

MYSTERY READERS JOURNAL

The Journal of Mystery Readers International®

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Cold Case Mysteries



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Janet A. Rudolph, Editor • Kate Derie, Associate Editor

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ARTICLES

The Warm Heart of the Cold Case by *Rona Bell*

The cold case solved—the surefire clickbait loved by headline writers. “After 50 years”... “New DNA analysis proves...” “As he lay dying, and I always suspected.” But isn’t it true that the cold case holds us in its grip is that it is a way that we can hold fast to a time, a place, a question. I was a young college student during the time of the Ypsilanti, Michigan murders. We lived in the wake of questions and clues. I overheard a woman say, “I’ve done two stupid things today. I cut my hair short and I accepted a ride from a man I did not know.” What was my responsibility in that moment? Should I have said something? The perpetrator was eventually caught, but could have easily become a cold case with silence even from people like me. It has haunted me.

Now years later, the wolf pack power of social media including the DNA data bases is a force for solving cold cases. The example of the Golden State Murderer, memorialized in *I’ll Be Gone in the Dark: One Woman’s*

Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer by Michelle McNamara is a premier example and our eyes are drawn to new cases every day.

But through this new time, I am drawn to the cold cases of a time gone by. Author Sheila Nickerson seized on the warm heart of the cold case in her extraordinary book of the mid-1990s, **Disappearance: A Map, A Meditation on Death & Loss in the High Latitudes**. Her move to Alaska in the early 1970s, and her many jobs in Alaska, including editor of *Alaska’s Wildlife*, writer-in-residence to the Alaska State Library, and art director of University Within Walls (statewide prison education program) and Poet Laureate of Alaska from 1977 to 1981, she was drawn to the unsolved disappearances throughout the high latitudes. Drawn first to remote air crashes where the victims were well known in Alaska, but the remains never found, she conjured the maps we make to help us search and to help us through the loss.

She also looked into history, and brought the search for Sir John Franklin, the famous British ship captain lost in the high altitudes, back to life. His wife, Lady Jane Franklin, never gave up and traveled to Alaska to find what she could. Hers was the warm heart of a cold case. Nickerson finds what she calls a small book published by the Alaska Historical Society by the niece of John Franklin, who offers up Lady Jane Franklin's theory of disappearance: "The record—the written message—is everything. Press on until you have every bit of evidence that is possible. Never give up. Keep the search alive. While the search lives, the missing person lives. While the search continues, hope continues. As the record is put together, the monument to the missing person grows. If the record is substantial enough, the missing person cannot be lost, ever. Trust the written word."

Perhaps this is the heart of the call of the cold case. This is the engine that ignites the writer, the ignition that begins the fulmination of social media, and the wish and hope and faith for resolution. And if not resolution, the

knowledge that with the written word, the victim can never be truly lost.

This is true in author Vito Racanelli's recently published **The Man in Milan**, which has as at its core the unsolved case in Italian aviation—the loss of the Ustica, known as the most horrific aviation crime in Italian history. As he says in the author acknowledgments, "While the Ustica airliner crash is unfortunately a real and unsolved tragedy some forty years later, this book is work of fiction."

The cold case is the catalyst to fiction and non-fiction both, sealing our senses in a time and place filled with mystery, one we yearn to know even better.

Rona Bell is the pen name of a well-known New York business executive. Her short story, "Prey of New York" was included in the anthology **Where Crime Never Sleeps: Murder New York Style 4** and cited in the Houghton Mifflin book of **Best American Mystery Stories 2018**, edited by Louise Penney and Otto Penzler. Her short story "The Call is Yours" appears in **Me Too Short Stories: An Anthology**, edited by Elizabeth Zelvin and published by Level Best Books.

Chandler's Legacy: A Cold Case That's Still Hot by Sean Day

Raymond Chandler's second novel, **Farewell, My Lovely**, is a pillar of the cold case genre. While it lacks the lyricism that entralls so many readers of **The Big Sleep** and **The Long Goodbye**, its plot is tighter than that of those novels, and the action is far more palpable. Which might be why it received so many film and radio adaptations, and why it continues to inspire artists.

Here's a bare bones description of the complicated plot. The story begins with private detective Philip Marlowe running into an ex-con,

a giant named Moose Molloy, who just finished an eight-year sentence for armed robbery. Now that Molloy is free, he's trying to locate his former girlfriend, a dancer named Velma. She wrote to him for two of the years he sat in stir, then vanished. Despite the short time since he was released, Molloy thinks nothing of murdering a nightclub owner for not telling him where Velma is, even though the man had no way of knowing. Molloy then half hires, half bullies Marlowe into tracking her down.

What ensues (spoilers ahead!) is a dreamlike trek through the seedier side of Los Angeles. A man named Lindsay Marriott hires Marlowe to help recover a jade necklace which, it later turns out, belongs to old Judge Grayle and Mrs. Lewin Lockridge Grayle, the judge's beautiful, much younger wife. But when Marlowe and Marriott arrive for the swap with those who supposedly have the necklace, the detective gets knocked out and awakes to find Marriott's skull bashed in.

Marlowe retrieves the card of a psychic named Jules Amthor from Marriott's body and decides to visit him. But when he questions Amthor too harshly on his connection to Marriott, some crooked cops knock him unconscious and take him to a quack doctor who keeps his "patients" forcibly sedated.

Marlowe eventually discovers that Mrs. Lewin Lockridge Grayle is none other than Molloy's long-missing former girlfriend, and that she'll do anything to keep her true identity and sordid past a secret (including having murdered Marriott). Unfortunately for Molloy, who's present when Marlowe finally confronts Velma, it turns out she's a lot less happy to see him than he is to see her. Since he hasn't had any qualms about killing anyone who gets in his way, it's hard to feel bad for him when she guns him down. She doesn't make it far, though. The cops eventually corner her, and she shoots herself, bringing the dark story to its end.

The book was made into two classic films. The first, *Murder, My Sweet*, was released in 1944 and stars Dick Powell. It's tightly scripted, and the cinematography is beautiful, but Powell's pleasant, fresh-faced PI is so far from the picture of Marlowe in my head that I have trouble relating it to Chandler's novel.

But the 1975 remake, *Farewell, My Lovely*, starring Robert Mitchum, must be one of the most successful book-to-movie adaptations ever. For me, Mitchum *is* Philip Marlowe, and Charlotte Rampling's turn as Velma is one of the classic depictions of a femme fatale. The cameos are great, too. Sylvester Stallone, a year before Rocky elevated him to superstar status, plays a minor thug in a scene at the brothel. And for diehard PI/noir fans, Jim Thompson, author of *The Killer Inside Me*, *The Grifters*, and *The Getaway*, among others, plays Velma's deceived husband, Judge Grayle. If only Chandler had repaid the compliment by appearing in a film adaptation of one of Thompson's books!

The British director Mike Hodges is another *Farewell, My Lovely* fan. He filmed Michael Caine reading a copy of the novel in *Get Carter's* opening scene (The novel, originally called *Jack's Return Home*, was written by Ted Lewis). Both the novel and movie are more brutal than Chandler's book, but they are heavily indebted to it. Lewis would go on to write other noirs, of which the most important and violent is *GBH*. It's also literary and stylish, but not for the squeamish. Hodges, for his part, would go on to make other films, most importantly the modern crime classic *Croupier*.

The HBO series *Bored to Death*, created by Jonathan Ames, famous for both his ingenious comic and noir novels, was also inspired by Chandler's second book. After reading *Farewell, My Lovely*, the series' inept protagonist, a neurotic, failed novelist played by Jason Schwartzman, becomes an unlicensed private detective joined by his equally inept friends, portrayed by Ted Danson as a perennially high publisher who dates girls half his age, and

Zach Galifianakis as a slacker comic book artist.

This is just a short list of works inspired by Chandler's novel. No doubt it will continue to spur other artists to create for decades to come. For me, the book never gets old, and I often consult it while writing my own stories.

Which is why, when my wife and I were in Nashville a few years ago, I purchased a facsimile of the first edition at a used bookshop.

"Oh," she said, "you don't have that one?"

"Well, I said, "I have all of Chandler's novels in a two-volume Library of America edition, but this is exactly how the book looked when it was first published."

"So... you want two copies of the same book?"

She was happy with her Kindle, which still kills me. And she was perplexed by my

crammed bookshelves and the stacks that took up increasing amounts of floorspace.

"Well," I explained, "the true first edition would probably cost twenty grand." This one was only twenty or thirty bucks.

"I see," she said, making clear she didn't.

Oh, well.

I told myself that Ames and Hodges would understand. Though I supposed they could probably afford the first edition.

Sean Day recently finished his first PI novel, set during the 2002 garage rock explosion in Detroit, and is working on a new humorous detective novel about the artist enclave of Ferndale, Michigan. An attorney working in Warren, Michigan, he resides in southern Ontario. He may be reached at seandaymystery@gmail.com.

Just What Is a Cold Case? by Sandra Murphy

Writers who pen cozy murder mysteries often find themselves facing a problem—how many bodies can their main character find without looking like a corpse magnet?

It starts with a public argument so witnesses hear "I could kill you for that" or the victim-to-be declare, "Over my dead body." The amateur sleuth, most often female, is forced into the investigation because she herself is a suspect and afraid the police won't continue to look for the real killer. Who wouldn't want to point out there were others with far better motives?

In following books in the series, a friend, family member, or colleague may be in the same unfortunate situation. They say, "You found the killer when you were a suspect, can't you please help me too?"

To avoid their fictional city becoming

known as the murder capitol, authors take their sleuths on a road trip. A change of scenery doesn't lessen the body count but it's not friends and neighbors who are the victims. Still, she can't travel from city to city, leaving a trail of corpses in her wake without looking like a serial killer.

Enter the cold case.

Just what is a cold case? The dictionary definition is an unsolved criminal investigation which remains open pending the discovery of new evidence. The National Institute of Justice says it's any case whose probative investigative leads have been exhausted. A case may remain open as long as clues are found and followed or may go cold within a matter of months when witnesses fail to come forward or physical evidence is lacking.

Solving a cold case depends on how long ago the victim went missing or was killed and the manner of death. For instance, in Cheryl Hollon's **Draw and Order**, her character, Miranda Trent, inherited a house and potential business from her uncle. He made the best moonshine around and wanted her to carry on the tradition. To promote her business and to keep money rolling in, Miranda, an Appalachian artist, hosts paint and shine events. She leads a tour group on a hike, the participants paint the scenery, followed by an old-fashioned meal and moonshine drinks. During one of the more strenuous hikes, a human skeleton is found. Miranda is sure it's that of her cousin, Howard, missing for the past five years.

As a cold case, there were very few clues. The sheriff is willing to write off Howard's death as due to an injury and exposure to the weather. Miranda knows her cousin was a skilled hiker and woodsman. She's sure it was murder. With persuasion from her mother and her aunt, Miranda investigates.

In this instance, there's an unidentified body and a missing man known to frequently visit the area. Without a wallet or other identification, dental records proved the skeleton was Howard's. It was up to Miranda to pinpoint when Howard disappeared, who were the last people to see him, and was his death work related or personal?

A much trickier case appears in **What the Cat Dragged In** by Miranda (Dean) James. Charlie is retired but works part-time at the college and volunteers at the library. He's well-known around town as the man with the huge cat—Diesel, a Maine Coon. Charlie also inherits a house and property. While inspecting the old family home, he and Diesel go to the attic. Hearing a thump, he finds Diesel exploring on

his own—with a human skull under his paw. It's real, and part of a not-quite-complete set of bones, missing the hands and feet. Dating the skeleton, it's determined it's that of an older woman who died and was buried many years ago.

In the South, where the series is set, historians are the older families, with stories passed down from one generation to the next. Tapping into that source plus records found at the library, college, and historical society, Charlie finds three women went missing during the approximate time period. The "ran off with some man" excuse was used and without further information, people believed it—mostly. There were rumors one woman was killed by her husband and buried on their farm, but no one ever knew for sure. Charlie's first questions are, how did the bones get into the attic after burial and where was the original grave?

Since the bones were found in what is now Charlie's house, he's invested in finding out who she is, was it murder, and were the hands and feet removed to thwart identification? Without witnesses to question or DNA and dental records to match, it becomes a research project, not an active investigation. In the end, old memories and old photographs provide the solution.

Cold cases such as these involve no blood on the page, no lies of misdirection, no need for alibis, and few clues to follow, making them more of a puzzle than a straightforward mystery.

Whether directly or indirectly involved, the characters have a strong need to know what happened. And isn't that why we read mysteries?

We need to know, too.

Sandra Murphy lives and writes in St. Louis,

home of the Gateway Arch and Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company. A collection of her short stories, *From Hay to Eternity: Ten Devilish Tales*

of *Crime and Deception*, can be found at the usual outlets or from the publisher at www.bit.ly/SandraMurphy.

Val McDermid's Cold Case Series: Karen Pirie by Chris Stuart

Not all series begin as a series. Val McDermid's six cold-case books—led by Detective Chief Inspector Karen Pirie of the Edinburgh-based Cold Case Review Team—begins with the first appearance of Pirie in a minor, though important, role halfway through **The Distant Echo** (2003).

McDermid introduces her: '...the other officer was getting to her feet. DC Karen Pirie yanked an unfashionable but functional sheepskin coat off the back of her chair and shrugged into it.'

McDermid might not have known she was starting a long-running lead character, but that first description is spot-on for what would follow.

The first half of **The Distant Echo** is about a murder in 1978 attributed to four St. Andrews students; the second half about its resolution as a cold case in 2003. So, a 25-year-old case. (I'm not aware of what the oldest cold case in fiction might be. Josephine Tey's classic **The Daughter of Time** (1951) is a cold case solved, at least speculatively, across five centuries. There's probably a novel somewhere about a murder of a Neanderthal by a *homo sapiens* and solved in the 21st century. I'd be interested in hearing from anyone about either the oldest fictional cold case or the oldest true-crime cold case.)

Pirie doesn't make a second appearance until **A Darker Domain** (2008), in which she is placed in her main role as the lead investigator of the Cold Case Review Team. It seems like the true start of a series, yet in interviews at the

time McDermid described the work as a stand-alone.

The story concerns a man's disappearance during the 1984 miner's strike and a contemporary murder in 2007. McDermid was raised in the mining area of Fife, so she knows the history and people of that area well. Though this may have been intended as a stand-alone, the strength of this second outing laid the bedrock for the series, which finally took shape in 2014 with **The Skeleton Road**. A Karen Pirie novel has appeared every even-numbered year since: **Out of Bounds** (2016), **Broken Ground** (2018), and most recently, **Still Life** (2020). Let's hope for another in 2022.

A good cold case story moves between the past and the present, bringing the past to life while managing the vagaries of memory and the preconceptions of the present. In McDermid's hands, multiple timelines and storylines are deftly juggled. There are no ham-fisted flashbacks or condescending descriptions of past fashions. The present is not smarter than the past, it just has better tools, more information, and—most importantly—an investigation led by a main character who cares and whom we care about.

Karen Pirie is not Carol Jordan with a new haircut. She has her own flaws and strengths, her own friends and enemies, and her own way of working through an investigation. She's part of a police detective team, for one thing, which means more of a setting like Ian Rankin's *Rebus* or William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* books, with attendant fully realized characters.

On Pirie's team (no spoilers here) are Jason 'The Mint' Murray and DS Phil Parhatka, among others, along with a weaselly boss intent on making her life miserable and her investigations difficult. It's a great ensemble cast, which bodes well for a television adaptation. The ITV network in the UK has begun production of a tv series titled *Karen Pirie*, which should air there soon (as they say), and hopefully will be available to those of us in the US soon after.

The Skeleton Road, the third Karen Pirie book, takes place in Edinburgh, but covers war crimes committed in the Croatian War of the early '90s. It's a political thriller, a murder mystery, and a personal journey for Pirie. To my mind, it ranks among the best of McDermid's work. It also has a thrilling chase scene along Oxford rooftops. McDermid mentions Dorothy L. Sayers' **Gaudy Night** as an inspiration. It's one of the things I love most about McDermid's work: she is vastly well-read and knows the history of crime, thriller, and mystery fiction as well as anyone.

Just as historical fiction is inevitably about the present, so cold cases bring up current issues. In the subsequent three books—**Out of Bounds**, **Broken Ground**, and **Still Life**—we get to know Pirie and her team as they handle cold cases that include a terrorist bombing, domestic violence, art forgery, and other storylines that, though they're set in the past, have relevance to today. **Broken Ground** even includes an appearance by Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland.

No article on Val McDermid's cold case books could neglect to mention what many consider her masterpiece, **A Place of**

Execution (1999). It's the third in a consecutive-year publication of three of what I rank among the greatest crime novels ever written, including Ian Rankin's **Black and Blue** (1997) and Reginald Hill's **On Beulah Height** (1998). It's almost as if the three were inspiring each other to greater work.

A Place of Execution revolves around murders, based in part on a true crime, that happened in 1963, and which are resolved in the present of 1999 by lead character Catherine Heathcote, a journalist who lives in the fictional town of Scarsdale in the Peak District. It's a masterful cold case story that in some way presages McDermid's most recent book, titled **1979**, which came out this year. It's the first in a smart new series featuring Allie Burns, a journalist at a fictitious Glasgow newspaper set in that year.

As McDermid was herself a journalist in the '70s, she knows that time and that world well. The new series—and she is already calling it a series—is historical fiction, all the action taking place in 1979, rather than in the present and past as in the cold cases in the Karen Pirie books.

Val McDermid fans—and I count myself one—have been lucky to be treated to a new book every year since 1987: an astonishing thirty-five works of quality crime fiction to date, including five series and six stand-alones. She has given us the gift of many years of superb crime novels. With these two active, brilliant series, we readers can look forward to many more.

Chris Stuart reads, writes, and copyedits, in that order, in Port Townsend, WA.

AUTHOR! AUTHOR!

The Lover's Lane Bandit *by J. L. Abramo*

At the center of **Homeland Insecurity**, my first book of non-fiction, are two murder cases—one in northern New Jersey and the other in southern California. The suspected perpetrators were born 8 days apart in 1934 and died 57 days apart. The crimes were committed 140 days apart in 1957. The killing of two young police officers in El Segundo, California, remained a cold case for more than 45 years.

Shortly before midnight on the 21st of July in 1957, two teenaged couples, coming from a summer party, parked their 1949 Ford to watch planes take off and land from Hawthorne Municipal Airport. The area where they parked, east of El Segundo in Los Angeles County, was known as Lover's Lane. One of hundreds of such secluded areas throughout America where couples stopped to experience their first tastes of kissing and light petting.

"It was getting steamy in the car, so I rolled down the window," one of the boys later recalled. "That's when the gun came through the window and a man said, 'This is a robbery.' At first, I thought it was a joke—that someone was pulling a prank—but I could see that the gun was real. Then he said, I don't know what to do with you."

The assailant demanded their money and jewelry. He ordered them all out of the car, had them remove their outer clothing, and bound and gagged each of them with surgical tape. Then the man raped one of the young girls—a fifteen-year-old high school sophomore. The Lover's Lane Bandit, as he would

come to be known, held the high schoolers captive for more than an hour. Then he marched them all out into a field where, it was later reported, they all believed they would be shot and killed. Instead, he left them there in the field—bound and partially clothed—and drove off in their 1949 Ford.

Just after one in the morning on the 22nd of July, El Segundo Police Officers Richard Phillips and Milton Curtis were sitting in a parked black-and-white police car when they spotted a 1949 Ford stop briefly for a red light at the corner of Sepulveda Boulevard and Rosecrans Avenue and then proceed through the intersection while the traffic signal was still red. They followed and pulled the Ford over to the side of the avenue. Officer Phillips left their car, while Officer Curtis remained in the police cruiser to attend to protocol—reporting over the radio that they had stopped a vehicle for a traffic violation.

El Segundo Police Officers James Gilbert and Charlie Porter heard the report over their radio. They were near the location of the traffic stop and decided to go to the scene. When they turned onto Rosecrans, they saw the police car and the Ford. Officer Phillips, and a man they assumed to be the driver of the Ford, were out of their vehicles. It appeared as if Phillips was about to write up a citation. When Gilbert and Porter pulled up and slowed down, Phillips waved them on—indicating that he and Curtis had it handled. The second police car drove off.

Minutes later, Officer Phillips was on the

radio calling for an ambulance—reporting that both he and his partner had been shot. Gilbert and Porter raced back to the scene. They found Officer Phillips on the ground. He had been shot three times in the back. He died before medical help arrived. Officer Curtis was still in the police car, dead. He had been shot three times in the abdomen. Richard Phillips was 29 years old. He was married with three young children. Milton Curtis was 25 years old. A rookie, only two-and-a-half months on the job, he was married with two children under the age of five.

A massive manhunt ensued. When the 1949 Ford was discovered, not far from the murder scene, it was quickly determined that the vehicle had been struck by three gunshots. One bullet had hit the trunk of the vehicle, and two others had travelled through the rear window. At the scene, investigators learned that Officer Phillips, apparently while on the ground dying, had discharged his service weapon six times. Three of his shots had struck the fleeing vehicle. There was no sign of the perpetrator. No one who was interviewed had heard or seen the fleeing suspect.

Howard Speaks, a crime scene investigator with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, hoped the vehicle would supply clues. "The only thing going through my mind was that I had to be sure to do everything right," Speaks would later say. Only two of the three bullets that had hit the vehicle were located, suggesting the third shot may have struck the driver. Officer Phillips may have marked his killer. Speaks went through the vehicle inside and out. On the steering wheel he found and was able to lift two partial prints of a left thumb. At the time, before DNA testing, fingerprints were still the most reliable method of

identifying suspects.

The two partials did not appear promising. Then a lab technician thought to put the two together and investigators felt confident they had a single thumb print that might identify a suspect. Investigators were able to create sketches of the suspect from witnesses including the teenaged victims who had been robbed, assaulted and terrorized—and Officers Gilbert and Porter who had seen him with Officer Phillips shortly before the killings. The police sketches were printed in newspapers throughout Los Angeles County. It seemed as if it would only be a matter of time before they located the killer. Optimism soon turned to frustration. No match could be found for the lifted thumb print. No one came forward to identify the suspect from the police sketches.

In 1959, a man digging up weeds in his yard—only a mile from where the El Segundo police officers had been murdered two years earlier—came across the frame of a handgun. When he discovered the gun, it was badly rusted and missing the cylinder. He thought nothing of it, putting it away with other junk in his garage. Nearly a year later he came across a cylinder that matched the frame and finally brought both to the police.

The weapon was identified as a nine-shot Harrington and Richardson .22 caliber revolver. The serial number on the weapon pointed police to a Sears Department Store in Shreveport, Louisiana, where the weapon had been purchased at the cost of \$29.95 in June, 1957. Two detectives from Los Angeles County travelled to Shreveport and they found the Sears sales clerk who had sold the gun. He dug up the sales record. The buyer was recorded as G.D. Wilson. The sales clerk had filled in all of the information on the

paperwork. The buyer was not required to sign his name.

The detectives could find no record of a G.D. Wilson residing in the Shreveport area, nor could they find anyone of that name with a criminal record or wanted for a crime in Louisiana or California. They assumed the man had been passing through and thought he may have spent a least one night in Shreveport. They checked hotels and rooming houses. On the day the weapon was purchased, a man who signed the register as George D. Wilson rented a room in the YMCA, just across the avenue from the Sears store. Wilson listed a false home address in Miami, Florida.

The detectives returned to California with little of value to show for their efforts. By the time 1960 arrived, after nearly 3,000 possible suspects had been looked at and cleared, the murder of Officers Phillips and Curtis three years earlier was considered a cold case.

In September, 2002, a phone call to the El Segundo Police Department, from a woman claiming she had new information about the murders, became the first promising lead in more than four decades. The woman said her uncle had bragged about being responsible for the killing of two El Segundo police officers. The case file, which had been gathering dust for more than forty years, was located and pulled out of storage. The uncle lead did not pan out, but the cold case was reopened by an entirely new generation of investigators. Homicide Detectives Kevin Lowe and Dan

Macelderry inherited the coldest case on the books. The only hard evidence was a thumb print from the stolen 1949 Ford driven by the perpetrator, a print which had been created by combining two partial prints. A handwriting sample from the man who purchased the murder weapon in Shreveport not long before the murders. And the belief that one of the gunshots, fired at the fleeing automobile by Officer Phillips as he lay dying, may have struck the driver.

At the time of the murders, due to the primitive methods of forensic investigation, and the lack of national databases, none of these clues had led to a guilty suspect. Now, in 2002, technology unthought of in 1957—including the digital imaging of the composite thumbprint, post-9/11 national fingerprint registries, advanced handwriting analysis, and the pure determination of cold case investigators—could hopefully lead to a killer.

Homeland Insecurity: The Birth of an Era of Unrest in America, is scheduled for release by Down and Out Books.

J.L. Abramo is the author of **Catching Water in a Net**, winner of the St. Martin's Press/Private Eye Writers of America Award for Best First Private Eye Novel; the subsequent Jake Diamond mysteries **Clutching at Straws**, **Counting to Infinity**, Shamus Award-winner **Circling the Runway**, and **Crossing the Chicken**; and five other mystery novels. **Homeland Insecurity** is Abramo's first book-length work of non-fiction.

The Amato Family Murder Mystery by *Carmen Amato*

Mystery was running through my veins long before I retired from the Central Intelligence Agency to become a full-time author.

I say "mystery," but "murder" would be more precise.

In 1912, an Italian immigrant shot three

people in Hartford, Connecticut, wounding one and murdering two. One of the victims was his wife.

The killer's name was Giuseppe Amato. He was my great-grandfather.

Giuseppe and Maria Carmella Amato shared a three-room apartment on the second floor of 23 Spruce Street with their six children, ages 9 to 1.

They'd both immigrated from Serra San Bruno, a small town in Calabria, the toe of Italy's boot. Giuseppe owned a barber shop on the ground floor of the Spruce Street tenement.

One floor above, Giovanni Tassinni, his wife Camila, and their three children lived in an equally cramped apartment but made space to take in a boarder.

The two wives were friends.

A laborer at the Armour & Co plant, Giovanni Tassinni was a hot-headed man. It was rumored that he shot a man in Providence, Rhode Island, several years ago, for paying too much attention to Camila.

When one of the Tassinni children died, "He raved insanely for several days, banging his head against the wall," according to the *Hartford Courant*.

Trouble began in early July when Camila Tassinni ran off with their boarder. Giovanni barreled his way to the Hartford police for help, but his English was so bad they sent him to find a translator. Instead, he hired a private detective, found his wife in Philadelphia and dragged her back to Hartford.

Giovanni accused Maria Carmella of encouraging Camila to run away. The halls of the tenement shook with savage arguments. Giovanni threatened to kill his neighbors and made it known that he kept a loaded revolver

in his apartment.

With Giovanni's threat hanging over his family, Giuseppe sold his barber shop and bought a Colt .32 automatic handgun. He practiced shooting in the basement of the tenement. The noisy neighborhood masked the sound.

Maria Carmella knew nothing of the sale of the family's only source of income, nor of her husband's handgun purchase.

Things came to a head on the night of 23 July. The two feuding men ran into each other at a local saloon and argued all the way back to Spruce Street.

An hour later, the whole neighborhood was startled when five shots rang out from the second floor, followed by hysterical screaming.

Giuseppe bolted out of the tenement, gun in hand, yelling at anyone in his way. He was last seen sprinting towards the rail yards.

Screaming and bloody, Maria Carmella and Camila ran after him. They both collapsed near the tenement's rear entrance.

Inside the Amato apartment, Giovanni Tassinni lay dead in the kitchen, shot twice.

The Hartford police organized a manhunt, assisted by cops in New Britain, Springfield, and other nearby cities. But fugitive Giuseppe Amato had planned ahead.

He bought the gun using a fake name, destroyed every photograph or drawing of himself, and emptied the family bank account.

Shot twice, the pregnant Maria Carmella didn't last long. Doctors at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford determined that only a transfusion would save her. Nurses volunteered to give blood, but the hospital refused them, preferring to get "some Italian to give the blood," according to the *Meridien Daily Journal*.

With his wife dead as well as Giovanni

Tassinni, Giuseppe was now wanted for two murders.

The .32 Colt was found in a watery grave in the Stony Hill section of nearby Windsor, Connecticut, suggesting that he tossed it over a foot bridge on the way to a railroad crossing. “Armed police in automobiles” watched roads and trains. They were hoping to identify Giuseppe by blood spatters on his clothing, although as the *Hartford Courant* speculated, “Amato could get fitted out with clean clothing in any of the Italian colonies around the state.”

After a few weeks of attention from places as far away as Burlington, Vermont, and Washington, DC, Giuseppe Amato became a cold case in the archives of the police department.

Camila Tassinni recovered and retrieved her children from the city of Hartford.

The six Amato orphans were farmed out to different friends and relatives.

My grandmother was 5 or 6 years old when the shooting occurred. Her version of losing both parents was that they went to Italy and died in a train crash. No one questioned her, yet the story always felt wrong. Why would two penniless immigrants return to Italy? Why would both parents go?

We uncovered the truth long after my grandmother passed away. If she ever saw her father again, knew how he escaped, or where he ended up, she never told.

Nor has anyone else.

Double murderer Giuseppe Amato was

never found.

Maybe someday, I’ll discover the last chapter of my great-grandfather’s life. How Giuseppe avoided the police. Where he went. If he meant to shoot his wife or not.

Until then, I’m focusing on the award-winning Detective Emilia Cruz police series. Emilia is the first female police detective in Acapulco. Over eight full-length novels so far (*Cliff Diver*, *Hat Dance*, *Diablo Nights*, *King Peso*, *Pacific Reaper*, *43 Missing*, *Russian Mojito*, and *Narco Noir*) and a dozen short reads, Emilia confronts drug cartels, official corruption, and Mexico’s culture of machismo.

In a continuing subplot, Emilia keeps looking for missing women whom she calls *Las Perdidas*—the Lost Ones.

Quite a cold case coincidence, don’t you think?

Both my character and I are looking for missing persons.

Following a 30-year career with the Central Intelligence Agency, Carmen Amato writes mystery and suspense, including the Detective Emilia Cruz police series set in Acapulco. Originally from upstate New York, Carmen’s experiences in Mexico and Central America launched her fiction career. Carmen is a recipient of both the National Intelligence Award and the Career Intelligence Medal. Visit her at carmenamato.net.

Cold Cases and the Human Connection by *Nicole Baart*

I’m not going to lie. If the FBI ever seized my laptop, my search history would definitely raise some eyebrows.

–how to dispose of a body

–how long can a person survive after being shot in the heart

–rates of decomposition in corpses

–when does rigor mortis set in

–undetectable poisons and their effects

It’s a grim list that often only leads to additional questions—and then interviews with doctors, morticians, police officers, and yes, even FBI agents. I can only hope that any investigating officers will take my profession as a writer into consideration.

Writing about missing people, murders, and shady characters is an adventure to be sure, but the truth is that writing mysteries is a deeply emotional pursuit. I don’t write about horrible things happening to good people for entertainment, but because it’s the best way I know how to come to terms with the darkness in this world. It gives me the chance to take a heartbreaking story and try to make some sense of it—and then write the ending that I wish a real life tragedy could have had.

The story behind **Everything We Didn’t Say** is rooted in an unsolved Iowa murder. Although officially written off as an accident, the family of the victim believed that the act was intentional. I was researching cold cases, hoping that some thread I found might work well in the story I was constructing, when I came across a comment on a message board. The comment led to an article which pointed to a website where I fell down a rabbit hole of conspiracies and accusations, scanned court documents and grainy photographs. My heart broke for the family of the deceased, and I found myself wondering who to believe: the bereaved mother or the sheriff who concluded that her allegations were false. There was nothing I could do to shed light on this particular cold case, but I was gripped by the human connection I felt, and decided to pour my heart into the story of my own unsolved murder, weaving elements of this true story into my own work of restorative fiction.

We are a society obsessed with true crime, but I don’t necessarily think that our interest is macabre. I believe that though we are curious about the where, when, how, and who of any violent crime, the answer that we truly long to know is: why? Why would someone do this awful thing?

The truth is often much more complicated than we would like it to be. The menacing monsters under the bed of our childhoods are replaced by people we know and love. People who—just like us—are capable of unimaginable things under the right circumstances. And when you unravel their lives to the point of origin, the ugliness inside of them has its root in a deep hurt that they once experienced. Abuse, neglect, rejection. Or, less dramatic but perhaps more insidious: betrayal, loneliness, fear. And although we like to demonize the perpetrators of harm, we can often see just the tiniest glimpse of ourselves in them. We would never take things so far, but we do know what it is like to feel wounded and alone.

On the other hand, sitting knee-to-knee with victims allows us as readers and humans to help shoulder the burden of grief—and, work through our own. Fiction is the truth aslant, a way for us to meet our hurt and questions, our wonderings about this world and our place in it, from the safe distance of fiction. Cold cases offer a sort of tangible, human connection to our communities and neighborhoods. A way to practice empathy, to evaluate the ways that we have failed, and to consider the ways that we can do and be better.

This firmly held belief means that my crazy internet search history also includes:

- how to heal from emotional wounds
- best practices for letting go
- what to say to a victim of violent crime

- how hurt people heal
- small ways to build community

It's my hope that when a reader picks up **Everything We Didn't Say**, they are not just whisked away by the exciting plot or mesmerized by the mystery, but also touched by the characters. I hope they see the ways that small kindnesses lead to moments of expectation, and that by the time the final page is turned they believe just a bit more that we are, and always will be, better together. My books don't have a happily-ever-after ending. But then, neither does real life. Our stories are a tapestry of hurt and happiness, grief and glory played out on a magnificent stage. And we get to

spend the rest of our lives answering the question: Why? May our reasons be rooted in the slow and extraordinary work of mending those broken places and striving for moments of true connection.

Nicole Baart is the mother of five children from four different countries. The cofounder of a nonprofit organization, One Body One Hope, she lives in a small town in Iowa. She is the author of nine previous novels, most recently, **Everything We Didn't Say**, in addition to **You Were Always Mine**, **Little Broken Things**, and **The Beautiful Daughters**. Learn more at NicoleBaart.com and on Instagram @nicolebaart.

What's the Weight of a Cold Case? by *Dr. Charley Barnes*

In my new literary thriller, **Sincerely, Yours**, I look at the ways in which cold cases are carried by those left behind. Sarah, the protagonist of the novel, is forced to “move on” from her mother's murder when the culprit goes uncaught. But is that something someone ever really moves on from?

Sincerely, Yours tells the story of Sarah, a young woman who sees her mother murdered. In the weeks after, when Sarah is trying to adjust to this new life, the killer gets in contact. He sends Sarah a letter apologising for what he did, but recommending that she try to let it go. He signed the letter only: **Sincerely, Yours**. However, far from this being the end for either of them, the killer continues to write letters to Sarah throughout his career. Meanwhile, Sarah continues to hunt him; even though the police look to have long ago shifted their attention from Sarah's mother, to focus instead on more recent victims.

Through Sarah, I really wanted to look at the emotional and psychological fallout of a

cold case mystery. For her entire adult life, she has to carry the burden of her mother being a cold case—with the added complication of the killer still being active. However, as there are new victims turning up all too frequently, the original ones often get left behind. It opened up a lot of interesting—albeit difficult—questions about how we've made murder into a buyable product, with killings and victims going in and out of fashion like a fictional media trend might.

The novel allowed me to explore what actually happens to loved ones in a cold case, though. Rather than the ones hunting the killer (although Sarah truly is, in secret) or the ones making the news, Sarah is forced to live in the shadow of this having happened. As a result, she keeps loved ones at a safe distance—even those she believes herself to be close to—and she builds an entire life around the one area she, logically, should want to keep away from: crime.

She writes a true crime release—in an especially meta sense, the book is about the relatives of those who die due to violence—and goes on to become a crime journalist, as well as later in the novel, with the help of a friend, developing a true crime podcast looking at the forgotten victims of famous cases. The entire novel revolves around this one life-forming incident for Sarah because, truly, how could it not? Additionally, when you—as the survivor of sorts—are facing off against that style of shadow, surely you only have two options for the life that follows: you turn away (forget it happened and build a life with a missing loved one as anyone else might); or you go into it (and let the case consume corners of your world and become part of your daily thought patterns).

As the author, I wondered more than once what it must actually be like to be emotionally connected to a case that goes cold. To my mind, it must feel an awful lot less attractive than it seems to us as consumers who are playing games of armchair detection. Of course, part of the reason why everyone—Sarah included, in many ways—loves a cold case is just

that: We like to believe we can solve them.

Unless you, like some, exist in the opposing corner wherein you hope for the case never to be solved. The sentiment isn't quite as morbid as it might seem on the surface, though. You're not wishing that gut-wrenching hurt on loved ones or anything quite as extreme as that. However, cold cases are, in many societies, now given a high status in the realms of urban legend. Therein lies the problem with them being solved, then, because if they are solved they cease to be a mystery.

But whatever lies beyond the cold case, Sarah—and I—are willing to bet there's something more comforting than the chill of never knowing.

Dr Charley Barnes is an author and academic based in Worcestershire, UK. She is a lecturer in Creative and Professional Writing at the University of Wolverhampton, and she has lectured at various institutes around the West Midlands on a freelance term. Charley is also a workshop facilitator, private tutor and editor. Her most recent prose work, *All I See Is You*, is a psychological thriller published with Bloodhound Books (May, 2021)

Even if You Can't Solve a Cold Case, You Can Make Up an Ending... *by R.G. Belsky*

I've written about a lot of cold case murders in my mystery fiction over the years.

But I've also actually lived through one.

When I was 19 years old and growing up in Garfield Heights, Ohio—a suburb of Cleveland—a teenaged girl was found brutally murdered in the bedroom of her house on a quiet, peaceful, *Leave It to Beaver*-like Midwestern street not far from me, during the middle of the day in December, 1964.

Beverly Jarosz, 16—a junior at a nearby Catholic high school—had been strangled to death and also been stabbed more than 40 times. There was no sexual assault and no other apparent motive. Nearly 60 years later, this shocking and unexplained murder remains an unsolved cold case.

I didn't know the victim, but I knew people who did—and I never forgot about this long-ago cold case from my youth for which there

never had been any answers.

Then a few years ago, when I interviewed best-selling thriller author Michael Koryta about his new book, **Here's What Happened**, he revealed to me how the story in that book had been inspired in part by a similar kind of cold case from his youth.

It involved the disappearance of a 19-year-old Indiana University student who vanished during a bike ride near where Koryta lived as a teenager.

"I have the memory of the shock that went through the community and how jarring it was to me and my family," he said. "This was the dominant crime story in our town and in my life. And it has had an unusual lasting power with me."

Of course, many of the facts in Koryta's fictional story were different from the real crime, but it made me remember the cold case murder from my own youth that had stayed with me for all these years.

And so I wrote a mystery fiction novel (**The Last Scoop**, 2020) for my series character, TV journalist Clare Carlson, with a story inspired in part by the long-ago Beverly Jarosz murder.

In my book, Clare goes back to a 30-year-old cold case of a teenaged girl murdered in a small Midwestern town under similar circumstances—the only murder in the history of the town and a crime that remained unsolved.

I begin by saying:

On a warm summer day in 1990, a pretty high school cheerleader, Becky Bluso, was found brutally stabbed to death in the bedroom of her own home in the quiet town of Eckersville, Indiana.

Today police are no closer than they were back then to solving the baffling crime.

Of course, the outcome in my book is very different from real life.

Clare chases down a series of old leads and finally is able to link the teenaged girl's murder to a series of other serial killer slayings and solves not just this murder—but a number of others.

That's the great thing about writing fiction.

You can make it up anyway you want.

So any cold case—no matter how baffling and perplexing and frustrating it has been to authorities for years—can be solved in 300 pages or so. That gives the reader a feeling of satisfaction. And it makes the author feel good too, because he always knows that his story will have an ending.

Not so with Beverly Jarosz, the unsolved cold case from my own youth.

The Beverly Jarosz murder remains open in the Garfield Heights police files. There has been no new evidence or new leads or new hope for solving it in a long time. And the killer—if he (or she) is still alive—would likely be in their 80s by now.

There have been many other famous murder cold cases that remained unsolved for years:

Jon Benet Ramsey, the 6-year-old child beauty queen found strangled to death in her home in Boulder, Colorado in 1996. The haunting video of little Jon Benet performing at a talent pageant remains with us all to this day—along with the unanswered questions about her murder.

Etan Patz, also only 6, who disappeared off the streets of New York City on his way to school in 1979. For years, it was a baffling cold case. More recently, a man was convicted for Etan's murder. But no body was ever found, and questions remain about the little boy's death.

The Zodiac Killer, who murdered at least five people and possible as many as 37 in northern California during the late '60s. He sent taunting letters to the media about all the murders. Eventually the killings stopped. But the Zodiac Killer is still an open case that has never been solved.

The list of notorious cold cases goes all the way back to Jack the Ripper in 19th century London, the legendary serial killer of numerous prostitutes who was never caught.

But Beverly Jarosz is the one cold case that I remember the most.

A young girl who lived just blocks away

from me who had her whole life ahead of her—but had it snatched away for no apparent reason at the age of 16.

And so this remains the ultimate cold case of my life....

R.G. Belsky is a longtime New York City journalist and a mystery fiction author. He currently writes the award-winning Clare Carlson series for Oceanview—and also writes thrillers under the pen name of Dana Perry for Bookouture. As a journalist, he has been a top editor at the *NY Post*, *NY Daily News*, *Star* magazine and NBC News.

Cold Cases and Ancient History? by *Albert Bell*

I have never set out to write a cold-case mystery, but I have ended up writing three of them. Two are part of my Pliny series, set in ancient Rome, while the other is the second in my Palmetto Antiques series.

In *Fortune's Fool* (Perseverance Press, 2017), Pliny is enlarging one of his villas on the shore of Lake Como. When a section of wall is torn down, the workmen find a human skeleton. In ancient Rome walls were often built by a “rubble-fill” method. Two masonry walls were erected and the gap between them filled with whatever was handy, as a kind of insulation. Pliny knows when that wall was built, so he can get a very precise date for when the skeleton would have been placed in it. The person must have been murdered. People don't just fall into a wall. And there is the matter of the obvious blow to the skull. As he and Tacitus investigate, they realize that Pliny's biological father may have had something to do with whatever happened.

Hiding from the Past (Perseverance Press,

2020) was a situation that quickly became a cold case. Pliny and a traveling party, including his lover Aurora, are stranded by a spring blizzard in a village at the foot of the Alps, where Pliny and Aurora spent some time ten years earlier, on a trip with Pliny's uncle (also his adoptive father). In their teens at that time, they investigated what looked like a murder but did not solve the case. The same suspects are still there, so they can pick up where they left off, with a more satisfactory outcome this time.

I also enjoy contemporary cozy mysteries and have written several in that category. My most recent, *Veneer Over Murder* (2020), features Maureen Cooper, a ghost-writer and owner of an antique store in a small town in South Carolina. (Maureen's first story was *Death by Armoire*, which won the genre category in *Writer's Digest's* contest for self-published books in 2018.) In *Veneer*, Maureen travels to Georgia to interview Leander Martin, whose conviction for murder at age sixteen

in the late '60s has been overturned. Maureen's publisher thinks the story might merit a book. The day after the interview Leander is found dead at the bottom of a set of steep stairs. Tragic accident, the police say. But as Maureen begins asking questions, she is almost killed herself and learns the truth about the crime Leander was accused of and the complex truths that some powerful people in his small town have been hiding for decades.

Writing a cold-case mystery presents problems that an author does not face when the story is about a crime (and it's always murder) that has just happened. The common wisdom is that, if a case isn't solved within forty-eight hours, it likely won't be solved. The trail grows cold that quickly. Trying to solve a crime that was committed forty or fifty years earlier raises all sorts of problems. Has all the evidence been preserved? What condition is it in? The crime scene has disappeared or changed dramatically. Witnesses may have died. If still living, they may not remember what their testimony was. We have much more sophisticated forensic methods today which allow us to extract usable evidence from very small bits of material, things that might not even have been

preserved decades ago. We can't follow people's movements by looking at footage from ubiquitous security cameras (even on neighbors' porches). We can't trace which cellphone towers their phones pinged off of. Before 1992, DNA evidence was not used in court.

While a cold case from a few decades ago presents those kinds of problems, any case from the ancient world multiplies them exponentially. No fingerprints, no handwriting experts, no facial recognition, not even a smoking gun—how would you ever get a conviction? Confession was the surest method. Advocates for both sides relied on speeches stressing the character of the people involved. The Roman orator Cicero made such compelling speeches for the prosecution that his opponents sometimes left town rather than wait for a jury's verdict. Other accused persons were known to commit suicide rather than face execution or death in an arena. Not many episodes of *Law and Order* or *CSI* end that way.

Albert Bell is a retired history professor and the author of 19 books. He and his wife have four children and three grandsons. His website is <http://www.albertbell.wixsite.com/writer>

Heating Up a Cozy Series With a Cold Case *by Leslie Budewitz*

One of the central motifs in my Spice Shop mysteries, set in Seattle's Pike Place Market, is a woman's search for identity. It's a critical aspect in a woman's journey—that point when she realizes she can build her own life on her own terms, then begins to do the work, be it physical, spiritual, or emotional. And sometimes, in fiction and in real life, that work forces her to confront people and problems from the past.

Pepper Reece, the shop owner and Mistress of Spice, is the heart of the series, though each book highlights another recurring character and their relationship with Pepper. I like to set myself a challenge for each book. In *Killing Thyme*, third in the series, those two elements come together, and reflect that search for identity, through a cold case.

Pepper was raised in an unusual household, a peace and justice community rooted in the

Catholic Worker Movement. Her parents, Chuck and Lena, were a Vietnam vet and a hippie chick who met at an anti-war rally and formed Grace House with another young couple. The two couples shared a large, run-down house on Seattle's Capitol Hill, and had daughters two weeks apart—Pepper and Kristen, who at forty-three, like to say they've been best friends since before they were born. It was the late '70s and early '80s, and Grace House was the center of a movement that backed its beliefs not just with protest but with action, starting programs like low-income pre-schools and health clinics, and serving free meals at the nearby Cathedral.

But not everyone shared the commitment to nonviolence. When the girls were twelve, tragedy struck. A fiery explosion killed the target of a rogue protest, a software engineer who left a family, including a young son. A Grace House member was killed, too, and in the aftermath, another disappeared. The group lost its spirit; both the joint household and the community dissolved. As is often the case, events Pepper never fully understood dramatically reshaped her life.

Now the adult Pepper meets Bonnie, a potter selling her work in the Market. Lena, visiting from Costa Rica, recognizes the woman as the long-missing group member. When an object that disappeared after the fire—a valuable bracelet—resurfaces during the renovation of the old house, where Kristen and her family now live, eyes widen. Then Bonnie is killed in her studio, making Lena and everyone who was part of Grace House in those days a suspect, along with the victim's surviving son and others who crossed Bonnie's path more recently.

The Seattle Police Department is one of the

few major police departments with a cold case homicide detective, an experienced detective whose job is to see old cases with fresh eyes. A case is considered "unsolved" until any of the assigned detectives retires or is promoted, usually fifteen to twenty years, then labeled "cold." The job is a marathon, not a sprint, as cases can take years to solve. It takes a special kind of commitment, a detective willing to crawl over old ground, plow through boxes of reports, notes, and evidence, then forget it all and take a different road. My Detective John Washington was a young patrol officer when the deadly fire occurred. He deeply admired the detectives on the case and knew how frustrated they were that it wasn't solved. So he takes the case personally. He's aware that they were always bothered by that missing bracelet. The only item stolen, it never showed up at any pawn shop. Now here it is. It ties Bonnie firmly to the fire and explosion, but why was she killed—and why was it left behind?

Like the detectives assigned to Bonnie's murder, Spencer and Tracy, Washington isn't keen on an amateur poking around his case. But this is a cozy—the amateur and her knowledge of those affected is the heart of the subgenre, whether the story is set in a small town or a "community within a community," as in an urban cozy like this one. A cold case investigation turns on reinterviewing witnesses and reconsidering connections. It's the perfect fit for a cozy, where the amateur sleuth is compelled to take the case by her personal ties, and where the investigation is grounded in her understanding of the community and the relationships between the people involved. In a cozy, a past crime and the fear of discovery often play a role. When the motives and methods are personal, forensics are not often important,

but when they're needed, the parallel professional investigation by law enforcement can provide them.

Ultimately, using a cold case to unearth the past allowed me to delve deeply into Pepper's relationships with her mother and Kristen. Her discoveries about her parents briefly make her question her own identity—her own narrative. When she reveals what she's learned about the past to her mother, she's finally able to see a confusing time through adult eyes, and they grow closer. Her tussle with Kristen takes longer to resolve. Kristen's family owned Grace House itself, where a key piece of evidence—the bracelet—lay long hidden. Because her family stayed, she heard conversations and witnessed events that Pepper did not, so she knew more about the conflicts that tore the community apart. And she didn't tell Pepper, who finds herself both resenting her friend's silence,

and unhappy with herself over her reaction. Both women must face uncomfortable truths about their childhoods, and themselves, if they want to solve the current crime and the cold case.

But they do it. Because ultimately, the past dictates the future only as much as we let it. And in a cozy, the belief that we can create the future we want always prevails.

Leslie Budewitz is a three-time Agatha Award winner and the best-selling author of the Spice Shop mysteries, set in Seattle, and the Food Lovers' Village mysteries, inspired by Bigfork, Montana, where she lives. As Alicia Beckman, she writes moody suspense, making her debut in April 2021 with **Bitterroot Lake**. Leslie is a national board member of Mystery Writers of America and a past president of Sisters in Crime. www.LeslieBudewitz.com.

Cold Cases and Deep Waters by *Martin Edwards*

I can't quite believe it, but nearly twenty years have passed since a very good editor invited me to come up with a concept for a new crime series with a rural backdrop. At that time, no British crime novelist had set a series in the beautiful Lake District, now a UNESCO world heritage site. I've always loved the Lakes, not only because of the stunning landscape, but also because of the area's fascinating literary associations and extraordinarily rich history. I decided to build on this idea of history. Why not focus my storylines on crimes of the past and the way that they influence events in the here and now? From this concept, it was a small step to pitch a series of cold case mysteries.

At that time, cold case work was in its infancy in British policing. There wasn't a

dedicated cold case team within the Cumbria Constabulary, the regional force responsible for policing the Lake District. So I decided to create one, headed by a woman detective, DCI Hannah Scarlett.

I'd written a series set in Liverpool with a male protagonist, the lawyer and amateur detective Harry Devlin. This time I wanted to create a relationship between two main characters which would develop over time. The other lead was Daniel Kind, who has moved to the Lakes from Oxford after the tragic death of the woman he loved. Daniel is a historian, so he—like Hannah—has a professional interest in delving into events of the past.

In the first book, **The Coffin Trail**, which was shortlisted for the Theakston's prize for

best crime novel of the year, Daniel and Hannah are in relationships with other people. However, there is a connection between them. Hannah's first boss and mentor was Daniel's estranged father, Ben Kind. Ben died before the series begins, but the complicated relationships that Hannah and Daniel had with him cast shadows over their growing attachment to each other. Again, I wanted to explore the influence that the past exerts over what we do now.

So the notion of a cold case, where an unsolved crime is re-examined years later, is reflected thematically in the books. That strong but often mysterious link between yesterday and today drives the development of characters, individual storylines, and the series as a whole. When Hannah sets out to solve a cold case puzzle, she is often reminded that we can't escape the consequences of what has gone on before. Because she looks at what happened

with fresh eyes, she sees things that weren't obvious previously. Her overriding focus is on the human dimension—understanding why people behave in the way they do. The passage of time can make it easier to reveal truth. And that, for me, is at the heart of the appeal of cold case mysteries. They aren't simply about plumbing the deep and murky waters of the past; they concern navigating a course through the present.

Martin Edwards is the author of twenty crime novels as well as non-fiction books such as **The Golden Age of Murder**. He has edited more than forty crime anthologies and also **Howdunit**, a masterclass in crime writing by members of the Detection Club. He received the CWA Diamond Dagger in 2020 and his other awards include an Edgar, Agatha, and two Macavities.

True Crime and the Fiction Writer *by Eve Elliot*

"I think he staged his own death."

"Yeah, but he was suffering from depression, so maybe he really did jump."

"What about the car, though? They found it two weeks later, and someone had been living in it."

"I think the record company bumped him off."

"Nah, he's living on a kibbutz in Israel, everyone knows that..."

I muted my microphone and listened, captivated by the voices emanating from the grid of faces on my laptop screen. This was my first meeting of the True Crime meet-up, on Zoom of course, like almost all of my social interactions these days.

I wasn't exactly an interloper; I had revealed

that I am a crime fiction writer and that I wanted to get a feel for true crime aficionados and how they discuss cases. But I felt like a bit of an anthropologist studying a fascinating new tribe. This collection of strangers intrigued me, each of them interested in some aspect of true crime, each of them knowledgeable about history, law, policing and psychology. Their passion for discussing these topics was infectious, and before I knew it, I was chiming in with my own thoughts on this 26-year-old case.

Richey Edwards was the lyricist and *enfant terrible* of the Welsh band Manic Street Preachers. On Feb 1, 1995, the day the band was scheduled to leave Cardiff for a promotional tour of the US, Edwards vanished, and

hasn't been heard from since. He was declared dead in absentia in 2008, but his body has never been found.

Rumours and speculation have circulated for many years, but nothing approaching evidence has ever been discovered. Some say he was fascinated with disappearances and faking one's own death, and went to ground in a far flung place like India or Israel to start a new life. Some think he ended up overdosing like so many other anonymous members of society's fringes. Others believe that as a long-time self-harmer and possible sufferer of bipolar disorder, he very likely jumped from a bridge on the River Severn (on the border between England and Wales), after which his body was carried out to sea.

Every one of these theories has its 'yeah-but's'. Every one of them is equally plausible. Nobody truly knows, and likely never will. Unless Edwards surfaces again one day with an Instagram account and a "hello lads, did you miss me?", it's probable this cold case will remain just that.

I'm not sure why cold cases interest me so much, but I find myself drawn to stories of long-forgotten crimes. I prefer disappearances and heists to the gorier tales of serial killers or the criminally insane, but for me, the crimes themselves aren't even the most interesting part (in the case of Edwards, no foul play was ever suspected and so it's doubtful any crime was even involved). What's fascinating is the eerie stillness of that moment in time being examined from the distance of many years. What intrigues me is knowing, even as I read about the cases and try to reconstruct the events, that we will likely never know for sure what happened, and will be left to speculate without any hope of closure or resolution.

And maybe that's why cold cases are ultimately both frustrating and fascinating. As a mystery story lover, my enjoyment of the genre is entirely dependent on a satisfying ending. I enjoy being a fly on the parlour wall when Poirot assembles the suspects and explains everything, I like poring over the final explanations that wrap up most mystery stories and finally understanding how the crime was committed, and how the culprit was discovered. With true crime you get none of this satisfying denouement. Reading about cold cases quite literally leaves you cold.

Yet it's all the more intriguing because it isn't fiction. There's a mundanity in true crime, no matter how chilling the crime or how shocking the details, because it focuses on the everyday actions of regular people doing regular things before fate cast them into the spotlight. In reading about cryptic last messages, or witness reports of strange delivery vans or suspicious prowlers, we see glimpses of our own pedestrian lives. We see how easily this could have happened to us, and we imagine a future where online groups of strangers discuss our actions and movements with microscopic interest. Cold cases speak to that vague uneasiness we all experience living in the modern world; here be monsters. Proceed with care.

The Zoom call went on for two hours, and everyone offered every manner of theory and explanation imaginable. So many creative thinkers contributing ideas and speculation made the case seem at times both a clear-cut example of a depressed young man ending his life, or the story of a carefully planned escape from notoriety. We did not arrive at a consensus, but that wasn't the point. The idea was to talk about the case and to let our imaginations

go wild.

As a fiction writer, it was a goldmine. I may write a book about a true crime group that actually solves a case, being that they are the only ones still keenly interested in doing so. But until then, I plan to indulge in many more cases and weird occurrences. Just as long as they're served up cold

Eve Elliot is a romance novelist, crime fiction writer and essayist. She wrote and produced a full-cast audio drama in the style of Agatha Christie, and had her first crime short story published in **Cemetery Plots of Northern California**, the 2021 Bouchercon anthology. She lives in Dublin, Ireland. eveelliot.com

Cold Case in a Cold Land by R.E. Donald

Living in bush Alaska is not for the faint of heart. Cold temperatures, rustic dwellings and a dearth of amenities, along with having wolves and grizzly bears for neighbors, doesn't make for an easy life, especially during an extended winter of short days and long cold nights. What better setting for a mystifying cold case?

Former homicide investigator Hunter Rayne of the Highway Mysteries series is no longer employed by the Canadian Mounties, so solving cold cases isn't in his current job description. Back in 1998, however, while hauling a load of mining machinery to Alaska in his 18-wheeler, he ended up running head on into a 25-year-old cold case. In Eagle, Alaska, he spots a young woman the spitting image of a girl he'd long thought was dead.

As a rookie cop in Whitehorse, Yukon many years earlier (in 1972 before DNA evidence was a thing) he'd been the first RCMP officer on the scene of a suspicious disappearance. A young American draft dodger and his girlfriend had vanished just before the first snow of winter, when grizzlies are hungry and have been known to break into cabins looking for grub. A grizzly had left his or her finger-, er, paw prints all over the remote trapper's cabin, and there was blood on the floor, but no sign of a human being. With few other clues to go

on, the case had started cold and stayed cold.

In case you're wondering, the unusual detective—essentially a Lone Ranger who drives a big rig up and down the highways of western North America—came about because I wanted to write about a world that was familiar to me. Well, I'd worked in the freight industry for over 20 years. I also wanted a sleuth who had experience in law enforcement and occasional access to law enforcement resources, hence a former cop with PTSD. And lastly, I didn't want to create a Cabot Cove situation, where there were enough murders in my hero's neighborhood to populate an entire crime series. (Thanks for the inspiration, Jessica Fletcher!) Thus was the concept of my semi-professional (pun intended) long-haul sleuth born.

The story of a cold case from the far north was a perfect opportunity to give fans of the series a glimpse at Hunter's past in the RCMP. His unofficial investigation calls his northernmost RCMP contacts into play, and I get to virtually revisit a part of North America that I've long been fascinated with. Although I've been to the Yukon on several occasions, and to Alaska more than once, my time in the north was generally spent in the communities of Whitehorse, Dawson, Fairbanks and Skagway. To make sure my descriptions were accurate, I

had to do quite a bit of research into life in the bush.

Another thing I enjoyed about writing **Sun-down on Top of the World** was the look back at Hunter's early years in law enforcement. As an added bonus, the northern setting gave me a chance to use one of the most interesting highway names in North America in the title. The Top of the World Highway runs 127 miles from Dawson City, Yukon almost as far as Chicken, Alaska. It connects with the Taylor Highway, which goes southwest to Tetlin Junction near Tok, and north to Eagle. In the summer months, that is. It's a world where certain highways close for the winter, making remote villages feel even more isolated.

Imagine having to chop holes in the river ice for your water in the winter. Imagine spending your summer collecting and chopping a year's worth of firewood for your woodstove. Your garden grows like stink during mosquito-ridden summer days with almost 24 hours of light, but much of it must be harvested before the first frosts in August, then stowed in a root cellar or canned to preserve it for winter.

Imagine catching and smoking as much fish as you can during the fall salmon run and making sure you've got enough toilet paper to tide you over for weeks and more in case bad weather throws the supply planes off schedule.

Lucky for Hunter, his trip to Alaska takes place in June. Mosquitoes abound, but the weather is mild and the days are long. The only cold things he encounters are the beer, the Yukon River, and a murder that hadn't been solved 25 years in the past.

R.E. Donald writes the Highway Mysteries, a series featuring a former RCMP homicide investigator who takes to the road as a long-haul trucker. Her hero, Hunter Rayne, is based in British Columbia, but her novels take the reader on highways from Southern California to Alaska. Ruth draws on her years in the transportation industry to create realistic characters and situations in her traditional mysteries with a not-so-traditional detective. She lives on a 124-acre ranch on BC's Cariboo plateau with her French Canadian cowboy. Visit her website at REDonald.com.

Old Crimes That Tie into New Ones *by Kathy Lynn Emerson*

I've always loved mixing old crimes with new ones in my novels, but until I starting thinking about an Author! Author! essay for MRJ's **Cold Case Mysteries** issue, I never realized how often I blend the two, especially when I'm writing contemporary cozies as Kaitlyn Dunnett. Three of my four Deadly Edits series mysteries deal with crimes committed years ago. So does **A View to a Kilt**, the most recent entry in the Liss MacCrimmon series.

Of course, my amateur detectives don't always know right away that there's a cold case involved. The exception is in **Clause & Effect**,

the second in my series featuring Mikki Lincoln, a retired teacher turned freelance editor, as the sleuth. When mummified remains fall out of a wall during renovations at the local historical society, it's pretty clear that someone was murdered in the past. It isn't exactly a cold case, since no one knew there was a case twenty-five years earlier, but close enough. Mikki is involved in solving it not only because she's there when the body is discovered, but also because she's now filling the same position the deceased held when she disappeared.

In the first entry in that series, **Crime & Punctuation**, the past crime at first appears to exist only in the pages of a novel, but before long, Mikki begins to suspect the murder her dead client wrote about was real, and that the deceased had a pretty good idea who committed the crime. Even in the third book, **A Fatal Fiction**, the past plays a role, but it's in the form of nostalgia, not criminal activity. There was no murder in any character's youth... just a few other scandalous secrets. In the most recent entry, **Murder, She Edited**, however, that's not the case. Mikki inherits an old farmhouse with the condition that she find and edit diaries left behind by the previous owner. It isn't until after she discovers the diaries are missing that she learns an unsolved murder took place in the farmhouse some fifty years earlier.

What's the coldest crime I've ever included in a novel? That would be the one in **Face Down Across the Western Sea**, one of the historical mysteries I wrote as Kathy Lynn Emerson. In that instance my sleuth, Susanna Appleton, isn't aware that there was a crime 70 years earlier until she almost becomes the next victim of a killer in her present—England in

the year 1571.

As a writer, it's both challenging and fun for me to tie a past crime and a present crime together, so that unraveling one mystery embroils my characters in imminent danger as they attempt to untangle the other. I also did this in another Liss MacCrimmon mystery, **Ho, Ho, Homicide**, in which Liss and her husband try to discover what happened to the owner of a Christmas tree farm who disappeared right after a body was found in his last shipment of trees. Putting the pieces together several years later places them at risk of becoming victims themselves. As Jimmy Fallon said of this book on *The Tonight Show*, "It has two things everyone likes, Christmas and murder." It also has a lovely cold case crime.

Kathy Lynn Emerson/Kaitlyn Dunnett has had 64 books traditionally published and has self-published several children's books and three works of nonfiction. She was the Malice Domestic Guest of Honor in 2014. Her newest book as Kaitlyn is **Murder, She Edited** and, as Kathy, **I Kill People for a Living: A Collection of Essays by a Writer of Cozy Mysteries**.

Solving Cold Cases in Fiction by *Laurie Fagen*

As a former broadcast and print journalist, I thought I could only write "Just the facts, ma'am."

But it turns out, having graduated from MSU—"Make Stuff Up"—writing fiction is very freeing, and **Bleeder**, the third book in my *Behind the Mic* mysteries is out Nov. 2, 2021.

My crime fiction novels feature a young radio reporter—of which I used to be one—who covers the crime beat for "KWLF-FM," a

fictional Chandler, AZ, radio station, where I live; she helps police solve cold cases because they're short staffed and she's interested; then because she's in this gritty crime world all day, at night she writes campy murder mystery podcasts.

The cold cases, as with some of the stories in my novels, come from actual cases which I then fictionalize to add more drama. Of course, Lisa Powers, my radio reporter sleuth, manages to solve the cold cases, which

does not always happen.

Some of the cold cases I write about come directly from the Chandler Police Department's cold case files on their website at www.ChandlerPD.com. I take the basic information, change the names and dates, and start figuring out how to "solve" the case. I've written about the death of a woman found in the desert; the kidnapping and murder of a bank executive; a child sexual abuse case; and in **Bleeder**, a suspected domestic violence cold case.

Lisa works with a couple of fictional Chandler PD officers who give her limited access to the files. As a pair of fresh eyes, she tries to update sometimes decades-old information, such as finding new entries for possible suspects in the fingerprint, ballistics, DNA and other online national indexes.

In the cold case in **Bleeder**, where a woman was gunned down outside her home on her way to work, police have shell casings and a bullet, but no murder weapon was ever found. So, Lisa works with the Phoenix Police Department and NIBIN, or the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network run by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to determine if the weapon has shown up in another criminal case.

The fictional elements include when Lisa interviews people associated with the crime, and because I do not have access to the real files, I'm making up this part of it. I imagine what might be found in the evidence boxes, the murder book, and determine what else could be done to bring the perpetrators to justice.

In **Bleeder**, the Phoenix PD ballistics lab determines the shell casings are from a Cobra Denali .380 weapon. Lisa—and I—find out there is no general repository, government or

private, matching weapon serial numbers with owners. The only way to find purchase information is from licensed firearms dealers and pawn shops. So, Lisa gets a pawn shop list of gun sales from the year before the victim's death and whittles it down to a manageable number of calls she makes to find more details.

Spoiler alert: Lisa is able to discover who she believes to be the killer, but they find her first!

While there are fictionalized elements to the cold cases, when possible, I try to use actual websites and contact information for those who are truly doing this type of work. For instance, in book #1, **Fade Out**, I interviewed Kelly Snyder, a retired law enforcement officer, who wrote the book **Find Me** about search and rescue teams in Arizona. I got permission to use his book's name in my novel, and used some information about psychics who he said have been instrumental in locating people. For the domestic violence plotlines in **Bleeder**, I use the actual National Domestic Violence Hotline at www.thehotline.org in case a reader may need that information in real life. Then again, as in **Dead Air**, the cold case is purely fiction. I took the nugget of a child sexual abuse incident and wondered what the now 18-year-old woman would be like today, knowing her rapist is still out there?

Personally, I have always been interested in cold cases, unsolved mysteries, and relish *Forensic Files* and cop TV shows and films. Not only does this help satisfy my fascination with cold cases, but it also adds a "mystery within a mystery" to my novels.

Maybe one day I'll get the chance to work on a real cold case. But for now, it's just as fun and interesting to make stuff up!

Laurie Fagen is a long-time "writer by habit" who has written for radio and television news;

corporate video, films and documentaries; magazines and newspapers; and now fiction. She has published short stories in *Sisters in Crime* anthologies, three full-length novels and two

novellas. She is also a fiber and jewelry artist and occasional jazz singer. She can be contacted through her website at www.ReadLaurieFagen.com.

Blowing the Dust Off *by Kate Fellowes*

I love a mystery. Especially those that feature a crime in the dim past, and another in the current day. I know the author will make a connection between those two, in a way I can't even imagine as I read along. And I know I will be amazed at the intersection of the two stories when it arrives.

When I set out to write my own first cozy, I decided to go for broke. **A Menacing Brew** (Fire Star Press, 2020) features a murder from an earlier century, one from several decades ago and yet another mysterious death in the present day.

Barbara and Amy York, my mother-daughter very amateur sleuthing team, never thought they would stumble onto the dead body of a friend while up to visit him for a nice weekend. But when it becomes obvious the crime had ties to a historical story he was working on for his newspaper—well, they owe it to his memory to snoop around a little. Their efforts unearth all three crimes and the tangled connections between them. The ancient murder looked like a tragic accident, remaining so until the truth was revealed one hundred years later. The decades-old crime, duly investigated by officials, was originally ruled death by misadventure, blaming the victim in a way that was convenient but never made sense. And the current event, for which Barbara is a prime suspect, reaches a rather heartbreaking conclusion.

It's the middle death that I regard as a cold case. Brushed aside by authorities, (paid off to

look the other way, according to rumors at the time), this crime provides the link between the other two deaths. Historical research, an old family Bible and personal interviews unlock the story. But the most damning evidence comes from an oral history recorded on long-forgotten audio cassettes.

The chapter of **A Menacing Brew** featuring the oral history scene was such a welcome challenge to write. Almost the entire thing consists of several characters sitting around a table, just listening. Could I write this in an interesting way? Make both the oral interview and the active listening suspenseful? Would my “rug pull” toward the end of the scene be the unexpected jolt I wanted it to be? The key to every crime, those few words at the end of the chapter needed to be powerful and shocking, bringing the cold case back to vivid life. I think I accomplished this goal, but readers must be the ultimate judge.

Cold cases, I think, have an extra layer of mystery, provided by nothing more than the passage of time. Clues disappear, memories fade and the sense of urgency is lost. But that is an invitation to visit the past, another world entirely. My sleuths delve into those long-ago days, tasked with taking the frayed ends of threads and finding the way to reconnect them—even after it becomes obvious someone wishes they would not.

One might think cold cases beg the question “what does it matter, after all this time?” But the answer, of course, is fundamental. It's about

servicing justice, altering the course of history, and setting the record straight. Could there be goals nobler than these?

Perhaps only one—bringing peace to the grieving.

Barbara and Amy deliver on each of these in a way I hope readers find tantalizing and touching, by turns. Their deep emotional connection, helped and hindered by their many personal differences, provides a unifying framework for their search and discovery.

I don't yet know if their further adventures

will involve another case buried beneath a century of dust, but I think the past will always cast a long shadow onto the present day. And shadows are where mysteries go to hide.

Kate Fellowes has published six mysteries, most recently **A Menacing Brew**. Her short stories have appeared in many publications, from *Woman's World* to *Crimestalker Casebook*. Working in a public library, every day is a busman's holiday for her. She blogs at katefellowes.wordpress.com.

Why I Hate Serial Killers *by Eve Fisher*

I don't like serial killers. I know, you're thinking, who does? Well, a hell of a lot of people, apparently. Not only do they like stories / movies / TV shows about serial killers, they even like them when the serial killer is the hero. I don't. One of my few lines in the sand (along with torture porn and child porn) is this: if the serial killer is the hero, I won't watch it or support it with my dollars. I don't want people to think it's "okay," or "justifiable," or "entertaining," because to me it isn't. For a number of reasons. Among them is the fact that I've seen a serial killer and all his fall-out at close hand, and it's probably the most horrific thing I can imagine.

Here in South Dakota, back in the 1990s, Robert Leroy Anderson was tried and convicted for kidnapping, raping, torturing, and killing two women. I was Circuit Administrator at the time, and he was tried in my circuit. Twice.

Though no one knew it at the time, it all began when Larisa Dumansky disappeared on August 27, 1994, after working the night shift at John Morrell & Co. meat packing plant in Sioux Falls, SD. As so often happens, her

husband, Bill, was briefly under suspicion, perhaps of an argument, perhaps of more. The idea was also floated that she might have taken off. The Dumanskys were both Ukrainian immigrants—maybe she'd gone home? Maybe she'd only come with him to get American citizenship? But her husband denied all of it, and said she'd never have run off, they were perfectly happy, and even more so, because she was pregnant. And then nothing was heard about her for years.

On July 29, 1996, Piper Streyle was getting her children (two-year-old son, three-year-old daughter) ready to go to their daycare center. They lived in Canistota, and she worked at Southeastern Children's Center in Sioux Falls. Her husband Vance had already gone to work. Piper never made it to work; the children never made it to daycare. Instead, one of Piper's co-workers called that afternoon, and was stunned when the daughter answered, weeping, saying that she and her little brother were alone in the house and that her parents were dead.

The daycare worker got on the phone to Vance and the Sheriff. They found the children

alone in a trashed living room, with Piper's purse emptied on the floor. The sheriff asked what had happened, and the daughter told him, "Mommy's going to die." A "mean man" had come into the trailer, argued with their mother, and taken her away at gunpoint. Vance Streyle remembered a balding man, in his twenties, named Rob Anderson who'd come to their trailer three days before, at 7:30 a.m., to ask about enrolling his kids in the Streyle's bible camp for children. Piper told Anderson the camp was over for the year, but to sign up for next year. Anderson left his name and telephone number.

Robert Leroy Anderson was 26 years old, and had already been married twice, with four children. He was a maintenance man at John Morrell & Co. meat packing plant. Witnesses remembered seeing his truck parked up the way from the Streyles on the 26th and the 29th.

The police searched his truck, and found (among other things) receipts for duct tape, and a wooden platform with holes drilled into it with Piper's hairs on it, a dirty shovel, furniture moving straps, weeds, a toolbox and other evidence. At his home, the police found a pair of jeans stained with blood and semen. Also, handcuff keys.

Two days later, the little daughter ID'd Anderson's photo as the man who took her mother. He was arrested on two counts of kidnapping, but not murder, because there was no body. In fact, they never found a body, despite a massive search that went on for days all around the Big Sioux River. They eventually found half of her shirt; later a farmer picked up the other half on the side of the road. They also found a roll of duct tape with human hairs attached to it that matched Piper's DNA, as well as rope and chains, eyebolts, a vibrator and a

half-burned candle.

In May 1997, Anderson was tried and found guilty of kidnapping Piper, and sentenced to life imprisonment in the South Dakota State Penitentiary.

Well, after that, a buddy of Anderson, Jamie Hammer, said that Anderson had been obsessed with torturing and murdering women ever since high school. Hammer was kind of into it himself. They used to sit around and plan the perfect crime. In 1994 they tried it. They got "wheel poppers" and put them on the road and were almost successful, except the poor woman whose wheel got flattened managed to break free. She was one of those who testified against Anderson.

There was another friend who was in on that attempted kidnapping: Glen Walker. In 1997, after Anderson's conviction of kidnapping Piper Streyle, Walker confessed to participating in the kidnapping (at knifepoint) of Larisa Dumansky, as she left work on August 26th, 1994. The two men drove her out to Lake Vermillion, where Anderson raped, tortured, and killed her. Walker always claimed that he just watched. That was how he knew that she pleaded desperately for her life (remember, she was pregnant). Walker was also the one who showed them where Larisa was buried, under a chokecherry bush. Only part of her skeleton was still there, but they found enough to identify her.

Meanwhile, Anderson was in prison, and his one-time cellmate, Jeremy Brunner, contacted the attorney general's office in August 1997. He told them that Anderson bragged in great detail about the murders of Piper Streyle and Larisa Dumansky. That Anderson admitted he was a serial killer; that he kept souvenirs or trophies of his victims at his grandmother's

house. That he had moved Larisa's skull to prevent them from IDing the body. And he asked Brunner to kill Walker, his old friend, because he knew Walker would turn him in. Anderson drew up maps for him, and told him where he had a gun stashed—again, in his grandmother's house.

The police searched his grandmother's house and found jewelry belonging to Piper Streyle and Larisa Dumansky, as well as Anderson's gun, all exactly where Brunner had said they would be.

September 4, 1997, Anderson was finally charged with murdering Larisa Dumansky, and with the rape and murder of Piper Streyle (remember, he'd just been convicted of kidnapping her before). The trial began in March, 1999, and he was convicted on April 6th on all counts. Three days later, he was sentenced to death. Walker was tried in March, 2000 and pled guilty to attempted kidnapping, and accessory to kidnapping and first-degree murder and conspiracy to kidnap Larisa Dumansky. He received a total of 30 consecutive years. He just got out on parole this year... believe me, I feel your horror.

Anderson appealed his death sentence in 2002—which here in South Dakota was a non-starter—but on March 30th, he was found dead by hanging. The interesting part of this was that he was in a segregation cell, not his death-row cell, because he'd been found in possession of a razor blade. As you can imagine, there's

been some unofficial debate about that. Did he really? Was it just an excuse to get him out of death row? Were there plans? Was there money? And reactions were universally, grimly positive:

Prosecutor: "There's a lot of women who will sleep better knowing that this guy is deceased."

Vance Streyle: "This is what we were after anyway. It just saved some time and effort."

I remember going to the last day of Anderson's trial—Anderson sat like a big fat white slug and smirked through the whole thing.

Did I mention that, back at Morrell's, a lot of coworkers admitted that they'd heard Anderson talk about kidnapping, raping, torturing, killing women, but couldn't believe that he meant it? That he was serious? So they never said a word to anyone, because they didn't want to look ridiculous. And the result was two women dead, another woman terrorized, and hints, rumors, of other women who might have disappeared, back where he used to live.

I can and do tell anyone and everyone, if anyone starts talking about how much fun it would be to do the things that Robert Leroy Anderson did, the hell with ridicule, I'm going to turn them in.

A serial killer as the hero? Not in my fictional universe. Not now, not ever.

Eve Fisher is a short mystery fiction writer, with 30 stories in *AHMM*, and many other mystery and sci-fi publications.

Help Me! by Russell Hill

Twenty years ago I was asleep when I was awakened by what sounded like a cry for help. It seemed to come from the rental house across the street.

"Help me!" When the cry was repeated, I got up, went to the window, opened it and heard the cry again. I dialed 911 and a police cruiser showed up.

The cop went to the door, listened, heard the cry, battered down the door and found a naked man tangled in the telephone wire.

The call went out to the paramedics and they took the man off to be detoxed.

There, sitting on the coffee table, were what looked like bags of cannabis. The cop re-treated, called a judge, woke him up, and got a search warrant.

The result was pounds of illegal drugs.

The man was charged with possession with intent to sell, and I was interviewed. Yes, I said, he lived there. I saw him repeatedly in his car coming in his driveway. He claimed he was only a visitor, the drugs were not his.

But I could testify that he was in residence, his car came regularly.

When it went to trial his lawyer asked for an extension.

This happened three more times. I asked the cop who was there too and he said they hope that you will not show up. You are the only one who can testify that he was in residence.

Pigs will fly before I won't show up, I said.

Eventually it came to a hearing and he was told to walk. The judge decided that my testimony wasn't enough, and he disappeared. The old cop said, "Win some, lose some."

"What happens now" I asked.

"It's a cold case," he said, "In another year the statute of limitations will close it out."

But twenty years later he showed up again. This time it was amphetamines, a lab in that rental house.

That same cop who was now grey-haired and paunchy contacted me.

"Remember the two of us sitting in the courthouse twenty years ago?"

"I do."

"Remember how he walked even though we

had good evidence?"

"I do."

"Well, the same sonofabitch is back. I want to bag him."

I thought yes, this is the story that I can write, this time the crime would end up with a conviction. But his lawyer tried the same trick. I showed up in court, sat in the same wooden chair I had sat in when I was in my sixties, and a new lawyer, a young man in a sharp suit asked for an extension in order to better prepare his case. The judge agreed. The cop and I had coffee.

"Here we go again," I said.

"This time we'll bag him."

Could I keep coming back? I am in my eighties and have nothing much more to do than write stories and drink scotch in the afternoon, and I was certain I would show up for his hearing next time and the time after that.

This time the judge listened to me as I told how the man had come and gone in his car, the other cars that came repeatedly to the house, the strange smells that emanated from the rental, nodded his head, and the man was sentenced to two years and the cop and I celebrated with a cup of coffee.

But it was not enough for a story; no beautiful girl, no ominous evidence of a serious crime, just the sentencing of a man to prison. He was not someone you met at the store in the afternoon, he was a man who had decided to peddle drugs and now he was to be incarcerated in a prison with men who had done far more heinous crimes. But he didn't look unlike the man you might meet in the store.

After the sentencing I went back to my house, sat on the deck, had a scotch and thought about the man who had been sent to prison by my testimony. What made him

different from me? Not much. He could have been selling ceramic pots to use in the garden. There was no story there, only an empty plot.

And now he would go off to Corcoran prison and he would do his time. The oaks on the far side of the canyon swayed in the late afternoon wind, the leaves moving like green water. There was no noise from the rental house across the street.

A Lifetime Ago by Marni Graff

I write two mystery series, and vary the way the story is told in each new one, as I try my hardest not to replicate what I like to call the Jessica Fletcher School of Murder by having readers wonder how many murders can justifiably happen in one small town.

When I started to plot the new Nora Tierney English mystery, *The Evening's Amethyst*, I knew the main plot would revolve around an Oxford master's student who falls to her death from a stairwell at Exeter college. Nora's step-sister is also taking her master's there, and as a friend of the dead woman, assures Nora and her detective fiancé that this could not be a case of suicide.

The books feature an American writer, Nora Tierney, who lives in England and is engaged to an Oxford detective, Declan Barnes. Several other characters from earlier in the series make an appearance, but each case is solved in a book, so other than following Nora's private life, they can be read in any order. How could I keep my personal challenge to vary the way this new story would be told?

This is the fifth book in the series, and I wanted another storyline to capture attention, one that I would sprinkle throughout the main parts of the book, until I brought that secondary plot line to a close after readers thought the

Russell Hill is a three-time nominee for the Edgar Allen Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America. He is an avid fly fisherman, having written about the sport for outdoor magazines. He lives with his wife of more than 50 years in the San Francisco Bay Area. His current writing project is about the death of Blackbeard Teach, and begins on Turneffe Atoll just off the coast of Belize.

book was over. Then I hit on it. A cold case seemed like the perfect choice. But would a cold case fit into this story I'd already decided on? How far back could I go and still have a story relevant to the main storyline?

I'd never done a cold case before, but decided it would challenge me as a writer. I also hoped it would keep the reader from feeling that while some of my characters might appear from previous books, the story I'm telling is one they haven't read before.

Casting my mind about for a suitable thread, discarding several ideas, I felt I'd hit on the right one when I decided to focus on the unsolved kidnapping of a 14-month-old boy from outside a Cumbrian pub. Left alone in his dirty playpen, young Donnie is taken while his drug-addled mother hangs out inside with her current boyfriend. The trail has more than gone cold; his body was never discovered. Twenty-seven years later, no one knows what happened to little Donnie.

Scenes from 1992 would be woven into my contemporary storyline, telling the story behind the kidnapping, and clearly letting the reader in on the kidnapper's identity, giving them inside knowledge my characters wouldn't have.

Delving into the cold case turned out to be one of the most satisfying parts of writing this book. I had to research the way things were in 1992, both in terms of technology, and what was happening in the world at that time. Then I had to create a reasonable motive for the kidnapper to feel justified in taking Donnie. And finally, I had to create a whole second cast of characters who would appear in the 1992 scenes and move the story forward of what happened to Donnie after he was kidnapped.

But the toughest part was figuring out how to wrap that cold case into the current time

period of the main novel. I found a way when Declan Barnes is told by his Superintendent that, despite being in the throes of a probable murder case at Exeter, he needs him to look into a second case that's fallen into his lap. A young man has walked into St. Aldate's Police Station that morning—and claims he's little Donnie.

Marni Graff is the award-winning author of *The Nora Tierney English Mysteries* and *The Trudy Genova Manhattan Mysteries*. **The Evening's Amethyst** will be out in fall of 2021.

The Adventures of Writing a Cold Case Cozy by Nancy Jarvis

Cozy mysteries, the genre I write in, offer murders and mysteries which need to be presented by the end of the second chapter and justice which is meted out before the end of the book, so it's unusual to find a cold case in one. I saw writing a cozy with a cold case as a challenge too interesting to be ignored.

I was a Realtor for more than two decades who once sold a house with a peculiar triangular space in the middle of where three rooms converged. The space was small, about two-and-a-half feet on a side, and had no exterior openings. Tapping on it produced a hollow sound. The property inspector my clients hired to investigate the house in general was tasked with explaining that space in particular. When he finished his inspection, the normally taciturn inspector cleared his throat and announced that he had found Jimmy Hoffa before laughing and explaining the space, which was open to the attic, served no purpose at all and he had no idea why it was there.

Too late. I hadn't started writing then, but I immediately stored the mysterious space and his body reference in a part of my brain

dedicated to curious but useless information. Of course, when I started outlining the third book of my Regan McHenry Real Estate Mysteries series, "Buying Murder," I retrieved that tidbit because it screamed cold case mystery to me. For my cold case, I had the same property inspection discover a partially mummified body which had been in the space for sixteen years.

From my writer's perspective, solving this cold case murder was great fun. In a standard cozy when the body is discovered, people gasp and say, "Oh, dear, it's..." Not so with a cold case body. The first big question to answer is who the newly discovered body was in life. It's an interesting problem which has to be solved with only the old clues on the body, especially when you not only don't know who he was, but don't know how long he's been dead.

In my writing case, I needed to discover not only the victim's identity and likely death date, but how he wound up in the triangular space, which meant playing with who put him there and why he was disposed of in such an

unconventional way. Finding answers to questions like these were more intriguing for me because the murder had been committed in the past and the trail had gone cold.

My particular cold case also raised a question that could never come up with a recent murder: how did the body come to be partially mummified? Figuring out the answer to that question means that I now know more about the history and evolution of cat litter formulation than a relatively normal person should.

A cold case mystery lets the writer explore characters' memories. Certainly, in any cozy story, the murderer might deliberately misstate remembered facts to throw off the investigation, but what about everyone else involved with the victim? How accurate would their memories be after the passage of sixteen years? Would they remember events perfectly, or would their memories become embellished

and made to fit with their perceptions, something which psychology tells us happens?

Best of all from a writer's perspective is that a cold case murder allows writer and reader to explore how an unresolved disappearance affects the cast of the book's characters and changes the course of their lives.

Nancy Lynn Jarvis left the real estate profession after she started having so much fun writing that she let her license lapse. After seven books in her Regan McHenry Real Estate Mysteries series, she is currently working on the third book in her PIP Inc. series which features not-quite-licensed private investigator, downsized law librarian Pat Pirard. Nancy spent eight-and-a-half months out of her damaged home following the CZU Fire, but now she's happy to be home again, writing and redecorating.

What A Cold Case Taught Me About Mysteries by *Stephanie Kane*

I became a mystery writer because of a cold case.

The crime was pretty low-profile, even prosaic: the bludgeoning of a housewife in her suburban garage one hot Saturday in June 1973. Her husband was arrested, but just before trial the charges were dropped. The family moved on—scattered, really, across the country—and the case went cold. Thirty years later, it became the subject of my first mystery, **Quiet Time**.

Why this case?

Betty Frye's murder was personal because I was about to marry her son. The morning she was killed, she called our flat. Hours later her killer—my soon-to-be father-in-law—paid us a surprise visit in clothes too hot for the weather

and with a bruise on his forehead. His claim that he was looking for a venue for our wedding dinner became his alibi. And there it sat till I wrote **Quiet Time**.

I'd remarried, but Betty's murder continued to haunt me. Back in 1973, she'd been unhappy about me marrying her son, and I'd feared the wedding was the catalyst. So when my new husband suggested looking into why the case was dropped, I went to the courthouse and got the old case file. The lead investigator's grand jury transcript gave me a snapshot of the evidence and a bungler of a cop to hang a mystery on. I gave **Quiet Time** what Betty's murder lacked. The killer was nabbed and justice prevailed.

Life isn't so simple.

Four years after **Quiet Time** came out, the killer's sister saw me talking about it on a late-night rerun of a public TV show. She came forward with a confession he'd made. By then I'd published three legal thrillers, but they were no help when the killer's lawyers turned their guns on **Quiet Time** and me. In 1973 I'd been invisible, but now everything about the day Betty was killed was under a microscope.

If the essence of mystery is not knowing, a cold case is the ultimate mystery because nothing is resolved. Did my marriage to Betty's son play a role in her murder? (Turns out, it did.) Is it better to be haunted by your worst fears than to know the truth? In real life, what happened and why have all-too-real consequences. A cold case is hell because without those answers, you can't move on.

For the decade the cold case dragged on, I completely shut down. Under continued threat of a subpoena for my drafts and notes, all I wrote was grocery lists. The case travelled the appellate courts, and witnesses died. When it was over, I obtained the official files from 1973 and the cold case and tried to write what I'd wanted **Quiet Time** to be. But now I knew too much. The voices were no longer in my head; now they were on audiotapes. The autopsy

froze Betty's life at the moment of her death. Crime scene photos made that explosion in the garage real.

But the record's who and how still weren't enough. The why came from Betty's surviving sisters, forensic and cold case experts, and the old homicide cop who hadn't bungled the case after all. Then it was my job to face my role in her murder and find meaning in that brutal act. The result is **Cold Case Story**, the book I'd always wanted to write.

My involvement in a real crime had another consequence: it brought me back to writing mysteries. Stories that end with who, how and why but leave it to readers to find the meaning. So they, too can turn the page.

Stephanie Kane is a lawyer and award-winning author of four crime novels. Born in Brooklyn, she came to Colorado and served as a corporate partner at a top Denver law firm before becoming a criminal defense attorney. In addition to authoring crime fiction, she is a second-degree black belt in karate, has lectured on money laundering and white collar crime in Eastern Europe, and given workshops throughout the country on writing technique. She lives in Denver with her husband and two black cats.

The Coldest Cases Are Solved (Incorrectly) by Ron Katz

By definition, cold cases are unsolved. I submit that cases that are solved incorrectly are even colder—frozen if you will—because the motivation to investigate further is minimal. The death of Vincent van Gogh from a gunshot wound in 1890 is a prime example.

Although iconic now, van Gogh was relatively unknown when he died, having sold a grand total of one painting. He was poor—

supported by his brother Theo for years—and he had been institutionalized for mental illness. One of his legacies was hundreds of letters exchanged between him and Theo.

Those letters became one of the pillars of his fame. Theo's widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, published them 24 years after the deaths, within a few months of each other, of Vincent and Theo. For many years, the letters provided the

main biographical information about Vincent, whom his sister-in-law turned into a mythic character.

Part of the myth was Vincent's alleged suicide, which fit in with a romanticized version of his life. That myth was perpetuated in the popular mind by *Lust for Life*, Irving Stone's novelized biography of Vincent published in 1934. The myth was solidified by the 1956 movie of the same name, starring Kirk Douglas.

The problem with Stone's version is that it wasn't entirely true. That was revealed by Pulitzer Prize winners Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith in their 950-page biography of van Gogh, which was published in 2011 and which relied on a much broader base of source material than the letters written by a mentally ill person who was desperate for money.

Naifeh and Smith found evidence suggesting that van Gogh was the victim of a homicide. For that, of course, they were roundly attacked by those who had long since bought into the suicide theory. Defending themselves against those scholars in a witty 2014 *Vanity Fair* article entitled "NCIS Provence: The van Gogh Mystery," Naifeh and Smith couldn't be clearer about the dramatic suicide at the end of the 1956 film:

"It's all bunk. Though eagerly embraced by a public... spellbound by the thought of an artist who would cut off his own ear, Stone's suicide yarn was based on bad history, bad psychology, and, as a definitive new expert analysis makes clear, bad forensics."

The forensic evidence marshalled by Naifeh and Smith is thought-provoking. For example, the fatal bullet went at an odd angle into the abdomen, a location which is not usual for suicides. Additionally, the bullet did not exit van

Gogh's body, which indicates that the shooter was further than an arms-length from the body.

Furthermore, van Gogh left the inn in which he was residing on the afternoon of the suicide with his easel, a canvas and paints—not ideal cargo for a suicide mission. These materials were never found.

More mysteriously, the investigating authorities could not find the gun. The official story was that van Gogh shot himself once and then made it back—over steep, uneven terrain—to his room, where he died 30 hours later. That left open the question why he didn't just pick up the gun and conclude the suicide. He left no suicide note, which, for a man who had written hundreds of letters, was, at the least, odd.

Plus, there was a prime suspect, a rich student who was summering in the same town where van Gogh was residing. Not only did this student subject van Gogh to abuse in public, but also he was fascinated by the Buffalo Bill Exposition, which he had recently seen. He carried a gun and dressed like Buffalo Bill.

The student was nowhere to be found in the area after the shooting. Shortly before his death—and 66 years after van Gogh's death—the former student gave an interview, in which he admitted to tormenting van Gogh, but not to shooting him, claiming that van Gogh had stolen the gun from him.

The issues surrounding van Gogh's death remain unresolved, which makes them a good subject for a mystery story. As this article is being written, I am in the process of writing such a story, "The Sleuthing Silvers and the Mystery of the Vanished van Gogh."

Like all fiction writers, I have a great advantage over real-life investigators: I can make things up. Therefore, although my story is

based on these real-life events, I can create clues about, for example, the suspected student; van Gogh's sister-in-law, who ultimately benefited financially from his death; van Gogh's critics and rivals from the classical school of painting, who believed art should uphold Christian values; and even van Gogh's doctor, who did little to save van Gogh's life and who reportedly stole six of van Gogh's paintings from the room in which van Gogh died.

Because this case is so cold after 131 years, it is unlikely ever to be solved in any definitive way. My goal is to, at least, provide an entertaining solution.

Ron Katz started writing the Sleuthing Silvers series—featuring a Baby Boomer detective couple—after four decades as a trial lawyer. A Rhodes Scholar and a graduate of the Harvard Law School, in 2016 he was a Fellow at Stanford University's Distinguished Careers Institute.

A Snitch in Time by *James L'Etoile*

Any investigator will tell you the first forty-eight hours in a homicide investigation are critical. The leads developed during those golden hours often prove pivotal in bringing the case to a successful closure. What about homicide investigations lingering unsolved for months, or even years later?

Recently, the nation watched the unmasking of the Golden State Killer through advances in familial DNA technology, coupled with a bit of investigative sleight of hand with genealogy websites and digging discarded coffee cups from a trash can. Michelle McNamara's account of the Golden State Killer's crimes, in ***I'll Be Gone in the Dark***, reinforces the importance of using the most advanced, modern technology to solve complex cases where the trail has gone cold.

Often, cold cases are solved without the bells and whistles of the latest and greatest scientific breakthrough. Those case closures don't get the splashy media coverage. A break in the case can happen at any time. You must be able to hear it when it happens. Instead of DNA and lab trickery, it comes down to old-fashion walking, listening, and talking.

In prison, there's no shortage of information.

Information is a commodity, bought and sold, bargained for, and traded to gain power. Especially when prison gangs are involved in the transaction.

I often write stories where prison gangs exert some influence from behind bars. In ***At What Cost, Bury The Past***, and most recently, ***Black Label*** (Level Best Books July 2021), the plotlines involve criminal influences from inside prison playing a role in the story. There is a culture of extortion and violence contained within the walls few people witness.

I worked in the California prison system for almost three decades. One assignment led to solving a homicide that lingered for over a year with no investigative thread left to pull. It was, for all intent, a cold case.

On June 8, 1985, Correctional Sergeant Hal Burchfield was murdered at San Quentin State Prison. During inmate count, the Sergeant walked up to the second tier in Carson Section and was fatally stabbed by a spear thrust out from one of the cells. The lights on the tier were broken, sending the first four cells into darkness where his attacker lay in waiting. The prison's misguided policy of housing gang

members in adjacent cells would come back to haunt them.

The initial investigation quickly uncovered members of a prison gang, The Black Guerilla Family (BGF), an African-American prison gang espousing violent revolutionary action with a history of assaults on staff, were behind the murder. The gang members housed on the tier where the murder took place weren't talking. Informing on a fellow gang member would result in that inmate being marked for death. A year passed without progress on the investigation. The case grew cold.

The inmates initially suspected of involvement were Andre Johnson, Lawrence Woodard, Jarvis Masters, Rufus Willis, and others. They were rehoused after the murder, and one of them, Willis, came to my unit, the Violence Control Unit at Folsom's new maximum-security prison, the California State Prison—Sacramento.

Two of the BGF's founding members were housed in my unit at the time. After the attack on Sergeant Burchfield, the Department of Corrections cracked down on prison gang activity. Validated members of the BGF, Mexican Mafia, and Aryan Brotherhood were sent into more restrictive Security Housing Units (Pelican Bay was about to open). The BGF members in my unit were getting significant pressure from the other gangs blaming the San Quentin upstarts for disrupting their criminal enterprises.

Willis was assigned a cell with a known BGF enforcer who glared out the cell window at the new arrival from San Quentin. Willis stopped in his tracks and told me he needed to talk with me. He claimed he couldn't go in the cell, or he'd be killed.

I pulled him from the cell block and took

him to my office for a private conversation. He wanted a transfer to another prison away from the BGF. I told him I needed something from him to warrant anything other than putting him back in the cell with the BGF enforcer. Faced with a dim and short future with the gang, Willis began to tell a story about what happened that night in June 1985.

Johnson, Woodard, Masters, and Willis were among the BGF members who planned the attack on Sergeant Burchfield. A piece of metal was cut from a bed frame in one cell and passed to Willis, who admitted beginning to sharpen the spear tip. Willis passed the weapon to Masters, who finished sharpening the metal before passing it to Johnson in the adjoining cell.

While the Sergeant walked down the tier, Johnson kept in the shadows and called the Sergeant to the cell front. Johnson thrust a spear fashioned from a rolled-up magazine with the metal tip into the Sergeant's chest, killing him.

I met with the Marin County District Attorney providing him with the newly developed confession. It was the crack needed to solve this cold case. Willis plead guilty to his role in the murder. While prison snitches aren't generally believed to be the most honest and upright citizens, it was enough to get three convictions for first-degree murder. Johnson and Woodard were sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, and Masters was sentenced to death.

Cold cases don't always need a fancy laboratory or advanced science. Sometimes, it takes a little listening and knowing how to develop human intelligence.

James L'Etoile uses his 29 years behind bars as an influence in his novels, short stories, and screenplays. He is a former associate warden in a

maximum-security prison, a hostage negotiator, facility captain, and director of California's state parole system. He has been nominated for the Silver Falchion for Best Procedural Mystery, and

the Bill Crider Award for short fiction. Look for **Dead Drop** in the summer of 2022 from Level Best Books. You can find out more at www.jamesletoile.com.

Out of the Past: When Cold Cases Meet Old Books

by Jeffrey J. Mariotte

I've long been fascinated by cold case investigations—in part, though not entirely, because college pal Rick Jackson became one of the most prominent cold case investigators in the country during his long and celebrated career at the LAPD. Mostly, though, it's because the idea that crimes committed long ago, but for which the perpetrators have escaped punishment, might finally be solved. Justice delayed is still some kind of justice, after all, even if it often feels like too little, too late to the victims and their loved ones.

The case at the center of my thriller **Flesh of All Sorrows**—published on the new Kindle Vella platform as my experiment in serial storytelling—was theoretically closed decades ago, when Sossaman, AZ, detective Dan Mansfield caught the serial killer known as the Bookbinder. A man's been sitting in prison ever since his conviction, declaring his innocence. But the investigation and arrest made Mansfield a local hero, and his newfound fame made him the youngest police chief in Sossaman's history. That, and the publication of a bestselling true-crime book about the case, elevated the family's profile even further and helped drive his wife's only novel up the best-seller lists.

Now, Dan Mansfield is dead, and his son, Danny, has just become the second youngest police chief in the town's history. Danny knows his meteoric rise is due as much to his father's

reputation as to his own accomplishments. But when it appears that the Bookbinder is active once again—that the incarcerated convict truly is innocent—Danny has to reopen the case, despite the threat to his father's reputation, his mother's legacy, and his brother's political ambitions.

Part of the Bookbinder's signature—and the source of his media-provided moniker—was that he chose his victims based on their resemblance to characters in his favorite thrillers from the mid-sixties through the mid-seventies, and after murdering them, rebound his copies in the victims' flesh. This provided me the opportunity to revisit and call out some of my own favorite books from that era, which I still consider a kind of golden age of thriller and mystery fiction.

Most people know Roderick Thorp today, if they do at all, because his 1979 novel **Nothing Lasts Forever** was adapted into a little movie called *Die Hard*, starring Bruce Willis as John McLane (Joe Leland, in the novel). It was a good, taut thriller, as one might expect given the nature of the story. But Joe Leland also appeared in an earlier Thorp novel, 1966's **The Detective**, which is my favorite of Thorp's works. It's a much, much longer book, with Leland investigating a case with more twists and turns, as well as being a character study of Leland himself. This one was also made into a movie, with Frank Sinatra as Leland and a

terrific cast that included Lee Remick, Jacqueline Bissett, Robert Duvall, William Windom, and Jack Klugman. **The Detective** makes an appearance relatively early in **Flesh of All Sorrows**.

William Goldman is one of my favorite novelists and screenwriters. Not everything he wrote was brilliant, but his batting average was better than most in both fields. My personal collection includes all of his novels, most in first edition, and they're some of my most prized books. The Bookbinder was a fan, too, particularly of Goldman's best thriller, the 1974 novel **Marathon Man** (he also wrote the screenplay for the hit 1976 film with Dustin Hoffman, Roy Scheider, and Laurence Olivier). Both works still stand up today. Many years ago, I was on a long car ride with another great writer, Joe R. Lansdale. We were talking thrillers, and he opined that the **Marathon Man** novel was a perfect thriller. I have to agree.

Some of the most skilled practitioners of the form in those days were those I call the three Gs. Goldman is one, then Thomas Gifford, author of **The Wind Chill Factor** and other terrific novels. The third G is James Grady, who exploded into American consciousness with 1974's **Six Days of the Condor**, which was adapted in 1975 as *Three Days of the Condor*

with Robert Redford, Faye Dunaway, Max von Sydow, and Cliff Robertson. He's written more about Condor, as well as several standalone thrillers and a brief series about private detective John Rankin that I hoped would go on longer, and he's still going strong. **Six Days** makes a visceral appearance in **Flesh of All Sorrows**, as the first confirmation that the Bookbinder is back.

Or is he?

This cold case wasn't unsolved—but it may have been solved incorrectly. And the people who don't want it reopened are powerful figures in this small town. Doing what he believes is the right thing just might turn out to be the worst decision Danny has ever made.

But Danny reopening this cold case gave me the chance to raise awareness of some terrific but largely forgotten books—"cold case books," if you will. As a former bookseller, that's one of those habits that stays with you, and like a cold case, it keeps resurfacing, year after year.

Jeffrey J. Mariotte is the award-winning author of more than 50 books, including thrillers, mysteries, horror, westerns, and more. He has worked in virtually every aspect of the book business, from co-founder of the Mysterious Galaxy bookstore to senior editor for DC Comics and the first editor-in-chief for IDW Publishing.

Writing a Mystery with a History by Marilyn Levinson

We mystery writers all have our personal checklists of what we like to include in a novel. One of my favorites is adhering to the principle that every character has a secret. We humans are nosy by nature and love to find out what someone—a character, in this case—is doing his or her darnedest to keep under wraps. Secrets in a mystery novel are usually

tied to some nefarious past deed, a deed that often involves or leads to murder. A cold case is a homicide that has yet to be solved. I like to link the cold cases in my books to a recent murder or two, upping the intrigue and suspense.

In **Death Overdue**, the first book in the Haunted Library series that I write as Allison

Brook, my sleuth Carrie Singleton has just been made head of programs and events of the Clover Ridge Library in Clover Ridge, Connecticut. Eager to make a good impression on the library director, who has her doubts about Carrie's capabilities, Carrie presents her very first event to a full house of library patrons. She introduces retired Detective Al Buckley who will discuss a cold case. Fifteen years ago, Al failed to solve the murder of a popular resident when he was on the force. He claims to have recently uncovered new evidence that he promises will expose the murderer and bring him or her to justice. However, as he is discussing the case, the detective is poisoned and dies before his audience. Feeling somewhat responsible for his death, Carrie takes it upon herself to solve his murder and that of the earlier case.

Characters are seldom who they claim to be in **Checked Out for Murder**, the fourth book in the series. An actress and a psychic, both newcomers to Clover Ridge who don't know

each other, are murdered the same week. Carrie learns that the psychic is the daughter of Chet Harper, an abusive father and husband, who was murdered twenty years earlier. His son was charged with the crime and released from prison when evidence turned up proving his innocence. The key to unraveling all three murders rests with a woman determined not to be found. But Carrie perseveres and the murderer is brought to justice.

In my opinion, including a cold case in a mystery novel increases its depth, dimension, and suspense.

A former Spanish teacher, Marilyn Levinson writes mysteries, romantic suspense, and novels for kids. Her books have received many accolades. As Allison Brook she writes the Haunted Library series. **Death Overdue**, the first in the series, was an Agatha nominee for Best Contemporary Novel in 2018. Other mysteries include the Golden Age of Mystery Book Club series and the Twin Lakes series.

Striking Range: Tracking the Elusive Cold Case Killer

by Margaret Mizushima

Cold cases fascinate me. Particularly when they involve crime solving techniques such as forensic genetic genealogy—the science of searching for a subject through the use of genetic databases and building family trees; or DNA phenotyping—predicting the physical characteristics and ancestry of an unknown subject through their DNA. I enjoy crime documentaries that outline how these methods are used to find perpetrators and bring them to justice decades after they've committed a horrific crime. Of course, we'd all like for them to be arrested sooner, but at least there is satisfaction in knowing that these criminals didn't get

away with the crime completely, and victim's families seem comforted by achieving some sort of justice and closure.

I write the Timber Creek K-9 Mysteries, a mystery series that features Deputy Mattie Cobb, her K-9 partner Robo, and veterinarian Cole Walker. Together these three work to solve crimes that take place in the fictional mountain town of Timber Creek, Colorado, a place that has become more and more dangerous during the past year and a half that spans the current seven book series. The dangers that surface are in part due to the murder of Mattie's father and the subsequent kidnapping

of Mattie, her mother, and her brother that took place thirty years prior to the story's inception in book one, **Killing Trail**. As Mattie's history unfolds throughout the series, she grows determined to discover the actual events on that fateful night and to track down her father's killer.

In the latest episode, **Striking Range** (Crooked Lane Books, Sept 2021), Mattie's past and present collide when she and her K-9 partner Robo are torn between investigating her father's cold case and the current death of a young mother. An ice storm batters the area, taking its toll on the Timber Creek investigative team, while Mattie and Robo search for the woman's missing infant. And even though they uncover the circumstances involving the present-day case, Mattie is still left searching for answers regarding her father's case and her past. Unfortunately, that's not unusual in cold case detective work; many of these cases go unsolved for decades.

The Timber Creek K-9 Mysteries are known for their action scenes related to K-9 handling, such as scenting and tracking, narcotics and evidence detection, and of course capturing and taking down fugitives who are bad guys. In each episode, I must weave together subplots that support the main investigation, either directly or in theme, and give Mattie, Robo, and Cole work to do that advances the

investigation and helps solve the crime. Computer work and forensic genetic genealogy don't always fit into the scheme of things in an action driven mystery.

Cold cases are complicated, and Mattie and Robo need to call in reinforcements as the Timber Creek K-9 series progresses. Now that **Striking Range** has launched, I find myself back at the computer, working out ways for Mattie to find answers about her past. And I'm plotting ways to fold new cold-case-solving methods into an action-packed K-9 mystery without leaving poor Robo sitting in the back of Mattie's unit, twiddling his paws as she continues her quest to track down her father's elusive killer.

I invite you to join Mattie, Robo, and Cole in their adventures in the Timber Creek K-9 mysteries.

Margaret Mizushima writes the award winning and internationally published Timber Creek K-9 Mysteries. She serves as president of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of Mystery Writers of America and was elected the 2019 Writer of the Year by Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers. She lives in Colorado on a small ranch with her veterinarian husband, where they raised two daughters and a multitude of animals. Find her on Facebook/AuthorMargaretMizushima, Twitter @margmizu, Instagram @margmizu, and her website www.margaretmizushima.com.

Fact + Fiction: Personal Experience and True Crime Inspire a Mystery Novel *by Marcy McCreary*

Sometimes life points you toward an unexpected treasure. Something you might wave off because you don't yet recognize its potential... but if you're patient and curious, its value will assert itself.

I'm a wide-ranging consumer of online media, including the *Boston Globe*. Luckily, on August 17, 2017, I happened to be scanning its online edition when I came across an article about a waitress who worked at the Concord

Hotel in the Catskills and mysteriously disappeared from the area in the mid-seventies. The *Globe* article (<https://bit.ly/3F3gVcO>) reported that detectives had recently discovered a buried decades-old skeleton in the vicinity of the area from which the waitress had vanished. Consequently, there was reason to speculate that the missing waitress had met with foul play.

However, a serendipitous old record from the time of her disappearance listed the woman's Social Security number. One of the detectives discovered that someone using that number was receiving care in an Alzheimer's facility in Lowell, Massachusetts. The missing waitress, presumed dead, was very much alive.

That simple Social Security number belonged to Flora Stevens, who was indeed the missing woman, her identity confirmed from an old employee ID card. Because she now suffered from dementia, she was unable to give detectives a clear account of what had happened to her in the intervening years.

Normally, I would read an article like this, think such a strange story, and move on. But I found I couldn't easily let go of this woman's fate. Her story kept tugging at me.

I spent my summers (1965–1982) in the Catskills resort area. My dad was the tumbler (activities director) and nightclub emcee at The Hotel Brickman in South Fallsburg, NY. I lived through three eras of the Borscht Belt: its glory days in the 1960s, its waning days in the 1970s, and its demise through the 1980s—which happened in slow motion, right before my eyes. I've always wanted to write a story in this setting, but the question was always what story? which era?... A coming of age? A romance? A hotel "locked-room" whodunnit? A memoir?

This article was my eureka moment. I was intrigued by the story of Flora Stevens and at the same time, liberated by the unresolvable mystery of it. The gaps in her life were mine to fill. I foresaw creating a narrative that spanned the forty years between a waitress disappearing and a mature woman with dementia being found. I changed the name of the real Flora Stevens to the imaginary Trudy Solomon and started building the plot.

When I began to outline the story, Trudy Solomon was the protagonist. But it felt too much like a memoir and I wasn't happy with the story arc, which put Trudy at the center of everything. Instead, I began to think of her as the book's MacGuffin—essential to the arc, but also incidental to key elements of the plot. Instead of making Trudy the main character, I created a police detective named Susan Ford, who—with her retired detective father, Will Ford—interviews people who have had contact with Trudy over the decades. Each of these "witnesses" adds important detail and dimension to the story of Trudy Solomon.

I also wanted the book to be fun and intriguing. For example, turning it into a mystery allowed me to describe the disturbing circumstances of Trudy's disappearance, while also incorporating into the plot the skeletal remains that were at first thought to be Trudy's. This gave the plot further complexity. Were the cases connected?

As this was a cold case, I was intrigued by the idea of pairing the original detective on the case with a new detective. And better yet, what if they were father and daughter? I've always loved "buddy" detective stories, but it's very rare to find a father/daughter (or even a mother/daughter) team. Barnaby Jones (if you're of my generation) and Veronica Mars (if

you're of my daughters' generation) are two rare examples. Adding that layer of a familial connection to the pairing was an aha! moment for me—introducing the dynamic of a shared past and intimate history that isn't usual in a detective team.

This dynamic also served another purpose, allowing me to set the story in both the past and present and explore how Susan's coming-of-age woes would influence the way she came at this case. The year Trudy disappeared—1978—was a terrible year for Susan. Her parents divorced, her grandfather died, her best friend drifted away. Pairing Susan with her father on this case allowed me to dig deep into their relationship and have them uncover things they didn't know about each other.

They come at the case with different motivations. Will thinks there's a chance he can solve a case that baffled and frustrated him 40 years ago. For her part, Susan is not exactly thrilled to face reliving an unhappy time in her life. But her ambivalence gives way to intrigue, as she begins to learn more about Trudy. It seemed plausible to think that she could help a woman, who has lost the thread of her life, begin to regain some clarity about it.

The description of the fictional Cuttman Hotel mirrors that of the Hotel Brickman, where I spent my formative summers. The actual owners and their families were nothing like the fictional Roths (in fact, I'm still friendly with the daughter of one of the owners). Many of the experiences I give the owners' children in the novel are ones I personally experienced—especially their aristocratic air of superiority and privilege. My sisters and I watched the guests come and go every week, but we were mainstays, treated well by the owners and staff. And we were somewhat

revered by the teenagers who replaced other teenagers week after week all summer long. If I wanted to play tennis, a court was made available to me. If I wanted a bite to eat, I would wander into the kitchen between meals. If I wanted to party at night, I would sneak away with a bellhop or waiter to a local bar.

When I thought about the timeframe of my novel, I decided I would write what I knew, and I knew the late seventies. I was a teenager then, and so I made Susan Ford a teenager at that time, growing up with the fictional Roth family's entitled offspring.

This authorial mingling of the factual personal with the imagined fictional allowed me to discover one of the joys of novel writing: to create a synthesis of real settings and events with pure inventions. Many of the places I reference in the novel are real: Lefty's Restaurant, Woodbourne Correctional Prison, Sullivan County Community College, Ciao Bello restaurant, the surrounding and nearby towns of South Fallsburg, Hurleyville, Liberty, Woodbourne, Middletown, and Ellenville. Susan's and Will's investigation into Trudy's life since disappearing takes them to places as far-flung as Mill Basin, in Brooklyn (where I grew up); Waltham, MA (where I once lived); and Hull, MA (where I live now), along with trips to Florida to face the fictional Roth family in their post-Catskills habitats.

Other places and venues are purely fictional, or at least fictionalized. Again, this notion of intermingling factual settings lived in by people drawn from my imagination allowed me to stretch and bend the narrative to build plotted fiction out of non-fiction.

I will wrap this up with one emphatic clarification. There are some pretty unsavory characters in **The Disappearance of Trudy Solomon**.

At the request of my mother, I will say for the record that the villains of the book are no reflection at all of my own family. Susan Ford's mother and Will's ex-wife, Vera Ford, would never win awards for Mother (or wife) of the Year. And yet, at the end of the book, Vera does get a grip on one long-standing aspect of her life, which makes her courageous and redeems her admirability.

After graduating from George Washington University with a B.A. in American Literature and Political Science, Marcy McCreary pursued a career in the marketing field. For the past 25 years, she has been a marketing communications and sales executive at various magazine publishing companies and content marketing agencies.

Cylinder Seals, the Bronze Age Rubber Stamp by *M. A. Monnin*

Cold cases. Secrets from the past. Why can't they stay buried?

In my upcoming book **Death in the Aegean**, former archaeology student and current private banker Stefanie Adams returns to the Greek isles for a much-needed vacation, after being passed over for a long-promised promotion to VP of customer service. On the island of Santorini, she's ready for the opening exhibit of a newly discovered Minoan treasure, sparkling seas, and hopefully a little romance. The last thing she expects or wants is to hear her dearly departed father accused of artifact theft, much less by a bride on her honeymoon who Stefanie has just met, and involving a theft that occurred forty years before.

The artifact in question is a cylinder seal, 3600 years old and carved with the image of a Minoan snake goddess and the skyline of the ancient Thera city of Akrotiri. Cylinder seals are the Bronze Age version of the rubber stamp. These seals feature intricate designs carved by master craftsmen into stone such as lapis lazuli, steatite (soapstone), marble and carnelian. Usually between one and two inches long, when rolled along a segment of soft clay, they leave an impression behind. The best examples feature breathtaking craftsmanship on

an item small enough to hide in the palm of your hand. Lovely and oh, so pilferable.

Stefanie knows her father didn't steal the cylinder seal. How would a stranger know that he'd been accused? He was never arrested. Stefanie wants nothing more than to ignore the woman's humiliating accusation, and she would ignore it, except that a golden statue in the exact image of the goddess depicted on the seal stone has been discovered by archaeologists working in Akrotiri. The Akrotiri Snake Goddess has renewed interest in the cylinder seal that disappeared all those years ago.

If only her father were alive to defend himself. Not that he would have come to Greece, of course. He'd given up archaeology at the age of twenty-three and never had returned, not even when she'd interned on Crete for a summer. Maybe that's why she hadn't made a career of archaeology. Banking was more practical, anyway, or so she told herself. The chances of finding anything as remarkable as the Akrotiri treasure are one in a million.

How would archaeologists be able to identify the Akrotiri skyline on the stolen cylinder seal, you ask? Google the Akrotiri flotilla fresco. It was found in the West House in Akrotiri. Archaeologists believe Akrotiri is the city on the

right that joyfully welcomes the fleet home. While the Akrotiri Snake Goddess is fictional and can only be found in *Death in the Aegean*, check out the snake goddesses that Sir Arthur Evans found at Knossos, on Crete. Made of faience, a glazed ceramic, they have a charm all their own.

The accusation against her father entangles Stefanie in a web of danger and intrigue, international crime and long-buried secrets, but we all lose when archaeological artifacts are stolen. There is the loss of knowledge that the item provides: techniques used in a specific place and time, indications of important aspects of the culture such as religion or government, and evidence of interaction with others.

We also lose the opportunity to witness for ourselves beautiful and practical objects made by cultures past, objects that fill us with wonder and awe.

Of course, those aren't the only negative consequences when artifacts are stolen. As handsome tourist Thomas Burkhardt warns Stefanie, where greed leads, murder follows.

An Air Force veteran and avocational archaeologist, M. A. Monnin enjoys traveling and archaeology in addition to making cocktails. She and her husband live in Kansas City, Missouri with their two Siberian huskies. She can be reached on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Why Cold Cases? *by Amy Myers*

Why cold cases? Reason number one: they are often far from cold. They can have heated and violent repercussions long after the crime has been committed—as my series sleuths, father and daughter team Peter and Georgia Marsh, know only too well. How and why are cold cases reopened? There are many answers to that in real life and even more in fiction. As far as Peter and Georgia are concerned, it's a sense they share—and keep between themselves—based on a weird atmosphere attached to a place or object that suggests there might be unfinished business there: that justice has not been done, or the guilty party has never been found or the wrong person has been convicted. Peter and Georgia call this sense fingerprints on time. When it happens, they follow the trail and the results of their investigations often lead them into uncharted and dangerous waters. Family members or perhaps the murderer may still be alive and the discovery of what happened can affect future generations

for good or for bad.

Reason number two: why do I write novels about fictional cold cases? There are practical reasons for that as well as the emotional and creative side that brings a novel alive. Cold cases send me delving into history, sometimes relatively recent events, sometimes ancient, sometimes in between—and that factor is always a winner with me. New areas to explore. Another practical consideration is that one isn't necessarily bound by modern police procedures, although of course all such procedures have to be true to the time the crime occurred and also borne in mind during the modern sleuth's investigation, whether that be by the police or otherwise. I provided Peter and Georgia with a handy police contact for this purpose since Peter had to retire from the force years earlier. Also, looking at the practical side, cold cases allow a wider canvas for witnesses and suspects in that those stemming from the

original crime are supplemented by modern ones who in some way or another link back to it.

One more practical consideration is this: one of the first things my agent told me when I began to write crime fiction was that if the crime is set in the past then it has to be linked in some way or another to an active modern day situation in order to keep the reader's interest in the story. There are exceptions of course. **The Daughter of Time** by Josephine Tey is one of them. She plants her sleuth Inspector Grant in a hospital bed while he investigates the case of Richard III and the Princes in the Tower, but she has her own methods of keeping the plot alive.

From a personal angle, my fictional cold cases almost chose me. I didn't know there was such a sub-genre when I began the series, but I needed a new sleuth after my Chef Auguste Didier series, set in the late 19th and early 20th century, came to a graceful end. I decided to be more up to date and a former cop seemed a good idea as a sleuth because it gave me more latitude over how the investigations proceeded. So it followed as the night the day that Peter Marsh, operating in the county of Kent, UK, would be best at tackling a case from the past so that he wasn't constantly getting in the way of the current police force. Why was he an ex-cop? He'd been paralysed after being shot during one of his cases. I was aware of Raymond Burr's TV series *Ironside* which featured a police detective in a wheelchair, so I set out to make Peter Marsh his own man. For a start, I would give him a partner in crime (so to speak). Hey presto! Here comes Georgia. They become Marsh & Daughter who share investigations together, then write the cases up in book form which are then published by their

local publisher Luke Frost.

Reason number three for choosing cold cases: there is always another element to writing a novel. One's characters turn out to have lives of their own. Before I started fiction writing, I would have thought that statement was complete nonsense. A writer always has control, one would think, and of course I do have that power—ultimately. But for me the interesting factor is what emerges between my intention and the screen (or in my case writing pad). For that, working in a different time period than our own tends to give me a broader canvas than being confined to the 21st century.

Peter and Georgia turned out to have another reason for wanting to investigate cold cases—the anguish that is caused in real life for the families and friends when loved ones go missing; the agony can't be assuaged if they don't know what has happened to them. Peter and Georgia share this agony for many years after Rick, Georgia's younger brother, disappeared without trace while on a holiday in Spain. After years of silence and false hopes, the story gradually emerges. The founding of Marsh & Daughter provides an outlet for Peter and Georgia's agony over Rick's absence, together with the opportunity of bringing justice where it had been lacking. In their cold cases, the victims are no longer alive, but at last justice has been done and, hopefully, the torment of those left behind has been alleviated. Did Rick return? Well... (I know the answer now of course, but I didn't when I began the series.)

There are problems as well as advantages for the novelist in investigating cold cases. For starters, the sleuths are probably at some point going to consult or clash with the police. There has to be friction at some level or at least a divergence of how the case is dealt with, but

basically the two elements are usually necessary to add the necessary spice. There are exceptions, of course, such as the TV series *New Tricks* in which former detectives officially investigate cold cases.

Another problem is that the wider the time between the original murder and the modern day the more essential it becomes that some element connects it to the modern day. Actively connect, that is. A discovery of remains of a Roman soldier is not in itself going to set the blood pulsing. There are many wonderful novels based in Roman times alone (try Jane Copley's for a start), but these fall into a different genre of course. If the original murder is 20th century then descendants can usually play a role, and that link making it an active discovery for the reader is somewhat easier. A question of inheritance? Or something else? And does that link in with another situation or murder today?

Of all the cases that Peter and Georgia have already investigated eight are recorded in print and digital form, from **The Wickenham Murders**, which begins with a skeleton found in a Kentish denehole (these are thought to be medieval chalk mines) and **Murder in Abbot's**

Folly, in which Jane Austen plays a silent role (not, I hasten to add, as the murder victim). Which reminds me, one rule of cold case novels is that the plot has to be credible or at least within the bounds of possibility. Suspension of disbelief only takes the reader so far.

There has been a long gap since Peter and Georgia's last case, and their new one is due out as an ebook in May 2022, **The Maid of Kent Murders**. The remains of a famous actor, missing for over sixty years, are discovered in the grounds of an old Kentish pub. He is thought to have disappeared of his own volition but of course that wasn't so. Could his murder be linked to the centuries-old heritage of the Maid of Kent inn—or to the bitter rivalries in the village?

It's all about past and present. That's the fascination of cold cases.

Amy Myers is the author of several series of crime novels of which the current ones are the Marsh & Daughter cold cases series and the Chef Nell Drury novels set in the 1920s. She is also well known for her mystery short stories published in Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine and anthologies. She is now living in Kent, UK, married to American-born car buff James Myers.

Genealogy and Cold Cases: A Perfect Mystery Match

by S. C. Perkins

Truth be told, I don't know that I actively thought of my genealogist protagonist—Lucy Lancaster, that is—as a cold case investigator when I first started writing her, but somewhere in my subconscious I knew that's how she would think of herself. Why? Because while I admit to writing by the seat of my pants, I can remember the particular ease by which the following line from my first book in my Ancestry

Detective series flowed from me. It came out of the blue, and was said about Lucy by her best friend, Serena:

“Your whole face practically glows when you start thinking about tracking down some long-dead person and their connections to others.”

Now, if that line isn't the definition of a character who enjoys investigating cold cases, I couldn't say what is. And in my eyes, the

delving into the cold case—the piecing together those connections from the past that will bring the answer into the forefront, to the present—is what Lucy loves best.

Thinking up cases that involve genealogy and entangling that past with another mystery in the present is fun for me as a writer, too. I enjoy taking a cozy mystery and upping the ante a little bit by adding in a secondary mystery that happened far enough in the past for solving it to be a little more difficult. Making it a bit of an inherent cold case by virtue of the fact that it happened decades to generations earlier, even if it's not what would be the true definition of the term.

For me, these genealogical mysteries are also cold cases because solving it requires Lucy have to dig into a past where the likelihood of living witnesses are slim, if not completely impossible. Of course, not all of my subplots involving a character's ancestral past have to happen that far back in time, but they're a little bit more fun for me to have to work out—and make Lucy unravel—when they are.

The other part that's enjoyable for me in making the genealogical mystery far enough in the past that the trail has gone cold is that I get to research the history of that particular time and throw in some facts into the mystery. Okay, sometimes I throw in a lot of facts. I'm a

factoid-loving writer, and I would shamelessly add in many more if it weren't for my very patient editor, who kindly reminds me to scale it back from time to time.

Nevertheless, by making Lucy have to really think about that historical period, and how it would affect the person at the center of the genealogical cold case—how they might think and might act due to the societal norms of the time, for instance—it makes the story even more fun to write. And to read, I hope!

As a reader, a good cold-case mystery makes for a really interesting story, whether the book in question is a dark thriller, a lighter cozy mystery like mine, and any mystery subgenre in between. And speaking as a writer, I honestly couldn't have more fun thinking up plots that mix my genealogist protagonist with a good cold case. The two truly are a perfect match.

S.C. Perkins is a fifth-generation Texan who grew up hearing fascinating stories of her ancestry and eating lots of great Tex-Mex. Her first book, **Murder Once Removed**, was the winner of the 2017 Malice Domestic Best First Traditional Mystery competition, and an Agatha Award Nominee. She resides in Houston and, when she's not writing, she's likely outside in the sun or on the beach.

An Old San Francisco Mystery Is Unburied, and Inspiration Strikes by Ann Parker

The initial spark for **The Secret in the Wall**, the upcoming book in my Silver Rush historical mystery series, came from a San Francisco cold case with roots in the 19th century.

I first read about this case in 2016, in a *San Francisco Chronicle* article that bore the

headline “Little Girl, Rose Still in Hand, Found in Coffin Beneath SF Home.” The article reported on the then-recent unearthing of an elaborate casket beneath a concrete slab of a home in the Lone Mountain neighborhood of San Francisco's Richmond District. The well-

preserved body of the girl was visible through the glass upper portion of the airtight glass-and-bronze casket. She had long blond hair, wore a white lace dress, had a cross of flowers on her chest, and looked to be about three years old. No one knew who she was or how she came to be there. The house's owner was told by the medical examiner's office that since the remains had been found on private property now belonging to her, she had to deal with the coffin and its contents.

This strange event and the mystery at its core lay buried in the back of my mind until late 2019, when it morphed into the opening scenes of **The Secret in the Wall**, in which my protagonist Inez Stannert finds a desiccated body not in the floor of a house but in a wall. From there, a whole host of questions arise. Who is the deceased? When did he die? Why? And why the heck is he in the wall to begin with? On a whim (and because Inez's ward, 13-year-old Antonia Gizzi had developed a fixation on **Treasure Island** way back in **A Dying Note**, the first book of the San Francisco cycle of my Silver Rush series) I gave my mystery corpse a glass eye and a bag of gold. Little did I know where all that would lead me!

As for the inspiration for my story, the little girl in the glass coffin, I'll not keep you in suspense. Soon after the discovery, a team of researchers and amateur sleuths sprang into action to uncover the girl's identity. The first clue to solving this (very) cold case involved the casket's location. In the 1860s, long before the Lone Mountain area was developed, it was home to San Francisco's many cemeteries. By 1900, these cemeteries were "full up," and the city's supervisors passed an ordinance prohibiting burials within city limits. A bit more than a decade later, the city announced that the

bodies had to be removed from the cemeteries, which were now sitting on prime real estate. All in all, roughly 150,000 bodies were retrieved and re-interred in Colma, the "city of the dead" south of San Francisco. The casket holding the girl had apparently been overlooked in the mass migration, and housing eventually erected above her resting place.

Old records and old-fashioned sleuthing led the team to realize the girl had been buried in the Odd Fellows cemetery, which was active from 1865 to about 1890. After overlaying an 1865 cemetery map onto a map of the present-day neighborhood, researchers narrowed her identity to two possibilities. Amateur genealogists searched records of births, marriages, properties, deaths, and censuses to track down possible descendants from the various families. About a year after the initial discovery, thanks to present-day DNA testing, the girl was identified and her history uncovered: Edith Howard Cook, daughter of a prominent San Francisco family, died on October 13, 1876, just a month shy of her third birthday. Her funeral record listed the cause of death as "marasmus," a form of severe malnutrition that can be caused by any number of infectious diseases. To read more about this case and how it was solved, check this 2017 Los Angeles Times article (<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-miranda-metal-casket-girl-identified-20170509-htlstory.html>). If you want more information about the fascinating archaeo-forensic investigation involved, follow the scientific journal links in Edith's Wikipedia entry (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edith_Howard_Cook).

As for the identity of the man buried in the wall in **The Secret in the Wall**, you'll just have to read the book when it comes out in

February 2022!

Ann Parker is a science writer by day and fiction writer at night. Her Silver Rush historical mystery series, published by Poisoned Pen Press,

an imprint of Sourcebooks, is set in 1880s in Colorado and, more recently, in “The Paris of the West,” San Francisco, California. **The Secret in the Wall**, eighth in the series, is scheduled for release February 2022. www.annparker.net

A Network of Friends by Neil S. Plakcy

One of the biggest problems that writers of traditional mysteries set in small towns face is what’s snarkily called “Cabot Cove Syndrome.” Wiktionary describes this as “The situation where, in order to create storylines for a detective drama, the protagonist encounters far more murders than is plausible.” After all, how many murders can one community support before everyone simply moves away? Or realizes that the so-called “amateur sleuth” is really a serial killer in disguise?

One solution I’ve found is in cold cases. It’s not unreasonable in a town with roots in the 17th century that there might be an unsolved mystery in the past.

The “cold case” I chose for **Whom Dog Hath Joined**, the fifth of my golden retriever mysteries, isn’t quite that cold. Only about forty years old, dating back to the Vietnam era.

I was born in 1957, and spent my teen years watching the progress of the conflict in Vietnam. Our social studies teacher reminded us that only Congress can declare “war,” so we couldn’t use that term in regard to Vietnam. I had a poster on my wall that read “War Is Not Healthy for Children and Other Living Things,” and each year I paid particular attention to the draft number drawing. I wanted August 25 to come up toward the top, so that when I was eligible, my birthday would statistically have to fall at the bottom.

At least that’s the way our math teacher had us look at it. Fortunately, the Paris Peace

Accords were signed in January of 1973, and the draft was cancelled. I was able to turn my teen focus to other things, like learning to drive and getting into college.

I grew up in a town with a strong Quaker heritage. Many of my teachers were Friends, and the Meeting House in the center of town regularly hosted events like the Harvest Festival, a giant flea market where you could buy funnel cake, autumn gourds, and the contents of someone else’s attic.

This festival, a mainstay of my childhood, appears at the beginning of **Whom Dog Hath Joined**. My co-protagonists, reformed hacker Steve Levitan and his clue-sniffing golden retriever Rochester, head to the festival in their hometown of Stewart’s Crossing, accompanied by Steve’s love interest, photographer and art professor Lili Weinstock.

While Steve is distracted, Rochester sneaks away and starts digging at a corner of the meeting house where renovation work is underway. He comes up with a sneaker—with a bone inside. And the case is on!

I got the opportunity to remember what my hometown was like in the 1960s, and to explore the area’s Quaker heritage, including a boarding school that may have had connections to a network of Friends smuggling conscientious observers to Canada. I threw in fringed leather vests, tie-dyed T-shirts and the music of Diana Ross, Jefferson Airplane, and Simon and Garfunkel. Researching and

distilling down my memories of the sixties created an atmosphere in which anything could happen—even murder.

All the titles in the golden retriever mysteries are puns on phrases that use God as their anchor, from the first, **In Dog We Trust**, right up to the newest in the series, coming this fall, **Dog's Waiting Room**. In this case, no one gets married—yet—but couples in Steve and Lili's network of friends do come together in ways I hope readers will find delightful.

This was also my first try at a locked-room mystery. The body is found in a narrow room behind a storage closet, accessible only by a hatch in the ceiling. There's no evidence of foul play on the corpse or in the claustrophobic surrounding area. And if Rochester hadn't dug

through the construction sheeting to discover this hidden room, the body might have remained undiscovered for another generation.

Both the memories and the methods were fascinating to me, and this investigation between Steve and Rochester was fun to write. I hope readers will enjoy this step back in time—and a step away from Cabot Cove Syndrome!

Neil S. Plakcy won a Lefty in 2009 for the second in his Mahu series of police procedurals and is a regular on the conference and convention circuit. He is the author of over fifty novels in mystery and romance, and lives in South Florida with his husband and two rambunctious golden retrievers.

Three Questions *by Lissa Marie Redmond*

When I worked as a Cold Case Homicide detective, I was the one who got to ask all the questions. Now that I've retired and turned to writing fiction, I get asked a lot about my time as a detective. I think that's because I don't look like a detective, at least, not the kind you see on TV. I look like a middle-aged mom, which is what I am. I'll go to a library, or a book club and people always ask, "How did you become a cold case detective?"

My path wasn't a straight one. I didn't send a transfer request downtown when an opening came up, and then go about my current police assignment in our version of the Special Victims Unit. I was pulled into it sideways, as so often happens in books and movies, but not so much in real life. I was put on a task force to try to track down a serial killer, who'd been terrorizing Western New York for three decades. After the arrest of serial killer Altemio

Sanchez, I ended up in our newly-formed Cold Case Unit. I stayed there until my retirement in 2015. When I started in that unit, it was still a fairly new concept for a city to have a dedicated cold case squad.

Which brings me to another question I get asked a lot: "Do you still think about your cases?"

The answer is yes, every day.

I think about the cases I helped solve, and I think about the cases that remain unsolved. I think about the victims and I think about their families. I wonder what the cold case detectives assigned to the unit now are doing with the cases I worked on. I hope they get the break that I didn't, and are able to give one of those families some answers.

Being a cold case detective is a hard job. You are reinvestigating a case that has already been investigated, sometimes by detectives still

working in the Homicide squad. You're searching for new leads or following up on old ones with new technology. The families are grateful but guarded. They don't want to get their hopes up again, only for the case to stall once more. And it's heartbreaking to see their pain, so raw after so many years, as if their loved one had just been taken from them yesterday.

Michelle McNamara talks about becoming consumed with a case in her book **I'll Be Gone in the Dark**. It's not hard to imagine a detective becoming overwhelmed by a case. That's one trope used in crime fiction that rings true to me. While I never fell into the bottle, like so many hard-boiled fictional detectives, I needed a healthy outlet. Writing became that outlet for me.

I also have to remind people that my fictional cold case detective, Lauren Riley, is not my alter ego. She is not me. Lauren is very driven to find the truth, no matter how old the case, even at great personal risk. She sacrifices a lot over the course of my Cold Case Investigation series, trying to solve the cases and give some sort of closure to her fictional victims' families. Sometimes in ways I never would have dared as a real-life detective. I write her character and her stories because the other question I get asked all the time is this: "Do

you ever write about your own real-life cases?"

The answer is no. Buffalo is more like a small town than a big city. I run into my victims' family members from time to time. I would never want them to pick up one of my books and believe I wrote about their loved one. Thankfully, I have enough imagination to not have to use the actual cases I worked on for plot points. I hope my experiences show through and lend authenticity to my writing. I strive to make sure that just because the things in my books didn't happen, they could have happened.

In real life, there wasn't always an ending. My cases weren't always tied up in a neat bow. Justice wasn't always delivered. In my novels, I get to pen a fictional ending, satisfying or not. And in the end, I get to provide all the answers to all the questions.

Lissa Marie Redmond is the author of the Cold Case Investigation series, Lissa also wrote the standalone thriller **The Secrets They Left Behind**. Her short fiction has appeared in numerous anthologies and publications. A member of Sisters in Crime, Mystery Writers of America, and International Thriller Writers, she lives and writes in Western New York with her family.

Whatever Happened to Baby Alice Spenser? *by Martha Reed*

I get asked at author signings and convention panels which of the books I've written is my favorite. I don't go anywhere near that answer because books are like children. We love them equally, plus each mystery novel offers its own separately unique challenges and rewards.

My first Nantucket Mystery uncovered a sex predator ring. The second one focused on a

missing sibling and the ramifications of inheriting a ridiculously large, unforeseen, and disproportionate amount of money and how having eighteen million dollars suddenly drop on you can impact existing family dynamics.

For **No Rest for the Wicked**, the third book in the series, I decided to challenge myself by diving deeply into a fictional island cold case,

the unsolved ransom kidnapping of Baby Alice Spenser in 1921.

Nantucket had a thriving summer artist community in the Roaring '20s and '30s and researching those alcohol-fueled Gatsby-esque parties was great fun. An entire tribe of New York City actors rented houses on the island, and everyone partied hard all summer long. Even those true stories are mythic.

To complicate things for my Detective John Jarad, I based the faded Baby Alice cold case clues off the memories of three local island families: the upper-crust but currently down-at-the-heel blue-blooded Spensers, the hard-working-class Ketchem clan, and the Schlagels, a grounds crew landscaping family still scarred by wartime anti-German sentiment.

I wove the local stories together to present a picture of what tragically happened on that warm summer night in 1921. As the cold case progresses, John is forced to deal with natural attrition, family myth, fading human memory, deliberate misdirection, and outright lies.

It's not all grimness. John Jarad has a modern advantage the initial Baby Alice kidnapping investigators lacked: forensic DNA analysis. John uses DNA to solve a genetic family puzzle that unlocks the Baby Alice cold

case, and as he continues to pursue the investigation, myriad other family scandals emerge. Modern-day events flare white-hot when a copycat criminal snatches a second child.

No Rest for the Wicked is not a historical mystery, but it is a mystery with historic elements. I loosely based the Baby Alice Spenser ransom kidnapping on the notorious Lindbergh case, and if you're interested in very early forensic methodology and detail, I recommend reading **Kidnap: The Story of the Lindbergh Case** by George Waller. Setting my fictional cold case took some effort, but in the end, I believe that the challenge, like the ransom, paid off.

Martha Reed is a multi-award-winning mystery and crime fiction author. Her Crescent City NOLA Mystery, **Love Power** was a 2021 Killer Nashville Silver Falchion Readers' Choice Award winner and a Silver Falchion Finalist in the Mystery category. It features Gigi Pascoe, a transgender sleuth. Her John and Sarah Jarad Nantucket Mystery series garnered an Independent Publisher IPPY Book Award for Mid-Atlantic Best Regional Fiction. Her short story, "The Honor Thief" was selected for **This Time For Sure**, the 2021 Bouchercon anthology edited by Hank Phillippi Ryan.

The Marketville Mysteries: Cold Case Cozies by Judy Penz Sheluk

The idea for **Skeletons in the Attic** came to me while I waited with my husband, Mike, in our lawyer's office. We were there to update our wills, and while our lawyer was detained in court, his goldendoodle kept us company. The opening scenes of the book are culled directly from that experience.

Of course, a book about updating wills would be pretty dull stuff, but while Mike read back issues of *Bicycling* magazine, I started

writing down ideas. What if I was there to inherit a house? And what if there were strings attached? But what kind of strings? By the time our lawyer arrived I had my premise:

A 36-year-old woman—I decided to call her Calamity (Callie) Barnstable—inherits a house in the town of Marketville from her father, who has recently died in what has been termed an "unfortunate occupational accident." A house

Callie didn't know existed. And there's a caveat: in order to inherit, she must leave her life in the city, move into the house, and find out who murdered her mother thirty years before. A mother she thought had left them for the milkman, or some other male equivalent.

Now, the book could have gone in any number of directions, from dark and gritty to standalone suspense, but my novel-writing veers towards cozy, albeit without the cats, crafts, and cookie recipes. And so, I sent Callie off to Marketville to dig for the truth, long buried under a web of deception. The style, a conversational first-person narrative, allows the reader to follow Callie on her journey as she learns that some secrets are better left in the past.

Buoyed by the success of **Skeletons in the Attic**, which reached #1 on Amazon in multiple categories, I was eager to write a second book in the Marketville Mystery series. Eager, but stuck. For the first time in as long as I could remember, I didn't have a single good idea. I knew I wanted to keep Callie in Marketville, but doing what? Going the "Cabot Cove" route (for lack of a better comparison) didn't fit with my vision of her life.

And then my mother died. Going through her belongings, I discovered a small blue leather train case with cream trim, an ivory plastic handle, and brass locks at the back of my mother's clothes closet. Inside, she'd carefully preserved documents from her past, documents I'd never seen, that she had never spoken about. Among them was her German passport issued in England in 1952, her landed immigration papers from England to Canada documenting her journey on the T.S.S. Canberra, old photographs and postcards, her Canadian citizenship papers, her mother's death

certificate from 1956, and a couple of pieces of costume jewelry. The idea for **Past & Present** was born: the past reaching out to the present.

I knew from that moment I would name my cold case character Anneliese, in memory of my mother, last name Prei (her mother's maiden name, as noted on her death certificate). I also wanted to name Anneliese's love interest Anton, after my father, who died of stomach cancer at age 42, when I was fourteen. I suppose it was my way of reuniting them.

Tracing my mother's immigration to Canada started with the Canadian Immigration Museum at Pier 21 and continued with research on the TSS Canberra (thanks to my friend, John G. Sayers, who also penned the exceptional **Secrets of the Great Ocean Liners**), as well as 1952 train schedules from Quebec City to Toronto.

The premise of **Past & Present** finds Callie opening Past & Present Investigations, hoping to transfer the skills learned in **Skeletons in the Attic** into a new career. It's not long before Callie and her new business partner, best friend Chantelle Marchand, get their first client: a woman who wants to find out everything she can about her grandmother, Anneliese Prei, and how she came to a "bad end" in 1956. But the cold case doesn't stop there, and it doesn't take long before Anneliese's past winds its way into Callie's present, and not in a way anyone, including Callie, could have predicted.

The third book in the Marketville series is **A Fool's Journey**. The story revolves around Brandon Colbeck, a college dropout who left home in March 2000 to "find himself," never to be seen or heard from again by friends or family. While a work of fiction, Brandon's story was inspired by an article in my local newspaper about a family still searching for their

missing son after fifteen years. That article led me to Ontario's Missing Adults (missingadults.ca), where I read about the missing son, and studied his age-progressed photographs. Then I contacted the website's founder, Lusia Dion, who graciously helped me along the way as I created a case for Callie to solve. In the odd way the universe sometimes unfolds, I learned that the missing man who inspired *Journey* returned home after almost two decades away. While I don't know the details of why he was gone for so long or where he'd been, I do know that the date of his return coincided with the day *A Fool's Journey* was released. Sometimes truth really is stranger than fiction.

After a two-year hiatus from Marketville as I worked on other projects—and, if I'm being completely honest, waited for another idea to strike—I'm hard at work on book four, with tentative plans to release it Summer 2022. It feels good to be back in Calamity Barnstable's world, solving one cold case cozy at a time.

A former journalist and magazine editor, Judy Penz Sheluk is the bestselling author of the Marketville and Glass Dolphin Mystery series. She is a member of Sisters in Crime, International Thriller Writers, the Short Mystery Fiction Society, and Crime Writers of Canada, where she serves as Chair on the Board of Directors. Find her at www.judypenzsheluk.com.

Life After the Badge by *Danny R. Smith*

Unsolved murders can haunt those who've been tasked with solving them. Though I retired from L.A. Sheriff's Homicide seventeen years ago, many of my unsolved cases trouble me to this day, and I will likely obsess over some of them for the rest of my life.

Case in point: In May of 2000, my partner and I investigated the death of a man who had been shot through his head in the front yard of his rural property in Santa Clarita. It was a murder that I always felt should have been solved, one that was always close to breaking wide open but never did. One in which I am confident that my partner and I had snared the killer in our net, but we could never quite put the pieces together.

Shortly before he was killed, the victim had left a mower on his half-mown lawn, walked over to the open tailgate of his pickup that was parked in his driveway, and removed his right glove. At some point, he stepped away from the truck and turned back toward his lawn—

presumably to finish his work—and that is when he was shot from behind at close range.

We were never able to determine whom he had visited at the tailgate nor why he had removed the glove. Had it been for the purpose of dexterity? He was, after all, right-handed. Or had he taken it off to shake the killer's hand?

Confident that the victim knew his killer, we homed in on the usual suspects: relatives, friends, associates, and neighbors. The last to see him alive and the first to find him dead. There are certain protocols of death investigation, and the probability of a person being killed by one of these usual suspects is very high in cases where other risk factors aren't part of the equation (gang membership, drug use, prostitution, et cetera).

The victim's roommate fit many of the categories that made him our Number One suspect: roommate, friend, last to see the victim alive, and the one to find him dead.

The roommate's wife, interestingly, was yet

another.

She appeared at the local sheriff's station shortly after the murder while I was there trying to interview her husband. She demanded that he be "released," and that we stop speaking with him immediately. Though he certainly wasn't in custody, and she had no grounds to demand we not speak with him, the pressure she applied at the front counter worked its way to me, and I was left with two choices: arrest him or end our interview. There was no probable cause to charge him, so he walked out of the station that night, and that is my greatest regret of this case. I always felt that if I had had another hour or two with him, and only him—without his wife or an attorney to keep him centered—I would have learned things that might have solved the case.

We learned that the roommate and his lovely bride had been separated for several months, but we never knew the reason. After the murder, the two of them suddenly bonded, and each became the other's alibi. (They somehow miraculously noticed one another traveling in opposite directions of an always-congested freeway at the time of the murder.) They obtained an attorney, and neither of them would ever speak with us again. Curiously, they reconciled and started a new and exciting life at a faraway beach community.

But what would the motive have been?

Could it have been reconciliation, and our victim somehow stood in the way of that? Or was there something strange or sexual happening among the three of them, something that pushed one of them into a murderous frenzy? Why had they separated to begin with?

The victim certainly had a peculiar love life. His last known relationship had been with a transvestite sex worker whom he had first

patronized, then fell in love with, and eventually funded her anatomic transformation into a woman. Then he broke up with her, and that had left the former sex worker in a state of rage. Of course, she, too, had to be considered as a suspect, but she had the rock-solid alibi of undergoing back surgery at the exact moment the victim was shot, and we were able to cross her off our list.

As far as any other motives, the victim had done well with his investments, and two people stood to prosper from his death: a daughter who lived far away and was never considered a suspect, and a son who lived across town, was a wannabe gangster, and who had had several brushes with the law. He remains a suspect, though more so for my partner than for me. Later that evening, my partner and I knocked on his door and notified him of his father's death. I believe he was truly shocked. He gave us consent to search his apartment, and we did, finding a gun that had not been recently fired nor cleaned. With no firearms evidence found at the scene nor recovered from the victim's body—the bullet entered the back of the victim's head and exited through the front—we could not scientifically conclude that the son's gun was not the murder weapon. The son later submitted to a polygraph examination, and the results were inconclusive.

Oftentimes it is the hunch of a detective that leads him in the right direction, and I do not believe the victim's son killed his father. However, my partner has never been comfortable eliminating the kid as a suspect. It wasn't often that he and I weren't on the same page, but this time we weren't, and that has always given me pause with discounting the son.

What about the neighbors? Yikes, that was yet another quagmire we had to negotiate.

Across the dirt road from his property lived three men, all biker types, two of whom were Vietnam veterans. “I hated the asshole,” one of them said to me and my partner during an interview shortly after the murder, “but I didn’t kill him.” The other two had solid alibis, but this one, the one who hated our victim, could only say he must’ve been in the shower because he never heard a gunshot. He agreed to take a polygraph and was cooperative and forthcoming throughout our investigation, and neither my partner nor I ever believed the neighbor committed the murder. But we were never able to determine who did, either.

Twenty-one years later, and my partner and I—both retired—still talk about our cases occasionally—especially the unsolved ones. Because those are the ones where someone got away with murder on our watch, and that is a weight that only the detectives carry.

As the Homicide Investigators Creed goes (in part): “No greater honor nor burden has ever been bestowed on an officer than being entrusted to investigate the death of a human being.”

This burden becomes part of us, taking residency in our hearts and souls and tormented minds. Many cops carry it with them until, like cancer, it eats them from the inside and sends them to an early grave. Others take a more direct approach to ending the pain, drinking themselves to death or sucking a hollow-point from the business end of their service pistol.

In my years after the badge, I’ve managed to

calm the demons through my stories. Following a diagnosis of chronic PTSD, my shrink suggested that I write. He said I had a talent for it, and that writing can be very therapeutic. It is.

In the beginning, I only wrote fiction where I had complete control of the stories, and I didn’t have to (voluntarily) revisit those things that haunt me. Eventually—fifteen years later—I was able to open some of the doors I had tried to keep closed, and I finally start putting my personal story to paper. It wasn’t an easy thing to do.

My memoir, **Nothing Left to Prove**, lays bare the violence I encountered on the job and the many horrific crimes I investigated. It tells how I dealt with those things then, and how I managed to pick up the pieces later. (It also happens to have on its cover an actual crime scene photograph from the homicide case featured in this article.)

It is my hope that by reading my memoir, more cops (and other first responders) who suffer will be encouraged to admit they hurt, and to get help before it kills them. I want them to know that it’s okay to say, “I’m broken.” In fact, it’s more than okay; it’s the beginning of a healing process. It’s the beginning of life after the badge.

Danny R. Smith, a retired homicide detective, is the author of seven detective novels, a law enforcement memoir, and *The Murder Memo*, a true crime blog.

I Leave a Trail of Whack-Jobs in My Wake by Gabrielle St. George

My name is Gabrielle and I am a whack-job magnet.

Is it my personal electromagnetic field? My

aura? A mutant gene? Karma exacting revenge for horrific deeds I committed in past lives? How is it that I so easily attract the unhinged?

I'm an introvert with a tiny social circle who prefers animals to people and my secluded house in the middle of a forest to literally anywhere else in the world. How do they find me? Why do they find me? When will they leave me alone?

Overall, my debut mystery novel, **How to Murder a Marriage**, releasing November 9th, 2021, has received excellent advance reviews which I'm thrilled and honored to be granted. But I secretly wonder (hello imposter syndrome, my old friend) if these 5-star reviewers know anything at all about good books and good writing. I've also received a couple of 2-star reviews that hurt my feelings, and I wonder if these toxic trolls know anything about good books and good writing either. One 4-star review was exceptionally complimentary, with the reviewer's only criticism being, "I did have to suspend belief here and there because honestly, even considering the main character's profession, how does one attract so many stalkers?"

Ugh, I wish I knew so I could make it stop. For my mystery novel, I drew upon much of my own tortured relationship experience. Some of the early feedback I received from editors pointed to certain plot points as unrealistic or too far-fetched. Without fail, these were the events and situations that I had pulled from my own real life. These were the "true story" parts of my story. The old adage, "Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction" means that what actually happens is sometimes more bizarre than anything we could have imagined—It's astounding to me that anyone questions this occurrence.

Who would believe that my ex-husband would stalk me for a decade, and after I found a new partner, that my ex-husband would team

up with my new partner's ex-wife and they would stalk us together? I don't just mean online, although that happened too. I'm talking about hiding out in the dark forest of my hundred-acre woods with cameras and listening devices and following me and showing up places they had no business being. When I eventually moved in with my partner, who also lived deep in a secluded forest, he slept with an axe handle on the floor next to him every night. When we decided to move a few hours north, we knew our leaving the area might trigger our exes.

One morning a week after the For Sale sign went up in front of our home, my partner left for work, and I got ready for an appointment at a local spa. My car was parked in its usual spot, next to the house on the very long driveway of our country property. When I opened my car door, I was confused by what I saw. I tried to take in the chaos before me but couldn't make sense of it.

Absolutely everything that had been inside my glove compartment and console had been pulled out and strewn about—loads of tissues, papers, receipts, all thrown across the front and back seats. There was a long screwdriver and a sharp, jagged tool jammed into the driver's seat cushion, sticking out menacingly poised to impale. There was a serrated knife with a ten-inch blade positioned against the gas pedal.

I was pissed off with my partner. Obviously, he must've been looking for something, and in his rush to leave for work, had made this huge mess. I called him. "Did you have to trash the whole car?"

"I wasn't in your car. What are you talking about?"

I stammered. Of course, it wasn't him. I

noticed a one-dollar coin placed on the center of the driver's seat cushion. The screwdriver pointed purposely toward it. The coin marked a large, white, sticky splotch of fluid. The idea of semen never entered my mind.

My partner calmly asked me to take photos of the disarray and send them to him. I did, all the while stressing about being late for my spa appointment. He phoned back immediately telling me to call the police. Irrationally adamant, I said that would have to wait a couple of hours—my spa appointment couldn't be rescheduled and I was going to it.

I started to drive then noticed the door to my potting shed inside the picket fence of my charming veggie garden was wide open. It was always closed to keep the squirrels out. My numbing sensation of shock was morphing into full on freak-out. I stopped the car and jumped out. I wasn't prepared for what I saw inside the shed. Every sharp garden tool had been carefully placed in a pattern along the bench and floor all pointing toward my house. Knives and shears, scissors and saws, all laid out in a threatening map. I slammed the shed door, ran back to my car and drove to the spa holding my butt on the edge of the seat so as not to disturb the coin stuck to the fabric beneath me.

It was impossible to relax during the facial, the massage was a waste, and I agitatedly skipped the polish on my toes. I was back at the house in record time. My partner was waiting there for me. The police pulled up minutes later.

One female cop took copious notes. Another set out to search our heavily treed property. It was growing dark, and she returned very quickly stating that she didn't want to run into our guy in the woods if she was on her own.

They called in the forensics team who spent three hours taking hundreds of photographs. They dusted everything for prints but there were none to be found—not even mine—the whole car and shed had been wiped clean. The only things missing were my personal items, a pair of sunglasses, gloves, and a blanket I kept for my dog. The creep clearly spent hours in my potting shed watching our home in the dark of night. He'd left a pile of cigarette butts on the floor. Forensics collected these. They missed collecting the semen and by the time we realized this it was too late for them to do so.

The detectives at the scene all figured it was one of our exes. My partner's ex didn't ejaculate on my car seat but the two of them could have wreaked this havoc together. Neither of them smoked. Maybe the cigarettes were left to throw us off. The lead detective was the only one who suspected the perp was a stranger. He was also one hundred percent certain that this rando would return. He said these types always did and that their behavior almost always escalated. The detective didn't think the perp would make the leap from creeping around our home, defiling our possessions, and staging threatening displays of sharp objects, to entering our house with the intent of inflicting physical violence. He figured the guy would have to work up to that. Might take an extra visit or two. None of this made us feel any safer.

The next morning a police IT team installed cameras all over our property that they monitored 24 hours a day. They wanted to get the guy on film. We just wanted them to get the guy. Rather than questioning our exes, they watched them.

Four months later forensics got a DNA

match off the cigarette butts. It wasn't either of our exes. It was a violent offender who had done time for rape and assault and was out on parole. He was wanted for a long list of violations. A warrant was issued for his arrest. The detective called regularly to keep us updated. They couldn't find the offender anywhere despite having searched all his previous known addresses and usual haunts. He had disappeared. The cameras kept rolling. Were our exes involved in this incident? Did they hire the guy to give us one last good scare before we packed up and peaced out?

Our house sold a month after the incident. The police wouldn't remove the cameras until the morning of our move. We weren't allowed to discuss the case for our own safety and due to the ongoing investigation. I still feel guilty that the new owners moved in without a clue that this violent man could return at any time.

If our exes sent him to frighten us there'd be no reason for him to come back after we were gone. Or maybe it's my whack-job magnetism that drew him to me. It's been a year now and the case has gone cold. It seems our night visitor vanished into thin air, never to be heard from again. For the sake of the new people living in my old house, I hope that's true.

Gabrielle St. George is a Canadian screenwriter and story-editor who writes humorous mysteries and domestic noir about subjects of which she is an expert—mostly failed relationships, hence her debut soft-boiled series, *The Ex-Whisperer Files*, which launches with **How to Murder a Marriage** on November 9th, 2021 from Level Best Books. Unfortunately, every word of her Author! Author! essay is the truth, which is definitely stranger than fiction. For more information, visit: www.gabriellestgeorge.com

Who Killed Jane Stanford? A Gilded Age Tale of Murder, Deceit, Spirits, and the Birth of a University by *Richard White*

I am a historian who taught for more than twenty years at Stanford University. I have written about criminals in my books, but **Who Killed Jane Stanford?**, which will be published by W.W. Norton in May 2022, is the first of my histories to cross genres into true crime.

The book originated in an undergraduate course that I taught on Jane Stanford's death in 1905. She was the co-founder of Stanford University, a spiritualist, and for a time the richest woman in San Francisco. I wanted to get students into the archives to touch and evaluate evidence. On the first day of class, the university archivist pulled Jane Stanford's death mask—a plaster cast of her face made two days after she died—from its box and showed it to

the students. They reacted with audible gasps as if her corpse had walked in the room. At that moment she leaped across the century and came among us like an apparition at one of her séances.

A coroner's jury examining her death decided "that she came to her death at Honolulu, Island of Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, on the twenty-eight day of February, A.D. 1905 from Strychnine poisoning, said strychnine having been introduced into a bottle of bicarbonate of soda with felonious intent by some person or persons to this Jury unknown and of the contents of which bottle Jane Lathrop Stanford had partaken."

She was in Honolulu because she was fleeing

a previous attempt to poison her. Someone had put rat poison in her Poland Spring Water six weeks earlier in San Francisco.

For three weeks, her poisoning, death, and presumed murder dominated front pages of newspapers in Honolulu, San Francisco, and the nation. Private detectives, the San Francisco Police, and the Honolulu police all investigated. Then, astonishingly, on March 21, 1905, the San Francisco police decided she had died a natural death. Stanford University and the Stanford estate provided the evidence. They relied on the opinion of a Honolulu doctor—hired by the estate and supervised by the university president—that Mrs. Stanford overate at lunch. Although the autopsy found her stomach to be empty, the doctor said she must have had considerable gas, which would have created pressure on her heart. This prompted hysteria and triggered a heart attack. She presumably could have been saved by a fart.

The natural death theory reigned for nearly a century until Robert Cutler, a professor in the Stanford Medical School, reexamined the surviving records in 2003. He demolished the case for a natural death. Jane Stanford had been poisoned with strychnine, just as the coroner's jury in Hawaii had found.

But who poisoned her?

I wish I could say that seeing Jane Stanford's death mask sparked a desire in me to see justice done. It didn't. I saw an aged woman and I initially wondered not who killed her, but why? Why hasten those last few steps to the grave? Someone must have had something significant at stake.

Now, I think about her at 3:00 in the morning—the time guys my age often lay awake in the dark. The university gives tours to prospective students that embody the old story of Jane

Stanford as the “Good Woman:” generous, beneficent, in continuing mourning for her lost child, Leland Stanford Jr., after whom the university was named. It has recently renamed the road running in front of the main quad for her. The newspapers at the time proclaimed that she had no enemies. Who would want to kill her and why?

It turns out a lot of people had a motive to kill her. Jane Stanford had enemies. She deserved most of them. Some of the suspects and the detectives who investigated them could have come straight out of the San Francisco of Dashiell Hammett's *Continental Op* or *The Maltese Falcon*.

On the surface, Leland Stanford Jr. University appeared to be simply another of the new research universities funded by rich people during the Gilded Age: the University of Chicago, Rice University, Vanderbilt University, and Carnegie Mellon University. But Stanford University was never what it seemed. It was stranger and much darker than these other schools. Leland Stanford Jr. University was “inward”—a common expression of the late 19th-century used to describe things that were not as they appeared on the surface.

No other research university had a founder who consulted the ghosts of her dead son and husband. No other founder wanted to embed spiritualism in the curriculum. The library and archives still contain transcripts of seances with her dead son, slates with spirit writing, and apports— ancient artifacts brought to seances by spirits. No other founder acted as if they owned the university, which for all practical purposes Jane Stanford did.

My problem was not a lack of suspects, but rather too many of them. Some were literally the usual suspects in Victorian murders—

including the butler. Some were the usual suspects in any murder in Gilded Age San Francisco—the Chinese servants. There were greedy relatives, family quarrels, corrupt police, and private detectives who seemed uninterested in solving the crime. There were university officials who wanted Jane out of the way.

The evidence was another problem. Never in my long career as a historian have I seen so many records disappear. Some of this was easy to explain: the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed police and other records in San Francisco. And Stanford did not initially take much care of its own records. But still. The records of a second autopsy that the university claimed showed she died of a heart attack: gone. Many of Jane Stanford letters during the time leading up to her death and the manuscript of a book by her niece which were donated to Stanford: gone. Some of Jane Stanford's early wills: gone. The papers of her private secretary, who did publish a book about her: gone.

These vanished records tested my belief that the past cannot be erased, but my faith remains

intact. An original letter can go missing, but a response remains. A report can disappear, but accounts of the report survive. Participants in events lie, but it is virtually impossible to find and destroy all the materials that undermine the lie.

I sifted through scattered sources to determine not only who killed Jane Stanford but how and why. Finishing the book, confined by the Covid pandemic, I kept going back over the sources, looking for details that I might have ignored. I conferred with my brother, Stephen, who writes crime fiction. He pointed out odd bits of evidence that I might have overlooked. That search and those conversations produced my final surprise. I had wondered why the San Francisco police and detectives did not pursue the suspects. In the end I realized that they had not only pursued them, but that they had found the killer.

Richard White is a historian and an emeritus professor at Stanford University where he taught for more than twenty years. His books have won many prizes, and he has twice been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Covering a Cold Case in Facts and Fiction *by Andrew Welsh-Huggins*

A cold case is a victim's nightmare and a novelist's dream. For survivors of a violent crime or their relatives, what could be worse than the unanswered question hanging over what was already the worst day of their life? For writers, the same unsolved mystery is a chance to build a new house over the shell of the former—to take the facts of an offense and provide a solution in fiction where one doesn't exist—not yet anyway—in real life.

I based my second novel, **Slow Burn**, on the still unsolved 2003 arson of an off-campus

house near Ohio State University that killed five college students, a case I helped cover as a reporter for the Associated Press. Though a man was briefly held as a suspect, he was never charged, and was released after a few hours. True to creative writing form, I took those details and turned them into a scenario whereby my main character, Columbus private eye Andy Hayes, is tasked with determining whether a man who pleaded guilty to committing a deadly arson fire and is now in prison was, in reality, guilty of the crime.

Then, a few years later, I reported on the conclusion of what at the time was one of the oldest cold cases facing the Columbus police department. It involved the story of Niki “Nick” Cooper, an officer shot in 1972 during an armed confrontation with a burglar, who was also wounded. For reasons that are still unclear, the burglar escaped prosecution and eventually, after committing other crimes out of state, was found by Cooper’s family in 2016 living a quiet life in Dayton at age eighty-two. Naturally, they wanted him prosecuted.

“I am not stopping, not until some kind of justice gets done,” said Lori Cooper, Niki Cooper’s daughter. The local prosecutor concurred. The attorney for the burglar, Charles Hays, argued that too much time had passed, and the state had missed several opportunities over the years to try Hays, violating his constitutional right to a speedy trial. To underscore this point, Hays’ attorney noted that his client had a current Ohio driver’s license he’d renewed twice and had lived at the same address in Dayton for ten years.

Ultimately, a judge ruled that the window for prosecuting Hays had closed, devastating the family of the officer after their decades-long wait for justice. Recording the thoughts of Cooper’s daughter the day of that decision was one of the more difficult interviews of my career.

I’ve covered dozens of terrible crimes as a reporter and occasionally mined them for my fiction, as with the arson fire. There’s no telling why one rises to the top over another when it comes to tapping them for a fictional treatment; each of them, after all, bears similar hallmarks of violence, anguish, and a desire for justice thwarted by a puzzle whose pieces

refuse to fit together year after year.

Whatever the reason, I kept returning in my imagination to the cold case that was the Niki Cooper saga, followed by its dissatisfying resolution. And at the core of my consideration was the same question that haunted Cooper’s family and which remains—despite the discovery of Hays in Dayton—to this day: how was the burglar able to disappear after shooting a police officer? This was the point I decided to focus on, and it’s here where fiction took over.

In my retelling of the case, the son of an officer shot under similar circumstances has evidence that the burglar—John J. Ebersole in my book—is still alive, but no one knows where he is. The cop’s son hires Hayes to track the burglar down, and the resulting search, including Hayes’ discovery of secrets that several people want kept hidden, comes to play in my latest novel, **An Empty Grave**.

The book is not a *roman à clef*, since I changed several facts about the actual case and fabricated an explanation for the burglar’s disappearance that goes down a far different path than the real-life tale. But the core element of any cold case remains: a family’s need for closure even after decades have passed. What could be more central to crime fiction than that?

Andrew Welsh-Huggins is the author of several novels and stories featuring Andy Hayes, a former Ohio State and Cleveland Browns quarterback turned private investigator. Andrew is also the editor of the anthology **Columbus Noir**, and his short mystery fiction has appeared in *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine*, *Mystery Weekly*, *Mystery Tribune*, and other magazines and anthologies.

Too Cold to Touch? Poe and the Girl Behind the Wall

by *Bruce Wetterau*

How would you solve a murder mystery that wasn't discovered by police until a girl's skeleton was unearthed almost two hundred years after the fact? Surely there would be precious little left to go on. Suspects? Could have been just about anybody alive two hundred years ago. Clues? The blowing sands of time certainly would have wind-washed most of them to oblivion. No fingerprints, witness statements, or the other usual touchstones police rely on to catch a murderer. It's a cold case that in real life today probably would remain unsolved forever.

Except it can't. Because that's the goal I set for myself when I decided to write a story about Edgar Allan Poe as the prime suspect in a murder. I'll admit to being fascinated (and a bit torn) by the prospect of pinning suspicions of guilt on the author who penned classic stories of murder and mayhem and who is regarded as the father of the modern detective story. But his reputation begged the question, did he know so much about murder because, well, he'd committed one himself?

As a gleam in this author's eye, the idea struck me as deliciously ironic, if not downright deviously speculative. It also promised a multitude of possible allusions to stories Poe wrote and a host of intriguing possible subtexts too. Which is to say, I couldn't resist the idea. But in the early days of planning my novel, the mechanics of constructing the mystery, fitting it into Poe's life, and proving Poe guilty or innocent of a crime so long ago seemed all but impossible. Sometimes I wonder why the heck I make things so hard on myself.

Happily, imagination won out and **The Girl Behind the Wall: Edgar Allan Poe, the Girl, and the Mysterious Raven Murders** became the third novel in my Clay Cantrell mystery series. By design all books in my series weave back and forth between a contemporary plot and a related mystery as it unfolds in the past. So the structure gave me a leg up, allowing me to tell the story of a cold case mystery actually unfolding in the past. Meanwhile, fast forwarding to the present, I follow my amateur sleuth Clay Cantrell as he tries to uncover the truth about this coldest of cases, the murder of Poe's girlfriend, Annabel Lee, in 1826. And just to make things really interesting for this installment of the series, Clay also winds up risking his life to catch a modern-day serial killer who is both obsessed with Poe and may even be connected somehow to Annabel's murder.

Where to begin? That's usually a nagging question for writing a mystery. But from the get-go I knew it had to be with Poe suffering a bout of his strange, recurring vision about killing his girlfriend years before. Equally important in the opening pages was introducing an ambitious newspaper reporter, Sam Reynolds. He will stop at nothing to get the story of a now famous Poe as a murderer. But he has only fragments of a story from Poe himself. He's learned the girl's name and a few shreds of information from Poe's drunken ravings, but he has no murder victim, no witness, and no idea of when the murder took place.

Clay doesn't start off with much more to go on in the present day. He accidentally discovers the victim—now reduced to a desiccated

skeleton—walled up behind a failing brick wall in an old tunnel under the University of Virginia grounds. The obvious efforts to hide the girl's body points to murder, of course. And a single, crucial clue makes Poe a possible suspect. A locket around the bones of Annabel's neck is inscribed "My beloved Annabel. Your devoted Eddy. Oct. 1826". The tantalizing possibility here is that the "Eddy" is Poe himself, that Annabel was his girlfriend when he was a student at the university. Could his walling her up have inspired Poe's famous story **The Cask of Amontillado**, if in fact he did kill her? The local police aren't interested in investigating a case so cold—it's too cold to touch—especially with a serial killer then on the loose in the town. But the case arouses Clay's curiosity, setting the second half of my mystery in motion.

I won't spoil the story by revealing how Clay and his friends, or for that matter reporter Sam Reynolds, fare in discovering the truth about Annabel's murder. But perhaps it will be enough here to explain how I came up with the idea of making Poe a murder suspect in the first place—a look into the sometimes quirky events an author's imagination builds on.

It's hard not to be at least passingly familiar with Edgar Allan Poe, of course. In my high school years, we all had to read some of his most famous, bone-chilling tales. You might ask here, was making Poe a murder suspect just payback for a boring 12th-grade English class? No, I can assure you that is not it. In fact it was my fifteen years living in Charlottesville, Virginia, where the University of Virginia is located.

You see, the University is steeped in history, having been founded by Thomas Jefferson. And it is not at all shy about its connections with Poe, who was a student there for almost a

year in 1826. In my work as a reference book author and editor in the 1990s, I frequented Alderman Library, the university's main library. It's a wonderful resource and also houses a prestigious special collection of Poe's papers. What's more, back then, you only had to glance across the street from the library's front steps to see the room Poe is said to have occupied while a student there. The room, #13 in the West Range, is something of a tourist attraction, furnished as it would have been in Poe's time.

The university's historic grounds and the connections with Poe naturally brought him to mind some years later when I began planning the Clay Cantrell mystery series. And as a fan of the long running PBS mystery series *Inspector Morse*, set in and around the historic Oxford University campus, I thought the University of Virginia would make an excellent backdrop for a murder mystery set here in the US.

But it was a bit of local lore from my days in Charlottesville that my imagination morphed into a key element for the story. Even today I remember being fascinated by a news story in the local paper about students sneaking into the complex of old steam tunnels running hither and yon under the University Grounds. I don't know how old the tunnels are, but I naturally imagined that some might date to the earliest days of the University. I never got the chance to explore those old tunnels myself, but that didn't stop me from putting them to good use in my evolving mystery novel. They offered the perfect place to wall up Annabel's body and keep it hidden for almost two centuries until my series hero, Clay, could find it by accident!

The rest of conjuring up my cold case mystery is, as they say, history.

Author Bruce Wetterau has written three novels for his Clay Cantrell mystery series: *Lost Treasure*, *Killer Fog*, and most recently, *The Girl Behind the Wall*. Before turning to novel

writing, Wetterau spent over twenty years as a freelance reference book author and editor. He published eleven reference books under his own name and contributed to many others.

Cold Case, Aloha Style by Steve Zettler

The television show *Cold Case* ran from 2003 to 2010. Technically it was set in Philadelphia, but like many such shows the majority of filming was done in Los Angeles and production crews only came to Philadelphia intermittently to shoot exterior scenes. I live in Philadelphia, where I work as a writer and actor, and had the pleasure of performing in an episode of *Cold Case*. I played a not very likable, wife-beating, abusive, alcoholic butcher who was working in the city's historic Italian Market on Ninth Street. I was suspected of decapitating my wife many years earlier; a crime that had never been solved. Sadly, I'm often cast in these charming parts, but in real life most people see me as a pretty nice guy; I think.

If you have watched the *Cold Case* television show you'll know that the investigators, after interviewing suspects like me, go back in time to find the guilty party, and thus solve the cold case. Ergo, another actor is required to play the same wife-beater as me but as a much younger man, requiring the producers to shout, "Get me a young Steve Zettler." I have to admit it had been a life-long dream of mine to send producers scurrying to find a young me. And that brings me to my other career and my novel, *Careless Love*.

Careless Love was published this past summer. It is a romantic-suspense novel with cold case attributes. I send a character back four decades to ferret out exactly what happened on a single tragic and murderous night in

Honolulu. It's the story of an artist whose mother, on her deathbed, reveals that her long deceased husband was not, in fact, the artist's real father at all. Because the dying mother wavers in her ability to remain focused, or string together cohesive recollections of the man she once loved, after her death the artist is left with a stack of unanswered questions, and the task of searching for the individuals who were in Honolulu in 1979, who were familiar with the crime, and who may hold the answers as to who the real father might have been, and therefore, where he might be now.

Careless Love travels down a very curvy road at high speed. A woman flees her abusive husband, escapes to Hawaii, falls in love with another man, becomes pregnant, and the man is murdered shortly thereafter. No spoiler-alert is necessary because the reader learns this much in the first few chapters. The suspense is in the search for the truth; the hour-by-hour piecing together of this tragic day in 1979. As I find can be the case in many intriguing novels, I wanted to know what happened to the players after the murder. I was hungry for more. Did the woman keep the child? Did she remain married to the abusive husband? Or did she escape the marriage and live happily ever after? If she kept the child, what kind of a life did the child have? I wanted those questions answered. And this is what drew me to the cold case structure. I examined my novel from a 2020 viewpoint. I brought this illegitimate child to

life as a forty-year-old in search of the elusive answers to this long held family secret. In creating *Careless Love* with the cold case aspect, I found it fascinating to study the same characters with two contrasting lives separated by forty years. Most of them appear in the novel while in their early thirties in 1979 and then again in their seventies in 2020 as much changed individuals. They are older and wiser, having had their lives shaken and devastated by the horror they had witnessed in 1979. In doing so I found I had a great affinity for them at all stages of their lives. I felt I knew them much better, and I believe this made them

much richer characters throughout the novel. I found them so compelling as older individuals that I was able to sit back and let them tell me, in their own words, how the events of 1979 unfolded and affected them and naturally changed their lives forever. *Careless Love* will always be a romantic-suspense novel, but undeniably it's a cold case account as well.

Steve Zettler is the author of the international thrillers *The Second Man*, *Double Identity* and *Ronin*. He is also the coauthor of the Nero Blanc mystery series. His most recent novel, *Careless Love*, was published in July, 2021, by Vine Leaves Press.

COLUMNS

Mystery in Retrospect: Reviews by *Lesa Holstine, Roberta Rood, Lucinda Surber, Alison McMahan*

Reviewed by Lesa Holstine

Telling Tales by Ann Cleeves. Minotaur Books, 2017.

All those books in my place, and one Saturday I couldn't find anything I wanted to read. I really wanted a traditional mystery because I had just watched *Agatha Christie's England* on PBS. So, I turned to Ann Cleeves and the second Vera Stanhope mystery, *Telling Tales*. I've read the first and scattered ones in the series, including the most recent one, but I went back to the first one I hadn't read. Ann Cleeves, and Vera Stanhope, with the descriptions of village life in England, a murder that turns a community upside down, and Vera's investigation, was just what I wanted.

Before she committed suicide, Jeanie Long was imprisoned for ten years for the murder of

fifteen-year-old Abigail Mantel. She protested that she was innocent, and finally, killed herself when probation was denied again. Her death came just before a witness came forward to exonerate her. To the small community of Elvet, that means the killer might still be alive, and might be there.

Emma Bennett always said that Abigail was her best friend when they were both fifteen. Now, when she overhears her husband, James, and the neighbor, talk about Jeanie's suicide, she realizes she'll have to tell her story again, how she had fled her house and found Abigail's body in a ditch. But when Detective Inspector Vera Stanhope shows up in Elvet, she lets Emma brood about the past before she listens to Emma's account.

Vera was brought in from Northumberland to take a second look at the Abigail Mantel

murder. It hadn't taken the police long to settle on Jeanie Long as the killer ten years earlier. She had been living with Abigail's father, but Abigail hated her, and urged him to break off the relationship. At least, that's the story the community heard. But Vera hears different versions of Abigail's tale as she questions former police officers, Jeanie's boss at the local pub, and Abigail's father. A small community can harbor secrets and lies and untold tales.

That's one of Ann Cleeves' strengths. Like Christie, she sets a scene, in a small village or a large country house, and allows the characters to reveal their own secrets, the stories they tell themselves about their past and their lives. Vera listens. At times she doubts herself, but she's finally able to see the truth, the nugget buried somewhere in all of the tales people tell. The reader might be there for all of the accounts Vera hears, but, time and again, Vera discovers a truth that the reader misses.

Telling Tales is just that. Vera listens as community members tell their tales, but somehow those tales reveal a killer, a truth that no one but Vera was able to catch. It's a perfect book for anyone searching for an Agatha Christie setting, a book with a depth of character and a startling reveal.

An Empty Grave by Andrew Welsh-Huggins. Swallow Press, 2021.

A year or two ago, my sister suggested I try a mystery about a PI who was a former Ohio State quarterback. She hadn't read any of Andrew Welsh-Huggins' books, but she saw a synopsis on a list of Ohio authors. I finally had a chance to read the seventh in the Andy Hayes series, **An Empty Grave**. I may have to go back and find earlier books in the series about the disgraced quarterback turned barely successful PI.

With two teenage sons and two ex-wives, Andy Hayes is a little strapped for cash. When Preston Campbell interrupts him at dinner to talk about a forty-year-old case, Hayes is a little reluctant. But he makes an appointment to hear Campbell's slightly iffy story. Forty years earlier, his father, Howard Campbell, was the cop who stopped a string of burglaries by the "Buckeye Burglar." Howard was shot three times, but managed to shoot John J. Ebersole, the burglar, who ended up in the hospital. Howard Campbell was permanently disabled, and committed suicide just recently. But Ebersole seems to have just walked out of the hospital and disappeared, although a man who shot a cop should have been under guard. Preston Campbell is convinced Ebersole is still alive despite a newspaper account from Rochester, NY saying he died in a fire. Campbell's sister is angry that Andy would even consider taking the off-the-wall case, but Andy assures her he'll just give it a little time, and return Campbell's money if nothing pans out.

Preston Campbell had already compiled a file of John J. Ebersole's associates who ended up dead, including a cop who was investigating him. Andy is surprised to find several people who received money from a mysterious person in Rochester, even though Ebersole was supposed to be dead. He's also surprised to find a connection to a small local liberal arts college, an East German professor who taught there in 1979, and another PI investigating on behalf of a college trustee who wants to run for Senate. But what could a Senate candidate, an East German professor, and a burglar possibly have to do with a forty-year-old case? Another death and a break-in at Hayes' house only add credence to Andy's belief that he's on the right track.

I liked Andy Hayes. He and his personal life are a mess, but that's common for so many PIs in mysteries. But he has a couple interesting friends who back him up, even if it's a little messy as to how they do that. It's just too bad his dog is aging. He's a PI who needs a friend or two. Looking for an interesting series? You might want to track down this one.

The Parting Glass by Lissa Marie Redmond. Severn House, 2021.

Despite allusions to Buffalo Police Detective Lauren Riley's Icelandic adventures in **A Full Cold Moon**, there's no reason a newcomer to the series can't pick up **The Parting Glass**. I admit that it's more interesting if you're already familiar with Lauren's tendency to go rogue, and her work partner's attempts to keep her in line, but she's not working for the police department in this latest book. So, head to Ireland with Lauren Riley and Shane Reese in the search for an invaluable painting.

At one time or another Lauren and Shane have both been on work-related injury lists. When one of them is out, the other partner on Buffalo's Cold Case Squad keeps them in the loop. This time, though, Lauren's doctor won't approve her return to work until she recuperates and does rehab for six months. Her lungs are too damaged as a result of being stabbed in the side. Who can expect her to sit around for six months? Instead, she renews her private investigator license, and turns down the ordinary PI cases of following spouses and looking for people cheating on workers' comp.

When Sharon Whitney calls, Lauren is intrigued by her case. When Sharon and her husband, Howard, were divorcing twenty years earlier, they fought over a small painting by Picasso. One night, Howard was brutally attacked, and the painting disappeared. The

police suspected James Breen, an employee. When he was cleared, he returned to his hometown in Ireland. No one has seen the painting in the last twenty years. Sharon hires Lauren to travel to Keelnamara on Ireland's west coast, and find the painting. Jimmy Breen has died, and Sharon bought his cottage so her PI can search the cottage. With Sharon Whitney paying all the expenses, including the cost of a B&B, Lauren hires her partner, Shane, asking him to take vacation and work with her. It's only the search for a missing painting, right?

Nothing is simple when it comes to Lauren Riley's cold cases. Everyone in the small town of Keelnamara knows about the Picasso. When the Garda reveal that Jimmy Breen was killed, the cold case robbery becomes an active homicide investigation. And everyone in Keelnamara is suspect, even the local Garda.

The relationship between Lauren and Shane is always an issue. Shane is younger than Lauren, but when she needed help, he took care of her. When he was injured in the line of duty, he moved in with her. There has always been an attraction, but neither of them have ever acted on it. Neither wants to ruin their friendship. And there's an unexpected turn in this book that keeps the reader unsure about the future. Time and again, they've saved each other from physical harm. What about emotional?

I've always been a fan of cold cases. Lissa Marie Redmond was a cold case homicide detective, so the books feel authentic. In **The Parting Glass**, Lauren and Shane are on unfamiliar territory, in a community where they know no one. When their cold case robbery becomes an active homicide investigation, they find themselves closed off from part of their case. In this small community, Lauren and Shane view even the local Garda as a suspect.

It's a strong person who can ignore a painting now worth twenty million dollars. Redmond combines an investigation and the beauty of Ireland in an intriguing mystery with several surprises.

Fatal Family Ties by S.C. Perkins. Minotaur Books, 2021.

If you follow S.C. Perkins' Ancestry Detective series, I'm sure you've noticed the clever way the publisher chooses to illustrate the reference area for genealogist Lucy Lancaster. It's obvious that **Fatal Family Ties** deals with the American Civil War. Lancaster, a genealogist based in Austin, Texas, has a fascinating story to uncover.

Lucy once worked at Howland University Library where three librarians looked down their noses at the genealogist. So, she's shocked when Camilla Braithwaite, one of those librarians, wants to hire her to look into a family story. The large Braithwaite family has thrived on the stories about Corporal Charles Braithwaite, the longest-lived soldier who fought in the Civil War. Now, though, a prestigious magazine, *Chronology*, features a story that says Charlie lied about his past. He never rose to corporal, and, worst of all, he was a deserter after the Second Battle of Bull Run. The family has always been proud of Charles' reputation as an artist, and, even more so, of his reputation for supporting the Black population of Houston, and women's suffrage. Now, Camilla wants Lucy to find the truth.

Camilla does have an unusual piece of art as part of Charles' story. She owns one third of a triptych, a painting on three panels, of a Civil War battle. Descendants of Charles' three children each own one part. Camilla has a relative who owns one piece. But he believes there's a hidden painting, a masterpiece, underneath

the cartoonish piece that has been handed down in the family. Before Lucy can send the painting to an art restorer, one of the Braithwaite family is murdered, and a panel is stolen.

Once again, Lucy teams up with FBI Special Agent Ben Turner. He's interested because a murder was committed just as he and Lucy were arriving at the house. Lucy wants to help right the wrongs of murder and theft, and she's proud to use her genealogical skills to do that.

I'll admit **Fatal Family Ties** started a little slow for me. It didn't help that I didn't like Camilla, and I did like the murder victim. But the book took off as Lucy delved into Charles Braithwaite's story. This time, the most engrossing part of the book wasn't the murder mystery, but the genealogical search, and the Civil War stories. I'd recommend that readers come for the murder mystery, but stay for the history and characters. While I might not have been fond of Lucy's client, her friends and family are charming. And the Civil War aspects of the story are fascinating. S.C. Perkins is to be commended for her use of genealogy in this intriguing, well-developed series.

The Secret Staircase by Sheila Connolly. Minotaur Books, 2021.

Although Sheila Connolly was able to wrap up some of the mysteries behind the lives of Henry and Mary Barton in her third Victorian Village Mystery, **The Secret Staircase**, she left us with the village of Asheboro, Maryland unfinished, and the house unfinished. In the overall scheme of things, Sheila Connolly's death in 2020 was a loss. Those of us who enjoyed her storytelling, and, in the case of this series, her passion and knowledge of Victorian buildings, will miss that as well.

Kate Hamilton has enjoyed the discoveries

about Henry Barton's mansion, but she still feels as if something is missing. She wants to tell his story, but knows so little about his wife, Mary. A grant will allow the house to be renovated, and she's eager to work with local contractors. She's just looking for the one who shares her passion for Henry's Victorian home.

When Morgan Wheeler shows up, the quiet, confident man seems to be just the contractor for the town's needs. He's knowledgeable, has a few subcontractors he'll work with, and he's as interested in the house as Kate is. But he doesn't like the measurements of Kate's favorite room, the kitchen. A little exploration leads to the discovery of a walled-up staircase. Fortunately for the town's future plans for the mansion, the skeleton hidden behind the staircase has probably been there over one hundred years.

Once the police release the scene, Morgan is free to bring in his subcontractors, a plumber and an electrician, to walk through the house. Every time Kate meets with them though, she feels uneasy. There's a tension amongst the group. When another body is found at the bottom of a staircase, the lawyer for the town's project gets a little huffy with Kate. Why can't she keep dead bodies out of the mansion, especially bodies that have just died?

I suspect the Victorian Village mysteries were a labor of love for Sheila Connolly. A couple of us once walked several streets in New Orleans with her, and she knew about door-knobs and iron fences and all kinds of details about the houses. She shares a great deal of knowledge about this particular Victorian house in the book. Connolly was able to make readers care, not only about the current characters, but, also about the post-Civil War lives of the people connected to the Barton home,

the Bartons and their servants. And she made an unusual and surprising connection between the people of both time periods.

If you're looking for an action-packed mystery, don't pick up **The Secret Staircase**. If you're looking for the drama of historic discoveries paired with a recent murder, a story told by an author inspired by detail, you might want to try this series. It's just sad there won't be more books in the series.

What the Cat Dragged In by Miranda James. Berkley, 2021.

What the Cat Dragged In is Miranda James' fourteenth Cat in the Stacks mystery. After thirteen books in a series, some authors just seem to phone it in. However, this one just might be the best yet in the series.

When Sean Harris told his father, Charlie, that he'd inherited his grandfather's farm, Charlie didn't believe him. He always thought his grandfather sold the home place because Charlie's father didn't want to be a farmer. But Charlie's grandfather had given a life-lease to Martin Hale, and once Hale died, the property all reverted to Charlie.

It's been over four decades since Charlie had been on the property, so he and his Maine Coon cat, Diesel, take a ride out to the farm. While exploring the attic, Diesel finds a skull, and Charlie finds bones in an old wardrobe. He hopes they have nothing to do with his grandfather, but he calls the sheriff's department. Kanesha Berry, chief deputy of the Athena County Sheriff's Dept., takes an interest, but it might be an old skeleton. She is more concerned when a body is found on the property after a storm.

Because Kanesha doesn't want the curious Charlie involved in the investigation, he finds another way to satisfy his curiosity. He knows

nothing about his family history or his grandfather's connection to Martin Hale. Charlie digs into a book that includes a little about his family, talks to the woman who compiled that history, and checks out the Harris family history at the local historical society. His research provides him with some surprising connections.

All of the regular characters appear in **What the Cat Dragged In**, so readers will be satisfied. There was something appealing, though, about Charlie looking for family history now that he himself is a grandfather who has descendants he can pass those stories to. While Charlie always has some reason to stick his nose into investigations, his role as patriarch of the Harris family provides him with reasons to search for answers.

Anyone who has followed this series from the beginning will remember Charlie's early appearance, a somewhat lonely man accompanied by Diesel. It's satisfying to see him surrounded by family and created family, part of a group that appreciates him. **What the Cat Dragged In**, with the links to family and local history, just might be the most enjoyable mystery in the series.

Striking Range by Margaret Mizushima.
Crooked Lane Books, 2021..

Although **Striking Range** is the seventh Timber Creek K-9 mystery, the backstory that Margaret Mizushima presents is so smoothly done that new readers will be able to pick up the storyline, and it just serves as a gentle reminder for those of us who read **Hanging Falls** a year ago. Deputy Mattie Cobb's background, along with her friends and co-workers, are introduced beautifully. Even Robo, Mattie's K-9 partner in the Timber Creek, Colorado sheriff's department, has a backstory.

Mattie is meeting with Jim Hauck, a cold-case detective from San Diego, to interview an inmate at a state prison in Colorado. John Cobb is the remaining brother of two who kidnapped Mattie, her brother and mother when Mattie was only two. For years, she thought Cobb's brother, Harold was her father. Now, she's in the process of reclaiming her original last name, Wray, but she has questions for John Cobb. He's in prison after killing her brother, and trying to kill her. But before Mattie and Hauck can interview the man, he's found dead in his cell. He left behind what could be a clue, though, a marked map leading to Timber Creek and Redstone Ridge.

Usually, Robo and Mattie would climb the mountains accompanied by Cole Walker—the local veterinarian, Mattie's boyfriend, and a member of the sheriff's posse. But Cole's stuck at the clinic following the complicated birth of a litter of puppies. So, Mattie, Robo, Hauck, and another local member of the posse head into the mountains, hoping to beat a blizzard. Just after they find one of John Cobb's hiding places, Mattie is called back. A body has been found, a young mother who just gave birth. And somewhere in the midst of the snowstorm is a missing newborn.

At times while reading this series, I grew a little tired of the ongoing storyline of Mattie's unknown past and family. However, this time, Mizushima is more skillful in incorporating that story with the current investigation. Now, the tension is ratcheted up as Mattie and Cole, along with various members of the sheriff's department, confront a killer with no remorse.

Mizushima does an excellent job in weaving together several cases, the cold case involving Mattie's family, and the search for a killer and kidnapper. She also excels in uniting a small,

tight-knit sheriff's department. Although she's still searching for answers, it's a pleasure to see how Mattie's found family—Robo, Cole, Cole's family, and the sheriff's department—have become the family Mattie needed and never had.

The Disappearance of Trudy Solomon by Marcy McCreary. CamCat Books, 2021.

How do authors handle a police procedural written nowadays? Marcy McCreary's debut, **The Disappearance of Trudy Solomon**, introduces a fifty-three-year-old police detective who questions her own actions after a shooting. In fact, Detective Susan Ford questions the past and the present while investigating a cold case and examining possibilities in the recent one.

Detective Ford is on desk duty until she's cleared by Internal Affairs, and others. But she wonders if she'll ever be cleared by the members of the Black community, although she had been an ally of the Black Lives Matter movement. Then, she shot and killed a young man who wasn't holding the gun that shot her. Calvin Barnes' family wants answers.

It's the perfect time to look into a case that haunted her teen years and much of her father's career as a police detective. Forty years earlier, Trudy Solomon, a waitress, went missing. The Roths, owners of Cuttmans, a resort in the Catskills, were the powerful family in the community at the time. Trudy's father always felt as if the family knew more about the disappearance than they thought. Now, the case is of interest again because skeletal remains were found in New York State, and there were identity questions. But then Detective Ray Gorman, a detective, connects a few dots and finds Trudy Solomon living in a retirement home. She has Alzheimers.

Where has Trudy been all these years? Was

there a crime committed forty years earlier? Because she's on desk duty, Susan's boss allows her to work with her father to dig into the past. Much of the book centers on the careful re-examination of past actions. I liked the team made up of Susan Ford and her father. At the same time, she's frustrated that no one believes her when she says Calvin Barnes had a gun. To the townspeople, she appears to be another cop who shot a Black man.

While most of the story is about the search for Trudy Solomon's past, Susan's guilty feelings and investigation into her handling of the crime scene is a timely topic. How will authors handle police procedurals? They'll allow the cops to analyze their own actions, to see the results in the communities they serve. Even mature police officers may question their actions now. Marcy McCreary juggles the cold case and the current investigation skillfully in her debut, **The Disappearance of Trudy Solomon**.

All These Ashes by James Queally. Polis Books, 2021.

I'll read almost any crime novel featuring a journalist. A journalist turned PI? I'm in. James Queally's **All These Ashes** brings back Russell Avery in the sequel to **Line of Sight**. While I didn't read the first one, I'd suggest interested readers start at the beginning. Why not?

Avery was a reporter who depended on the Newark, New Jersey police for many of his stories. When he burned them, shining a light on their actions in the shooting of a young man, they turned their backs on him. He couldn't buy a story, although he still tries. Lieutenant Bill Henniman did suggest he get a P.I. license, but all he has to show for that is a failed business. Then Henniman hires him.

In 1996, four teenagers disappeared. The

youngest was thirteen. Shayna Bell, the oldest, was sixteen. After two months, Shayna's older sister, Cynthia, raised hell until the media became involved. Those four, Shayna, her sister, and two cousins, became known as The Twilight Four, Newark's most notorious case. Abel Musa, Cynthia's ex-boyfriend, went to prison after an informer said he confessed to setting a building on fire with the four teens locked inside. Now, Musa is dying of pancreatic cancer, out of prison on compassionate leave. And Bill Henniman believes he's innocent. He wants Avery to find the killer.

Henniman could lose his pension if he's connected too closely to the investigation. Avery could find a story that would bring him back into the newspaper game. Although the two have never been close, Avery agrees. It's a case that will bring him nothing but grief. He and Henniman are injured when a boobytrapped house explodes around them. One by one, their sources die or refuse to help. Avery finds himself trapped in Newark's dirty politics, scrambling because one invaluable source works for a candidate. And he finds out how brutal politics can be when he's offered the chance for a story with pictures that could compromise one of the candidates.

Why do Avery and Henniman fight for answers in a case that could destroy them? Henniman admits he doesn't like Avery, but he understands him. "I get up. I try and make this city a little less terrible, protect the people who need it."

Russell Avery might not be a reporter at the moment. But reporters, too, get up every day hoping to make their city a little less terrible. In *All These Ashes*, Avery struggles with his own ethics. It's those struggles, and that hard work by reporters that continues to appeal to me as a

fan of crime fiction.

James Queally's website is <https://jamesqueallywriter.com/>

Darkness Falls by Robert Bryndza. Thomas & Mercer, 2021.

While I liked **Darkness Falls**, by Robert Bryndza, I know there are two words connected to this book that are trigger warnings for some readers. If you can't or don't read books with serial killers, this one isn't for you. If you like novels featuring dogged private investigators, try this one.

In September, 2002, journalist Joanna Duncan disappeared from a parking garage after leaving work. While the CCTVs in Devon and Cornwall could track her to the garage, that was all they showed. Now, in 2015, Joanna's mother, Bev, contacts a start-up detective agency and asks Kate Marshall to look for her daughter.

Kate knows what it's like to crash. She was a young Met officer when she uncovered a serial killer, and her relationship to that killer brought scandal and headlines. She drank, lost custody of her young son. Now, she's been sober for eleven years. When her AA sponsor died, she left Kate a campground with the provision that she had to fulfill her ambition of opening a detective agency. With her young business partner, Tristan Harper, they're struggling to keep the campground and the agency afloat. But Bev's boyfriend is willing to pay for their current case.

Kate and Tristan start from the beginning. What was Joanna investigating when she disappeared? The more they question, the more links they find to a small group of people. Some are quite successful, but many of the men are gay. And as they dig through Joanna's files, they find names of several men who went

missing in 1999 and 2000, before Joanna disappeared. What is the connection between these missing people?

Bryndza's *Darkness Falls* is not a fast-paced thriller, although it says thriller on the cover. It's a solid detective novel, and I won't hesitate to pick up the next in the series. Relationships are important in this book. There's Kate's loss of her sponsor, and her current relationship with her son. Tristan's sister hates to see his partnership in the detective agency. Kate and Tristan are both intriguing characters. Although it's called a Kate Marshall thriller, and the three books in the series emphasize Kate's past, I'm sure Tristan is going to come into his own in one of the books.

As a fan of detective novels, I appreciated the careful step-by-step investigation into the cold case. I'm looking forward to following Kate and Tristan into their future.

Reviewed by Roberta Rood

The Coldest Warrior by Paul Vidich.

An investigation into the death of a scientist working for the CIA yields shocking results.

The year is 1975. Jack Gabriel, an Agency veteran, has submitted his retirement to the Director. But his departure is put on hold. Instead, he is tasked with finding out the truth about the death, just over twenty years ago, of Charles Wilson.

Jack Gabriel has always had a degree of ambivalence concerning his chosen profession.

Lawyer? Investment banker? College professor? Those were the careers he had contemplated, but still the allure of espionage drew him to her bosom. The cerebral challenge of the work, the immediacy of the problems and their complexity, the

urgent call to fight the great Cold War against Communism. These were what drew him.

He reluctantly embarks on this investigation, only to find that at every step of the way, obstacles are placed in his path.

Charles Wilson had been a family man, with a wife and children. Antony, the eldest, has never been able to accept the verdict of suicide in his father's death.

"What happened?" Antony snapped. "He died. Fell or jumped. That's pretty clear, clear as mud."

Gabriel was impatient with Antony's testiness. "We both believe someone needs to be held accountable."

"Really?" Antony stared. "He suffered the killing love of his friends."

Paul Vidich's prose is salted with allusions to classic literature: At one point, a character remarks that "Men strut their time in power and then are heard from no more." Or, as Macbeth puts it;

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.

I knew from the beginning that *The Coldest Warrior*, published in February 2020, is based on a true story. What I did not know was that author, Paul Vidich, has a personal connection to these events.

This novel has an even greater impact if you read it in conjunction with a viewing of Errol Morris's documentary *Wormwood*. Available on Netflix, this six-part documentary film recounts the actual story of the death of Frank Olson and the subsequent investigation—

perhaps, one should say, the subsequent cover-up.

The atmosphere of Cold War paranoia lies dark and heavy over the unfolding events of this story. And Eric Olson—Antony in Vidich's novel—even now, decades after his father's death, is relentless in his search for justice.

Paul Vidich is Eric Olson's first cousin and Frank Olson's nephew.

Reviewed by Lucinda Surber

The Moment Before Drowning by James Brydon (Akashic Books 2018) is set in 1959 Sainte-Élisabeth in Brittany. Capitaine Jacques le Garrec has just returned home from Algeria in disgrace, accused of committing a brutal crime while interrogating Algerian insurgents for the French army intelligence services. Le Garrec is a former hero of the French Resistance who served as a police detective in Paris. His old friend Erwann Ollivier asks le Garrec to look into the death of Anne-Lise Aurigny, one of his high school students, whose mutilated body was found displayed on the heathland the previous winter. Anne-Lise was the daughter of a Nazi collaborator brutalized by the town after the Germans left, and Capitaine Lafourgue of the local police spent only a few days investigating her murder.

Le Garrec agrees to look into the cold case, and begins to trace Anne-Lise's last months. The mutilation and the way the body was arranged in the open convince le Garrec that she was killed by someone with a personal connection, and his questions reawaken uncomfortable memories of the war. Le Garrec is haunted by the horrors he witnessed in the interrogation chambers at al-Mazra'a, especially the torture of 19-year-old Amira Khadra. Lafourgue's conviction that police work depends on

exercising power and spreading terror echoes the perspective of his commander in Algeria, sending le Garrec deeper into depression as the merciless killings of the two young women intermingle in his mind.

This intense debut thriller explores the long-reaching debilitating effects of the atrocities of war.

Second Sight by Aoife Clifford (Pegasus 2019, Australia 2018) begins when lawyer Eliza Carmody returns to her small Australian coastal hometown of Kinsale to interview an expert witness. The law firm Eliza works for is defending Colcart Electric against the town of Kinsale, nearly destroyed by a bushfire perhaps caused by lack of maintenance of power poles.

Twenty years earlier Eliza and her best friends Amy and Grace were 16, eager to celebrate New Year's Eve with three potential boyfriends while her older sister Tess had plans to attend the infamous footy club party. The night doesn't go well for anyone. Shortly afterwards Eliza was sent away to boarding school, and she never forgave her father for refusing to listen to her pleas to come home, or her beautiful sister who was allowed to stay with their father.

Policeman Mick Carmody is now in a nursing home, unable to speak or move after a car accident. Eliza learns that her father had two files in his car at the time of the accident, one the cold case of Grace Hedland, who never came home that long ago New Year's Eve. A witness reported seeing Grace at the train station, and the presumption was that Grace ran away to the city in despair after Eliza appropriated the boy she loved.

A childhood accident left Eliza with two different colored eyes, earning her the nickname

Odd-Eyes and a reputation for second sight, being able to see the unseen. Since leaving Kinsale two decades earlier, Eliza has rarely returned, and is startled to discover that her former classmates and friends are strangely the same and different at the same time. The discovery of a necklace Grace was wearing the night she disappeared causes Eliza and Amy to scrutinize the past, wondering why they were so willing to accept the theory that Grace left town, and fearing that she was killed.

Interspersed chapters from New Year's Eve 1996 reveal details many would like to keep hidden. This intense thriller examines the power of love, the debilitation of grief, and the unreliability of memory.

The Night Fire, by Michael Connelly (Little, Brown, 2019), begins when retired Hollywood homicide detective Harry Bosch is given a murder book by the widow of his mentor John Jack Thompson after the funeral. John Jack must have taken the murder book of the unsolved murder of 24-year-old John Hilton, an addict who was killed in an alley in 1990, when he retired 20 years earlier, but Harry can't figure out why since it doesn't appear that John Jack was looking into the cold case.

Meanwhile, Renée Ballard, a young detective demoted to night shift after filing a sexual harassment complaint against a supervisor, is called to the scene of a fire death in the middle of the night, a homeless man whose kerosene lantern appears to have fallen over and ignited his tent. Ballard turns the case over to the LAFD arson team and puts it out of her mind until she learns that tests show the lantern had a safety feature that automatically shuts off the flame if it toppled over—the accident is now a murder.

Mickey Haller, Bosch's flamboyant defense

attorney younger half-brother, convinces Bosch to help with the defense of a mentally ill man charged with the murder of a superior court judge, which alienates Bosch's police contacts, who feel he is now working for the enemy. Bosch shares the murder book with Ballard to look over during the slow hours of her night shifts, and the two agree that the 30-year-old case is worth looking into; there are aspects of the original investigation that don't hold up. The arson investigation stalls because the investigators can't find the witnesses Ballard talked to the night of the fire, and she manages to get permission to join the team since they are only around when she is working the night shift.

This excellent second collaboration between the two driven detectives is highly recommended.

You Can Go Home Now, by Michael Elias (Harper 2020), features Iranian-American Nina Karim, who joined the police department in Long Island City, New York, so that she could use police resources to locate the anti-abortionist Army of God sniper who killed her doctor father when she was a teenager in 1999.

She has two active cases: Lawrence McDermott, who came to the police station to confess to committing murder but has no memory of the crime, and Ronald Seevers, a former cop working at Home Depot whose parents reported him missing after he didn't show up at the weekly Sunday-night family dinner. Ronald's parents suspect his wife Susan, who has also disappeared with most of her clothes, is capable of murdering their son. When Ronald's body is found duct-taped to a handcart in a deserted warehouse, there is no physical evidence of the murderer, who even dug the bullet out of the back of his skull with a scalpel.

When Nina informs Ronald's parents of his death, they tell her their son was afraid of his wife, who was violent and once poured boiling water on him as he slept. Nina tracks down Susan, whose face bears the fading bruises of a beating. Susan says she has an alibi for the night of the murder, but refuses to reveal any details.

Despite her dubious motives for joining the department, Nina is a talented detective and notices that several cold case murder victims had restraining orders after abusing women. Intrigued by the puzzle, she establishes a connection to Artemis, an unlisted shelter for battered women. After contriving a violent beating, Nina arrives at the door of Artemis begging for shelter, explaining that the husband who beat her is a cop and she can't go to the police. There she hears the stories of women terrified that the men in their lives will eventually kill them and their children despite the restraining orders they've obtained and the hospital records documenting their injuries.

After some time at Artemis, Nina hears Phyllis, the Artemis director, telling a woman "You can go home now." and realizes she is conflicted about the possibility the abuser has been killed, finally freeing his wife and children from constant fear. This intense thriller explores the tipping point between the law and survival from the perspective of vulnerable women and children.

The Awkward Squad, by Sophie Hénaff, (MacLehose Press 2018, France 2015) introduces Paris police Commissaire Anne Capestan, relegated to the command of the Awkward Squad at the end of her six-month suspension after killing a suspect. Regional Chief Buron has created the new squad by relocating the department's unfireable misfits

who have refused to retire despite problems with health, drugs, alcohol, etc. Forty people are on Capestan's roster, though most haven't turned up to work for years. Lieutenant José Torrez, known as Malchance, is the first to appear. After four partners in a row were injured, stabbed, shot, and finally died falling off a tower block, no one is willing to work with Torrez or even make eye contact. Soon several more appear: Commandant Louis-Baptiste Lebreton, thrown out of internal affairs by his own division; Capitaine Eva Rosière, whose detective novels with thinly-disguised characters became a despised prime-time TV show; Capitaine Merlot, an alcoholic reeking of red wine; and Lieutenant Évrard, a compulsive gambler from the gambling task force.

Capestan is given all the unsolved cases from the region, elevating the Île-de-France's record for solving cases to 100%, and putting her squad at 0%. They begin digging through the boxes of case files—burglaries, thefts, selling counterfeit goods, ATM scams—searching for anything worth further investigation. Buried among the chaff they finally discover two murders. Rosière and Lebreton take the 1993 case of Yann Guéan, a quartermaster in the merchant navy, heading off in Rosière's luxury Lexus with her lapdog Pilou to interview the men who pulled his body out of the Seine. The second murder is that of Marie Sauzelle, an elderly woman strangled in 2005 during a burglary. Partnering with Torrez, who warns her about the danger of getting in a car with him, Capestan says she will try her luck and the two set out to see if any neighbors remember the crime from eight years earlier.

Capestan feels naked without the sidearm she is prohibited from carrying, and Torrez hates the lack of a siren, but the new squad works well together and soon uncover

unexpected evidence of police corruption in the long-abandoned cold cases. This engaging series opener is great fun.

Hid from Our Eyes, by Julia Spencer-Fleming (Minotaur, 2020), begins when Russ Van Alstyne, Chief of Police in Millers Kill, New York, is speaking to the League of Concerned Voters, fighting a campaign to dissolve the police department and rely instead on the state police. Russ is secretly relieved to get a 911 call until he arrives at the crime scene, where the body of a barefoot young woman wearing a party dress has been discovered on a remote road. There is no sign of violence and no obvious wounds.

The crime scene is eerily reminiscent of the body Russ himself discovered in 1972, when he had just returned from Vietnam. Russ was Police Chief Jack Liddle's prime suspect for a time, but Jack himself had witnessed a similar death as a young trooper in 1952. All three young women were found barefoot, wearing party dresses, with no obvious cause of death, and no arrests made. Knowing that he may be removed from the case if the connections become public, Russ begins investigating the two cold cases, searching for connections with the new murder.

Meanwhile, Russ's wife Clare Fergusson is trying to juggle caring for their infant son Ethan while performing her duties as an Episcopal priest at St. Alban's Church. Clare worries that Ethan's fussiness and difficulty sleeping are symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome, since she was binge-drinking for the first three months of pregnancy before learning she was carrying a child. Her veterans support group is helping with the underlying issues that caused her alcoholism and an addiction to amphetamines and hydrocodone,

but there are times when she longs for relief from the exhaustion of new motherhood.

Interspersed sections from Police Chief Harry McNeil in 1952, Jack Liddle in 1972, and the current investigation that is quickly growing as cold as the earlier ones gradually coalesce in this excellent ninth in the series.

Remain Silent, by Susie Steiner (Random House, 2020), finds Manon Bradshaw, a detective inspector in Cambridgeshire, England, working part time on cold cases so she can spend time with her toddler son Teddy. While at the local playground, Manon spots two boots high in the tree branches and rushes Teddy home before he can see the hanging body. Her partner Davy Walker arrives at the scene to find a note in Lithuanian pinned to the trousers of the dead young man: "The dead can't talk." The note plus the hands scarred with thin white lines point to Edikas Wisbech, who organizes local work crews. Wisbech is the focus of the Fenland Exploitation Team, but so far they have been unable to gather any hard evidence against Wisbech since the migrant workers don't speak English and are frightened about repercussions to their families at home if they try to escape their enslavement.

Unsure if the death of Lukas Balsys was suicide or murder, Manon and Davy try to interview the other men who live in Wisbech's flophouse, but even with an interpreter they can't get anything out of them with Wisbech in the room, and he never leaves. Interspersed chapters narrated by Matis, a young Lithuanian on Wisbech's crew, document the unending physical labor, sleep deprivation, shortage of food, and intense feelings of depression and helplessness living in a world where they are unable to communicate.

Manon is asked to assist with the investigation and feels guilty that she is eager for the challenge, though it gives her less time with Teddy, her adolescent adopted son Fly, and her new husband Mark. Manon is forced to admit to herself that that being a stay-at-home-parent is exhausting rather than fulfilling as she attempts to find an elusive family-work balance in this poignant third in the series.

Firewatching, by Russ Thomas (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2020), introduces Detective Sergeant Adam Tyler, a lone wolf exiled as the sole representative of the South Yorkshire Cold Case Review Unit in Sheffield after hitting a superior officer. One of Tyler's cases is Gerald Cartwright, a financier who went missing six years earlier after one of his wild parties, assumed to be on the run from his creditors. Shortly after Cartwright disappeared, his mansion in the village of Castledene burned, leaving a crumbling hulk. Now 21 and home from university, Cartwright's son Oscar is having some work done in anticipation of finally being able to sell the dilapidated mansion known as the Old Vicarage. Behind a bricked-in section of the basement a body is discovered with blunt trauma to the head and badly damaged fingernails, presumably from trying to claw himself out of captivity.

Tyler uses his familiarity with the cold case to convince DCI Diane Jordan to add him to the murder investigation team led by Detective Inspector Jim Doggett, bringing along Constable Amina Rabbani, a ambitious young Muslim. Unfortunately the prime suspect is Oscar, who picked up Tyler in a bar the previous evening while he was doing some strongly encouraged socializing with the South Yorkshire Police Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transsexual Support Network, led by his one semi-friend in

the department, Sally-Ann from IT.

Two elderly spinsters live in the cottage next to the Old Vicarage: Edna Burnside, who is dying of cancer, and Lily Bainbridge, who suffers from dementia. The two met while serving as volunteer firewatchers during the Blitz, and have lived together for most of their lives. They befriended Oscar's mother Cynthia, who was abused by her husband, and helped her care for the baby she didn't seem to want. After Cynthia deserted her husband and 10-year-old son, Lily and Edna raised Oscar until he was sent off to boarding school. Tyler suspects that Lily and Edna know something about Gerald's disappearance, but is unable to break through Edna's headmistress resolve and Lily's tenuous grasp on reality.

Interspersed blog posts from *The Firewatcher* describe famous historical fires and bits of information about a string of local fires that fire officer Paul Enfield believes are the work of a serial arsonist. This excellent debut police procedural starring the prickly young detective is highly recommended.

Reviewed by Alison McMahan

The Darkness Knows by Arnaldur Indriðason (Minotaur, 2021).

Arnaldur Indriðason is best known for his Detective Erlandur series, including **Jar City** which was made into a movie. **The Darkness Knows** is the first of four novels featuring retired detective Konrad. As in all Indriðason's books, the environment is as important as the human suspects. Iceland's world is small: everyone knows each other, everyone is tightly knit, and the action of one has consequences for many. Konrad is drawn back into a thirty-year old cold case when the body of a businessman emerges from the ice as the Langjökull

glacier melts. Konrad has one key suspect who has lived all these years under suspicion. He declares his innocence from his deathbed. It's up to Konrad to re-investigate the facts of the case and to tease apart the tightly woven threads of social relationships and connections of Reykavik's different social classes until he finds the truth. A very moving moment occurs when Konrad contemplates the photograph of three happy Boy Scouts playing on a tractor with no idea of the fate that awaits them and their friendship. Through Konrad's eyes

Indriðason ties together Iceland's past and present in ways all of us can understand.

Alison McMahan is the author of **The Films of Tim Burton: Animating Live Action in Hollywood** (Bloomsbury 2005) and **Alice Guy Blaché, Lost Visionary of the Cinema** (Bloomsbury 2002), which was adapted into the documentary *Be Natural* (2018). She is a two-time Derringer Award nominee. Her short mysteries have been published in anthologies by Wildside Press, LevelBest Books, Untreed Reads, Down & Out Books, and Harper Collins.

Children's Hour: Cold Cases by Gay Toltl Kinman

Cold cases to kids means cold weather—and places with 'cold' in the title. The Cold War is a real cold case. Also, think revenge—a dish best served cold. However, the kids do have one real cold case—aptly titled **Cold Case**.

Picture Books

Cole, Tom Clohosey. **Wall** (Templar Books / Candlewick Press 2014)

In 1961, the Cold War had a wall that divided Berlin, Germany. A boy and his mother are on the East and his father on the West. The boy digs a tunnel to be able to reunite them—and discovers his father is also digging a tunnel.

De Felice, Cynthia. Robert Andrew Parker, Illus. **Cold Feet** (Dorling Kindersley 2000)

Superb illustrations in this old folktale. A wandering bagpiper in winter with shoes in tatters stumbles on a dead man whose shoes fit the piper. A nearby farmer and his wife refuse to give the piper shelter in spite of the weather, so he plays a trick on them, they leave their house and he moves in. There's a knock on the door—and it's—??

Kohara, Kazuno. **Here Comes Jack Frost** (Roaring Brook Press 2009)

Nothing colder than Jack Frost. He plays with a lonesome boy, warning him never to mention anything warm. A few months go by, and the boy says, "Look, Jack Frost... It's almost spring."

Easy Readers

Manning, Matthew K. Ethen Beavers, Illus. DC Super Hero Stories series. **The Flash Races the Rogues** (Stone Arch Books / Capstone 2017)

Captain Cold and The Flash's other arch enemies gang up on him. He's smarter than they are and foils their attempts to do their darndest in the world.

Mason, June. Illus. Erik Doescher, Mike DeCarlo and Lee Loughridge. The Super DC Heroes series. **Ice and Flame** (Stone Arch Books / Capstone 2011)

Captain Cold is one of the arch enemies of The Flash. The hero can't get rid of him but he can forestall a crime—until the next time. Captain Cold freezes whatever he 'fires' at. Gee whiz—lots of action.

Middle Reader

Kinney, Jeff. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. **The Meltdown** (Harry N. Abrams 2018)

This is an hilarious book with illustrations on every page. Greg tries to keep warm in many creative ways during a very cold winter—even his middle school has to close because of the snow. The last quarter of the book tells about the giant fight over territory with forts and snowballs as a lot of the kids live on the same street.

Martin, George R. R. Yvonne Gilbert, Illus. **The Ice Dragon** (Tom Doherty Associates 1980)

Adara, now 7, has become friends with the Ice Dragon that brings winter to her area. The Dragon comes back early so she can ride him and get rid of the dragons and soldiers who are destroying her family and farm.

Mlynowski, Sarah. *Whatever After* series. **Cold As Ice** (Scholastic 2014)

Brother and sister, Jonah and Abby, go through their magic mirror—and end up in a fairy tale. This time it's the Snow Queen's story—where it's very cold. Everyone is frozen except Abby until the end. Then she gets it, too, but manages to convince the Snow Queen there's another way to keep 'friends.' Ralph the reindeer is a delightful, sassy character. This fun series includes visits to Snow White, Cinderella, the Little Mermaid, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel.

Pike, Christopher. *Spooksville* series. **The Cold People** (Aladdin 2015)

Frozen enemies face Adam and his friends in a forest near Spooksville. Soon there are more in the town trying to freeze the residents. Can Adam save them?

Scott, Cavan. *Star Wars Adventures in Wild*

Space series. **The Cold** (Disney Lucasfilm Press 2017)

An unbearably cold trap set by the evil Captain Korda awaits Milo and Una Graf as they search for their parents, kidnapped by the Empire. Monkey-lizard Morq and family droid CR-8R help.

Stine, R.L. *Goosebumps* series. **The Curse of Camp Cold Lake** (Scholastic 1997)

Sarah Maas finds watersport camp worse than she expected. A ghost tries to drown her, then run her over in a speedboat—but wait, who is the ghost? The reader will definitely get cold chills and goosebumps.

Tarshis, Lauren. *I Survived* series. **The Children's Blizzard, 1888** (Scholastic 2018)

Several little 'mysteries' make us this story. John Hale, 11, at Prairie Creek, Dakota Territory, momentarily loses his sister twice. The second time he goes out of the one-room school house into the blizzard to find her. Soon he is lost. A well-written, suspenseful story based on a true incident. The author has several in the series such as Titanic sinking, San Francisco Earthquake, and Pompeii eruption.

Tsai, Luther and NuryVittachi. *Magic Mirror* series. **The Secret of Cold Mountain** (Reycraft 2020)

The premise of the Magic Mirror series is the same as the Magic Treehouse series in that the children are transported back in time to another location. Marko and Miranda, brother and sister, receive a message from their grandfather to "tell Cold Mountain that the answer to the question is 'Lady Annee and The Record of Ancient Mirrors.'" The mountain they are transported to by a magic mirror is cold—but it is not the mountain named. They do find the right "mountain" and are able to deliver the message just in time.

Junior High

Aiken, Joan. *The Wolves Chronicles*. **Cold Shoulder Road** (Open Road Media Teen & Tween 2015)

Aiken is always a good read. Twite and cousin Arun return home to Cold Shoulder Road in Folkestone to find Arun's mother and another woman missing. They are with a sect headed by evil and charismatic leader. Plus some smugglers are searching in hidden tunnels for buried treasure. Can the cousins get the women back—and stop the smugglers?

Avi. **Catch You Later, Traitor** (Algonquin Young Readers 2016)

In 1951, the Cold War sends FBI agents to the Collison's Brooklyn home, accusing the father of being a Communist. Pete, 12, investigates to find out for sure if anyone in his family is a Communist in the McCarthy era.

Kidd, Ronald. **The Year of the Bomb** (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers 2009)

The Cold War is the setting for this story. Four boys, 13, living in Sierra Madre, in southern California, learn that the movie *The Body Snatchers* is going to be filmed in their town. (True!) The boys interact with real people working on the movie—and with Richard Feynman who worked on the atomic bomb. Feynman lived nearby in Altadena. Two FBI Agents are looking for Communists and the boys help them. The fact that Feynman was friends with a real spy, Klaus Fuchs, makes him a suspect. Real landmarks are also used. Well-written.

Leonard, Julia Platt. **Cold Case** (Aladdin 2011)

Set in Santa Fe. Oz Keiller, 13, discovers a body in his family's restaurant. His older brother is accused of the murder. Then Oz learns the connected of the murdered man

with his family. The man had written an exposé on Oz's father revealing him to be a spy while an employee in Los Alamos selling nuclear secrets. He and his best gal pal, Rusty, set out to find the truth.

Meloy, Maile. Ian Schoenherr, Illus. The Apothecary series. **The Apothecary** (G. P. Putnam's Sons 2013)

Cold War 1952. American Janie Scott is in London with her parents who are suspected Communists and escaping the movie industry's pressure. She meets Benjamin at school, and they discover his father is involved with the Soviets and the atomic bomb. His father's book, the **Pharmacopoeia**, helps them track the spies. A page turner! Two others in the series, **The Apprentices** and **The After-room**, are equally as readable, but are not as involved with the Cold War as **The Apothecary**.

Nielsen, Jennifer A. **A Night Divided** (Scholastic 2015)

Cold War 1961, the wall is being built by the Soviets dividing East and West Germany. It divides families also. Father is in the West and Mother and daughter, Gerta, 12, and brother Fritz are in the East. Gerta sees her father waving to her, she waves back and gets in trouble with the police. Her mother is terrified—all three of them are trying to be good East German citizens, and not come to be noticed by the authorities. They have always lived there so moving was not on their minds. Gerta tries to find a tunnel—or dig one—so they can escape because life has become so difficult.

Rex, Adam. *The Cold Cereal Saga*. **Cold Cereal** (2013); **Unlucky Charms** (2013); **Champions of Breakfast** (Balzer & Bray / HarperCollins 2014)

The premise is that Goodco, an evil

breakfast cereal company, is luring magical creatures through a rift in the timespace continuum. Soon there will be an invasion of faeries. The heroes and heroine, Scott, Mick, Erno and Emily, of the story stop them. The author combines the Arthurian legend and Irish folklore to create the world that the cereal company is trying to take over.

[Delicious Irony Department: On Amazon books is the list of the three above books. Below that are the pictures of current and popular cereals. Obviously (to me) whoever thought they would be able to sell cereal didn't know the premise of the books.]

Ruby, Lois. **Red Menace** (Carolrhoda Books 2020)

Marty Rafner, 13, is planning on a relaxing summer in 1953. FBI agents are staking out as his parents are suspected communist sympathizers. The Rosenbergs are due to be executed. The same could happen to his parents. Marty has to find out the truth to save his parents.

Sparkes, Ali. **Frozen in Time** (Egmont 2009)

Cryonics—the ultimate cold case. In 1956, a scientist freezes his young daughter and son, but before he can joint them he is kidnapped by those who want his secrets. In 2010, brother and sister discover the two and bring them to life. Foreign secret agents are still seeking the scientist's research, but the four children together foil them.

Strasser, Todd. **Fallout** (Candlewick Press 2013)

When the Cold War nuclear arms race begins, Scott's father builds a bomb shelter for their family of four, and stocked it with all the provisions they will need for two weeks. When the bomb goes off, six neighbors crawl into the

bomb shelter with them. Definitely another type of disaster.

Van Draalen, Wendelin. Tara Sands, narrator. **Sammy Keyes and the Cold Hard Cash** (Live Oak Media 2017)

Sammy is sneaking back into her grandmother's apartment building where old seniors are supposed to live. She startles a man on the fire escape who has a heart attack and—dies. But before he does he begs her to take the cash he has and throw it away. She does do that—by giving money to those in need. She investigates why the man had the money and why he wanted to get rid of it. Wonderfully funny, as are all in the series, and wonderfully narrated.

Yelchin, Eugene. **Spy Runner** (Henry Holt / Godwin Books 2019)

The Cold War in 1953. Jake McCauley, 12, sees Communist spies everywhere—and there's never a dull moment. He believes his father is being held by the Russians. When his mother takes in a boarder, Mr. Shubin, Jake is sure he is a spy and sets out to prove it. He's right, but not the way he thought. Fast moving and exciting.

Young Adult

Benoit, Charles. **Cold Calls** (Clarion Books 2014)

Eric Hamilton gets several calls with no one at the other end saying anything. The fifth time the person says, "Check your inbox." He does, and sees a creepy picture—from inside his bedroom. How can that be? Other teens get calls also, with the caller saying "I know your secret," and using this to force them to bully other students. Superbly written.

Moore, Meredith. **I Am Her Revenge** (Razorbill / Penguin 2015)

‘Mother’ should win the award for waiting the longest to serve her revenge dish very cold—seventeen years. She—think Cruella—used the time to train her ‘daughter’, Vivian to get revenge on the man she said deserted her

when she was pregnant. Vivian is to get Ben to fall in love with her and then reject him. Ben is the son of the man Mother wants to get her revenge on. But all is not what it seems.

Crime Seen: Cases That Come In From the Cold by Kate Derie

For some reason, the cold case officer or squad is the center of many TV crime series. Perhaps it’s because the solution quite often involves gee-whiz forensic techniques, which have proved so popular with audiences. Or maybe it’s because the investigation rarely involves rounding up the usual suspects or coping with political pressure. Cases are triggered by present-day murders, pleas from victims’ families, and the discovery of forensic evidence (e.g. bodies) that links to previous crimes.

First on the scene was *Cold Squad* (CTV, 1998–2005). This Canadian production, set in Vancouver, follows police sergeant Ali McCormick (Julie Stewart) as she heads a little-regarded cold case unit and copes with a somewhat chaotic personal life. Team members come and go, but McCormick powers through. A fairly routine police drama, but worth taking a look. All 98 episodes are streaming at Hulu.

The series entitled simply *Cold Case* (CBS, 2003–2010) is set in Philadelphia, PA, where Lily Rush (played by Kathryn Morris) heads the first cold case team in the city, as they work their way through a huge backlog of cases. A novel element of the show is extensive use of flashbacks to the original crime, filmed in a style and with a soundtrack appropriate to the period. This popular series was picked up in Canada and eleven other countries. 156 episodes available at HBO Max.

In *Bones* (Fox, 2005–2013), the banter

between forensic anthropologist Temperance “Bones” Brennan (Emily Deschanel) and FBI agent Seeley Booth (David Boreanaz) lightens the atmosphere even if the crimes are gruesome. There are some priceless episodes when Brennan and Booth go undercover, for example on a bowling team (S6, E23). I loved *Bones* at first, but the overuse of the “super-crim” serial killer trope drove me away before the end of the series. Amazon Prime Video, 245 eps.

Waking the Dead (BBC, 2000–2011) was the first British series to focus on cold cases. Det. Supt. Peter Boyd (Trevor Eve, *Heat of the Sun*) leads a small team with a mandate to look at cases where modern technology could open new avenues of inquiry. Boyd tends to harangue and make unreasonable/illogical/impossible demands on his team, but they are not afraid to fight back, especially profiler Dr Grace Foley (Sue Johnston). She is a rare character, both then and now, as a late-middle-age woman in a significant, sympathetic, continuing role. Each story is covered in two 50-minute episodes, allowing plenty of time to dig deep into complex crimes, without forcing the viewer to sit through an entire six- to ten-episode season. Dark (literally) and cynical, *Waking the Dead* is not always easy to watch, but it is thoughtful and absorbing. Recommended for fans of *Cracker*. BritBox, 92 eps.

Not only the cases but even the investigators are old in *New Tricks* (BBC, 2003–2015). DS

Sandra Pullman (Amanda Redman) is in the doghouse at the CID and therefore burdened with pulling together the new UCOS (Unsolved Crimes and Open Case) squad. She has next to no budget and must use retired police officers, who have a tendency to use the old-style methods they are most familiar with.

Their most amazing “new trick” is the seamless combination of humorous dialog and activity with serious crime solving. The three investigators are wonderfully well-rounded characters, each of them more than the sum of his quirks. The humor derives organically from their personalities and interactions rather than being grafted on with silly situations. The use of retired officers provides the bonus that they were often working at the time that their cold cases occurred, giving them special insight into the culture surrounding the crime. Starting in season 9, new actors/characters were rotated in from time to time. This much-loved show is available on BritBox (107 episodes).

While all of the above series have folded, the cold case series is still viable, as shown by *Unforgotten* (ITV, 2015–), now awaiting a potential fifth season. Like many, if not most, current crime dramas, each season is concerned with a single continuing case, although there are many threads that may or may not be related to the main case. DCI Cassie Stuart (Nicola Walker, *MI-5*) and partner DI Sunil “Sunny” Khan (Sanjeev Bhaskar) are lead investigators on cases triggered by the discovery of long-hidden bodies. I’m by no means an action freak, but I found the first season rather slow and tedious. The show’s high ratings indicate that others are more appreciative of this in-depth approach. All four seasons (24 episodes) are available on PBS Passport streaming video (subscription through your

local PBS station) or PBS Masterpiece on Amazon (subscription through Amazon, not included in Prime Video), while the first three seasons are included with the Amazon Prime Video basic subscription.

A recent limited series, *Traces* (2019), created by Val McDermid and Amelia Bullmore, centers on an alternately naïve and paranoid young lab technician whose mother was murdered twenty years ago. Meanwhile, her boyfriend is accused of culpable negligence in an arson case. I had high hopes but was very disappointed. The lead actress is wooden, there are superfluous plot threads that did not even qualify as red herrings, there are far too many coincidences, and you will know the villain as soon as he shows up. But if you still want to watch, it’s on BritBox (6 eps.).

A modern twist on the cold case mystery is provided by the dramedy *Only Murders in the Building* (Hulu, 2021–), co-created by Steve Martin and starring him, Selena Gomez, and Martin Short. This unlikely trio of residents in a vintage Manhattan apartment building are all true-crime fanatics. So when another tenant apparently commits suicide, they quickly determine it must be murder and decide to investigate, recording their progress in a podcast. Satirical targets include the has-been TV actor (Martin), the over-the-top theater producer (Short), the girl with the mysterious past (Gomez), the incredibly successful true-crime podcaster (Tina Fey), the reclusive rock star (Sting), the dictatorial president of the Tenants Association, and many more modern archetypes, memes and tropes. And yes, there is a cold case involved, but I don’t want to spoil it for you. This is Hulu’s first original series, with ten 30-minute episodes in the first season.

In addition to these series, many well-known

crime series include a long-running cold case that haunts a leading character, which usually is solved ever-so-slowly over the course of several seasons or the entire series. Examples:

Bones: the mysterious disappearance of Bones' parents, leaving her in foster care.

Monk: the murder of Monk's wife, which triggered his OCD.

Castle: the murder of Det. Beckett's mother.

New Tricks: the hit-and-run death of Jack Halford's wife.

Inspector Lewis: the hit-and-run death of Lewis's wife.

The cold case is also a standard plot-of-the-week that appears in most crime series sooner or later. Here is a sampling of stand-alone episodes:

NCIS: "Lt. Jane Doe" (S2, E4, Netflix)

Castle: "That '70s Show" (S6, E20, Hulu)

Murdoch Mysteries: "Confederate Treasure" (S4, E7); "Unfinished Business" (S7, E12);

"What Lies Buried" (S8, E7, Acorn)

Vera: "Telling Tales" (S1, E2, Acorn)

Monk: "Mr. Monk and the Very, Very Old Man" (S2, E5, Prime Video)

Inspector George Gently: "Gently Liberated" (S8, E1, Acorn)

Law & Order Criminal Intent: "Yesterday" (S1, E18, Prime Video rental)

Death in Paradise: "In the Footsteps of a

Killer" (S6, E7); "Melodies of Murder" (S7, E8, Britbox)

Poirot: "Five Little Pigs" (S9, E1); "Elephants Can Remember" (S13, E1, Britbox)

Miss Marple: Sleeping Murder (TV movie)

Jesse Stone: Sea Change (TV movie)

Cold cases seem to be rare in feature films. However, there are several worthwhile Scandi-noir films based on the popular "Department Q" novels by Jussi Adler-Olsson. In *Department Q: The Keeper of Lost Causes* (2013), Inspector Carl Mørck and his assistant Assad look into the disappearance of a female Danish politician five years ago. In *Department Q: The Absent One* (2014), Carl and Assad are baffled by the events twenty years ago at an exclusive private school. *Department Q: A Conspiracy of Faith* (2016) starts with a message in a bottle and gets very twisted. *Journal 64* (2018) is triggered by the discovery of three mummified corpses in a secret room. Despite some clichés of the genre, I found something uniquely fascinating about Adler-Olsson's characters and propulsive plots. Recommended, but be warned: the crimes are brutal. Find these on AMC+ (www.amcplus.com), which is available as an independent video subscription or through the Prime Video subscription service. The films can also be rented individually at Amazon.

Real Cold Cases by Cathy Pickens

While hard-to-solve mysteries make for good reading, in real life, a murder that goes cold makes for a double tragedy—the loss of a loved one, then the enduring questions about who did it and why.

Because of the open-endedness of cold cases, I'm exploring two I've written about in a

recent book (*Triangle True Crime Stories*) because the more people are reminded of a case, the better the odds it might be solved. And these are two cases that could be solved.

Real cases go cold for any number of reasons, and cold cases tend to be solved either because a relationship changes or through new

technologies. Over time, someone who was afraid can now speak or learns they know something they didn't know. New technologies—or old technologies applied in new ways—can provide long-sought answers.

New Broadcast Technology

As with most “new” technologies, the foundation of the technology may be old, but the application or the reach is much improved. Commercial radio broadcasts have been around for a hundred years, but podcasts, carried not over the airwaves but over the internet, are available to anyone with a computer or smartphone, whenever the listener wants to tune in. Podcasting has proven a powerful means for citizen sleuths and do-it-yourself detectives, as well as law enforcement, to solve real cases.

As examples, the podcast *Up and Vanished* helped solve the disappearance of Georgia high school history teacher Tara Grinstead. The podcast *Your Own Backyard* kept attention on the disappearance of Kristin Smart from Cal Polytechnic until an arrest was made. Most recently, Mandy Matney, journalist with FitsNews, has brought her sources and research to the public by covering the Murdaugh Murders in South Carolina.

In North Carolina, two journalist-podcasters and a now-retired sheriff's detective are still hoping *The Long Dance* podcast will solve the decades-old murders of Patricia Mann, 20, and Jesse McBane, 19.

On the Friday before Valentine's Day in 1971, Jesse, a North Carolina State student, took his high school sweetheart Patricia to the Valentine's Day dance sponsored by her nursing school in Durham. In a time of chaperones and curfews and lovers' lanes, the engaged couple attended the dance, then went to a wooded

road in what would soon be a housing development to spend a few quiet moments alone.

Patricia didn't make it back to Watts Nursing School for her dance-night 1:00 a.m. curfew. Her friends searched and found Jesse's car, empty, on the lovers' lane. They sounded the alarm. The families were frantic. This wasn't a couple who would run off together or cause worry. Something was wrong.

Almost two weeks later, a land surveyor found what he first thought was a mannequin in some winter underbrush. It was the couple, tied with their backs to a tree. They'd been bound, strangled, and partially covered with leaves and tree limbs.

The detective in charge of the case tried what was new technology in the 1970s, taking the file to one of the first psychologists to develop profiles of potential suspects. In 1956, Dr. James Brussel had made headlines by giving police a fairly accurate description of the man New York City knew as the Mad Bomber, right down to his animosity for Con Ed utility and his double-breasted suits. Then as now, the profile didn't give a name and address for the perpetrator, but it reinforced the direction of the investigation.

New York's Mad Bomber, George Metesky, was arrested, but Dr. Brussel's guidance didn't help solve the Durham lovers' lane murders.

The Durham case faced an all-too-familiar trope of crime novels: interagency rivalries confused the investigation. This case had plenty of agencies involved—Durham, Raleigh, the state bureau of investigation (SBI), and the FBI—and communications weren't always smooth.

In another familiar plot line, one of the prime suspects in the case continually refused to “assist with their investigation.” Predictable

in a case almost fifty years cold, other suspects died as the decades passed. By 2016, two podcasters had combed through paper records—almost nothing existed online about this case—and gathered enough information to approach sheriff's detective Tim Horne about working with them. He declined. But coincidentally, a couple of years earlier, he'd stumbled across the evidence box for the case, with the black-and-white crime scene photos scattered in the top of the box. He had become curious and started working it himself.

At first, Horne wasn't interested in working with podcasters Eryk Pruitt and Drew Adamek. They continued their own research and came back to him again—this time with the name of the person they thought had committed the murders.

After seeing where the podcasters' research had led them, Horne agreed to work with them. He'd been a detective open to trying new technologies during his investigative career, so why not give this a try? The more people who heard the facts, who heard the theories, who heard from the family members, the more likely someone would know something, would be willing to talk.

Detective Horne asked the podcasters to investigate the three main suspects, to investigate the cases against all three rather than homing in on only one. They ended up in the same place the detective had, with a single prime suspect.

The case remains officially open. They've made no arrest. But the podcast makes fascinating listening for those who enjoy police procedurals. We rarely get to see (or listen to) how an investigation unfolds. Here, we're taken along through each setback and small win. Now, if only someone will have the courage to

tell what they know.

New DNA Technology

Scarcely a week goes by without the announcement that a decades-old case has been solved with genetic DNA. With the help of ancestry DNA databases, genealogists are becoming Sherlocks, combining their ability to sleuth through census records, obituaries, city directories, social media posts, and family trees to find the likely donor of a biologic sample found at a crime scene.

Their detective work is a new-fashioned combination of lab technology, computer records, obsessive attention to detail, and the mastery of technical terms such as allele frequency.

At the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, in 2012, the worst nightmare for any parent became real for the parents of Faith Hedgepeth. Classes had just resumed for the fall semester. Faith and her roommate had been out at a night club in downtown Chapel Hill, then her roommate had gone out again when Faith went to bed.

The next morning, the roommate returned to find Faith dead, bludgeoned in her bedroom.

In the age of cell phones, voice mail recordings, closed-circuit security cameras, and DNA, surely the case of a beautiful, ambitious young woman, an active member of the Haliwa-Saponi tribe who wanted to return to her hometown to help children, would be solved quickly. Someone would talk.

But no one has. The police held the evidence close for a while, hoping what they knew could be used to trip up the killer during an interview. After all, a college student in a small college town has a circle of friends. They all know each other, and they know the dating dramas and rivalries as well as the friendships. But

DNA testing of every male known to Faith, in Chapel Hill and her hometown of Hollister, yielded no matches.

Could this be a random attack? The roommate had left the apartment door unlocked when she left with a friend during the early morning hours. What were the odds that someone found the unlocked door? Chapel Hill had witnessed a similar attack four years earlier. Two men kidnapped student body president Eve Carson from her back-street, off-campus apartment and drove her around collecting money from her ATM account before shooting her to death in the middle of a street.

That case was quickly solved, thanks to ATM cameras and young men recognizable from previous mugshots. In Faith's case, no camera caught the crime.

But investigators do have a DNA sample from a bloody rum bottle (likely the murder weapon) and from her body. What they don't have is a match.

They've submitted the DNA to Parabon Nanolabs, one of the leaders in genetic phenotyping. Parabon used the sample to generate a "genetic mugshot" based on the genetic characteristics of the donor: likely heritage, eye, skin and hair color. The computer-generated mugshot is about as helpful as a police artist sketch—it may look like him, it may not. In this case, they now know he's likely of mixed European and Latino descent, which includes Native American descent, most likely with black hair, olive skin, brown eyes, and few to no freckles.

But they haven't yet identified him from the DNA samples taken from those who knew Faith, went to school with her, grew up with her. However, as Chapel Hill police chief Chris Blue observed, "This is a very strong case.

What we need to do is connect that case to Faith's killer."

Someone knows something. The more people who know about the case, the more likely that person may come forward, finally. Faith's close-knit family and community want answers.

Justice is not closure, though those upended by crime wish it could be. But justice is a measure of rightness with the world that those living with a cold case want and deserve.

For more details on these cases, listen to these podcasts:

Pruitt, Eryk and Drew Adamek. *The Long Dance*, podcast, 8 episodes (2018). thelongdancepodcast.com.

Gasparoli, Tom, *Pursuit*, podcast, 10 episodes (2019). www.pursuitpodcast.com.

Jensen, Billy and Paul Holes. "Who Killed Faith Hedgepeth?" *Jensen & Holes: The Murder Squad*, episode 14 (2019). themurdersquad.com/episodes/who-killed-faith-hedgepeth/. Selected evidence photos, Parabon phenotype sketch and audio recording of the 911 call are available on this site.

Update—Case Closed?

On Thursday, September 17, nine years and nine days after the death of Faith Hedgepeth—and the day after I submitted this article for MRJ's **Cold Case** issue—Miguel Enrique Salguero-Olivares, a 28-year-old Durham, NC man, was charged with first-degree murder. He was nineteen at the time of the college student's murder. His DNA matched the several samples found at the scene, but his name had not come up during the intensive investigation.

Faith's parents and the detectives involved attended the news conference announcing the arrest. An arrest does not mean a conviction.

Cathy's most recent book is **Triangle True Crime Stories** (History Press 2021), with cold cases, poisoners, the nation's largest prison

break, and other Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill crimes. She's returning home in **Upstate South Carolina True Crime Stories**, coming 2022, to explore her first murderer and other cases.

Just the Facts: Frank Hamer—Cold Case Detective

by *Jim Doherty*

Frank Hamer was, of course, best-known as a Texas Ranger, a member of the most storied of all state police forces.

But that wasn't all he did. As regular readers of this column know, he also served as the police chief of the small town of Navasota in East Texas, and as a detective for the Houston Police. Aside from that, he was deputy sheriff in Kimble County, a Federal Prohibition Agent, and a field investigator for the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers' Association. Later in his career he'd be hired to organize and head up a waterfront police force for the Houston Harbor Authority.

In November of 1920, Pat M. Neff was elected governor of Texas, assuming office the following January. Shortly afterwards, Captain Aaron Cunningham, the commander of Texas Ranger Company C, came under severe public criticism, and decided to resign rather than ride it out. This created an opening that Neff was anxious to fill with the man who was perhaps the most famous law officer in the state, Frank Hamer.

Hamer was serving, at that point, as the Chief Prohibition Agent for the Austin District. But the chance to return to the Rangers, to return as a captain, and to be placed in command of his old company was too attractive an offer to resist. On 1 September 1921, Hamer was sworn in as a Captain of Texas Rangers, perhaps one of the proudest moments of his

career. At 37, he was one of the youngest captains in the history of the Ranger Force. And for the next four years, he distinguished himself as one of the best captains the Rangers ever had. He tracked down interstate fugitives, established better relations with his counterparts in Mexican law enforcement, and stood tall against the Ku Klux Klan (an old enemy he'd been fighting for years).

But in 1924, as Governor Neff was approaching the end of his second two-year term, he decided not to run a third time. There were no term limits for Texas governors, but there was a strong custom that no governor should serve more than two terms, and Neff was a great respecter of tradition.

This paved the way for a return to power by James Ferguson. Ferguson, had been elected governor in 1914 and reelected in 1916. But during that second term, allegations of bribery, misappropriation of public funds, and using his office to settle personal grudges came to light. He was impeached by the Texas House on 27 different counts, and found guilty of 10 of them by the Texas Senate. He was not only removed from governor's mansion, but barred from ever holding elective office in Texas again.

But by 1924, Ferguson had figured out a way to get around that obstruction. Instead of running himself, he'd have his wife, Miriam, run. She'd be signing the bills and making the

speeches, but her husband would be calling the shots. And in the end, Mrs. Ferguson became Governor Ferguson.

One of the first things her husband instructed her to do was cut the staffing of the Rangers, reducing the force from 51 to 28. Only three of the captains then serving were retained, and none of them was Hamer. The vacancies in the captains' positions thus created were filled with political hacks to whom the Fergusons owed favors.

Not pleased, but faced with a circumstance he could do nothing about, Hamer tendered his resignation, effective 30 June 1925. Hamer detested corrupt politicians, and had no use for the Fergusons. They, on the other hand, held him in some regard, and were persuaded by those who had their ear, that Hamer was an asset to Texas law enforcement they could not afford to lose.

Accordingly, they created a position for him, "Special Investigator for the Adjutant General" (the Adjutant General being in charge of the Rangers, as well as the commanding officer of the Texas National Guard), and asked him to stay on in that capacity.

As Special Investigator, the newly demoted private spent much of his time reviewing unsolved murder cases that the Rangers hadn't been able to close, determining if there were investigative leads that had been missed, or any new ones that could be opened. Although the term would not be coined for decades, Hamer had become perhaps the first Cold Case Detective in US law enforcement history.

The first cold case he undertook was the 1923 double murder of prosperous real estate broker J.A. Barnes, and his seven-year-old son, Jesse, who were blasted to death when Barnes opened a wooden crate marked "magazines,"

delivered to his Corpus Christi home by an express company.

Local authorities called in the Rangers. They did a cursory investigation, and found that a young Mexican boy, Juan Morales, had been seen with a wooden crate near an express company office. Morales insisted he'd never actually taken possession of the crate. He'd said that he'd been asked by a young Anglo man to ship the crate for him, but that, since he didn't know the procedure, he went to find someone in the express office to help. When he returned, the young man, the Ford coupe that man had been driving, and the crate were all gone.

A confession that he'd sent the bomb was eventually coerced from young Morales after third degree methods were administered, but, soon after that, it was learned that two other Hispanic youths at a different express office had been offered the same remuneration for sending the package off. When questioned, the two boys gave a description of the man who had hired them, and his car, that both matched Morales's description. Further investigation by Rangers, local detectives, and investigators from the express company failed to turn up any new leads.

When Hamer took over the case in 1926, he asked the obvious question that none of the earlier investigators had ever posed.

Cui bono?

And there was really only one person who benefited. Frank Bonner, who'd married Barnes's daughter, Dorothy, eloping with her to New York just a few months after the murders. An Army officer during the Great War, Bonner was familiar with explosives. And Barnes had been unalterably opposed to Bonner marrying his daughter. With his death, that opposition became moot.

Investigating further, Hamer found that Bonner, a student at the University of Texas in Austin at the time of the murders, had, on the day the package was sent from San Antonio, cut classes. He'd never done that before. Showing a photograph of Bonner to the three Hispanic youths who'd been hired to send the package, Hamer was told that, while none of them could make a positive identification, they all agreed that the man in the photo certainly resembled the man who'd tried to hire them to send the crate. Hamer also learned that 35 sticks of dynamite and a box of blasting caps had been stolen from the UT campus a few weeks before the bomb had been shipped.

Mr. and Mrs. Bonner had, all this time, been living in NYC, where Dorothy had been pursuing a moderately successful career in show business. If they were able to get Bonner indicted, they'd have to also get him extradited. Fortunately, the Bonners moved back to Texas in the summer of 1926, intending to open a dance studio, completely oblivious to the fact that the most famous cop in Texas was slowly weaving a convincing circumstantial case against Frank Bonner, and that moving back to Texas made charging him that much easier.

A few months later, Hamer presented his case to the Grand Jury in Nueces County, which promptly indicted Bonner. He was arrested that same day at the San Antonio home he shared with Dorothy, and transported to the Nueces County Jail to await trial.

That trial began on 18 January 1927. Not surprisingly, Dorothy stood by her husband, even providing him with an alibi for the day the package was shipped. More surprisingly, her mother also stood by Bonner, insisting that there was no animosity between him and her husband.

Despite an extremely strong circumstantial case, the jury failed to convict. It was one thing for the defendant's wife to stand by him. But it was quite another for Mrs. Barnes, the widow of one victim, the mother of another, and a victim herself, since she had also been injured in the explosion, to stand by him. The combined support of his wife and mother-in-law was, in the end, too compelling for the jurors—at least some of them—to ignore. In the end, they were unable to come to a verdict. The prosecution, after deliberating on the question of whether or not to retry Bonner, ultimately decided to drop the charges.

Hamer had, in all likelihood, solved the case, but he couldn't overcome the emotional element, and the killer, or, at least, the man who was most likely the killer walked free to live what was an apparently happy life, raising a family with Dorothy, and dying of natural causes in 1980.

Another case Hamer investigated was the triple murder, on 9 August 1925, of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Engler, and their daughter, Emma. Mr. and Mrs. Engler were shot in their beds as they slept, dying instantly. Emma attempted to escape, but was pursued by her parents' killer, pistol-whipped, dragged back to house, and also shot in the head.

The murders, occurring as they did in an unincorporated part of Travis County, were under the jurisdiction of Sheriff W.D. Miller, who was no hand at homicide investigation, and honest enough to admit it. He called in veteran Detective Raymond "Boss" Thorp, fingerprint expert for the Austin Police, to conduct a crime scene examination as well as a "boots-on-the-ground" investigation.

Nevertheless, rather than trusting to the more experienced investigator's expertise,

Miller, noting the brutality of the three murders, concluded that it had to be “a negro crime,” and, in the manner of Police Chief Louis Renault in *Casablanca*, simply rounded up “the usual suspects” (which is to say, the black and Mexican ones) and tried to break them by third degree methods. This proved unavailing.

The Rangers were called in, but their efforts also failed to yield results.

Early in 1927, Hamer, in his Special Investigator’s capacity, was assigned to assist Boss Thorp. As usual, Hamer was able to look at the circumstances objectively and unemotionally.

There were three murders, but those of Mr. and Mrs. Engler were comparatively quick and painless. Killed in their sleep, they weren’t even aware of the attack.

The murder of their daughter, however, was prolonged, savage, and painful. She’d been chased and viciously beaten, which suggested that she was the one the killer had a grudge against. That she was the main target.

From long experience, Hamer knew that most murders are committed by the victims’ significant others. Husbands kill wives and wives husbands. Boy friends kill girl friends and girl friends boy friends. Gay and lesbian lovers kill each other. The percentages vary to one degree or another, but, by and large, if the victim had a significant other, that significant other was the most likely suspect.

Accordingly, he concentrated on a suspect who’d been only cursorily considered to that point, Emma Engler’s fiancé, Willie Giese.

The Engler family had been killed with a .38, and Hamer learned that Giese’s personal weapon was a .38. He obtained a search warrant to confiscate the revolver, and, after gaining possession of the weapon, arranged for

Colonel Calvin Goddard, the pioneering expert on forensic firearms ballistics evidence, to examine it. Goddard was able to prove that the rounds fired into the Engler family came from Giese’s revolver.

When the case was presented to the Travis County Grand Jury, however, the jurors found the “new-fangled” ballistics evidence unconvincing and failed to return a true bill against Giese.

Another solved case that failed to yield a conviction, or even an indictment.

Hamer was due for a win, and he finally obtained one when he was called in to take over the investigation of the kidnapping, and probable murder, of Corpus Christi physician James A. Ramsey.

The case began on 27 May 1926 when a young Mexican man, apparently in deep distress, knocked on the door of Dr. Ramsey’s home and urgently requested that the doctor accompany him to the home of his sister, who was suffering from an acute illness. Reluctantly, Ramsey agreed to follow the young Mexican man. He never returned.

San Patricio County Sheriff Samuel F. Hunt organized a search that was unsuccessful. When a ransom demand for \$10,000 was received by Ramsey’s family, Hunt requested aid from the Rangers, but no progress was made. At this point, Hamer was called in.

The Mexican man who had come to the doctor’s home in May, claiming he was needed for a medical emergency, was identified as Roberto Martinez, and located in Mexico. Presumably using his friendly contacts in the various Mexican police services, Hamer arranged for Martinez to be returned to Texas, where, under interrogation, he admitted that he and a local lawyer named Harry Leahy had

kidnapped Ramsey.

Leahy had been seeking revenge on Ramsey for buying a family farm that his parents had lost when they fell behind on payments and their mortgage was foreclosed.

When Leahy held a grudge, he really held it. Martinez described how Leahy forced Ramsey from his car, walked him to the place he intended to kill him, and, over the course of several hours, tortured the doctor to death, but not before forcing him to sign his deed of ownership over the Leahy farm back over to Leahy. He was finally killed by being forced to drink gasoline.

Martinez led the officers to the gravesite. The physical evidence found there bore out Martinez's story.

Leahy was charged, tried, convicted and sentenced to life. But at first, it looked like Hamer was about to chalk up another loss when Leahy filed a successful appeal, and was granted a second trial.

But he outsmarted himself. The first jury had convicted him and recommended life imprisonment. The second convicted him and recommended the death penalty.

That penalty was carried out on 2 August 1929. Before he died, he asked to see Hamer, who had regained his captain's rank and, in fact, been appointed Senior Captain of the Texas Rangers in command of the Headquarters Company by Governor Dan Moody, who'd

defeated "Ma" Ferguson, and replaced her as the Lone Star State's chief executive in 1927.

When Hamer arrived, Leahy told him, "All my life, things have broken my way. But this time the cards were stacked against me."

"Who stacked 'em, Harry?" Hamer replied. "No one but you."

For his cooperation, Martinez received a five year sentence, and was paroled after two.

As for Hamer, as productive as he'd been so far in his career, his best years in police work were still to come.

Further Reading

As usual, John Boessenecker's splendid biography, **Texas Ranger—The Epic Life of Frank Hamer** (Thomas Dunne, 2016) was my main research source for this column. Specific details about the Ramsey kidnapping case came from newspaper articles and other sources archived online.

Oddly, but, perhaps in retrospect, not all that surprisingly, "**I'm Frank Hamer**"—**The Life of a Texas Peace Officer** (Pemberton, 1968) by John H. Jenkins and Gordon Frost, the first, quite enjoyable book-length biography of Hamer, makes no mention of his stint as the Adjutant General's Special Investigator. The book was written under the eye of Hamer's widow, Gladys, and she probably wouldn't have wanted his failure to nail Bonner or Geise noted.

From the Editor's Desk by Janet Rudolph

Cold Cases! If you're a mystery reader—and if you're reading this, you are—you always want to find out what happened, no matter how long ago the crime took place. Solving mysteries is key to the enjoyment of mysteries... or at

least seeing justice served, even after many years.

I remember the first personal Cold Case I experienced—one that was solved with 'new' DNA technology. A friend's mother had been

murdered in her kitchen. It was so sad and awful. Her mother was a holocaust survivor having made it through Auschwitz, only to be struck down in her own kitchen by a petty thief. The DNA analysis and perp arrest came ten years later.

With all the new technology, it's great to see cold cases being solved. So this issue focuses on Cold Cases, mostly in fiction... with several non-fiction cases in our special columns. Hope you find lots of reading material.

As always thanks to Kate Derie for her amazing editing skills. Thanks, also, to all our contributors, reviewers, and columnists.

Themes in 2021. This year we revisited History Mysteries and had two issues: **Historical Mysteries I** and **Historical Mysteries II**. We moved on to Texas to examine **Lone Star Mysteries**. This, our final issue for 2021 focuses on **Cold Cases**.

Themes in 2022: New England Mysteries; Art Mysteries; African Mysteries; Legal Mysteries.

If you have a mystery that fits into one of these upcoming themes, please consider writing an **Author! Author!** essay: 500–1500 words, first person, up-close and personal about yourself, your books, and the theme connection. We're also looking for reviews and articles. Send submissions and suggestions for new themes to janet@mysteryreaders.org.

Virtual vs. Live Literary Events. I'm still attending virtual events, although there seem to be a lot more 'in person' ones taking place. I'm planning on attending **Left Coast Crime in Albuquerque in March 2022** (<https://leftcoast-crime.org/2022/>). Fingers crossed. It's been a long time since we've all been together.

In the meantime, be sure to check out live and virtual festivals, conventions, and

conferences, as well as individual book events through libraries, books stores, book clubs, and groups such as Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America. Although it's not the same as being there with friends, writers, and other readers, these virtual events have given many of us the ability to 'attend' conferences that we might never have been able to travel to. Many of the sessions have been archived online, so be sure and check for more info.

Social media. I blog daily at *Mystery Fanfare* (mysteryfanfare.com) with lists of holiday mysteries, cartoons of the day, guest posts, reviews, and interviews. And, if you're in the mood for chocolate (who isn't?), I blog a chocolate recipe or review every day on my blog *Dying for Chocolate* (dyingforchocolate.com). Follow me on Twitter @JanetRudolph for other book and fun news, as well as @TopperRudolph on Instagram.

Speaking of websites, do you have any improvements to suggest for our blog or website? Something new to include? Or perhaps a new approach? Go to mysteryreaders.org and mysteryfanfare.com and look around. Send suggestions and recommendations to: janet@mysteryreaders.org.

Literary Salons. Although our NorCal Chapter of Mystery Readers International hosts Literary Salons in Berkeley, these haven't taken place in over a year because of social distancing and limited travel. I suggest you check out your favorite bookstores for Author Events. Many are free and some are just the price of the book, and you're probably going to buy it anyway. I still have hope that we'll be able to start up our 'realtime' Literary Salons again—perhaps in 2022.

The Garden. We finally had some rain here in California. The storms were described as a

‘bomb cyclone’ and an ‘atmospheric river’—such odd terms! Anyway, the drought has not been alleviated, and I hope we have a lot more in the coming months. I cut my water consumption by 75%. My roses were not happy about it, but I feel I did my part.

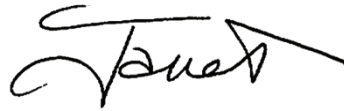
We took out several huge sick trees, and I think that upset the wild life balance, as the hawks and ravens who lived there moved on, and the rats and mice had a heyday—decimating the new growth on over half of the rose bushes (and we have over 150 bushes) and other plants and eating through the brakes and wires in all three of our vehicles. Ugh! I’ve seen a few hawks and crows back in the remaining trees, so happy hunting!

Luckily, I have lots of succulents, and they seem to be doing fine in the drought. I am so

lucky to have such an awesome garden to tend. For flower pictures, check out “Behind My Garden Gate” on my Facebook profile page: www.facebook.com/janet.rudolph.

Pets: Bella and Reign have totally bonded, and it’s a joy to watch them together. They play together, they sleep together, and they really enjoy each other’s company. And, in case you’re curious, the cats are both fine. Wellie is still a terror, and I now have several drawers filled with pieces of broken pottery.

Hope you have a wonderful holiday season and a great new year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet", with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.