

All Points Bulletin

*The Twin Cities Sister in Crime Member Newsletter
January 2009*

January's Guest Speaker Violent Beginnings

Jane Gilgun is a professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. She has done in-depth interviews with perpetrators and survivors of violence for almost 30 years. Most of the perpetrators were residents of Minnesota prisons when she interviewed them. She has interviewed murderers, rapists, child molesters, women beaters, armed robbers, burglaries, and men who beat up other men.

Jane has written a great deal about violence, including poetry, short stories, a murder novel in progress, academic papers, a book on child sexual abuse that uses a lot of interview material, and a book that plays off the cover-ups that perpetrators use to avoid accountability for their acts. She also writes children's stories and recently made them available on Amazon Kindle. She checks Kindle every day, and she has some sales.

Start the New Year Right

*Tuesday, January 6th, at 7 PM
Once Upon A Crime
604 W. 26th Street, Minneapolis (East of Lyndale)*

Minutes of the December Meeting

Lori Lake passed out money from the national Sisters in Crime organization to members who worked the table at the book expo to reimburse them for parking.

Remember the 2009 dues are due now. Renew your national membership online or through the mail then pay \$10 to the local chapter.

The last mug has been given out. We need to decide what to do for future speakers. Should we buy more or something else? The general feeling was to continue with the mugs but no vote was taken.

The books for the next few months are:

January – *Blue Heaven* by **C J Box**

February – *China Lake* by **Meg Gardiner**

March – *Iron Lake* by **William Kent Krueger**

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The book for this meeting was *Blind Spot* by **Terri Persons**. Several members had read it though not all of them recently. Good discussion.

Our speaker for the evening was **Lauri Traub**, assistant public defender from Dakota County. She talked about her duties, her case load, and the guidelines for qualifying for a public defender. She discussed her personal ethics regarding defending people she knows are guilty. She also talked about some of the programs available to teen offenders and their success rate.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Reis
Secretary Emeritus

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3rd, at Once Upon A Crime, 604 W. 26th Street, Minneapolis (East of Lyndale). .

President's Message

Thank you to everyone for being part of our Twin Cities Sisters in Crime chapter during 2008. A special thanks to the officers who have loyally served for the last few years and who are no stepping down and a thank you to those who will be taking up their tasks. I hope you'll all continue to contribute and attend our monthly meetings. I know that as a group, SinC will continue to grow and support our local mystery authors.

Here's to a prosperous, exciting new year!

Marilyn Victor

Writer's Groups

There are many reasons to join a writers group, especially if you're just starting out. Instead of giving your manuscript to your best friend or mother to read, a writers group provides a peer group to help you on your way. They can help sharpen your writing, improve your writing habits, and provide a supportive creative environment. If you find a really good group, you'll also discover your creative batteries recharged after each meeting. You'll come away with new ideas, and a renewed commitment to keep writing.

Writers groups can be targeted toward one specific genre or be all encompassing. When looking for a group, decide what works best for you. I suggest finding a group interested in writing what you write. They will have a better idea of what needs to be done to write a successful novel in that genre. If they don't write in your specific genre, be sure they at least enjoy reading it. If they look down on romance books or think all mysteries are

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mindless fluff, you're not going to get the input you want, and their comments may make you give up on the whole idea of being a writer. Likewise, it's also easier for you to read and comment on work written in a genre you enjoy reading.

Getting into an already established writers group may be difficult. Most groups are usually small, although I heard of one that has 15 members. A group that works well together and has been meeting for several years often is loathe to invite in new blood. If you can't find an established group to join, consider start one of your own; that way you can tailor it to your specifications and attract like-minded people.

Before starting one or joining an established group, think about what you need as a writer. What works for one doesn't necessarily work for someone else. There are hundreds of articles on the internet about what to look for and what to avoid. Here are things that I learned from the groups I've been involved in:

Be constructive. Honest, concise, and objective criticism is the most important component in any writers group. You'll get no help from a group that continually praises your work and offers no substance. A group that opens a vein and makes you bleed over each contribution isn't good either. Critiques should be constructive and polite. Be gentle, but give the writer something they can work with. Tell them why something doesn't work for you. If another member has raised the same objections you have, don't rehash it again. Just let the writer know you agree with the others comments. Remember: It is not your job to convince the writer that you're right. Tell them what you think—constructively—and let it go. It's up to the creator of the work to take away what they need or wish to use from your critique.

Listen. When your work is being commented on, keep your mouth shut. Don't argue. Don't object. Don't try to explain. Just listen and take notes. If more than one member agrees with a comment, you may need to rework that area. You may even decide after stewing over the criticisms for a couple of days that they were right.

If you want feedback, you have to contribute. I remember one member of a writers group who only showed up when he had pages to share. When he was there, he'd often make up some excuse as to why he had to leave directly after we had given him input on his pages, without offering comments on anyone else's work. He didn't last long. If you want people to spend their valuable time commenting on your creations, you need to be willing to reciprocate.

Do not discuss any member's work with people outside of your writers group. Do not let anyone outside the group read another member's pages. Members need to trust that their brilliant ideas will not be shared with anyone outside the writer's group. Coming up with a unique idea or perspective is not easy. Finding someone else beat you to the publishing punch because of a security leak in your group, could be devastating.

Don't impose on another member's good will. Writers groups are a good way to network, but don't go into a group thinking you're going to coerce that Big Published Writer into reading your manuscript, send it to his agent, or give you a blurb for your debut novel. What you can do is learn from that author's experience and expertise about the business of writing. It's possible someone in your group may know an agent who would be interested in your work. Another may clue you into a short story contest that would be perfect for you. You never know who knows who and how it can springboard your career. Just don't go into the group thinking you're going to use them to climb that ladder to success. That attitude usually backfires big time.

There are all types of writers and writers groups out there. One I recently became involved in is a "plotters group." Our first meet was a weekend retreat. No TV, no music, no distractions. We spent two-and-a-half days helping each other plot out new works, commiserated about the state of publishing and offered support and encouragement. The creative energy from that weekend kept me writing consistently each day for the next month, something I hadn't done in a very long time.

Other groups can offer help in synopsis writing, self-publishing or finding an agent. If you don't fancy a face-to-face group, a Google search will reveal thousands of on-line writers groups. Sisters in Crime's Guppy group, geared toward unpublished writers, offers opportunities to join internet based critique groups.

In the end, finding the perfect writers group is a bit like finding love—it all comes down to chemistry and finding people you enjoy spending time with and whose opinions you trust and respect. It can be a crap shoot, but it can also be one of the most valuable experiences you'll have as a writer.

Marilyn Victor

Question of the Month

Our question for December was more involved than usual. The first part asked whether any among our membership planned to give novels as holiday gifts and, if so, to identify the titles. The follow-up question to those authors who were brave enough to answer: Do any of you plan to give copies of your own books as gifts?

Here are the responses:

- I will be giving out at least one mystery this year: **Ellen Hart's** *Sweet Poison*. There may be more, but for now that's what it is for the moment!! — Jessie Chandler
- I just gave away a mixture of 20 of our books, *Who Died in Here?*, *Stand-Up and Die*, and *Hotdish to Die For* to Arise, a non-profit group that works with women in prison. — Pat Dennis

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- I had grand plans of sharing relatives' reading tastes with Pat or Gary at Once Upon a Crime so they could put the appropriate books in my hands. I don't think I'm going to make it to the store in time since all of those gifts have to be mailed. As far as the second part of the question -- I've never given one of my books as a gift. I don't think that would go over very well! — Anne Frasier
- I'd be giving a copy of my book to everyone on my giving list if only I had a published book. — Kathleen Nordstrom
- No, our family has reached the stage where we give to charities in one another's names. An exception to the above: A brother-in-law who collects first editions and ARCs, I give him one of each of mine. *Thai Die* this year. — Mary Pulver
- My oldest granddaughter is an avid reader. Many in the family stay away from books for her since they have trouble finding something she hasn't yet read. I take it as a challenge to find something age appropriate and new to her. This year I am starting her on the *39 Clues* series. The first installment was written by **Rick Riordan** and there is a deck of clue cards that accompany the books.

I'm also giving books to the younger grandkids but not mysteries. They are all still pre-school age. My daughters are getting cookbooks and my husband will open the latest **Vince Flynn**. — Kim Reis

- Santa was most kind to me and the publishing industry this year. Besides the sixth revised edition of **Ephraim Katz's** *The Movie Encyclopedia* and **Roger Ebert's** *2009 Movie Yearbook* (must-have's at our house while watching TCM), my Xmas stocking was filled to overflowing with **John Le Carre's** *A Most Wanted Man* and **Asne Seierstad's** *Angel of Grosny*.

As for the second part of the question, I've never had the chutzpah to send someone one of my books as a Christmas present. But I did send my father an author's copy of my first novel before Christmas several years ago. That gift resulted partly as a function of timing; my first novel was published two months before Christmas and I wanted him to have tangible evidence that it actually had happened. — William Fietzer

Member's Websites

(Carl Brookins) www.minnesotacrimewave.org
(Pat Dennis) www.penurypress.com or comedybypatdennis.com
(William Fietzer) www.williamfietzer.com
(Anne Fraiser) <http://www.annefrasier.com>
(Lois Greiman) www.loisgreiman.com
(Erin Hart) www.erinhart.com

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(C. Hyytinen) www.chyytinen.com
(Julie Kramer) www.juliekramerbooks.com
Ellen Kuhfeld - Big Washuu's Lab of Arcane Knowledge) <http://washuu.net>
(Mary Kuhfeld - Monica Ferris) at <http://monica-ferris.com>
(Lori L. Lake) www.lorillake.com
(Michael Allan Mallory and Marilyn Victor) www.snakesjones.com
(Sujata Massey) <http://www.interbridge.com/sujata/>
(August Schwerdfeger) <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~schw0709/>
(Richard Thompson) www.fiddlegame.com
(Christopher Valens) www.christophervalen.com
(J. L. Wilson) www.jayellwilson.com

Members Who Blog

Static (Anne Fraiser)
<http://annefrasier.blogspot.com/>

Agora2 (Carl Brookins)
<http://www.agora2.blogspot.com/>

Riding with the Top Down (Lois Greiman)
<http://ridingwiththetopdown.blogspot.com/>

Killer Hobbies (Mary Kuhfeld-Monica Ferris)
<http://killerhobbies.blogspot.com/>

It Makes Us Wild (Marilyn Victor & Michael Allan Mallory)
<http://zoofari.blogspot.com/>

Probable Cause <http://christophervalen.com/blog>

Resort to Murder
<http://www.resorttomurder.blogspot.com/>

Sisters In Crime Blog Crimespace
<http://crimespace.ning.com/profile/SistersInCrime>

If you have a website or blog you'd like to have listed here, please contact our newsletter editor at twinsisnewsletter@yahoo.com.

Upcoming Mystery Conventions

Love is Murder
February 6–8, 2009
Chicago, IL
Guests of Honor: Jeffrey Deaver, Alex Kava, Steve Berry, Sharan Newman
Local Guest of Honor: Raymond Benson
<http://www.loveismurder.net>

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Sleuthfest

February 26 – March 1, 2009

Deefield Beach, FL

Guests of Honor: John Hart and Brad Melzer

<http://www.mwaflorida.org/sleuthfest.htm>

Left Coast Crime

March 7-12, 2009

The Big Island, Hawaii

Guests of Honor: Rhys Bowen and Barry Eisler

Toastmaster: Lee Goldberg

Fan Guests of Honor: Pam Dehnke and Vallery Feldman

Upcoming Events at Once Upon A Crime

Tues. Jan 6 - 7:00 **Twin Cities Sister in Crime meeting**. Book for the night is CJ Box's *Blue Heaven*.

Wed. Jan 14 - 6:30 **Mystery Reading Group** facilitated by Ellen Hart. Book for the night is **Sean Chercover's** *Big City, Bad Blood*.

Tue. Jan 27 - 7:00 **KJ Erickson, Ellen Hart** (*Sweet Poison*), and **Mary Logue** (*Point No Point*) for a Panel Discussion and Q&A

Tues. Feb 3 - 7:00 **Twin Cities Sister in Crime meeting**. Book for the night is TBA.

Wed. Feb 11 - 6:30 **Mystery Reading Group** facilitated by William Kent Krueger. Book for the night is Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca*.

Tues. Mar 3 - 7:00 **Twin Cities Sister in Crime meeting**. Book for the night is TBA.

Sat. Mar 7 - 12:00 - 2:00 **Laura Childs** *Oolong Dead* Signing & Refreshments

Wed. Mar 11 - 6:30 **Mystery Reading Group** facilitated by Carl Brookins. Book for the night is Chuck Logan's *Absolute Zero*.

Sat. Mar 28 - 12:00-4:00 **The Seventh Annual Write of Spring** with *LOTS* of local authors, TBA.

Tues. Apr 7 - 7:00 **Twin Cities Sister in Crime meeting**. Book for the night is TBA.

Wed. Apr 8 - 6:30 **Mystery Reading Group**. Book for the night is TBA.

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Tues. May 5 - 7:00 **Twin Cities Sister in Crime meeting**. Book for the night is TBA.

Tues. May 12 - 7:00 **Jane Cleland** *Killer Keepsakes* and **Rosemary Harris** *The Big Dirt Nap*

Wed. May 13 - 6:30 **Mystery Reading Group**. Book for the night is TBA.

Twin Cities Sisters in Crime Members

Judy Balthazor, Colleen Barnett, Carl Brookins, Jessie Chandler, Barbara DaCosta, Pat Dennis, Julie Fasciana, Monica Ferris, William Fietzer, Barbara Fister, Anne Frasier, Donald B. Gibson, Lois Greiman, Ellen Hart, Erin Hart, Susan Hastings, Carol Hedberg, Camille Hyytinen, Bobbye Johnson, Julie Kramer, William Kent Krueger, Ellen Kuhfeld, Lori L. Lake, Jenifer LeClair, Jess Lourey, Michael Allan Mallory, Sujata Massey, Linda Morganstein, Lori Ness, Todd New, Kathleen Nordstrom, Once Upon a Crime, Diane Pearson, Kim Reis, Barbara Schlichting, August Schwerdfeger, Kathy Spexet, Chynee Strommen, Charity Tahmaseb, Susan Thoburn, Richard Thompson, Christopher Valen, Robyn Van Horn, Marilyn Victor, Celia Waldoock, Deborah Woodworth

(This listing contains the names of those members who have their dues for 2008. If your name is missing from this updated list, please let one of the officers know. Thank you.)

Officers & Officianalia of Twin Sisters In Crime

President Marilyn Victor
Vice President Jesse Chandler
Treasurer Lori Lake
Secretary Michael Allan Mallory
Newsletter editor Bill Fietzer
Web maven Charity Tahmaseb.

Interested in the Twin Sisters chapter of Sisters in Crime? Visit www.twincitysync.org. Or call Lori Lake at LLLake-Author@comcast.net. To become a member, you must first join the national Sisters in Crime organization at <http://www.sistersincrimen.org/>. Our local chapter dues are \$10 a year. Local meetings are held at 7 P.M. on the first Tuesday of each month (except July and August) at Once Upon A Crime Mystery Book Store, 604 W. 26th, Street, Minneapolis, MN 55405 (This is half a block east of the intersection of Lyndale and 26th in south Minneapolis.