



CRIME TIMES

Arizona Mystery Writers

December 2008

To promote mystery writing in Southern Arizona

Workshop for December 13, 2008

The December workshop session will be presented by Karen MacLeish and Erik Hertwig. Under their guidance we will have fun creating a mystery. Briefly, Karen will set the stage by describing a “closed” setting from which characters cannot enter easily nor are they able to leave. There will be a floor plan diagram of the place and a list of the characters with minimal character history.

The group will then go to work brainstorming the murder. By voting, members choose the victim(s), how he or she will be murdered and where. Selection of the motives and the character(s) that will solve the crime will be determined next. Using the character list, group members discuss possible relationships and interactions among the characters and develop any needed back story, clues and red herrings to be written.

After the group chooses the victim(s) and the characters that will solve the crime, we can work on the story individually or in groups of two or more. If everyone is tossing out ideas, it might be fun to do the whole story together. This will be determined by the group.

This exercise will leave you inspired to go home and use the same techniques to create your next mystery.



December Speaker- Jerry Simmons

NOTHING PERSONAL—JUST BUSINESS—THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS THAT IS!

By Carol Dee O’Mahony

Oh yeah, it’s personal. We put heart and soul—not to mention hundreds of solitary hours—into our writing. We pay for thousands of ink cartridges, endless reams of paper, book covers and editing and then, at last, it’s done. Now what? Oh, just publishing and marketing our work. In case you haven’t noticed, many of us writers aren’t very good at either one of these endeavors.

On Saturday, December 13th, Jerry Simmons, author, publisher and teacher will share his knowledge with **Arizona Mystery Writers** about the importance of understanding the marketplace for selling books. He’ll talk about how writers become successfully published authors and share some of

the secrets of the largest booksellers and publishers in the world.

Jerry, a 25-year veteran of New York publishing with Random House and the Time Warner Book Group has worked on books written by Nelson DeMille, James Patterson and Sandra Brown to name a few. He has also worked on several bestselling titles including *The Bridges of Madison County*, *Presumed Innocent* and *Absolute Power*.

His latest book, **WHAT WRITERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PUBLISHING** is described by the #1 New York Times Bestselling author Sandra Brown as “*The good, the bad, and the ugly aspects of book publishing, told in a straight-from-the hip manner. New writers take note.*”

Come join Arizona Mystery Writers at the Hometown Buffet at River and Oracle on Saturday, December 13th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Cost \$12 for meeting and lunch. \$5 for only workshop or speaker session. Please bring exact change or write check to Arizona Mystery Writers.

If you are coming to the meeting, please RSVP-
mb33ja@comcast.net or 577-7270. Thanks Mary

Review of Workshop for November

by Jan Pope

Mike Alvarez, Writer, teacher and long time member of Arizona Mystery Writers and one of the workshop leaders we all look forward to. His workshops are always entertaining and illuminating. Those who participate leave knowing they have learned something useful. November's workshop was no exception.

The topic was developing memorable characters. Using techniques as outlined in *STRUCTURING YOUR NOVEL* by Robert Meredith and John Fitzgerald, and using the basic ways to build a character—exposition, description, narration/dialogue or a combination of those three—members were to write a paragraph describing a character.

Following are a few of the wonderful results.

“You want to know what to expect from your blind date, Hank? Well, brace yourself. The most obvious when Betty Sue enters a room is cleavage. If you can tear your eyes away from that area, you'll see a blanket of over-bleached hair framing a botox-blank face — false eyelashes out to here, neon rad lipstick on puffy collagen lips—”

“Okay, Fred, I get the picture. I meant, what is she like?”

“Oh, she has a heart of gold.”

— Molly McKinney

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Dora pulled the door shut behind her, closing it gently as though she were trying not to disturb anyone. But who was there to disturb? Stephen was dead. The click of the latch made her wince. She crossed the floor to his desk where everything was neatly arranged: every pen was in its place, every rubber band and paper clip in its container, and every pad of paper properly arranged.

This was Stephen, she thought, the son she'd known for thirty-five years. How could she ever believe that this person was the one who had left this world in such a messy manner.

She picked up the note that lay at a discordant angle across the fastidiously arranged items and read Stephen's final words.

— Ellie Nelson

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When the door knob turned in the dead of night. Denice Copper grabbed the brass studded cane that stood at her bedside. She lay listening. The sounds were muffled.

“Who’s there?” she cried, pushing herself to sit on the edge of the bed, the cane raised to batting height. Why she should think of playing softball struck her as funny. “That you, Alex?” She called, rising to face the bedroom door. “Alex?”

Not a sound. The street light penetrated the hallway. The red hands on the clock pointed to 2:10. The roar of an engine starting signaled Fred Hathaway leaving for his job at the bakery.

Cautiously Denice ventured into the hall. A tall bearded figure loomed ahead. She gasped and a frightened cry escaped her.

“Don’t panic.” He said “I’m here to kill you. “Rasco sent me.”

— Myrtle Nord

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He stood at the front of the room, a good-looking middle-aged man with a soft voice that carried. He had perfected the voice teaching college classes. The door to the room was slightly behind and to his right. His audience was a group of mature writers here to learn as well as to socialize.

Mr. A Told of his background as a computer tech in the chilly rooms where computer frames are kept and described the heightened sense of hearing one develops in such an isolated room.

His audience rapt attention to his words, papers rattling as they did the assignment. Only Mr. A heard the soft click of a pistol cocking. He dropped to the floor. The students registered the intruder’s presence only when he was visible and firing his weapon — at them.

— Karen MacLeish

Review of Speaker for November

By Karen MacLeish

SAM TURNER with very able assistance from his partner, P.J. (Phyllis Turner) began his talk by asking how many of us have or have had telescopes. Several responded in the affirmative. Will we be seeing some star-related mysteries soon? Sam cautioned us that if we're writing a scene with the moon in a particular phase, we'd better check to be sure the moon was really in that phase on that date and even if it was visible in that area. Was there really a full moon on November 13th in 2008? Was it visible so that the killer could find no place to hide from the posse, or was the sky overcast and rain imminent? Also, if your protagonist and sweetheart are looking at constellations at 11:45 p.m. on a certain day, make sure the one they're looking at is visible at that hour. Sam says only 80% of constellations will be visible because the other 20% have "gone down" already. Or perhaps haven't "come up" yet?

Sam told us of an outlet in Tucson where everything about astronomy is available. Telephone them at 292-5010 to determine when they will re-open after the fire.

Sam mentioned several books which are available on amazon.com. You will find NIGHTWATCH, A Practical Guide to Viewing the Universe by Terence Dickinson in hardcover from \$28 and spiral bound for \$15.

WHAT'S OUT TONIGHT?, 50 Year Astronomy Field Guide, 2000 to 2050, by Ken Graun in paperback, 2003 edition from \$43.00 and the revised 2006 edition from \$33.95.

TURN LEFT AT ORION, A Hundred Night Sky Objects to See in a Small Telescope, by Guy Consolmagno, et. Al. from \$12.87.

SKYWATCHING, by David Levy in hardcover from 3.80 and paperback from 16 cents.

www.nanowrimo.org says they're celebrating ten years of literary abandon. What a fascinating site that is. Sounds like fun and worth a try.

Google couldn't tell me anything about the Tahiti Myth involving the North Star, so we'll have to re-read HAWAII, by James Michener for the real scoop.

Google "Sky Center, Mount Lemmon, click on "Playing Mt. Lemmon Sky Center" and you will get a spoken, guided tour of the recently opened facility.

Google "Crab Nebula" and click on "Most Detailed Image of the Crab Nebula," and you will get a beautiful color photo from the Hubble telescope.

Google L-5 Society, and you can get a "Brief History of the L-5 Society."

Google NOAO and click on National Optical Astronomy Observatory, then on Kitt Peak, and you can see a "previously unsuspected high-speed collision between two galaxies...". Beautiful.

Sam also introduced us to the magazine, SKY, in any issue of which, we can find all we want to know

and more about astronomy and the skies.

Thank you so much, Sam and P.J. This has been fascinating.

The Kindle

Liz Gunn's guest at this month's meeting will be "The Kindle." There was a lot of interest expressed during last month's meeting about this newest "book" form, so join us for a free demonstration. You'll be **amazed!**

Book Sales at Meetings

You may bring your books to sell at our monthly meetings. A table is provided to display the books. All transactions are between the seller and buyer. AMW is not taking any money from the book sale and is not responsible for the books or their sales.

Board of Director Position Open

The position of secretary/membership is open on the AMW Board of Directors. Please volunteer to be a more active part of our group. The duties of the Secretary are to take minutes at our Board Meetings and distribute them via email to the other Board Members. Currently, the Board meets approximately four times a year.

Endowment Fund

AMW has established an Endowment Fund. Our first activity will be in honor of Jim Martin. This summer, his family lost Jim and in his memory they have donated money to promote and encourage students to write mysteries.

Book Fair

AMW is participating in the first Tucson Book Festival. It is a joint effort of the University of Arizona and the Arizona Star Daily Newspaper. The three day event will be held the second weekend of March, 2009. Booths will be set up outside on the mall of the University of Arizona.

Anthology Books

EVERYONE who has any anthologies left over, please bring them to the December or January meetings so we can sell them at the Book Festival in March 2009. Do you have anthologies that need to be sold?

Happy Holidays to Everyone!