human. Can a five-year-old convince her mother and her aunt, a policewoman, that their cat told her someone they trust is dangerous?

(Mentor Authors & Aspiring Writers - Continued from Page 13)

Mentor Author: Greg Lawson



Greg has worked as a Sheriff's Academy Firearms Instructor in Central Texas. He is currently a Travis County Sheriff's Department Detective. He has worked Cold Cases, and now investigates

child abuse. Greg's mysteries are infused with his real-life work experiences. He lives in Georgetown with his wife Lynn.

For more about Greg's work, please turn to Page 15.

Aspiring Writer: Julie Speaker



My 80 year-old mom and I are collaborating on a mystery novel titled *Mama's Little Darlin'*. I encouraged her to write and was secretly sure she would produce a hackneyed version of Miss Marple and her cat. To my astonishment, she writes about events that evoke my

childhood pain with a depth of feeling and compassion that she has never expressed openly to me. She and I communicate with each other through the characters in the novel.

From living in the same small town for 60 years, Mom has Miss Marple's feel for people's twists and melds this with crisp dialogue *a la* Robert B. Parker. I add my own broader experience with the world and the realities of modern techno-life.

I am a biostatistician by profession and bring a scientist's love of logical plotting and character development to the mix. Mom and I both admire the gentle humor and empathy for small town life shown by Susan Rogers Cooper. Right now I am struggling to get Mom to kill off one of our characters to fulfill the murder part of a murder mystery. Even though Edith is a villain, she is still too vivid in Mom's mind. Collaboration can be a delicate balancing act.

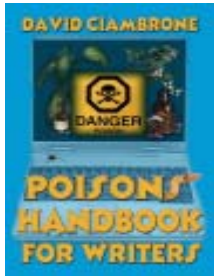
Mama's Little Darlin'

By Julie Speaker in collaboration with Patricia Speaker

Abby Candalaria, a Texas school teacher, had a choice. She is being stalked by a man who terrorized her as a child. She can shoot the sonovabitch or she can run. Her cousin, an Austin Deputy Sheriff, arranges a new identity and she chooses to flee to California and a new life.

She and Paul Martin, her new boss, find romance and with his delightful teen-age daughter and solve the mystery of a woman who may not be dead.

They return to Austin to confront Abby's stalker and uncover Candalaria family secrets that free Abby for a new future.

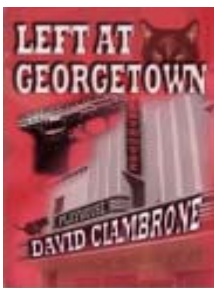


POISONS HANDBOOK FOR WRITERS

By David Ciambrone,

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.

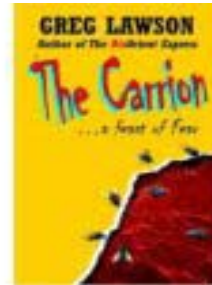


LEFT AT GEORGETOWN

By David Ciambrone

Publisher: L&L Dreamspell
 Release date: October 2007
 ISBN-10: 1603180206
 ISBN-13: 978-1603180207
 Paperback: 256 pages

Virginia Davies has a lot going on in her life - a new marriage, new city, new job, a new play - and murder! She married her longtime boyfriend Dr. Andy Clark, then they moved from Orange County, California to Georgetown, Texas, where she took a job as a curator at the prestigious San Gabriel Museum. Her main source of pride, her manuscript - Murder as a Community Project - was optioned for production as a play. Unfortunately, Virginia's propensity for finding trouble followed her from the west coast. At the first Georgetown Community Theater rehearsal she discovered one of the actors, a reporter for an area newspaper, with a knife stuck in his chest, and it's not a prop. Dragged into the action-packed mystery by strange photographs and actors' antics, Virginia's husband is kidnapped to stop her from nosing around. Snooping around in her usual unorthodox manner, while people keep trying to kill her, she manages to rummage through trouble in Georgetown, Austin, and Williamson County, Texas - while befriendng the police and the Mafia.



CARRION

By Greg Lawson

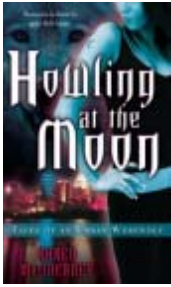
Publisher: AuthorHouse
 Release date: February 2005
 ISBN-10: 1418498475
 ISBN-13: 978-1418498474
 Hardcover: 316 pages

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 outsiders 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.

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.

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.



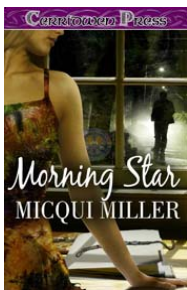
**HOWLING AT THE MOON:
Tales of an Urban Werewolf
By Karen MacInerney**

Publisher: Random House,
Release date: 2008
ISBN: 978-0-345-50481-4
(0-345-50481-X)
Price: \$6.99

Sophie Garou seems to have it all: a great job at a prestigious accounting firm, a closet that rivals a Nordstrom showroom, and a terrific boyfriend who isn't afraid to use the "M" word. There's just one little itty-bitty problem: Sophie is a werewolf-and her time of month has a whole new meaning.

Needless to say, life among yummy flesh-and-blood humans is no piece of steak...er, cake! but regular doses of wolfsbane tea and a mother who runs a magic shop have helped Sophie keep her paranormal pedigree under wraps.

Still, when a sexy, golden-eyed werewolf prowls into town, Sophie finds herself struggling to keep her animal impulses in check-not to mention trying to keep things on track with her super hot (and super human) lawyer boyfriend. What's more, someone is threatening to expose Sophie for what she really is. And when her mother is accused of selling a poison-laced potion, Sophie must sniff out a culprit before the fur hits the fan.

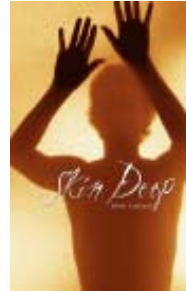


**MORNING STAR
By Micqui Miller**

Publisher: Cerridwen Press
Release: April 2008
ISBN 9781419957505
Trade paperback: 461 pages
Price: \$9.99 USD

Distributed by Baker & Taylor
and Jasime-Jade Enterprises

Liz O'Hara, a widow and the mother of two teens, has spent her adult life looking over her shoulder, knowing that one day she will be forced to admit the truth about the lost seven months she lived on the run as the young hippie Morning Star. But in her worst nightmares she never dreamed she'd face the dilemma of Solomon—choosing one child over another while a murderer lurks in the shadows, waiting to strike when Liz is most vulnerable



**SKIN DEEP
By Weslynn McCallister
writing as Jamie Cortland**

Publisher: Crystal Dreams
Publishing, an imprint of
Multi-Media Publications
2007

Release date: July 2007
ISBN# 978-1-59146-097-8
Price: Paperback \$12.95 USD

He's looking for you...On the beaches; the tennis courts; in cocktail lounges, up-scale restaurants and coffee houses. When you meet him, he will be charming, engaging and compelling...all but impossible to resist. Others will feel his menacing aura, but you will not.

And so it was for Evelyn who was still half-way in love with her super-star ex-husband. Once caught in his web, she discovered he was not the man of her dreams. Dropping his mask, he became the hideous creature of her nightmares. Her only thought was to find a way to escape.

Ordering information: You may purchase or order the paperback version of Skin Deep by Jamie Cortland through most bookstores. Online availability through Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble.com and many others. You may also order an autographed copy from the author at www.weslynn.com

Josh Wilder, a disillusioned East Coast news anchor, suddenly finds his career back on the fast track. But in order to cash in on his new celebrity, he must risk destroying the woman he's loved in his heart for twenty-seven years, the street waif he knew only as Morning Star.

Together, Liz and Josh face the greatest challenge of their lives—racing against the clock to save a dying young woman while stopping the madman who has sworn to kill them.

Visit Micqui's website at www.micquimiller.com to enter her monthly contest and to sign up for your free subscription of *Murder Mostly Deadly*.



MANUEL MULDOON

By Peary Perry

Publisher: PublishAmerica
 Release date: May 2006
 ISBN-10: 1413795145
 ISBN-13: 978-1413795141
 Paperback: 320 pages

At night, Manuel Muldoon, a magna-cum-barely high-school graduate, dreams of two things: leaving Marshlake, Texas, and becoming a successful mystery writer. By day, the often-belittled half-Irish, half-Mexican young man is houseboy to the town's first family of banking: Robert and Nancy Sturmwell and their spoiled daughter Miss Victoria, and sometimes Robert's nephew Jeff and his beautiful wife Erica.

With the family away on vacation, Manny agonizes over his first novel and revels in the peace – until the family returns and a contractor sees an arm sticking out of the unfinished swimming pool wall.

Framed for one murder, implicated in another, Manny confides in Vicky while evading police and the murderer on a fast-paced, dangerous trip to uncover the truth. A sleepy Texas town, drug money laundering, a jealous roommate, a crooked banker in league with a crooked cop, and a naïve writer-to-be converge in *Manuel Muldoon*.

RETURN TO DUBLIN

By Jack Rosshirt

Cost: \$13.95 plus 8.25% tax
 Postage and Handling: \$2.00

KENYAN QUEST

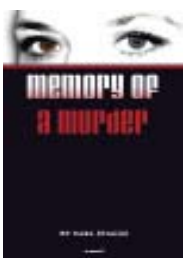
By Jack Rosshirt

\$14.95 plus tax , postage and handling



One Last Kill. That's the only business that Brian Mahoney – a foot soldier for the Irish Republican Army in 1920 – has left to address before emigrating to the United States. The presence of his victim's wife and child make him hesitate, but only for a moment. With his target confirmed and his Beretta at his side, he completes his mission and leaves Ireland. But when Brian returns to Dublin decades later, he soon discovers that changing his name, having a successful law career, and raising a family aren't enough to erase his past. So begins *Return to Dublin*, a collection of tales about revenge, bad luck, secrecy, and deception. The characters in each story approach their lives, their pasts, and their own morality in different ways; some with violence and fear. And some, like "People's Attorney" Bledsoe Flax, face theirs with humor and a little hope.

Copies of Jack's books can be ordered from the author at Roshtex@aol.com or 3413 Foothill Terrace, Austin, Texas 78731



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

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

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

Now, twelve years later, this special sight opens the doorway to a mystery man who comes to Adam for help.

Chip Weathers, a homeless man suffering from amnesia, believes he may be behind the murder of a woman found buried in the basement of the house his family once owned. A fateful *Newsweek* article leads Chip to Adam in the hopes he can reach through the fog of memory to determine the truth. But soon after Chip enlists Adam's help, someone takes a shot at them. It seems as though someone has a lot to lose by Chip regaining his memory of the violent events of the past. 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?

Coming Soon ...

EYES IN THE ALLEY

By Vallie Fletcher Taylor

Publisher: Zumaya Publications

Release date: August 2008

To most people, the Great Depression brings to mind shantytowns and fields buried in dust, breadlines and shuttered banks. For young Vallie Fletcher, it was a time when she startled her San Antonio neighbors by jumping off garage rooftops, convinced she can soar into the air. After all, that's what she did during a near-death experience at age two. It was a time when she looked into the face of a starving child, a face that would haunt her throughout her childhood.

Segregation rules that did not make sense, sharing a classroom with four sets of twins, "medical" treatments and "health" rules that seemed as likely to kill as to cure, music and dance teachers collaborating with mothers who have seen too many Shirley Temple movies trying to turn children into performers – all and more are combined in this fascinating memoir of a time that to many is no more than a notation in a history book in a place where the past is as much a part of the infrastructure as the streets.



**WEDNESDAY,
MAY 21, 2008**
is the deadline for News,
Announcements and
Submissions for the
JUNE 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.