

# Crime Scene

## A Sisters in Crime Toronto Chapter Publication



November 2017

### SinC Reaches Out

By Lesley Mang

SinC is an organization whose purpose is to support women writers of crime fiction. It's a challenging undertaking, especially if authors and would-be authors don't know we're here. In recent years, the Toronto Chapter has made an effort to find those writers through attending book events around the GTA. This fall we attended two large affairs that brought us new members and spread the word about our work.



On September 24, a blistering hot day, we were at the **Word on the Street**, held at Toronto's Harbourfront complex. This annual one-day event celebrates the creative use of words, both written and oral. We talked to numerous people, both women and men, because we also welcome brothers. Six of our members sold their books and we also sold our chapter-produced anthologies of short stories and mugs with our logo. By the end of the day, three people had joined our chapter.



Judy Penz Sheluk, Lesley Mang and Nancy Kay at SinC's Bouchercon table.

We were extremely fortunate to have a table at **Bouchercon**, one of North America's premier mystery conferences, held in Toronto, October 12-15. We had an excellent location. Everyone attending the conference had to pass by our table to get to panel sessions. And naturally people stopped to chat. Twelve of our authors sold their books. We sold copies of our anthologies and many mugs with our logo. Best of all, we had 10 new members join us.



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**Lesley Mang** has been president of Sisters in Crime Toronto since 2013.

### Sisters in Crime Upcoming Programs

**Location for our monthly meetings:**  
**Northern District Branch**, Toronto Public Library, Room 200, 7 pm, 40 Orchard View Blvd., 416-393-7610

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**Thursday, November 16, 2017**

**Anita Arvast**, author of *What Killed Jane Creba*, talks true crime and the invention of a gang war.

**Thursday, December 7, 2017**

**SinC Toronto and Crime Writers of Canada Annual Holiday Party!** Members and guests welcome! For RSVP info and more information, see page 13 and [torontosistersincrimetoronto.ca/holiday](http://torontosistersincrimetoronto.ca/holiday).

**Thursday, January 18, 2017**

**Jeremy Grimaldi**, author of *A Daughter's Deadly Deception*, the 2017 Arthur Ellis award-winning book about Jennifer Pan, the Chinese-Canadian woman who hired a hit man to kill her overbearing parents.

# SinC at Bouchercon 2017

Many of our Sisters attended, volunteered and participated in [Bouchercon 2107](#), the World Mystery Convention held in Toronto October 12–15. Congratulations to Sisters **Helen Nelson** and **Janet Costello** and all volunteers and participants for a highly successful and memorable event!



## Touring the Conan Doyle Collection

By Dorothy Birtalan

One of the pre-convention events that sold out the fastest was the tour of the Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Reference Library. Part of the 100-branch public library system for the City of Toronto, the library houses one of



the foremost collections of materials devoted to the life and work of Arthur Conan Doyle.

This broad and deep collection contains many versions of the novels (in many languages),

adaptations and translations, books by other authors using Sherlock as a character, other books Conan Doyle had written (such as about spiritualism, true crime, and history), manuscripts, letters, secondary materials such as critical and bibliographic studies, and graphic novels that are in some meaningful way associated with Arthur



Conan Doyle.

The tour groups were hosted by Head Librarian Peggy Perdue, who very generously brought out a few rare and treasured items from the stored collection. This included a first edition of *A Study in Scarlet*, a letter written by Conan Doyle, and *The*

*Hound of the Baskervilles* novel written on a stack of papers shaped in the head of an angry dog!

Scholars regularly come to consult the collection for their research. The vast majority of the collection is held in climate-controlled rooms unavailable to the general public.

The chess set is an original and sits on an antique round table from the Victorian era.

The White pieces represent Sherlock and his collaborators, with the pawns being the Baker Street Irregulars. The Black pieces represent the various villains that Sherlock has faced in his exploits.



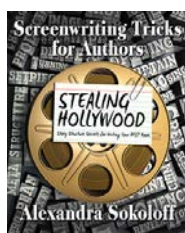
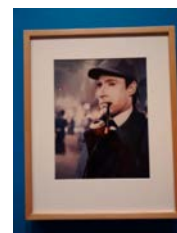
After hearing about and being allowed to examine the collection, the tour proceeded to the main floor to view the Pop Sherlock! Exhibit, which showcases many of the places and images in popular culture that has used or referenced the Sherlock Holmes character.

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**Dorothy Birtalan** puts her computer



science degree to use consulting with non-profit and sole proprietorships to build and improve their web presence. A SinC member since 2008, she is our web and social media guru. [Check her blog](#) to read her mystery/book reviews.



## SinC into Great Writing IX Workshop

This SinC-sponsored workshop, *Learn How to Give Your Novels Structure*, featured award-winning novelist and screenwriter Alex Sokoloff presenting her internationally acclaimed workshop, based on her book *Screenwriting Tricks for Authors*. Maureen Jennings of *Murdoch Mysteries* fame spoke about adapting books for TV. Then, that evening (the Wednesday before Bouchercon really started), everyone watched *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* to learn how to identify climaxes and set pieces, and figure out exactly

how we can use film structure to make our stories stronger and more exciting. This workshop was available at a special price and only for members of Sisters in Crime!



# Blogging Bouchercon

by Kathleen Fraser

Do you write a mystery blog? A writing or reading blog? Send us a weblink to your blog and we'll share it with our readers!

A great way to keep up, when you can't attend a convention (or get to see every panel), is to read your Sister bloggers. *Crime Scene* looks at blogs about Bouchercon 2017 from three Sisters: two local, and one from the Twin Cities Chapter.

Sister **Rosemary McCracken** (at [www.rosemarymccracken.wordpress.com](http://www.rosemarymccracken.wordpress.com)) writes about the pub trivia evening, her Friday afternoon panel (each author discussed their novel's unique setting) and the Saturday evening authors signing of *Passport to Murder*, the Bouchercon anthology. "I was thrilled to be among the 22 authors with stories selected for the collection (culled from about 120 submissions). All stories had to include some form of travel, and a murder or an attempted murder. My story, "The Queen-size Bed," is set in Cuba." (Sister **Marilyn Kay** also had a story chosen for the anthology.)

Rosemary McCracken signs a copy of the Bouchercon 17 anthology.



Sister **Judy Penz Sheluk** (at [www.judypenzsheluk.com](http://www.judypenzsheluk.com)) writes about her first time as a moderator. She moderated a panel of reviewers from the *Globe & Mail*, *Ellery Queen*, *AudioFile Magazine*, *Mystery People*, *Mystery Readers*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Crimespree*, *Mystery Scene* and *The Strand* magazine. "We had a tough time slot: 8:30 to 9:30 am on Sunday – trust me when I tell you that an early morning panel on the last day of a four-day conference is not ideal. Fortunately, the strength of the panel drew people in, and we pretty much had a full house. I wasn't perfect, and I might do some things differently if I ever have another opportunity, but overall, it went really well. The thing I'm most proud of? Two years ago, I was terrified to speak in public, and there I was, moderating a panel of esteemed reviewers in front of a packed room!"

One of Judy Penz Sheluk's Bouchercon highlights: Sunday's brunch with blogger reviewers Dru Ann Love (Dru's Book Musings) and Kristopher Zgorski (BOLO Books).

I first noticed Sister **Jessica Ellis Laine** (at [www.jessicaellislane.com](http://www.jessicaellislane.com)) of the Twin Cities Sisters in Crime Chapter at the SinC breakfast because she received the SinC **Eleanor Taylor Bland Award** for unpublished manuscript by a writer of colour. Her blog entry tells readers why her first Bouchercon was "pretty damn good." Highlights include the SinC workshop, Speed Dating for Authors, meeting familiar and new authors (including a non-Bouchercon attendee in a bar who gave her a poem), author breakfasts and happy hours, joining and then escaping the CWC Pub Quiz (after being accused of Googling answers). And especially receiving the Eleanor Taylor Bland Award. "Keeping it short and sweet, I thanked four tremendous women: Eleanor Taylor Bland, Sisters in Crime founder, Sara Paretsky, and my mentors, former Twin Cities SinC President, Erin Hart (Nora Gavin/Cormac Maguire series) and MWA Grand Master, Ellen Hart (Jane Lawless & Sophie Greenway series). Then I got a hug from Sara Paretsky and decided I could die happy now."

SinC National immediate past president **Diane Vallere**, award-winner **Jessica Ellis Laine**, and incoming SinC president **Kendel Lynn** at the SinC 30th Anniversary Breakfast at Bouchercon 2017.





## More SinC at Bouchercon





# SinC at Word on the Street



SinC authors **N.J. Lindquist, Jennifer Soosar, Sylvia Warsh, Lynn McPherson** and **Sharon Crawford** signed and sold their books at the SinC table and chatted with mystery lovers at the [Word on the Street Festival](#), at the Harbourfront Centre, Queen's Quay West, Toronto. SinC Sisters of the **Mesdames of Mayhem** also had a table (and fun with Vikings!).



## Supporting Our Sisters

### Margaret Cannon

Margaret Cannon is a brilliant reviewer with a discerning eye for good crime fiction. When Margaret was being interviewed by SinC National past president Catriona McPherson at Bouchercon, she mentioned that the *Globe and Mail* has been and is continuing to cut down on the space they were devoting to her mystery book reviews. The *Globe and Mail* is a national newspaper, and has been a strong source of recommendations, publicity and profile for authors – especially women.

Word is that the section's editor listens to feedback from their readers. And so SinC Toronto Sisters may want to contact the *Globe and Mail* to ask them to keep (even expand) their mystery-related review column inches.



*We're just sayin' ... Tweet. Write. Call. Do whatever you do best!*



National Novel Writing Month

"To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan, and not quite enough time."  
—Leonard Bernstein

### Do You NaNoWriMo?

At this time of year, quite a few of our Sisters (like [A.B. Funkhauser](#)) closet themselves away for the month of November to write – almost nonstop – and participate in activities supporting other writers. On November 1, participants begin working toward the goal of writing a 50,000-word novel by 11:59 pm on November 30.

NaNoWriMo is for anyone who has ever thought about writing a novel and needs a kick in the pants to get going. Are you looking for support? Check out the @NaNoWriMo Twitter feed for inspiration. And look out for your Sisters!

# Mark Freiman on Hate Crimes

By Paula Sewell

The October 19 gathering of Sisters in Crime welcomed lawyer extraordinaire Mark Freiman, Ph.D., Q.Arb, to discuss hate crimes and hate speech. Mark is one of Canada's foremost legal experts on human rights issues.

He began with the legal definition of a crime committed with words, citing Section 430 of the Criminal Code, which deals with mischief. It states, in part, that mischief "motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on religion, race, colour or national or ethnic origin" is a punishable act, and has been used to prosecute hate crimes. Convictions, unfortunately, are rare.

Statistics on hate crime can be misleading, depending on the paradigm used to collect the data and on who is collecting the data. For example, one model might have crimes that are only hate based, while another might include those with hate involved. The same can be said regarding police reports. For example, more police equals more arrests which make it seem there is more crime. Less police equals fewer arrests, which makes it seem there is less crime.

Mark Freiman is an expert in these matters, having prosecuted one of Canada's most notorious hate speech offenders, Ernst Zundel. A German national who lived in Canada for more than 40 years, Zundel was a Holocaust denier who spread his neo-Nazi ideas by publishing and distributing pamphlets through

the mail. A Holocaust survivor complained, and charges were filed under Section 181 of the Criminal Code: "One who willfully publishes a statement, tale or news that he knows is false and that causes or is likely to cause injury or mischief to a public interest is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years."



Sister Kate Freiman presented our guest and her husband, Mark Freiman, with the third SinC anthology, *The Whole She-Bang 3*.

Zundel's lawyer, Doug Christie, put the Holocaust on trial, asking open-ended questions meant to trip up witnesses for the prosecution. In the end, though, Zundel was convicted. Unfortunately, in 1992, the Supreme Court

of Canada overturned his conviction, stating that Section 181 was unconstitutional and suppressed Zundel's expressive freedom.

Holocaust survivors then made complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) regarding Zundel and his website, which promoted hatred toward Jews. The case went to Attorney General Ian Binnie. Two weeks later, Mr. Binnie was promoted to the Supreme Court of Canada, leaving Mark Freiman to prosecute the case by himself. The hearing and trial went on for years.

Under Section 13(1) of the CHRC, it is "discriminatory to communicate by telephone any material that is likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt." Mark

had to prove the internet is a telephone. When Zundel wanted to show the court his website, Mark was happy to oblige. It was the late 1990s. To get on the internet, the computer screen showed a telephone "dialling up" and ringing. Point proven. Now Mark had to prove the website belonged to Zundel, and the messages were posted by him.

Before the trial could conclude, Zundel fled to Tennessee. He divorced his second wife to marry his third, which turned out to be a stroke of luck for Mark. The jilted ex-wife came forward and revealed that she'd seen Zundel correcting galleys to be uploaded to the site.

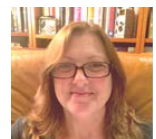
The United States, for their part, deported Zundel back to Canada for immigration violations, where he was detained for two years. He was then deported back to Germany, where it is a crime to deny the Holocaust. He spent five years in prison, and died seven years after his release.

Section 13(1) of the CHRC has since been repealed, making prosecution just that much more difficult. Courts are reluctant to convict a person of a hate crime unless the evidence is crystal clear. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that there is no national standard for the definition of a hate crime; each province has its own laws.

But in general, hate speech is defined as dehumanization of whole group, denial of worth and dignity of a whole group, and the elevation of emotion of detestation and demonization of a group.

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An award-winning screenwriter from Los Angeles, **Paula Sewell** is currently working on her first novel.



# Criminal Intent

Featuring Jennifer Soosar

Interviewed by Arlene McCarthy

*Jennifer Soosar maintains that watching too much America's Most Wanted as a teen had a strong influence on her choice to write about shady characters. She was born and raised in Toronto, where she lives with her family and has a degree in anthropology from York University.*

*Her short fiction has appeared in Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine (May 2016), Flash Bang Mysteries (July 2017) and SpineTingler Magazine (November 2017).*

*Jennifer is a member of International Thriller Writers, Crime Writers of Canada, and Sisters in Crime.*

*You can find out more about her novel Parent and Teacher Association on her website [www.JenniferSoosar.com](http://www.JenniferSoosar.com) or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/parentteacherassociationnovel](https://www.facebook.com/parentteacherassociationnovel). Or find her on Twitter [@jensoosar](https://twitter.com/jensoosar).*

**Q: Tell us about your writing experiences before the publication of this first mystery novel, *Parent Teacher Association*.**

**A:** I wrote short stories as a kid and had one published in the *Toronto Star* at age 13. I knew I wanted to be either a writer or a criminal lawyer, so writing about crime is a perfect fit for me now. Later, in my 20s, I wrote several feature-length screenplays, but soon discovered that selling a screenplay is near impossible. I went back to short stories and reworked some of my screenplay ideas into them.

**Q: One reviewer referred to your novel as a cozy psychological thriller. Did this comment surprise you?**

**A:** I don't think of the book as a cozy but can understand why someone might, because it doesn't have any glaring violence or language or sex. I think my novel is more on the creepy side than the cozy, but I'm open to reader's interpretations.

**Q: *Parent Teacher Association* tells the story of fragile elementary school teacher. What motivated you to create her?**

**A:** Schoolteachers are interesting. On one hand, you have the stereotypical image of the perky, prissy, Good Ship Lollipop elementary teacher.

Then you have the awful, miserable teacher who hates kids and should not be teaching – I think everyone's had one of those in their lives. Then you have the daily

bottomless pit of news stories about teachers being arrested for abusing students. While the majority of teachers are doing an excellent job, they're not perfect people. The assortment of personalities in the profession lends itself well for a fictional character.

Teachers face a unique set of pressures. They've got a mixed bag of kids (and matching parents) to deal with every year; some of them can be very difficult. Parents

and teachers are working for the same goal – the betterment of the child – but, amazingly, it doesn't always nicely align. I have sensed an anxiety bubbling under the surface of the school environment. It's an anxiety shared by students, teachers and parents, but unique to each one. I thought, what better place to set a suspense story?

**Q: Events centre on Battle Hill Elementary School in the fictional town of Splinter Wood, where the main employer is the Quincy-Agra slaughterhouse. Tell us why you created this setting.**

**A:** The slaughterhouse is an atmospheric device and doesn't play into the story too much. I needed a town that was surrounded by nothing but rolling hills and dead quiet cornfields and seemed like the ideal place for someone fresh out of a mental hospital.

But don't be fooled by this backwater's low profile. Not only does Splinter Wood have a sinister past, but a bizarre plan for the future, too. What are those plans? Well, by the time you find out, it'll be too late to run away screaming.





**Q: I think you had great fun naming your characters – Ruth Cannon, Lenerd, Moody Creek Elementary, Naomi, Sebastian. Will you share with us your inspiration for these names and your reasons for applying them to the characters?**

**A:** Names are really important and I struggle to get them right. I hope to convey subtle hints to the reader through the names, not only an emotional suggestion, but clues to some of the secrets in the story. There are other considerations, too. I want each name to stand out as distinct, so the reader can keep track of characters without confusion.

For Lenerd's name, for instance, I could have gone with "Leonard" but that felt too refined for the character. It also omitted the word "nerd."

**Q: The prison, the tattoos and snakes become symbols that add dimension to character and plot development. Why did you choose these elements?**

**A:** Thematic elements are important for building atmosphere and suspense, so whatever I chose had to emit a dangerous, grimy feeling. I'd say the choice of these symbols was subconscious. The fact that they were practical enough to be used throughout the book was what made them stick around.

**Q: From her introduction in the first chapter, the reader senses that Lizanne Demeter may not be the most reliable narrator. What sources did you draw on for her?**

**A:** I think Lizanne developed herself. She started off in my mind as a generic teacher, but I quickly realized I couldn't pit an aggressive helicopter mom against someone so normal. It was unbalanced. Lizanne had to match Naomi in intensity, but in her own way. Her personal problems also needed to frustrate Naomi's agenda.

Once I decided that Lizanne was fresh out of a mental hospital, she took it from there. I allowed her to make all of the big decisions, including the ending. She was fascinating to write about.

**Q: Several subplots are skillfully woven together in the final chapters of the novel to produce a plot twist that surprises. Did you create them in detailed plotting or did they develop as you wrote the novel?**

**A:** A bit of both, and it was challenging to do. I did have plot points, but the problem was all that empty space in between them.

I like Thomas Harris' advice: "You begin with what you can see and then you add what came before and what came after." That's sort of vague, but it helped me. You also spend so much time thinking about how it will all resolve itself that eventually you figure it out.

**Q: You bring the extremes of the "helicopter parent" to life in Naomi; how did you keep her somewhat likeable?**

**A:** Naomi wants the best for her child and anybody can relate to that. Of course, she takes it to a pathological level, but that's what makes her a fun character. Readers want to like the villain, too, even while despising them. Naomi's agenda is motivated by a deep sense of fear that the reader senses, but doesn't quite understand until the end. Maybe that's what makes her somewhat sympathetic.

**Q: Who are your favourite authors and how have they influenced your writing?**

**A:** I started reading Stephen King's short stories when I was about 11, and his work gave me permission to write about some of the weirder and darker characters I was interested in. His characters were so realistic, from description to dialogue, I couldn't believe it. He showed me what was possible to create. His work also had a substantial entertainment factor. I went from a reluctant reader to someone who wanted to tell stories. He made fiction fun for me.

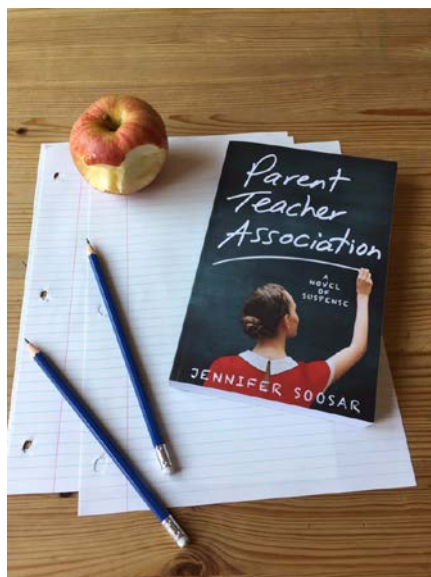
Patricia Highsmith is another favourite. Her work is very psychological. I enjoy how she peels back seemingly ordinary characters, revealing their unstable emotional states and the criminal

actions they're capable of, if they have the right stimulus. Her work showcases the frightening, yet familiar oddity of human nature.

**Q: What is the best part about being an author?**

**A:** Seeing your work published is a great feeling, but I really enjoy the research stage – exploring different topics, taking notes, learning something. The best part is weaving the research information into the story and seeing how it enriches with detail and authenticity.

So far, I do most of my research from library books and the internet. I stopped using Google because I didn't want to get flagged as some kind of maniac for all the weird, bizarre stuff I was researching. I use Startpage now because they don't keep track of your searches.





**Q: What new projects are you working on?**

**A:** I'm hard at work on my second novel. It's more of a crime story than a mystery and is quite different from *Parent Teacher Association*. It's set on the shipping docks of Duluth, Minnesota, and pits a young male security guard against a psychopath.

**Q: Complete the sentence: "Because I write mysteries, I..."**

**A:** Because I write mysteries, I have activated a whole other part of my brain, at least it feels that way. Untangling the mess of a mystery you've created from some bright idea into something not only readable but entertaining is a painful yet satisfying experience. It requires a new way of thinking. I hope it gets easier!

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## Women Killing It

By Terri Dixon

On September 1 and 2, 2017, Prince Edward County, aka "The County" – yes, wine growing too – hosted its First Crime Writers Festival. Murder and wine go so well together!

Presented in cooperation with Macauley Heritage Park and the Prince Edward Library System, the Picton, Ontario, event was sponsored by Books & Co., Janet Kellough, Vicki Delaney, Black Prince Winery and the Grange of Prince Edward Vineyards.

Three events plus a writers' workshop made up the agenda. The first, *The Mysterious Affair*, held at Books & Co., Friday at 7 pm, comprised a 'table-hopping' of all nine celebrated authors: Melodie Campbell, Elizabeth J. Duncan, Barbara Fradkin, R. J. Harlick, Maureen Jennings, Susanna Kearsley, Mary Jane Maffini (all SinC) Nazneen Sheikh and Robin Timmerman. County wine and goodies were generously donated. Lynn Pickering and Janet Kellough tried to keep the authors on track with hilarious consequences as they moved from table to table.

The second session, *Murder at the Vicarage*, was held at Picton's lovely Macauley Heritage Park, where Melodie, Elizabeth, Susanna and Mary Jane held court with a Victorian tea while the participants enjoyed an afternoon of light mystery and romantic suspense. Janet Kellough moderated.

The third, *Appointment with Death*, held at Books & Co., provided the darker side of murder, motives and MOs (opportunity). The event was, appropriately enough, a late-evening affair, with Maureen, Nazneen, R.J. and Barbara. Christine Renaud and Janet Kellough moderated.

**Q: How has being a Sister in Crime affected you?**

**A:** I appreciate being a part of a group that has the mission to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers. I think that's remarkable. Sisters in Crime is truly carrying out that mission on a North American level.

At the local Toronto chapter, it's about belonging to a great community of writers and readers who are passionate about crime and mystery fiction, informative monthly meetings, lots of events, a terrific series of anthologies (*The Whole She-Bang*), and plenty of support and encouragement.

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Maureen Jennings, Melodie Campbell, Barbara Fradkin, R.J. Harlick (back), Elizabeth J. Duncan, Susanna Kearsley, Mary Jane Maffini and Terri Dixon.

The *Special Writers Workshop*, *The Body in the Library*, to help aspiring writers fine-tune their work, took place at the lovely Picton library, led by Mary Jane. Proceeds were generously donated to the County library system.

A complete and attractive display of all the authors' books were ready and waiting for purchase at Books & Co.

This festival was such a success – every event was sold out – that there will most likely be a Second Crime Writers Festival held in Prince Edward County in 2018. Hats off to all sponsors, co-presenters and authors!

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**Terri Dixon** is treasurer of Sisters in Crime Toronto. She is a retired nursing professor who dabbles in photography and horticulture. Terri has completed her first novel, set in Spain and laced judiciously with cozy intrigue. *Murder in Malaga* introduces her duo of Canadian ex-pat Alexandra and Spanish police inspector Eduardo as they make their way through Malaga.



## The Mesdames of Mayhem Strike Again!

Congratulations to the Mesdames of Mayhem on the launch of their latest anthology, *13 Claws*, celebrated with readings, signings, food, drink, and costumes at the [Sleuth of Baker Street](#) October 28.



## Write On, Brother

By Steve Shrott

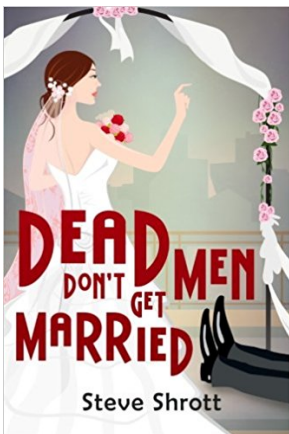
### On Writing Humour

I love writing humour.

When I work on a funny novel or short story, I'm frequently smiling and laughing as I sit at my computer. And it's not just because of the vodka. (Okay, part of it is.)

The one question I'm often asked is, how do you know something is going to be funny?

I think part of it is experience. I began as a comedy-writer crafting jokes for numerous performers including Joan Rivers, Rodney Dangerfield and Phyllis Diller. So after writing literally hundreds of lines, I've developed a gut instinct about what makes something funny.



Of course, I'm wrong on occasion, and though humour writing is kind of in my blood, there have been times when someone's suggested I get a transfusion.

There's a terrific satisfaction in crafting a humorous story that works. It probably has something to do with the fact that humour releases those same endorphins as exercise, and the only thing I have to stretch is my fingers on the keyboard. (Although I do breathe heavy afterwards.)

I suppose what I enjoy most is creating quirky, fun, characters and then dropping them into wild situations.

I begin work on a humorous story by coming up with many two- or three-line ideas that I think might be amusing.

I often look for the "Uh-oh Factor." What I mean by that is a situation that is horrendous for the protagonist, but funny to the reader. Yes, all my characters hate me!

I recently wrote a story about a timid mystery writer who asks his "just out of jail" cousin for help with his first crime novel. The next thing he knows the cousin has made him getaway driver on a bank job. Uh-oh!

If I have the "Uh-oh Factor," I'm pretty sure the story will be entertaining.

I used to worry if one of my scenes wasn't hilarious on the first draft, but I've learned over time, you can always make it funnier on the second, third, fourth or (on bad days) the 26th rewrite.

And if that doesn't work, I always have my vodka.

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Steve Shrott's mystery short stories have appeared in 18 anthologies as well as numerous online and print



magazines. He has written two humorous mystery novels (*Audition for Death* and *Dead Men Don't Get Married*), and a how-to book on comedy writing. Some of his jokes are in the Smithsonian Institution.

For more Steve, visit [steveshrottwriter.weebly.com](http://steveshrottwriter.weebly.com).

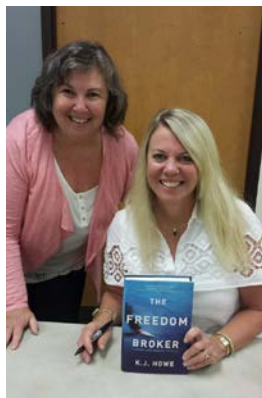


# K.J. Howe, Freedom Broker

By Kathleen Fraser

Thursday, September 21, 2017, **K.J. Howe**, Executive Director of [ThrillerFest](#) – the premiere conference for thriller enthusiasts – and member of the [Rogue Women Writers blog](#), talked to Sisters in Crime Toronto about *The Freedom Broker*, her debut thriller, which explores the dark world of elite kidnap negotiation and recovery.

I was especially delighted to see Kimberley again, as many moons ago she and I took a mystery writing class with Peter Robinson and were part of a really great writing group for a while. Her first writing class was romance writing with Brian Henry but, as she told the group, “dead bodies keep popping up in my books.”



Kimberley is an enthusiastic world traveller – “a child of the world” and a “research junkie” – and so she wanted to write an international thriller. It’s evident that she has found her genre.

K.J. Howe’s first, never-published novel was about a female sniper, which, she figured out, was not really a good occupation for a sympathetic series character. She considers it her learning experience.

A kidnap-and-ransom expert, however, seemed to have great possibilities as a character. And not every kidnapping is going to be the same. So Kimberley decided to become an expert on kidnap and ransom.

She got up her nerve and attended a conference about this dark, private world with 80 experts on the subject at the Biltmore in Miami. There she spoke with several “response consultants” – she coined the term “freedom broker” – many of them former intelligence and tactical agents and special forces soldiers, as well as psychologists and former hostages.

Kimberley says she was especially inspired by former hostage Peter Moore, who was held in Iraq for almost a thousand days, and finally released in exchange for another prisoner.

“It’s a kind of purgatory for those who are waiting,” she says. Moore endured his time in solitary by keeping his brain sharp, building a railroad system in his mind, interviewing his pillow, and “not being stupid.”

“At the elite level,” she says, “there are only 25 people doing this for a living.” They work alone, without weapons, but they have to be tactically ready.

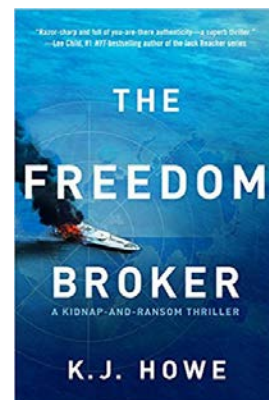
Why would anyone turn to a “freedom broker” instead of government or police or a family representative?

Freedom brokers know what they are doing. Flexibility and awareness are key in negotiations. And they aren’t necessarily bound by political or legal restrictions governments face. Until recently, it was illegal in Canada to pay ransom. “Even family sometimes behaves badly,” says Kimberley. Some may not be willing to do more than “pray for the release” of a victim.

There are more than 40,000 kidnappings a year around the world, some political, some related to fundraising for terrorist activities, some to steal intellectual property, or just for the money. Sometimes, hostages get sold to another group. Nevertheless, we were reassured to hear that over 90 percent of kidnap victims come home safely.

K.J.’s heroine, Thea Paris, has for motivation a brother who was forced to be a child soldier. She also has Type I diabetes, a challenge that Kimberley wants readers to understand can be met and managed in a way that allows Thea to be a kickass woman in what is mostly a man’s world. The diabetes, she says, “is a very useful tool in a thriller. You can’t ignore it. If you don’t get insulin, you die.”

K.J. Howe is hard at work finishing up her next Thea Paris kidnap-and-ransom thriller, *Skyjack*. Can’t wait to read it!



**Thanks to all of you who contribute stories and photos to *Crime Scene* magazine!**

This issue includes photos from Marilyn Kay, Dorothy Birtalan, Lynne Murphy, Sylvia Warsh, Lisa de Nikolits, June Lorraine Roberts, Judy Penz Sheluk, Terri Dixon, Linda Cahill, Carolyn Arnold, Susan Daly, Jessica Ellis Laine, Jennifer Soosar, Rosemary McCracken and the Bouchercon 2017 and Jungle Reds webpages.

## SinC Toronto History

**Lynne Murphy** is one of the original Toronto Sisters in Crime, going back to October 1992 and the first Toronto Bouchercon, where Sara Paretsky inspired an amazing group of Toronto women to stand up for themselves as writers of crime fiction.

Now that we are celebrating SinC Toronto's 25th year, I have been seeking out stories and photos of the early days of the chapter. Lynne has generously shared some photos from 1997 to 2002 that will bring back memories for longtime members. A few



are shown here. Can you guess which is from the Agatha Christie Hat Party?

**Do you see yourself here? Do you have a story to tell about the early days of the chapter?** Drop me a line at [newsletter@torontosistersincrime.ca](mailto:newsletter@torontosistersincrime.ca) or send me your photos and I can share them with our Sisters in forthcoming issues of *Crime Scene* magazine. (We'll feature more of Lynne's pics again.)



Also in the works: A list of all our members' books, going back to the early days. Stay tuned!

## SinC Toronto Executive Election

The following full members have been nominated for positions on the SinC Toronto Chapter Executive for 2018. We look forward to welcoming the newest members to our executive team at our November meeting.

President: **Kate Freiman**

Vice president: **Paula Sewell**

An award-winning screenwriter from Los Angeles, Paula relocated with her family to Toronto in the summer of 2015. She is currently working on her first novel, and is thrilled to be a part of the Sisters in Crime.

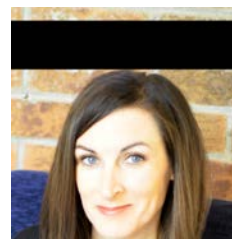
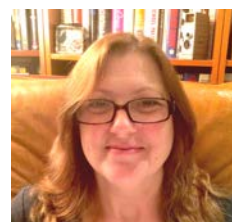
Treasurer: **Terri Dixon**

Recording secretary: **Lynn McPherson**

Lynn grew up in various parts of Canada, from the Canadian Rockies to the big city of Toronto. She is a debut author who has channelled her lifelong love of adventure and history into her writing, where she is free to go anywhere, anytime. She is also a member of Crime Writers of Canada and International Thriller Writers. Her cozy mystery, *The Girls' Weekend Murder*, is the first book in the Izzy Walsh Mystery Series.

Members at large: **Lora Avgeris**, membership coordinator; **Helen Nelson**, programming chair; **Dorothy Birtalan**, web manager/social media; **Kathleen Fraser**, magazine editor; **Marilyn Kay**, communications chair; **Lesley Mang** and **Nancy Kay**.

Sister **Lesley Mang** is resigning from her position as president; **Linda Cahill** is stepping down as vice president and **Steve Shrott** is no longer taking minutes as recording secretary. We thank these longtime members for their invaluable contributions and wish them all the best with the mountains of time they will suddenly have available!





## Crime and Congratulations

Congratulations to Sisters **Susan Daly** ("Murder on the Northern Lights Express") and **Sylvia Maultash Warsh** ("The Cabin in the Woods") for their inclusion in *Malice Domestic 13: Mystery Most Geographical*.

Watch Sister **Lynn McPherson** talk to Global News about her new murder mystery, *The Girls' Weekend Murder*, and why she decided to write about two unlikely events at <https://globalnews.ca/video/3771656/a-girls-weekend-turns-horribly-wrong-in-new-book>.

*Spinetingler Magazine* announces that it will begin regular publication of a print magazine. The long-running eZine will continue to publish web content between print issues. The first issue will be published in November 2017 by Down & Out Books. The Fall 2017 edition will feature an original story by Sister **Jennifer Soosar**.

Sister **Lisa de Nikolits** is excited to be Writer-in-Residence for Open Book Toronto for November. "The theme is 16 Shades of Noir and we're going to have a lot of fun!" Her latest, *No Fury Like That*, launched this fall.

## Renew Your SinC Membership or Join Now and Save for 2018!

**Renew or join SinC Toronto now**, before the end of the year, for only \$30 if you pay *before December 31, 2017*. Pay \$35 after December 31. Renew in person at our November meeting or online before December 31.

**What does your membership give you? Benefits of full membership include:**

- Attend monthly meetings for free
- Priority access to annual field trips
- Discounts to events
- *Crime Scene* e-magazine
- Promotion on SinC website
- Promotion at monthly meetings
- Author promo opportunities at book fairs
- Internet access for credit card book purchases
- Eligible for featured interview in magazine
- Opportunity to submit for SinC Toronto's well-received anthologies
- Use of SinC logo on your own website
- Priority access to in-demand speakers
- Eligible for executive positions

### Start off the festive season at the 2017 CWC/SinC Joint Holiday Party!

#### Place

Jane Burfield's Party Room, 66 Collier Street  
just north of Toronto Reference Library, easily accessible by TTC

#### Date & Time

Thursday, December 7, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

#### And just for you, we have...

Nibbles, wine & beer (cheap, cheap, cheap), door prizes, raffle

#### Cost

\$20 for CWC & SinC members, \$25 for non-members

- ✓ **RSVP to [HelenLNelson@rogers.com](mailto:HelenLNelson@rogers.com)**
- ✓ **Two ways to pay by Monday, December 6:**

Pay by PayPal at [www.Torontosistersincrime.ca](http://www.Torontosistersincrime.ca)

OR

Give your money or cheque (made out to Sisters in Crime) to Helen Nelson  
or mail to 59 McMurray Ave, Toronto, ON M6P 2T2.

#### A gift for you!

TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR for your entry into the door prize contest!



*Note:* Membership in Sisters in Crime National (our US "mothership") is required for full membership in Toronto SinC.

Visit [sistersincrime.org](http://sistersincrime.org) to sign up for only \$40 US and explore some of the many additional resources SinC National provides, including SinC Links — "news you can use" about the mystery business, discounts to industry-related magazines and more.

**Tell us your news** so we can share it on Facebook, Twitter and in our next issue of *Crime Scene*. Full members get the benefit of all of our promotional firepower!



**Sisters in Crime –  
Toronto Chapter**



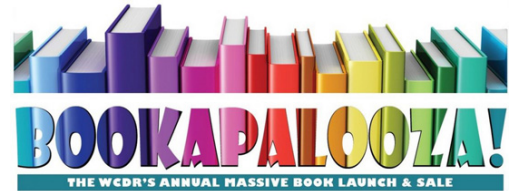
**SinC\_Toronto**

# A Murder Is Announced

## Upcoming Book Fairs & Mystery Cons

- Bookapalooza – Saturday, November 25, 2017.

Once again the Toronto chapter of Sisters in Crime will be at [Bookapalooza](#) to meet, greet, and sign books!



This is a tremendously successful event held a 25-minute drive east of Toronto in Whitby. There are lots of opportunities to listen to speakers throughout the day on a wide range of book-related topics, and to get “up close and personal” with lots of authors. We will, of course, have all three of our *Whole She-Bang* mystery anthologies for sale, plus the insanely popular SinC mugs!

## 2017 SinC Executive Committee

**Main Contact Email Address:**  
**[info@TorontoSistersInCrime.ca](mailto:info@TorontoSistersInCrime.ca)**

President: **Lesley Mang**  
Vice-President: **Linda Cahill**

Programming: **Kate Freiman**

Treasurer: **Terri Dixon**

Membership: **Lora Avgeris**

[membership@torontosistersincrim.ca](mailto:membership@torontosistersincrim.ca)

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Magazine Editor: **Kathleen Fraser**

[newsletter@torontosistersincrim.ca](mailto:newsletter@torontosistersincrim.ca)

Recording Secretary: **Steve Shrott**

Members-at-Large:

**Nancy Kay**

**Helen Nelson**



**Crime Scene**, the magazine of the Toronto Chapter of Sisters in Crime, is published five times a year.

We encourage reprints, but only with credit to the article's writer(s) and the Toronto chapter, and after notifying the Magazine Editor at [newsletter@TorontoSistersInCrime.ca](mailto:newsletter@TorontoSistersInCrime.ca)

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