



July 2010

CRIME REPORT

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Meeting Notes

July 6, 7:00PM
Rediscovered Bookshop
7079 Overland Road, Boise

Be sure to join us for our final meeting at the *soon-to-be-old* Rediscovered Bookshop location.

Let's give RD Books a proper Partners in Crime send-off before they head to their new home. Lots of stuff on sale, too!

Last month **Adam Graham** spoke about the old radio programs he features on his Great Detectives podcast.

Very informative and entertaining. Who knew that old radio could be so much fun? Great way to learn about the classic who-done-its, from Sherlock Holmes to Johnny Dollar, and more.

You can learn more at:
www.greatdetectives.net/detectives



Blane Holden
Crime Report Editor
Boise, ID 83709

Letter from the Editor:

Blane Holden



Welcome to the July 2010 edition of the Crime Report.

Summer is here in all its glory, and heat. A perfect time to dust off your lawn chair and grab some reading time in the shade with an ice-cold lemonade.

It's also the time for new movies. So far my favorites are *Robin Hood* and *Knight and Day*, and there are many more on the schedule. (After I get through with the current session of summer classes, of course.)

Between relaxation sessions, don't forget to tone your writing too. Maybe even send in an article to the Crime Report?

Have a great July!

... Blane

In this issue:

In Tidbits from the President, Victoria tell us about writers' retreats; both the good and the stuff you don't talk about back home.

It was a quiet month for news, but we have several announcements about upcoming events.

Celebrate the seventh month with 7 writer-related websites and then hone your writing with "7 Reasons Agents Stop Reading Your First Chapter."

The Readers' Group celebrates their 100th book this month, so they are having a special get-together. They also completed the reading list for the remainder of 2010, so be sure to see what's on the schedule.

Submissions:

Please email articles, news, suggestions, and questions to: pincEditor@gmail.com

Be sure to indicate if you have included any attachments.

Articles are due by the 21st of the month *prior* to the issue in which they will appear. For example, if you are writing an article for the April issue, it is due to the editor by March 21st.

Members who contribute to the newsletter will be entered in a drawing for a \$20.00 gift card.

July Quotes

"Why shouldn't truth be stranger than fiction?"

Fiction, after all, has to make sense."

—Mark Twain

"You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you."

—Ray Bradbury

"If there's a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."

—Toni Morrison

"I try to leave out the parts that people skip."

—Elmore Leonard

2010 Officers Partners in Crime

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Victoria Blue

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Ken Marks

Treasurer —
Jane Trust

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Newsletter Editor** —
Blane Holden

Member-at-Large—
Sally Fielder

**Partners in Crime meets at
7:00 PM on the first Tuesday
of each month at:
Rediscovered Bookshop
7079 Overland Road
Boise, ID**

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Have questions for The Writer's Block guests? Email them to Amanda@RadioWritersBlock.com.

IDAHO magazine Young Writers' Program

Young Writers, Parents, Teachers, Mentors ... a writing opportunity to encourage emerging young writers:

IDAHO magazine's Young Writer's Program is designed to encourage Idaho students, from kindergarten through high school, to develop and improve their writing skills by learning what it is like to submit freelance articles to a magazine with statewide circulation.

The goal is to publish stories by student authors in *IDAHO magazine*. The author of each published story will be paid \$25 for one-time rights to that story (both in print and online), and each May, the author of the story deemed to be the best of those published in the previous twelve issues will receive that year's *IDAHO magazine* Young Writers Award.

Additional details, along with

application information and writer's guidelines, can be found at the *IDAHO magazine's* web site, www.idahomagazine.com.

J. A. Jance is Coming to Boise!

Bestselling mystery author, J.A. Jance, will be speaking and signing her new book:
Queen of the Night

Thursday, July 30th, at 7 PM.

Boise Public Library,
Downtown.

Free to the public

Rediscovered Bookshop is Moving Downtown.

Rediscovered Bookshop, is moving to their new Downtown Boise location this month.

July 10 will be their last day at the Overland location.

Their new location will be:
180 North 8th Street.

Ph (208) 376-4229

Tidbits from the President

Writers' Retreat

If you've never been to a writers' retreat you're missing out on a great opportunity to jump-start your WIP. Whether you need to brainstorm a new project or bounce ideas around for a plot twist, your fellow writers are a great resource and a writers' retreat is a great place to get everyone together to accomplish just that.

This past weekend, I attended a writers' retreat with the local RWA chapter, CBC. We have a credo that we stand by that states, "What happens at retreat—stays at retreat!"

Why do we say this? Because we all need a place where we can go veg-out for a while and revitalize ourselves. It's very therapeutic to know you can do or say or try anything—okay, we're talking about writing people; get you heads out of the gutter! That being said, we do have a blast (and of course those who wish to imbibe or indulge are free to do so). Yes, chocolate counts.

Aside from all the "intentional distractions," we are also very productive. Many writers choose to do that and just write. Others take time out to read and still other's congregate and brainstorm their little hearts out. Everyone enjoys not only feelings of accomplishment in their writing careers, but they enjoy a tremendous sense of camaraderie, too.

Sometimes we need time away from our daily routines to remind us how important our writing is to us. Imagine no errands to run, no laundry to do, no games to coach, no spouses to please, no work complete—other than your writing.

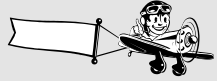
My recommendation, to those writers who feel they need a "time-out" from their everyday responsibilities, is to get a group together, rent a cabin, and go revitalize, invigorate, renew, and revamp your writing career. A writers' retreat is definitely the way to do just that.

Happy writing!

Victoria Blue
President



*** Member News ***



Nothing new on the wires this month, but we did get a shout from Angela A. on her way to Maine.

She says the trip is going well and sends her best to everyone. Her new e-mail address (at least for now) is:
myseries@mymail.com



If you have news to share with the Partners in Crime members, please submit it to pincEditor@gmail.com.

This is an especially good place to announce a book, short story, or other type of publication. Winning or placing in a contest is also a news item to share.

Can't wait to hear your news!

7 Reasons Agents Stop Reading Your First Chapter

by Livia Blackburne.

[The following is an excerpt from a Writers' Digest online article. This is a list of common mistakes observed from random entries presented for a panel discussion. The panel was composed of publishers and agents.]

1. Generic beginnings: Stories that opened with the date or the weather didn't really inspire interest. According to Esmond Harmsworth (agent), you are only allowed to start with the weather if you're writing a book about meteorologists. Otherwise, pick something more creative.

2. Slow beginnings: Some manuscripts started with too much pedestrian detail (characters washing dishes, etc) or unnecessary background information.

3. Trying too hard: Sometimes it seemed like a writer was using big words or flowery prose in an attempt to sound more sophisticated. In several cases, the writer used big words incorrectly. Awkward or forced

Announcements: Events and Contests

Criminal Pursuits

Don't forget Partners in Crime's manuscript critique service, *Criminal Pursuits*.

If you're interested in receiving a few clues to help you solve the mystery of writing your own mystery, Partners in Crime Boise may be able to help.

For complete information see:
www.partnersincrimeboise.com

Literature Fellowships & Writer in Residence:

On April 10, a panel of three out-of-state judges met in Boise and selected the new Idaho Writer in Residence and five recipients for Fellowships in Literature.

The judges' recommendations were confirmed by the full Idaho Commission on the Arts at its May 14 meeting.

The new term commences July 1, 2010. Congratulations to all.

Writer in Residence:
Brady Udall, Boise, fiction.

Fellowships:
Brittney Carmen, Moscow, creative nonfiction and memoir

Alan Heathcock, Boise, fiction

Heidi Naylor, Boise, fiction

Reuben Appelman, Boise, creative nonfiction

Matthew Haynes, Boise, creative nonfiction

Tune In to Writer's Block:

The Writer's Block for Thursday, July 8th:
Travel writers Maria and Mike Smith discuss the pros, cons, and myths of travel writing.

Learn how to break into travel writing, what the pay is (and is not), and how to survive a working relationship with your spouse.

Tune in live Thursday, July 8th at 1pm at:

www.RadioBoise.org, or
www.RadioWritersBlock.com.

Readers' Group Report

by Anne Roberts

Great discussion tonight—seven of us! Several people had trouble getting into the June selection, **The Wrong Mother**—too much detail that seemed extraneous, different points of view (first person and third person), the writer's style.

Sally whined too much—"I didn't care what happened to her." The plot twists and turns reminded us of Kate Atkinson—disparate parts brought together in the end. We all liked the police characters and wanted to know more about them—will check her first book to see if the back story is there.

Some readers said they would not read her again. Did the moms complain too much? Were the fathers really that uninvolved with their kids?

Next meeting will be Tuesday, July 27th at 6:00 pm at the Smokey Mountain Pizzeria and Grill on State Street near the original Albertson's. We're celebrating the group's **100th book: *An Expert in Murder* by Nicola Upson.**

Readers' Group 2010 Book List

- January: *Sacrifice*
by S. J. Bolton
- February: *Still Waters*
by Nigel McCrery
- March: *Dog on It*
by Spencer Quinn
- April: *Promised Land*
by Robert B. Parker
- May: *The Dark Horse*
by Craig Johnson
- June: *The Wrong Mother*
by Sophie Hannah
- July: *An Expert in Murder*
by Nicola Upson
*100th Reader's Book!***
- August: *Forfeit*
by Dick Francis
- September: *Nemesis*
by Jo Nesbo
- October: *The Janissary Tree*
by Jason Goodwin
- November: *A Bad Day for Sorry*
by Sophie Littlefield
- December: *Merry, Merry Ghost*
by Carolyn Hart

imagery was also a turnoff. At one point, the panelists raised their hands when a character's eyes were described as "little lubricated balls moving back and forth." [a raised hand was a vote to stop the reading.]

4. Too Much Information:

Overly detailed description of bodily functions or medical examinations had the panelists begging for mercy.

5. Clichés: "The buildings were ramrod straight." "The morning air was raw." "Character X blossomed into Y." "A young woman looks into the mirror and tells us what she sees." Clichés are hard to avoid, but when you revise, go through and try to remove them.

6. Loss of Focus: Some manuscripts didn't have a clear narrative and hopped disjointedly from one theme to the next.

7. Unrealistic internal

narrative: Make sure a character's internal narrative—what the character is thinking or feeling—matches up with reality. For example, you wouldn't want a long eloquent narration of what getting strangled feels like—the character would be too

busy gasping for breath and passing out. Also, avoid having the character think about things just for the sake of letting the reader know about them.



[Read the complete article at: www.guidetoliteraryagents.com/blog/7+Reasons+Agents+Stop+Reading+Your+First+Chapter.aspx— Ed]

Editor's Note:

Are you guilty of any of these writing errors? Have you ever picked up a book and been turned-off by finding similar problems?

I know I've committed my own share of these types of story killers, but knowing about them helps to avoid repeating them during rewrites.

Sometimes they will creep out onto the page when we are struggling to get the story out. Ernest Hemingway said that all first drafts are bad, but that that's what first drafts are for. Get the story out first.

Go ahead and break all of the rules on your first pass, make all the mistakes you want, but make sure you fix them during your rewrites.

7 Great Websites for Writers

National Novel Writing Month: *nanowrimo.org*

Got a novel inside you just begging to come out? Give in to the urge and join over 150,000 writers, world-wide, on a month long quest for a 50,000-word novel every November.

Grammar Girl: *grammar.quickanddirtytips.com*

Have you ever suffered under the burden of grammar-phobia? Have you ever wanted to be a grammar-maven? If you answered yes to either of these or just want to have fun with syntax, then read or listen to Mignon Fogarty explain it all.

Viral Marketing by Seth Godin: *sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog*

Learn the secrets of self-promotion from writer and marketing mastermind, Seth Godin.

Murder*By*4: *murderby4.blogspot.com*

Four published murder/suspense authors take readers on a tour of the inside of the writing and publishing world. They will introduce you to their unique styles and entertain you with their diverse experiences.

Word-A-Day: *wordsmith.org*

Start with the A.Word.A.Day e-newsletter to build your vocabulary in easy installments. Then, move up to the Internet Anagram Server. Who knew that “Partners in Crime” was an anagram for “Cremains Printer” or “Scream Inner Trip”?

Agent Query: *agentquery.com*

A free, searchable database of literary agents. Offering the “largest, most current searchable database of literary agents on the web”; includes helpful links and articles.

Critique Circle: *critiquecircle.com*

An online writers’ workshop for all genres. Features manuscript tracking tools, character generation tools, and more. Sign up for free account and start using it today.



Writing Prompts

by Blane Holden

Last month I wrote that story ideas can come from anywhere. I was never more glad of that fact until I signed up for a last-minute slot in a creative non-fiction class. I suddenly found myself with an article due and nothing to write about—or so I thought.

The instructor told us to “take a slice” from our own histories and make it into a piece of literature. Yeah, right.

I scoured my journals, reviewed my childhood adventures, and bounced ideas off my wife until she told me to let her get some sleep and rolled over (taking the covers with her). Nothing about my life seemed interesting enough to write about; or at least not fifteen, double-spaced pages worth of interesting.

The problem was that I was focusing on the end product and my brain locked-up like a car’s brakes on an icy off-ramp—locked hard, while I was careening faster and faster towards the back of a semi hauling jet fuel. Not a fun situation.

So, I gave up; threw up my

hands (figuratively) and went out for lunch. While I was waiting for my lunch, I started watching the busboy cleaning tables. As he continued to stack glasses and plates ever higher I envisioned the tower of glass and china suddenly losing balance and the busboy madly grabbing for plates and cups trying to salvage them.

Luckily, he got the dishes cleaned up without a problem, but the image triggered a memory that I could write about. And so it goes, random events can trigger a moment of insight if we leave ourselves open to the muse. Fiction or non-fiction, often needs only nudge to get a story going.

Here are three random prompts pulled from *The Writer’s Book of Matches*:

1. “You wouldn’t catch me dead wearing a getup like that.”
2. “I’ll see your shoe and raise you one sock.”
3. While filling up her car with gas, a woman finds the words “help me” and a license number written in lipstick on her passenger door.

