



Mystery Press

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Motivational Quote

"Finally, one just has to shut up, sit down, and write."

Natalie Goldberg

Message from the President

by Suzanne Stengl

Many hands make light work.

It's that time of year. We're electing our new board. We've got a slate of officers ready to get to work on the second year of Mystery Writers Ink. Our board only has nine positions, but there's lots of room for you to help out.

Want to help our Treasurer organize our fundraiser book sale? Check with Donna Wickens.

Have you got an idea for a Program

Topic? Let your Program Chair know about it. You can even volunteer to present a topic to the group. You can come early to help our Facilities Management Chair set up. Or you can bring cookies!

Many hands make light work and we've got an ambitious group willing to help and eager to learn more about the art of writing and mystery writing in particular.

At this time I would like to especially thank our "distance" Newsletter Editor Julie Kirsch (in Toronto) and our Layout Designer Susan Mills (in New Jersey) for doing such a great job for us with Mystery Press.

Book review of Plot by Ansen Dibell

by Peter O'Brien

The plot thickens...

Will this 160-odd-page book whet the appetite? Not if it's broth you're looking for. This little gem is the full meal deal. I was up at the crack of dawn and found myself reading till the cows came home, such were the nuggets of wisdom betwixt & between these pages. From cover to cover, pearls of wisdom are dropped like big meatballs in those tiny, little bowls they serve Won Ton soup in at Chinese restaurants.

Count on the fact that the advice in this book will be as good as gold when you put pen to paper for your next story. The book is chronologically laid out and addresses two main problems: creating plot and then controlling it.

After defining these two central challenges, Dibell reviews openings, middles and endings. Focusing on these three movements in any story or novel, the author discusses the many challenges and choices that contribute to their development.

The chapters center on elaborate openings to capture the attention of the reader, shifting viewpoints, subplots, building big scenes, set pieces, patterns, transitions, flashbacks and finally, endings. I found the constant attention to choices about how to develop and sustain the plot to be beneficial.

So, to both summarize and set your minds to rest about whether or not this is a good read, let me count the ways. One, it is a very, very good read. Two, at this moment in time it's a tried and true approach to a problem in the writing craft that everyone needs to get to the bottom of if they're going to hone their skills, develop their talent and hit the jackpot with a best-seller.

And last but not least, it's refreshing to chew the fat on ideas that are crisply laid out on the page, without clichés. I hate those things with a passion.

Workshop with Carol Pallister

By Terri Baker

"It's the girls you have to watch out for," said Carol Pallister, of Chinook Centre Community Services and liaison with the Calgary Police in loss prevention in stores. "They're the ones packing (i.e. holding a gun, a knife, or a dirty needle)." Drawing on her



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years of experience, Pallister ran down some shoplifter traits for the assembled group. “Shoplifters know no age boundaries,” she says. “They can range anywhere from twelve years and up.”

The size of the thief’s booty is an indication of motivation. A small take indicates a dare or a rite of passage, according to Pallister. Bigger rip-offs indicate an offender is stealing to support a drug habit. But officers can spot a major drug user. “They have an acidic smell,” Pallister says. “They’re fidgety, never still. They’ll either talk a mile a minute or not at all.”

With this in mind, loss prevention officers study customers for specific inconsistencies. “Like dirty hands and lots of makeup,” Pallister says. “And hands that shake or twitch.” Electric toothbrushes and electric razors are the products most often ripped off in bulk. Once the thieves get the merchandise out of the store, they drop the products off at an empty warehouse downtown and collect their cash.

Who are the ones executing large shoplifting theft? “Experienced thieves, like the drug-related chain now operating from Calgary to Slave Lake,” says Pallister. “They have this kind of thieving down to an art. Three individuals will scope the store, spotting loss prevention officers.”

To make an arrest of a shoplifting offender, loss prevention officers must:

- See the person enter the store
- See the person enter the department

- See the selection of an item
- See the concealment of rip-off tags
- See the person walk out past the point of purchase



Once all of these behaviors are observed, the officer must then ‘Charter and Caution’ the offender within ten minutes. “This is the Canadian equivalent to the U.S.’s ‘Miranda rights’,” says Pallister. “You must make sure the apprehended person—especially in youth cases—understands everything you’ve said.” Even the ‘Miranda rights’, thrown out in all those cop shows we import from the United States, do not have to be read to someone in custody UNLESS the cops are getting information out of the offender. In the States, detectives are the only ones who handle the questioning—and they have thousands of them.

Canada, on the other hand, has very few detectives. As she paced back and forth in front of the group gathered to hear her speak, Carol Pallister threw out the buzzwords she’d picked up during her years acting as an interface between the police and the community.

Offender Terms

Mules: Females who carry guns, or stake out a store. They’re usually addicts themselves.

411: Information. Example: *I’ve got to get the 411 on her.*

Packing: holding a gun, a knife, a dirty needle.

Police Terms

Gang: Any gathering of more than two.

Hep. C: Hepatitis C. Police run into it every single day. Look for jaundiced skin.

Yardape: Someone (male) who just got out of prison. Their bodies are pumped into prime workout shape because all the prisons have gyms where the prisoners can workout.

Carol Pallister is open to questions and can be reached at the Chinook Centre Community Services. Please call 221-0540.

From ‘Julie’s’ Dictionary

Subbing by Susan Mills



In honour of this issues theme, I thought I’d shed a little dictionary light on a commonly used term.

Kleptomania is often expressed as shoplifting, but according to my dictionary, it is a morbid impulse to steal; a pathological mental illness that is considered “senseless” stealing in that the **kleptomaniac** does not take objects for immediate use or for their monetary value and such articles are often returned surreptitiously, given to others, or hidden away. Mostly found in women it is often associated with depression.

Got questions?

Drop us a line at mysterywritersink@hotmail.com



A Thank You and a shout out to Penny Grey for the gift of a meat mallet. We’ll try to put it to good use!




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Mean Streets of Calgary

Assorted authors

Carol Pallister is the Volunteer Coordinator at the Calgary Police Service's Chinook Centre Community Station. She does loss prevention gigs "for the fun of it" and has seen, first hand, Calgary's criminal element in action. She shared her knowledge and personal stories with us the evening of April 10, 2003. Please see below for some impressions from her audience.

The evening with Carol was frightening and I drove home looking in my rear view mirror. A warning came over the radio that  911 was down and, after hearing that, I had to drive through my dark back alley to pull into my garage. I knew then that my research in fear was complete; it took a glass of wine and a few minutes before my heartbeat returned to normal! The one tidbit that really stood out for me was Carol's note about Charter and Caution. It's the equivalent of the Miranda in the U.S., but neither Canadian nor U.S. police are required to deliver it to a suspect unless they want answers to their questions. I'd love to hear Carol speak again but let's get her back during the day! *Trish Gartshore*

People in law enforcement definitely have a different perspective on life. I couldn't help noticing Carol's eyes light up when she described the good guys taking on the bad guys as nothing more than a game. A game! What does Carol do for relaxation? Wrestle alligators? Skydive without a

parachute? I'll never be able to look at the obituary page again with quite the same naivety. The next time I read about the sudden death of a young person, I won't be thinking of traffic accidents or cystic fibrosis or even suicide—I'll be wondering if it was modern street drugs that caused his or her death. *Janet Hunter*

Carol was not the usual burly type that I associate with loss prevention. She has to use her wits to outsmart the criminal element and that's an approach I hadn't really thought of. I particularly enjoyed the way she used actual situations to show what she meant, as that's much more interesting than having stats and rules listed from a book. I think I'm much more likely to remember the things she told us because of her frank and candid way of speaking. *Jude Wilner*

Carol painted a picture of perverts lurking around every corner, parents showing no responsibility, and teenagers who wait in their rooms to escape their parents so they can commit crimes with their friends. Her attitude toward the public? We are unwitting victims never knowing we have been victimized. Although I came away with fodder for a story, I still believe the police care about me, "Joan Public". I also believe teenagers respect their parents and the law, even if they do not always agree with the rules; that most parents love and care for their children and that when I walk down the street, there is not a pervert waiting around the corner.

Margaret Brick

As a writer, I wanted to learn everything I could from Carol; as a Calgarian, I heard more than I wanted to! I really didn't need to know that young drug addicts—sick with Hepatitis C or AIDS—are just down the aisle from me at my drugstore, stuffing electric toothbrushes and electric razors into their clothing, to be traded for street drugs, or money to buy street drugs. No more will I be thinking that drug addicts, sexual deviants and shoplifters live in their own world, nowhere near mine. Gee thanks, Carol! *Penny Grey*

Mystery Writers Ink— with Terry Biswanger

by *Nina Evashkevich*

In order to cope in the field, many medical personnel develop "gallows humour." They find humour in the smallest things that other "normal" people wouldn't see as funny.

- There is nothing like the smell of jet fuel and burning flesh.
- If you have a high quality blood sample, a pin-drop of blood can be replicated enough using P.C.R. for DNA, to test it. If it degraded or mixed with anything, that small of a sample is useless.
- When at a crime scene, you turn off the lights and use your flashlight.



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- You can see prints on a car, even in the rain. If the car is dirty, fingerprints haven't been left, the dirt is simply taken away.
- Fingerprints are matched up by computers but a person still has to analyze the data.
- When looking for a "match" in fingerprints, there is no universal standard. A match of eight to ten fingerprints is most accurate.
- If bones are ever found, EVERYTHING stops, so that the anthropologists can come and sift the site grain by grain (of dirt or sand).
- You have to wait to process a body until the medical examiner is done with it.
- The medical examiner will have the forensic team roll the body, and print it. The M.E. takes all the valuables off the body.
- You have to photograph EVERYTHING! They want an overview, mid-range, and close-up.
- Photographs and measurements must be taken of all the blood spatter, and/or fingerprints, and everything must be measured as to where it is in relationship to everything else in the room, including what direction each one is facing.
- It is not unusual at a homicide to shoot 500-600 photos. They aren't all developed--most are processed to negative and then filed in case they are needed in the future.
- At a crime scene, the entire place is covered with fingerprint powder.
- When doing a cast impression, you will first photograph and measure the foot/tire print. You have to set up a tripod and take the pictures from six different angles, measurements are taken and then it is casted.
- There are only five or six major crime labs in Canada. In the States, almost every municipality has a small crime lab. It does depend on the location, however, and how much money and funding that area has.
- In Alberta, if someone is stopped by the police and a blood alcohol sample is taken, it is driven (not couriered) to Edmonton to the crime lab.
- In Alberta, if an autopsy is done, the histology is done in Calgary and the toxicology is done in Edmonton. When you are autopsied, part of your body is in both places.
- Forensic Pathologists don't make as much money as television implies.
- In a drowning, the body will remain on the bottom of the water source until the gasses caused by decomposition build up. At this point, the body will float to the top.
- If a person is alive when they drown, there will be foaming at the mouth and nose, because the air in the lungs and the acid in the stomach foams up.
- A person can be drowned and show no "signs of struggle" like bruising.
- If a person gets shot or stabbed, but not killed or totally incapacitated, they run. They don't just drop, they leave a blood trail all over the place.
- It is obvious when a person is dead because of the pallor they get (yellowish grey) almost immediately.
- A certain percentage of people can smell cyanide, which smells like burnt almonds.
- People who die of carbon monoxide poisoning get a "cherry" complexion.
- People die with their eyes open, not closed.
- Body fluids release when you die. (They don't show that on TV.) The bowels/bladder immediately relax and empty because they are controlled by muscles.



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· If a person dies in a fire, their skin & muscles contract and the hands ball into fists, as if a person is trying to box.

· Embalming fluid really makes a mess of things for forensics although you can still find heavy metals in hair shafts and nails (indicating blood poisoning).

· Drug testing is done on hair, because that is where it shows up most clearly.

· Rigor-mortis starts in the smallest muscles first, is full blown in approximately 12 hours, and leaves the body after 24 hours, sometimes lasting up to 36 hours, depending on the environmental conditions. During this time, the body looks as if the fingernails have grown and the hair looks longer. This is caused because of the skin contracting. After rigor mortis has left the body, it all looks normal again.

· Rigor mortis is caused by muscles breaking down.

· A dead body really is dead weight. It usually takes at least two people to move a dead body. Corpses are very awkward to move.

· Don't bother trying to hide a body, someone always finds it.

· Lividity is when the blood pools to the lowest part of the

body. You can tell if a person has been moved by where the blood is pooled, ie: the blood is pooled on the back, but the person is found sitting upright in a chair. Lividity takes place in just a few hours.

· Vicks under your nose, or chewing something like cinnamon gum can help blot out the "smell of death".

· You can get prints off rubber gloves. Turn them inside out and viola, there are the prints.

· You can get fingerprints off a dead body because of the oil in a person's skin when they touch the body. The carbon powder attaches to the oil.

· You can't tell how long a fingerprint has been there, or which prints were put there first.

· They don't do "type" (A, B, O, AB) testing on blood anymore, they just check it for DNA.

· After an autopsy, the organs are put into the stomach, even the brain.

· You can buy most autopsy instruments at a building store.

· Hardening of the arteries is real--they crunch when cut.

· You can tell by looking at bones approximately how long ago they were broken, or in the

case of multiple fractures, in what order (over time) they were broken because of aging and healing.

· Because of scarring, you can tell if a person has had a heart attack. You can also tell if they've had previous heart attacks.

· Organs to be transplanted must be harvested within hours to be viable.

· Luminol does work, but it only lasts for a couple of minutes, long enough to get a picture.

· Baby wipes work well to get fingerprint powder off. Fingerprint powder comes in all different colors, but the standard color is black. Most technicians wear black clothes so the powder won't show.

WELCOME TO "(W)Rites of Summer"

Who? Cecelia Frey and 8 writers (short story, novel-in-progress, creative non-fiction) who are over 18 years of age. The workshop is limited to 8 participants.

What? The AWCS first annual Summer Writing Workshop.

Why? To share a 5-day comprehensive writing experience that will include instruction, discussion, writing, inspiration and enjoyment.



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Where? The Alexandra Writers Centre, 922 9th Avenue S. E. Calgary, Alberta. Enter through door #3 (side door).

When? July 14th - 18th, 2003
9:30 - 11:30 - Morning Workshop
11:30 - 1:00 - Lunch
1:00-3:30 - Individual consultations with Cecelia Frey, small group discussion, focus groups, etc. as decided by facilitator and participants.

Thursday Evening Reading 7:30 p.m. AWCS will host a summer reading by all participants and Cecelia Frey. Wine and refreshments. Everyone welcome.

For information on cost and how to apply please contact Margaret Brick: mbrick@direct.ca

Program Schedule

Thursday June 12, 2003
Old Y Centre
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
AGM: cast your vote and participate in "Death by Chocolate".

Topic: "Building a Home Writing Business: Financing your Fiction"
Presenters: Brenda Collins & Nina Evashkevich

Thursday Sept 11, 2003
Old Y Centre
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Welcome back!

Topic: TBA
(see the Sept. newsletter)

Mystery Writers Ink Society
223 - 12th Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta T2R 0G9
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.

Solved

We have a new "Mystery Sleuth!"

Question: What outlaw, made famous by Hollywood movie screens, has ties to our Alberta heritage and maybe even got his push into crime here?



The SunDance Kid, AKA Harry Longabaugh, Harry Alonzo, Harry Place, Frank Jones, and Frank Boyd. He worked at the Bar U Ranch and was arrested for cruelty to animals in 1891. After he was swindled in a business deal at the Grand Central Saloon he left Alberta and wandered into the history books.

MJ Brick
Member, MWI

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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 Submissions

Mystery Press is published quarterly in September, December, March and June.
Original material only please. Articles may not be reprinted without permission of the authors. INK reserves the right to edit submissions.

Deadline for the September newsletter: Aug 20/03.

Please send submissions by E-mail to Penny Grey:
pegrey@greygroup.ca

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!