



Mystery Press

Mystery Writers Ink

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December 1, 2002

Message from the President

by Suzanne Stengl

At our first general meeting, held at the Old Y on Sept 12, 2002, Andrew Robinson, Manager of Spy City, spoke to a group of 27 writers. For our October meeting, we met at the Steve Johnson Rifle Range for a gun demonstration by a local gun expert.

In keeping with our goal of presenting a blend of Mystery Topics and General Writing Topics, we had a change of pace for our November meeting. Brenda Collins and Sharon Wildwind presented *Anatomy of a Mystery* and touched the tip of the iceberg of mystery information. We heard about the rules for the mystery genre, main characters in a mystery, and the mystery arc. We asked questions, we got answers and we generated more questions. Not only about mystery writing but about writing in general.

Thank you to Brenda for an excellent handout. This handout will be part of the New Member Folder so be sure you get yours.

Our organization is off to a great start. The last time I checked the membership list, we were at 35 members. I look forward to meeting many more of you at our December meeting!

Shooting for Accuracy: A Mystery Writer's Aim

By Dee Van Dyk

"I know what you're thinking. Did he fire six shots or only five? Well, to tell you the truth, in all this

excitement, I've kinda lost track myself. But being as this is a .44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world and would blow your head clean off, you've got to ask yourself one question: Do I feel lucky? Well, do ya, punk?"

--- (Dirty) Harry Callahan

On October 10, in front of a packed room of very lucky mystery writers, our visiting gun expert took Hollywood and its writers to task and dispelled some deeply entrenched gun myths.

Does your protagonist shoot the gun out of the hand of his adversary? If so, he'll join the single documented case in history. Does your villain tuck his piece - err, gun - into the front of his pants? He'd better snug his belt extra tight, cuz these babies, even the girlie guns, are heavy. Got a sniper who picks off a target at 100 yards with a small calibre handgun? Nuh-uh.

As writers we know that the devil - as well as the good read - is in the details. The selection of the right gun for the job, the heft of a gun, the way it smells after it has been fired ("cherries, slightly off", says Jeff), the ear-splitting sound of a bullet discharging . . . these are the details that add to or detract from the credibility of your story. It's important to get them right.

Your characters have a choice between two types of handguns: revolvers and semi-automatic pistols.

A revolver is more dependable, with five to nine bullets fitting into a round cylinder. With a semi-automatic pistol, the bullets are

placed in a 'clip' or 'magazine' instead of a cylinder, rendering a speedier release of murder and mayhem.

Calibre is a measure of thickness - in either inches or millimeters - of the width of a barrel of a gun. For example, the smallest handgun is a .22 calibre, meaning the bullet will pass through a barrel that is 22/100ths of an inch in diameter. A bullet from this gun will certainly hurt but it's not a weapon for the serious assassin. You'll need a minimum .38 calibre to ensure 'stopping power'.

Writers commonly make the mistake of penciling in the wrong bullet with a particular gun. A .22 is found in both revolvers and semis, .25 is only in semi's, .32 and .40 are in either, and a .38 is mostly found in revolvers. Got an old cowboy gun? Chances are it uses a .45.

Want to know more?

For a copy of the lecture notes, e-mail: collib@shaw.ca

Want the sensory details? Thirty dollars plus the cost of ammunition will buy you firsthand experience at The Shooting Edge (phone: 720-4867). It's recommended that you ask to fire one bullet without the protective ear coverings. Once you've heard a gun being fired, you'll never confuse it with the sound of an engine backfire.

Got questions?



Drop us a line at mysterywritersink@hotmail.com



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Book Talk

by Sherile Reilly, Librarian

With quotes and personal examples from her life, Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird* is a funny and fascinating book. The author describes her book as *Some Instructions on Writing and Life* and it's full of sage advice that made me laugh many times.

Anne Lamott says one of the gifts of being a writer is that it gives you an excuse to do things, to go places and to explore. It motivates you to look closely at life. We need to practice writing every day, just as you would do scales on the piano. Do it by pre-arrangement with yourself. Anne wishes she had a secret formula that would enable us to sit at our desk and land flights of creative inspiration, but she doesn't.

Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor. If you want to write, you won't get to it unless you get over your perfectionism.

Get to know your character as well as you can, let there be something at stake and then let the chips fall where they may. What sort of first impression do they make? What does each one care passionately about? Try to capture how each character feels, thinks, talks, and survives.

Anne believes that becoming a writer is about becoming conscious. When you care about the truth, you have the ability to throw the light on for your readers. They will recognize their lives and truths in what you say through your writing.

One final tip—listen to your broccoli. What does that mean?

Read Anne Lamott's book for the answer and gain further

knowledge about life and the craft of writing. The book is in the MWI library and available for loan. Give me a call at 286-6266 to reserve it.

White Hat Hacker

By Brenda Collins

Steve Biswanger, President of the Biswanger Consulting Group, has been described as a 'white-hat' hacker by the Financial Post. He is one of an elite group of Canadian e-security specialists who assist clients from as far away as Australia and Guatemala in designing, implementing, maintaining and assessing computer security strategies and complex security architectures. In his presentation in our January meeting, Steve will cover some of the common computer attack strategies and provide anecdotal descriptions of things he's encountered.



I Spy with My Little Eye

by Penny E. Grey

Pinhole cameras, phone taps and body wires—certainly the stuff of fiction, but of real life? You bet! According to Andrew Robinson, Manager of Spy City, mystery writers aren't the only ones who plant video devices in the vice-president's office, so do ordinary Calgarians. While the mystery writer is helping her detective solve the murder of the VP's secretary, the Calgarian is...well, I'm not sure I want to know!

From corporate types recording business deals to parents keeping

tabs on babysitters to husbands suspicious of wandering wives—Spy City sees them all. At the inaugural meeting of Mystery Writers Ink, Robinson shared some customer stories, showed us some great spying gadgets (who *wouldn't* want the microphone pen in their pocket at the next peer review?) and answered specific questions from writers well into their latest projects. A camera planted in the room might have caught looks of horror on some faces as he told us just how popular and how easy it is to spy on a colleague, a family member or a friend.

At Spy City, Robinson does his best to weed out customers who intend to use any of his products illegally (you'd be surprised how often illegal intent is admitted, he says). He explained the principles of expectation of privacy regarding video and audio recording. For example, a video camera cannot be placed secretly in a space an individual expects to be private, such as a department store changing room. The laws of Canada and the US differ in regards to audio recording. In Canada, one person in a conversation involving two or more persons must be aware the conversation is being recorded and in the U.S., two persons must be aware of it.

Spy City can show you wired or wireless technology in video and audio devices, but Robinson says law enforcement has all the really good stuff—like digital scanners for detecting cell phone signals and forward-looking infrared systems to locate people in a building. There's a definite limit to what the general public can access legally, so you might want to reconsider the



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anthropologist-turned-amateur-sleuth in your story if you expect her to use “Mission Impossible” gadgetry. Enthusiastic discussion of computer and telephone security (mostly the lack thereof!), audio and video detectors, phone scramblers and motion sensors, among other things, made for an entertaining evening and a great learning experience. The knowledgeable Robinson clearly loves what he does and invites Calgary mystery writers to visit him at Spy City’s 17th Avenue location or call him any time with questions.

Now, if I can just stop looking over my shoulder....

From Julie’s Dictionary

By Julie Kirsch

For my first column, I decided to clear up any confusion



regarding a commonly misunderstood and misused word—penultimate. This is what my right-hand man (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary) has to say about it.

Penultimate: (adj.) last but one; second-last. *Penultimate* is often mistakenly used and understood to mean ‘absolutely ultimate, unsurpassable’. (n.) 1. the last but one 2. the last syllable but one. I find this one makes the speaker sound very starchy and oh-so-proper!

Member News

Donna Levia: In October, I had the chance to pitch my comic crime novel, *Leaving the Mafia*, to Donald Maass (Anne Perry’s agent,

among others) and he asked to see 50 pages as soon as it’s complete. So now I’m researching and writing madly in hopes of completing it soon!

Julie Kirsch: By the time this hits the stands, my internship with Random House will be over. Right now I’m working on securing gainful employment in the publishing industry. Hopefully, exciting news will appear in our next newsletter! Stay tuned...

Sharon Wildwind: I’ve got an agent, Janet Benrey, of the Heartline agency. Janet is currently sending two of my mysteries around to publishers.

The difference between the right word and the almost right word, is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.
-Mark Twain

December 12 Meeting and Social

We plan to hold a New Member Orientation each December for our new members and anyone else who wants to come to meet the new recruits. For this particular NMO, we are all new members. So everyone is invited!

Our two-hour meeting will be divided between a Business Session, a Bingo Mixer, and a talk on Manuscript Mechanics. In our Business Session, Brenda will give us a Program Overview.

The session on Manuscript Mechanics will focus on such questions as: How do I properly format a manuscript? How do I package it for mailing? What do I

send? How many chapters? Which chapters? What should I put in a query letter? What’s the best way to get US stamps for return postage? Feel free to raise any other questions you may have about how to submit your work.

Send your "Bingo Clue" to Jennifer!

Since one of the main points of a New Member orientation is to get a chance to meet new members, Jennifer Howard is organizing a "Bingo Mixer". You email her a short tidbit about your writing life (send to lovewriting@shaw.ca) and she will put your clues into a bingo square. For example, someone might write as a clue *my first m/s is about hijacking a BC ferry*.

Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to find that person at coffee break. And to try to put names to as many clues as you can. Please join us!

Clues

By Susan Mills

Be our next “Mystery Sleuth”.

Question: Where is ‘Sandstone’ City and why is it so unique?



Hint: It became that in late 1886 because of a city ordinance.



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Winter Program Schedule

Thursday December 12, 2002

Old Y Centre
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
New Member Orientation
Manuscript Mechanics, Program
Overview, Bingo Mixer.

Send your "clues" for the bingo mixer to:

Jennifer Howard at
lovewriting@shaw.ca

See details for this meeting elsewhere in the newsletter

Thursday January 9, 2003

Old Y Centre
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
topic: Computer Hacking: From
Someone Who Does It For a Living
presenter: Steve Biswanger

See details for this meeting elsewhere in the newsletter

Thursday February 13, 2003

Old Y Centre
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
topic: GMC Writing Tool
presenters: Sherile Reilly &
Donna Tunney

Lug a Mug



We don't have a storage area at our meeting place so please bring your own coffee cup. Enjoy a bottomless cup of coffee for only 25 cents!

Styrofoam cups are available for the forgetful!



Solved

Not only has our first Clue been solved, but our first "Mystery Sleuth" had such a nicely done answer that I have chosen to let her tell the tale.

Question: What is Calgary's "First" Cemetery?



Answer: Union Cemetery!

Burials for Fort Calgary were taken care of in a cemetery established by the Roman Catholic Mission until 1884, when Calgary was incorporated as a town and a public cemetery was created at Shaganappi Point. But the soil conditions were unsuitable in that location, and in 1892 the bodies were moved to the new Union Cemetery. Union Cemetery is therefore Calgary's oldest cemetery, but not its first.

Penny Grey
Member, MWI

Found your own Clue to Send?
Email: quillpen@optonline.net

Mystery Writers Ink Society

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Canada

Mission Statement

Mystery Writers Ink shall support writers of mystery fiction by providing networking opportunities, educating, and informing writers about writing techniques, publishing and marketing.

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Memberships

are accepted between Sept 1 & Oct 31 of each year.

Published authors & past members may join at any time.

Full membership: \$35

Associate membership: \$45

Newsletter

Editor	Julie Kirsch
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Newsletter Submissions

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Original material only please.

Articles may not be reprinted without permission of the authors. INK reserves the right to edit submissions.

Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to that issue.

Please send submissions by E-mail to Julie Kirsch:
juliekirsch@hotmail.com