

# THE 3rd Degree

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA

february

## Hello, I must be going!

by Reed Farrel Coleman

Hellos are always so much easier than goodbyes.

And the fact that I am composing this farewell letter during the final week of my tenure isn't making the task any easier.

Between my duties at MWA, my career, and my family, this last year has been a bit of a blur and I am certain that after a few months to reflect on it, I will be better able to focus on the things that were accomplished, as opposed to missed opportunities.

Having said that, I can assure you that the representatives you have elected as Board President, chapter presidents, and At-Large Directors — and the officers they, in turn, elect — care deeply about the organization and the individual members.

Passion is probably not the first word to come to mind when you consider your elected representatives, but it should be. If you could see as I did how hard these folks work, the level of personal sacrifice they make in order to serve you, then you would share the same high level of confidence I have that Mystery Writers of America will continue to flourish.

This commitment, at least during my term, started at the top. Although the presidency of MWA can be a figurehead position, Janet Evanovich rejected that notion right off the bat. In spite of releasing several books this year, she attended nearly every board meeting, made herself available to me whenever I needed to discuss pressing issues or strategy, attended SleuthFest, and threw herself headfirst into organizational matters. Many of the things that may be considered my accomplishments were due in large part to Janet's guidance and support.

That, and she called me a "stud muffin" from the podium at the Edgar Banquet last year.

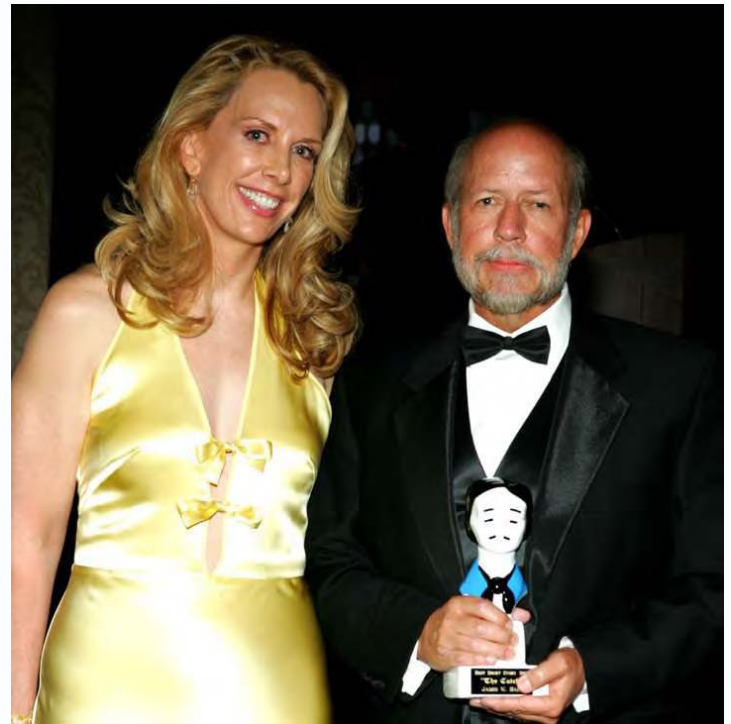
I also owe special thanks to Bob Williamson, Noreen Wald, Charles Todd and Margery Flax, our Treasurer, Secretary, Parliamentarian, and queen, respectively. Their sage advice and counsel served me well.

In the coming years you should see the fruits of the board's labors. By next year at this time, MWA's state-of-the-art website should be one of the most highly visited book sites on the net.

We have formed an alliance with a nationally syndicated



Reed Farrel  
"Stud Muffin" Coleman



2006 Edgar Winner for Best Short Story James W. Hall with Twist Phelan

## Recipe for a novel

By James W. Hall

"Mediocre writers borrow; great writers steal." So said T.S. Eliot. He wasn't encouraging plagiarism, but was distilling into a sentence a general approach that all writers use — whether they are conscious of it or not — to develop their craft.

In all the centuries before there were coast-to-coast creative-writing programs, ordinary folks had been learning to write poems, novels, plays, and stories quite well.

Though I've been teaching in a university writing program for 35 years and am absolutely certain that the service we provide to aspiring writers is of an overall benefit to many, I am equally certain that attending an academic institution to learn to write a novel is not necessary. Nor is it necessary to read how-to books on plot or character or the use of setting.

Everything a writer needs to learn her craft is sitting on her own bookshelf at this moment, just waiting to be plundered.

This may sound like heresy. A writer, and writing teacher,

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# boardreport



The 2007 MWA National Board of Directors met for the first time on January 20. The board's new officers are Daniel J. Hale, Executive Vice President; Frankie Y. Bailey, Secretary; and Bob Williamson, Treasurer.

New MWA President Nelson DeMille also attended the meeting.

Retiring board members include *TTD* Chair Steve Brewer, who provided this Board Report each month. Many thanks to Steve for his fine work and leadership during the redesign of the publication this year.

As new *TTD* Chair, I'm looking forward to working with Editor Beth Tindall and Assistant Editor Annie Chernow, and can only hope to fill Steve's size 11s.

--Sandy Balzo

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you use [mwa\\_org@earthlink.net](mailto:mwa_org@earthlink.net) to send e-mail to the National Office, please change your contact information to [mwa@mysterywriters.org](mailto:mwa@mysterywriters.org). The Earthlink address will no longer be valid starting Feb. 1, 2007.

**mwa**  **ontheair**  
L.C. Hayden



"Hello, this is Hollywood calling. We loved your book. We're thinking a movie for the big screen or maybe a series for the little screen." What author doesn't dream of receiving such a call? Unfortunately, for most of us, the Hollywood connection seems so elusive.

If you're one of the many who would like to learn the ins and outs of Hollywood, come listen to Rona Edwards and Monika Skerbelis, co-authors of the critically acclaimed book, *I Liked It, Didn't Love It: Screenplay Development from the Inside Out*. These director/producers have had more than 25 years' experience in the film industry, having worked in development for major studios (Universal, 20th Century Fox, Paramount) and have had movies produced with VH1, ABC, USA, HBO, Lifetime, CBS, Warners Bros. and many others. The show airs on Tues., Feb. 13 at 8 p.m. Central.

Closely related to the Hollywood theme is the Broadway connection. Broadway personality Zev Buffman has joined forces with Angela Lansbury and other authors to revive great mystery plays and screenplays. This show will air on Tues., March 13 at 8 p.m. Central.

To listen to these shows, dial toll-free 866-212-0875 from USA, or 866-212-7554 from Canada, or 978-964-0049 Direct Global Toll. When prompted, punch in the participant passcode: 7629501#. During the last fifteen minutes of the show, I'll open all lines so that my guests can receive questions from you, the listeners. You can also e-mail questions and suggestions for future guests and topics to [ontheair@mysterywriters.org](mailto:ontheair@mysterywriters.org).

Last month's show brought us co-publishers Kate Stine and Brian Skupin of *Mystery Scene*. They revealed information important to the entire mystery community. The MWA Members Only website has archives of this show and others.

L. C. Hayden's last mystery, *What Others Know*, was a *Left Coast Crime Award Finalist*. Her newest book, *Why Casey Had to Die*, was a *December 2006 release*.

The official newsletter of  
**Mystery Writers of America**  
ISSN #1535-9034  
Published 10 times per year

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### TTD by e-mail

If you would prefer to receive your *TTD* by e-mail, please let the national office know. You must be able to receive large PDFs (1-2M) as e-mail attachments.



# An unacceptable death

By Gary Phillips

When someone you know leaves us, someone who was talented, who overcame and who was in the last and most important analysis, a good person, you can't believe it. Barbara Seranella, award-winning, bestselling mystery writer died this past January at the not-so-old age of 50 as she waited for her third liver transplant.

You can — and I would suggest you do if you haven't — read one of Barbara's novels featuring the hard-nosed Munch Mancini to pick up on the similarities between the character and the writer. Barbara made no secret of her past and, indeed, had triumphed over it to be clean and sober and productive.

In addition to her fiction, an essay she wrote for the *L.A. Times* that ran as her New Year's resolution on December 31st really gives you an idea of the kind of woman Barbara was.

"These days I exist in a state of grace. I don't get angry; there's no one I argue with. Nothing is a big deal. I'm not worried about my career or signs of aging. I feed the birds and watch them eat. In my lack of hustle, mysteries have been solved."

Now that's tough. No pretense. No "woe is me" — just that straight forward manner that marked her style of writing and how she lived her life.

When she told me about her condition at Left Coast Crime in El Paso, I was the one tearing up, not her.

So not to contradict the departed, but for me the mystery still remains: Why did she have to die? Where's the cosmic fairness in that?

I'm going to miss you, Barbara.  
 We all are going to miss you.



Barbara Seranella

Photo by Jeff Kreider, *The Book Orphanage*

## Complete Range of Editorial Services

Professional editor and published author offers complete editorial workout to new and experienced mystery writers.



Benefit from years of editorial experience at major publishing houses. Honest evaluation, sensitive critique, plot/character development, line editing, rewrites.

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## markets

G. Miki Hayden



**Oceanview Publishing** is currently accepting submissions of book-length adult fiction and non-fiction from new and established authors. Send a 750-word synopsis and the first 30 pages of the manuscript via e-mail and follow the guidelines on the publisher's site. Agented or nonagented submissions will be considered. The review process takes 90 days. Books on the Oceanview list include *South Beach Shakedown* by Don Bruns, *The Perfect Assassin* by Ward Larsen and *Death Angel* by Martha Powers.

-- [www.oceanviewpub.com](http://www.oceanviewpub.com)

**Authors Ink Books** will accept e-mail queries, but sample chapters or full manuscripts will only be accepted in hard copy via the postal service. By mail, send a query letter with the first three chapters, or 50 pages of printed text plus a chapter by chapter summary. Include your marketing ideas in an outline or a detailed proposal. (Decisions will be based on your writing, however.) Turnaround is six weeks, and an exclusive look is requested.

-- [www.authorsinkbooks.com](http://www.authorsinkbooks.com)

Literary crime or thriller submissions must be made by your agent to **Bitter Lemon Press**, and return postage and packing materials are requested. The press would like a synopsis and a sample chapter as the first submission. "Our books are entertaining and gripping novels that expose the darker side of foreign places," according to the guidelines. "They explore what lies just beneath the surface of the bustling life of cities such as Paris, Havana, Munich and Mexico City."

-- [www.bitterlemonpress.com](http://www.bitterlemonpress.com)

G. Miki Hayden's *The Naked Writer* is a sophisticated style guide for all levels of writers.

## New England Crime Fiction Contest

In memory of Al Blanchard, co-chair of the first three New England Crime Bake Conferences, NEMWA President, and member of Sisters in Crime, the New England Crime Bake Committee is sponsoring its third annual short crime fiction contest.

The prize is \$100 plus publication in Level Best Books' fifth anthology of crime fiction. The story must be a crime story by a New England author OR with a New England setting, previously unpublished (in print or electronically), must not be more than 5,000 words in length, and may include the following genres: mystery, thriller, suspense, caper, and horror, but no torture/killing of children or animals.

This is a blind contest with NO entry fee. The deadline for submissions is April 30, 2007. It is okay to submit the same story again, provided it has not been published in the meantime. It is also okay to submit more than one story. The winner will be a guest of the Crime Bake Committee at the **New England Crime Bake**, held every year in mid-November, where the award will be presented in person.

**Q. It's almost tax time! I do all my writing at home. Is it worth taking a "home office" deduction? And what other deductions may I take?**

A. Although the IRS carefully scrutinizes home office deductions, they are permissible if you strictly follow IRS guidelines.

Briefly, your use of the business part of your home must be exclusive and regular, AND the business part of your home must be one of the following: a) your principal place of business, or b) a place where you meet or deal with clients or customers in the normal course of your business, or c) a separate structure (not attached to your home).

For most writers, the key is the "exclusive use" test: You must use a specific area of your home only for your writing, although the area used for writing can be a room or other separately identifiable space — the space need not be marked off by a permanent partition.

You do NOT meet the requirements of the exclusive use test if you use the area both for business and for personal purposes, e.g. using your den to write and also watch television. If, however, you dedicate a section of your den exclusively to your writing, that exclusive area (by square footage) may satisfy the test.

The amount of the deduction is based on the ratio of business usage to non-business usage of your entire home.

For example, if 15 percent of your home or apartment is exclusively used as an office, then 15 percent of all household expenses, including electricity, rent, heating, repairs, insurance, and tips to your mailman, are deductible.

Homeowners also can take a depreciation deduction. For more information, see IRS Publication 587, *Business Use of Your Home*, which can be obtained online at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

**Other Deductions.** Of course, writers also can deduct on their Schedule C of Form 1040 all "ordinary and necessary" business expenses, but "necessary" does not mean "indispensable." Some common expenses that writers may deduct include office and computer supplies, postage, writer's

workshops and conferences, duplicating and printing, magazines subscriptions, professional services, telephone and Internet service, business use of a car, advertising and promotional costs,

travel, parking and tolls, and professional organization dues.

If property you acquire for business use is expected to last more than one year, however (a desk, bookcase, computer or printer, for example), there are special rules you must follow to depreciate the property, explained in IRS Publication 946, *How to Depreciate Property*.

**But You Can't Deduct For Non-Payment.** Writers frequently sell stories and even novels to publishers that go out of business or otherwise don't pay. There is a very common misconception that this is a "bad debt" for which the writer may take a deduction. Not so! In fact, according to the IRS, in Publication 334, *Tax Guide for Small Business*, "Cash method taxpayers normally do not report income until they receive payment. Therefore, they cannot take a bad debt deduction for payments they have not received or cannot collect."

*Daniel Steven is Chairman of the MWA Contracts and Grievances Committee and a publishing and media attorney. This column provides general legal information; consult an attorney for application of the law to your specific circumstances. © 2007 Daniel Steven*



**Reed's goodbye**

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participating in a contest to award a contract to an unpublished author.

We have formed an alliance with a nationally syndicated radio show that features MWA guest authors on an almost-weekly basis. And this show is being developed for television.

Within the next few months, the MWA *Books in Print* guide will be out and made available to book sellers and libraries. It will also be a useful tool for MWA at BEA, the Miami Book Fair, and the like.

MWA's presence at book fairs and conventions will continue to grow as we sponsor entire mystery tracks. We will likely be entering into sponsorship agreements with major corporations in order to expand the organization and its influence in the publishing community.

But not everything we've done is on the grand scale. We have taken a much more proactive stance toward our local chapters by encouraging them, with both words and funds, to develop local events. For example, this past year marked

the premier Killer Nashville Convention run by the SEMWA Chapter under the guidance of Clay Stafford.

We have allotted over \$10,000 to the Author Enrichment Fund, the aim of which is to help our affiliate members take the next step to publication and active membership.

We have increased the number of pages in *The Third Degree* and the newsletter has changed the focus to more writer-relevant material. We've also enhanced its look.

The board's other good works are just too numerous to list. Before I go, I want to remind you all about the upcoming Edgar Week. We've selected the great Stephen King as Grand Master. TV personality Al Roker has graciously agreed to host the banquet. Kris Montee and Kelly Nichols (PJ Parrish) are going to produce an amazing show.

Please come out and show your support for the organization.

Ultimately, what we do on the board will succeed or fail based upon your level of involvement and support. Please volunteer, answer the questionnaires, send in your dues promptly.

It was a rare honor to serve the organization and I thank you all.

*Reed Farrel Coleman's newest Moe Prager book, Soul Patch, will be released in May 2007.*

# chapternews



## Florida

SleuthFest Law & Order will be held April 19-22 in Miami Beach, with guests of honor bestselling author Linda Fairstein and Rene Balcer, producer/writer for *Law & Order*. Registration costs increase Feb. 15. Visit [www.sleuthfest.com](http://www.sleuthfest.com) for more information.

## Mid-Atlantic

The Mid-Atlantic Chapter has a full schedule planned for February and March. On Feb. 6, former prosecutor Linda Fairstein will thrill our Chapter dinner audience.

Edgar®-winning author Dan Stashower will read from his newest book, *The Beautiful Cigar Girl*, on Feb. 19 at a joint event with Chapters: A Literary Bookstore.

Best-selling novelist Sara Paretsky speaks Feb. 27 at a reception hosted by the Library of Congress, in cooperation with MWA. Our Mar. 13 Chapter dinner topic is "Marketing your Novel," with Patrick Hyde.

Award-winning author Laura Lippman will be featured at Chapters: A Literary Bookstore on Mar. 19. The Hon. William S. Cohen, former Secretary of Defense, and his wife Janet Langhart Cohen, will speak at our dinner on Mar. 27.

## Midwest

Under the leadership of new Midwest Chapter Board member Larry Sweazy, the January meeting was held in Indianapolis, with 31 people attending.

In February, there are two meetings. The first will be in Chicago at the Love is Murder (on Dark and Stormy Nights) convention. Our speaker will be Ken Bruen. As always with Ken, we anticipate a most interesting presentation. This meeting will be held on Sun., Feb. 4 at 10:00 a.m., and one does not need to register for the convention to attend.

There will also be a meeting of the Twin Cities area contingent. New Midwest Chapter Board member Jess Lourey has arranged for Minnesota-based publisher Midnight Ink to host an MWMWA meeting at its Woodbury (suburb of St. Paul) offices on Feb. 13, from 7-9 p.m. Midnight Ink will be providing food and drink as well as the speakers. Alison Aten, their head of publicity, and acquisitions editor Barbara Moore will be among those available to present and answer questions about publishing and publicizing.

## New England

On Tuesday, Feb. 6, MWA New England will welcome speaker Casey Sherman. Casey's true crime thriller, *Search for the Strangler*, chronicles the author's 12-year re-investigation into the murder of his aunt Mary Sullivan — the youngest



Laura Durham is the new Mid-Atlantic Chapter president.  
Photo by Carla Coupe

and last victim of the Boston Strangler. Was she murdered by Albert DeSalvo? Did he actually commit any of the crimes to which he confessed? Sherman reveals new information that could answer the questions once and for all.

Sherman is the senior writer at CBS4 News and a contributing writer for *Boston Magazine*. He's been profiled in *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *People Magazine*. He has also appeared on dozens of television programs, including *The Today Show* and *America's Most Wanted*.

## New York

As Jane K. Cleland assumed the chapter presidency, she announced the recording of all speaker programs. The podcasts are available on the chapter's new website as MP3s.

Jane has appointed Charles Benoit as the first chair of our new Library Relations Committee to build ongoing, useful, strategic relationships with librarians throughout our region.

Also on the New York regional board are incumbents Jason Starr and Jim Weikart and second termers, the Hon. Andrew J. Peck. Elected to a first one-year term are Jillian Abbott, E. W. Count, and Peggy Ehrhart. Elected to a first two-year term are Alafair Burke, Kevin Berean, Chris Grabenstein, Robert Knightly, and Tim McLoughlin.

Leaving the board after 2 two-year terms are G. Miki Hayden, Madeline Weitsman, and Barry T. Zeman.

## Northern California

In March, we'll hold our next meeting as usual at John's

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# Novel recipe

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making the case for stealing the work of others... well, yes, heretical it may be, but it's also the truth, and it also works.

I learned this the hard way, starting my own apprenticeship as a writer with four failed novels. I spent about 10 years trying without success to write a serious literary novel.

After reading many biographies of great writers, and from talking to writer friends of mine, I estimate that the average apprenticeship for any writer, from the day that she makes writing a central, dominant part of her workday, to the point at which she is actually publishing and getting paid for what she writes, is roughly ten years — about how long it took me.

Some manage to cover this ground more quickly, some take longer. Some write four novels that fail, some write two or three, some write and rewrite the same one until they learn their craft.

But 10 years is a ballpark estimate. Which suggests to me that you sure as hell better love the daily process of writing if you're going to sustain your enthusiasm through that long trek.

And it wouldn't hurt to have a day job, too.

After failing four times, I reached the conclusion that even though I had a Ph.D. in literature and had published short stories and poems in literary journals for years, I was simply not smart enough to write a novel. But, stubbornly, I still wanted to do it.

So I hit upon the simplest strategy I could think of. I sat down and dissected a book that I dearly loved, a popular novel (that will go unnamed), one that while not exactly of high literary status, had been a reasonable commercial success and was close to the kind of novel that I thought maybe, just maybe, I could write.

I dissected and dissected, outlined, made notes. Chapter by chapter, page by page. Scene by scene. I scrawled observations in the margins of the novel. I even typed out verbatim whole pages of it, dialog, setting, action, all of it. I was determined to absorb this book on some cellular level, digest its rhythms, its pace, its narrative techniques and so on until I could mimic it in my sleep.

Then with the book open beside me at my computer, I wrote my first chapter. Same number of characters, same number of words, same amount of dialog, same quantity of action, a dash of setting, some quick character descriptions. I didn't steal the words, the idea, the plot, or anything beyond the most elementary aspects of the book's architecture.

When I'd finished the first 10 pages, which was very close to the length of my model's first chapter, I turned to the second chapter and repeated the process. I consulted my model every step along the way. Every paragraph, every page. I tried very hard to avoid using even a single word from the original, or to duplicate anything in it beyond the structural elements.

Then something surprising happened. By chapter seven

I found myself not paying nearly as much attention to the novel that lay open on my desk. Because the novel unfolding on my computer screen was taking possession of me.

I think of this process now as being like the booster rocket that pushes the heavy payload off the ground and propels beyond the pull of gravity, then when it's served its purpose it drops away and the space capsule (your own novel) continues on its own course, and finds its own orbit.

This finished novel became *Under Cover of Daylight* and it was published by W.W. Norton in 1987. It was reviewed favorably, sold more copies than most first novels do, and it started a career in novel writing that I'm still engaged in 20 years later.

About a dozen years ago when I decided to try to teach a novel writing course in the MFA program at Florida International University where I work, I used this same approach.

The course was titled, "Writing Your First Novel." Rather than rely on one of the many fine fiction writing textbooks that are out there (Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction* being the best of the lot), I had each student spend a couple of weeks deciding on a particular novel they would use as their model.

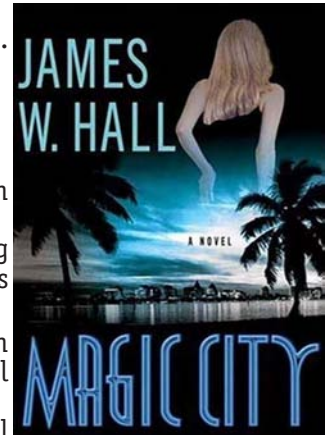
That's the first issue we discussed, and it's a crucial step in this process. For some beginning writers there's no doubt in their mind when it comes to selecting a model. They know and love a particular book with such passion that it stands apart from all other books they've read in its influence over them.

For other beginning writers choosing a model for their own work can get confusing. They like so many books, admire the abilities and styles and skills of so many different writers that picking one out of that huge assortment is a daunting task. But it must be done to follow this method.

Of course, we are all influenced by many of the books we've read. We admire certain writers for certain aspects of their craft, and other writers for completely different skills.

For instance, I think of John D. MacDonald, the creator of Travis McGee, as an incredibly good writer of action scenes. When two men are fighting, his descriptions of the physicality of the events is nearly without parallel. Ross Macdonald is great with faces and expressions and eyes. James Lee Burke is fantastic with weather, and Elmore Leonard is the master of dialog. Sue Grafton has a voice, wry but tough, that I dearly love. And on and on.

But when it comes to choosing a model for your first novel, you MUST, focus on only one. More than that confuses the issue.



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# Recipe

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The novel you choose should be one that will sustain your long-term interest. (That sometimes won't become clear until you've tried out this method for a month or so.) It should have been commercially



James W. Hall

(though not necessarily a blockbuster). It should have been written within the last 50 years or so. (Times and fashions change so radically, and it can be dangerous to choose a book that was popular in some bygone era, but seems silly in our current one.) And the book you choose should fall in your comfort zone. (You don't want to pick a Tom Clancy novel as your model if you

have no patience for research, or don't already possess a vast storehouse of information about some area of expertise.)

Hemingway had Sherwood Anderson's stories open on his desk when he struggled to write his own first stories. He was convinced he could write at least as well as Anderson. He stole a great deal from Sherwood Anderson and were it not for using Anderson as his model, many of the stories in *In Our Time* (Hemingway's first collection of short stories) could not have been written.

Great writers steal. Which means they don't simply take someone else's work and slap a fresh coat of paint on it. They take someone else's work and digest it fully, absorb it into their own chemistry and what was once Sherwood Anderson is transformed into something all new, totally fresh, with only the faintest echoes of the original.

Several students in that long-ago class went on to publish novels. All of them are still publishing novels today, even in a very competitive marketplace.

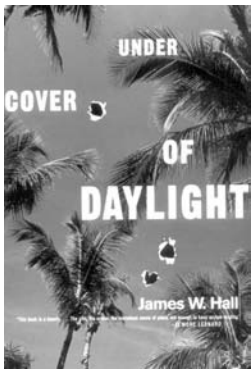
I'm not trying to take any credit for their success. They learned to write their novels the old-fashioned way, the way writers have always learned to write. They didn't study literary theory. They didn't analyze Aristotle's *Poetics* to learn to plot their novels.

They sat down with a pre-existing version of the thing they wanted to do, and studied it till they knew it inside and out and could use that model to support them through the long and difficult stages of composition, until they were ultimately able to give birth to their own creation.

*James W. Hall is the author of 14 novels, the most recent of which is Magic City (March 2007). He lives in South Florida and North Carolina.*

## SAMPLE: Opening chapter

Using the model described, here is how my own first chapter of *Under Cover of Daylight* might be outlined:



### Opening Chapter -- Who, what, when, where

- **10-12 ms. pages:** (2500 words approximately) It is important to have this in mind at the outset so you can pace yourself to the first breaking point.

- **Two characters**
- **The season of year; the weather**
- **The historical moment:** What year?

- **Establish location:** general -- South Florida; more specific -- Key Largo; and even more specific -- the main character's room

- **Establish central dramatic conflict:** The WHAT that drives the story

- **What actions take place?** These should be the actions which will ripple through the rest of the novel

- **WHY these actions take place:** the psychological reasons the people behave as they do will come later and be part of the suspense and mystery as the reader discovers

more and more about why the main character did what he did. Many of the other events of the rest of the story are also direct consequences of this initial action. A stone thrown in a still pond, the ripples spread through the entire story.

- **Establish the specific work (job) of central character:** My character ties fishing lures for a living. Ideally this job should have some metaphorical connection with other aspects of the story.

- **The two characters should speak to each other for at least one page.**

- **The two characters should struggle, physically and psychologically.**

- **They should touch each other.**

- **There should be uncertainty about who will prevail.**

- **The outcome of this struggle should be violent and unexpected.**

- **A death will occur.**

- **The consequences of this struggle should be what propels the psychology of the main character and the rest of the action of the novel.**

- **A seed should be planted in this opening scene:** A shadow character who may have witnessed the violent event that will flower into a major aspect of the storyline.

# Edgar® nominees

## Best Novel

- The Pale Blue Eye** by Louis Bayard (HarperCollins)  
**The Janissary Tree** by Jason Goodwin (Sarah Crichton Books/FSG)  
**Gentlemen and Players** by Joanne Harris (HarperCollins - William Morrow)  
**The Dead Hour** by Denise Mina (Hachette Book Group - Little, Brown and Company)  
**The Virgin of Small Plains** by Nancy Pickard (Random House - Ballantine Books)  
**The Liberation Movements** by Olen Steinhauer (St. Martin's Minotaur)

## Best First Novel By An American Author

- The Faithful Spy** by Alex Berenson (Random House)  
**Sharp Objects** by Gillian Flynn (Crown - Shaye Areheart Books)  
**King of Lies** by John Hart (St. Martin's Minotaur - Thomas Dunne Books)  
**Holmes on the Range** by Steve Hockensmith (St. Martin's Minotaur)  
**A Field of Darkness** by Cornelia Read (Warner Books - Mysterious Press)

## Best Paperback Original

- The Goodbye Kiss** by Massimo Carlotto (Europa Editions)  
**The Open Curtain** by Brian Evenson (Coffee House Press)  
**Snakeskin Shamisen** by Naomi Hirahara (Bantam Dell Publishing - Delta Books)  
**The Deep Blue Alibi** by Paul Levine (Bantam Dell Publishing - Bantam Books)  
**City of Tiny Lights** by Patrick Neate (Penguin Group - Riverhead Books)

## Best Critical/Biographical

- Unless the Threat of Death is Behind Them: Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir** by John T. Irwin (Johns Hopkins University Press)  
**The Science of Sherlock Holmes: From Baskerville Hall to the Valley of Fear** by E.J. Wagner (John Wiley & Sons)

## Best Fact Crime

- Strange Piece of Paradise** by Terri Jentz (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)  
**A Death in Belmont** by Sebastian Junger (W.W. Norton and Co.)  
**Finding Amy: A True Story of Murder in Maine** by Capt. Joseph K. Loughlin & Kate Clark Flora (University Press of New England)  
**Ripperology: A Study of the World's First Serial Killer** by Robin Odell (The Kent State University Press)  
**The Beautiful Cigar Girl: Mary Rogers, Edgar Allan Poe and the Invention of Murder** by Daniel Stashower (Dutton)  
**Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer** by James L. Swanson (HarperCollins - William Morrow)

## Best Short Story

- "The Home Front"** - *Death Do Us Part* by Charles Ardai (Hachette Book Group - Little, Brown and Company)  
**"Rain"** - *Manhattan Noir* by Thomas H. Cook (Akashic Books)  
**"Cranked"** - *Damn Near Dead* by Bill Crider (Busted Flush Press)  
**"Building"** - *Manhattan Noir* by S.J. Rozan (Akashic Books)

## Best Young Adult

- The Road of the Dead** by Kevin Brooks (Scholastic - The Chicken House)  
**The Christopher Killer** by Alane Ferguson (Penguin YR - Sleuth/Viking)  
**Crunch Time** by Mariah Fredericks (Simon & Schuster - Richard Jackson Books/Atheneum)  
**Buried** by Robin Merrow MacCready (Penguin YR - Dutton Children's Books)  
**The Night My Sister Went Missing** by Carol Plum-Ucci (Harcourt Children's Books)

## Best Juvenile

- Gilda Joyce: The Ladies of the Lake** by Jennifer Allison (Penguin Young Readers - Sleuth/Dutton)  
**The Stolen Sapphire: A Samantha Mystery** by Sarah Masters Buckley (American Girl Publishing)  
**Room One: A Mystery or Two** by Andrew Clements (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers)  
**The Bloodwater Mysteries: Snatched** by Pete Hautman & Mary Logue (Penguin Young Readers - Sleuth/Putnam)  
**The Case of the Missing Marquess: An Enola Holmes Mystery** by Nancy Springer (Penguin Young Readers - Philomel/Sleuth)

## Best Play

- Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure** by Steven Dietz (Arizona Theatre Company)  
**Curtains** by Rupert Holmes (Ahmanson Theatre)  
**Ghosts of Ocean House** by Michael Kimball (The Players' Ring)

## Best Television Episode Teleplay

- The Closer** - "Blue Blood," Teleplay by James Duff & Mike Berchem (Turner Network Television)  
**Dexter** - "Crocodile," Teleplay by Clyde Phillips (Showtime)  
**House** - "Clueless," Teleplay by Thomas L. Moran (Fox/NBC Universal)  
**Life on Mars** - Episode 1, Teleplay by Matthew Graham (BBC America)  
**Monk** - "Mr. Monk Gets a New Shrink," Teleplay by Hy Conrad (USA Network/NBC Universal)

## Best Television Feature/Mini-Series Teleplay

- Conviction**, Teleplay by Bill Gallagher (BBC America)  
**Cracker: A New Terror**, Teleplay by Jimmy McGovern (BBC America)

Continued on Page 10

# chapternews



Continued from Page 5

Grill in San Francisco, Dashiell Hammet's old haunt. Visit our website for details ([www.mwanorcal.org](http://www.mwanorcal.org)) on our guest speaker either from the field of law enforcement, forensics, ballistics, or maybe even a Sacramento FBI agent.

## Northwest

MWA-NW's board spent the month of January putting the finishing touches on plans for its co-sponsorship of **Left Coast Crime** in Seattle, including Friday night's special underground tour. We're looking forward to seeing you all there, so please stop by the MWA table and say hello!

## Rocky Mountain

For our Feb. 8 meeting Troy Cook, the author of *47 Rules of Highly Effective Bank Robbers*, will discuss his book and how it was recently optioned for a movie. Since our chapter president has been on a speaking/arresting acquaintance with some rather ineffective bank robbers, this should be an interesting session.

If any of our chapter members will be in the Denver area during one of our meetings (say for a book signing), we definitely encourage them to drop in. They might even end up being our featured monthly speaker at that meeting.

## Southeast

SEMWA recently held elections for four board member positions. Members re-elected Clay Stafford as SEMWA chapter president. Sallie Bissell of Asheville, NC, will replace Linda Black as a board member and SEMWA newsletter editor. Chester Campbell was re-elected Western Area representative for another two-year term. Finally, Cathy Pickens of Charlotte, NC, is the newly elected Publicity/PR Coordinator.

## Southern California

MWA SoCal has lost its longest serving member, Patricia Matthews (1927-2006). Patricia, an active member, joined MWA in May 1965. By the time she died on Dec. 7 last year from complications due to congestive heart failure, she'd written 45 novels published in her own name, in the names of Patty Brisco and Laura Wylie, and several in collaboration with her husband Clayton Matthews.

Though she wrote suspense thrillers and contributed stories to *Alfred Hitchcock's*, *Ellery Queen's* and *Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazines*, she was best known for her historical romantic fiction. A number of her romances sold in the millions of copies. In an interview for *Contemporary Authors* (a biography series available for download on Amazon.com), Patricia said, "To bring pleasure and escape and mental stimulation to others is not an insignificant thing."

In happier news, our monthly programs are back on track.

February's luncheon will feature a dialog/interview/chat between two eminent Sherlockians: chapter member Charles Higham, author of *The Adventures of Conan Doyle* among many other books; and newly sworn-in chapter president Les Klinger, an Edgar® winner for *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*.

In mid-February the MWA SoCal Board is meeting for a one-day retreat to discuss how to further improve and energize the chapter, with an emphasis on outreach to the community and ways to include some of the chapter's farther flung members in our activities.

## Southwest

Members of the Southwest Chapter continue to look forward to their annual conference, **Hard Boiled Heroes and Cozy Cats**, to be held June 15 -16 in Dallas. The keynote speaker will be bestselling author David Morrell, creator of John Rambo.

At their January meeting, The Houston area members welcomed Ray Hill, the creator, host, and producer of **The Prison Show**, which was voted Houston's Best Talk Radio Show, 2006. Hill discussed the "Woodlands Ten" case about the 1991 murder of Paul Broussard in Houston, and what has happened to the young men convicted of the crime. Ray also spoke about life within the Texas prison system.

Dallas and Fort Worth area members had a good time at their Holiday Happy Hour in December held at the Trinity Hall. For more information, please see the Southwest Chapter web site ([www.mwasw.org](http://www.mwasw.org)).

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-- Brenda Novak

Bestselling author of *Dead Silence* (July 2006)

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# Edgar® nominees

Continued from Page 8

**Best Television Feature/Mini-Series Teleplay, continued**  
**Messiah: The Harrowing**, Teleplay by Terry Cafolla (BBC America)

**Secret Smile**, Teleplay by Kate Brooke, based on the book by Nicci French (BBC America)

**The Wire, Season 4**, Teleplays by Ed Burns, Kia Corthron, Dennis Lehane, David Mills, Eric Overmyer, George Pelecanos, Richard Price, David Simon & William F. Zorzi (Home Box Office)

## Best Motion Picture Screen Play

**Casino Royale**, Screenplay by Neal Purvis, Robert Wade & Paul Haggis, based on novel by Ian Fleming (MGM)

**Children of Men**, Screenplay by Alfonso Cuarón, Timothy J. Sexton, David Arata, Mark Fergus & Hawk Ostby, based on a novel by P.D. James (Universal Pictures)

**The Departed**, Screenplay by William Monahan (Warner Bros. Pictures)

**The Good Shepherd**, Teleplay by Eric Roth (Universal Pictures)

**Notes on a Scandal**, Screenplay by Patrick Marber (Scott Rudin Productions)

## Robert L. Fish Memorial Award

**William Dylan Powell** "Evening Gold" - EQMM November 2006 (Dell Magazines)

## Simon & Schuster-Mary Higgins Clark Award

**Bloodline** by Fiona Mountain (St. Martin's Minotaur)

freshblood



January 2007

### ACTIVE

**ALEXANDER**, Tasha **SE** *A Poisoned Season* (William Morrow) March 2007

**BORDEN**, Marian Edelman **NY** *Murder Off the Books* (Echelon Press) March 2007

**COHEN**, Lawrence **NY** "The End of the Whole Mess" - *Nightmares & Dreamscapes: From the Stories of Stephen King* (Turner Network Television) 2006

**FRITZ-COPE**, Michelle **NOCAL** *The Tunnels* (Mira Books) June 2007

**GRAY**, Penny **NE** *Everything to Prove* (Harlequin) April 2006

**JOHNS**, Linda **NW** *Hannah West in Deep Water* (Putnam Books for YR/Sleuth) 2006

**LUKASIK**, Gail **MW** *Destroying Angels* (Five Star) March 2006

**NOVAK**, Brenda **NOCAL** *Dead Right* (Mira Books) February 2007

**OVERHOLT**, Kathy **FL** *Lone Star Plague* (Leisure Books) Sept 2007

**ROWSE**, Sharon **CORR** *No Job for a Gentleman* (Carroll & Graf) 2007

**SHAMBURG**, Robin **NY** "Blind Date" - *PBS Hollywood Presents: Cop Shop* (October 2004)

**VENNE**, Matt **SOCAL** "I Saw What You Did" - Warner Brothers (2007) (*Fresh Blood, continued*)

**WILEY**, Michael **FL** *The Last Strip Tease* (St. Martin's Press) Fall 2007

(*Fresh Blood, continued*)

### ASSOCIATE

**LIPIRA**, Vicki **MW** Publisher/Editor, Great Mystery and Suspense Magazine

### AFFILIATE

**ABROMOVITZ**, Les **FL** Attorney

**BENEDICT**, Laura **MW**

**BETTIT**, Paul **NE** Journalist

**DASHOFY**, Annette **NY** Yoga Instructor

**EDWARDS**, George **MW** International Law/Academic Writing

**GRANEY**, Douglas **SW**

**HEWES**, Robert **SOCAL** Truck Driver

**JASTRZEBSKI**, Michael **FL**

**JEHN**, George **NY** Retired Airline Pilot

**JOHNSON**, Heidi **SW** Linguist/Activist

**KATZ**, Candace **MA** Deputy Director, President's Commission on the Arts & Humanities

**LYNN**, Carol **NE** Strategic Marketing Consultant

**MACDONALD**, Jedeane **RM** Technical Editor

**MCCANN**, Dale **SOCAL**

**MOSA**, Althea **NW** Retired Police Officer

**PETERSON**, Laurel **NY** Associate Professor of English

**RICHARDS**, Penny **SW** Caterer

**SANYAL**, Mary **NOCAL** Psychotherapist

**SCHAAB**, Susan **NY** Licensed Attorney

**SMITH**, Wilson **SW** Mortgage Broker

**SULLIVAN**, Irene **FL**

**TCHAKOUMI**, Virginie **SOCAL** Translator

**WALKER**, John **NOCAL** Education Specialist Cisco Systems

**WARNER**, Wanda **MA** Former Journalist/Screenwriter

**WELCH**, Leian **NY** Copywriter

### REINSTATEMENT

**GUDES**, Lynne Curtis **RM** Affiliate

**HARRELL**, Linda Bell **FL** Affiliate

**LACHACZ**, Frank **SE** Affiliate

**LINDQUIST**, N.J. **CORR** Affiliate

**O'CONNOR**, Siobhan Byrne **NY** Active

**RUMER**, Patricia **SOCAL** Active

### REQUEST FOR CHANGE TO MEMBERSHIP STATUS

**GRUNER**, Mary **MW** Affiliate to Active. *Two Wrongs* (Hard Shell Word Factory).

**NORMAN**, Michael **RM** Affiliate to Active. *The Commission* (Poisoned Pen Press) February 2007

**PERRY**, Carol **NE** Affiliate to Active. 2 short stories published by Level Best Books in anthologies plus an additional story published by New England Writers Network.

**WISEMAN**, Sarah **MW** Affiliate to Active. *The Dead Sea Codex* (Hard Shell Word Factory) January 2006.

### Make Your Hotel Reservation now!

Planning to attend this year's Edgar® ceremonies? The Grand Hyatt Hotel is offering a heavily discounted room rate of \$245/night for the week of April 23-27, 2007. This is almost \$100 off the regular room rate.

To qualify for this rate, you MUST book your reservations by March 15, 2007. Call 800-233-1234 or 212-233-1234 and ask for the "MWA" rate.

# vitalsigns



February 2007

## Books

Cordelia Frances Biddle, *The Conjurer*, St. Martin's Minotaur  
 Claudia Bishop, *Ground to a Halt*, Berkley Prime Crime  
 Lawrence Block, *Lucky at Cards*, Hard Case Crime  
 Giles Blunt, *By the Time You Read This*, Henry Holt  
 James O. Born, *Field of Fire*, Putnam  
 J. S. Borthwick, *Foiled Again*, St. Martin's Minotaur  
 Deborah Crombie, *Water Like a Stone*, William Morrow  
 Robert Dugoni, *Damage Control*, Warner Books  
 Lisa Gardner, *Hide*, Bantam  
 Lee Goldberg, *Mr. Monk and the Blue Flu*, Signet  
 Carolyn Haines, *Fever Moon*, St. Martin's Minotaur  
 Charlene Harris, *Grave Surprise*, Berkley Prime Crime  
 L. C. Hayden, *Why Casey Had To Die*, Five Star  
 Robert L. Hecker, *Murder By Proxy*, Hard Shell Word Factory  
 Steve Hockensmith, *On the Wrong Track*, St. Martin's Minotaur  
 Jonnie Jacobs, *The Next Victim*, Kensington  
 Marne Davis Kellogg, *Perfect*, Griffin  
 Bob Morris, *Bermuda Schwartz*, St. Martin's Minotaur  
 Shirley Rousseau Murphy, *Cat Pay The Devil*, Morrow  
 Shirley Rousseau Murphy, *Cat Breaking Free*, Avon  
 Robert B. Parker, *High Profile*, Putnam  
 James Patterson & Michael Ledwidge, *Step on a Crack*, Little, Brown & Co.  
 Gillian Roberts, *All's Well That Ends*, Ballantine  
 Sara Rosett, *Staying Home Is A Killer*, Kensington  
 Gammy L. Singer, *Hard Luck and Trouble: A Landlord's Tale*, Dafina  
 David Skibbins, *The Star*, St. Martin's Minotaur  
 Peter Spiegelman, *Red Cat*, Knopf  
 David Sundstrand, *Shadow of the Raven*, St. Martin's Minotaur  
 Leann Sweeney, *Shoot From The Lip*, NAL/Signet  
 Charles Todd, *A Long Shadow*, William Morrow  
 Noreen Wald, *Hurricane Homicide*, Berkley Prime Crime  
 Allen Wyler, *Dead Head*, Forge

## Short Stories

Bonnie J. Cardone, "Murder at the Marietta Inn," *Gone Coastal: A Mystery Anthology*, Seven Sisters Press  
 Joe Lee, "The Saint and The Sinner," Amazon Shorts, January 2007  
 Kris Neri, "Malibu Dreamin'," *Gone Coastal Anthology*, Seven Sisters Press, November 2006  
 Kris Neri, "Audition for Murder," *Map of Murder Anthology*, Red Coyote Press, February 2007  
 Judith R. O'Sullivan, "Suicide At Sea Isle City," *Deadly Ink 2006 Short Story Collection Anthology*, Deadly Ink Press, 2006

## Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, February 2007

Jon L. Breen, "The Missing Elevator Puzzle"  
 Steve Hockensmith, "Dear Dr. Watson"  
 Edward D. Hoch, "A Bird In The Sand"

## Young Adults/Juvenile Books

Peg Kehret, *Trapped*, Dutton Children's Books

## Stage Play

John Dandola, *The Intercessions Of Father Brown*, Premiere  
 Performance: Saturday, January 27, 2007 at 8 p.m.,  
 Seton Hall University's Theatre-in-the-Round, South  
 Orange, New Jersey

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA

Mystery Writers of America Inc.  
17 E 47th Street, 6th Floor  
New York NY 10017  
*February 2007 issue*



## *In This Issue*

- Accomplishments reviewed
- Recipe for a novel
- A sad farewell to an old friend
- Tax time have you confused?
- Full listing of Edgar nominees

photos



## Your MWA Board



**Front row, seated:** Noreen Wald, Nelson DeMille. **Second row, standing (left to right):** Les Klinger, Reed Farrel Coleman, Barbara Parker, Doug Lyle, Dan Hale, Cindy Daniel, Sandy Balzo, Jane Cleland, Cara Black, Laura Durham, Michele Martinez. **Back row:** Paula Munier, Lynne Heitman, Lee Goldberg, Clay Stafford, Steve Brewer, Harry Hunsicker, R.T. Lawton, Ted Hertel, Brian Thornton, Frankie Bailey, Bob Williamson