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PUBLIC SAFETY WRITERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Early Summer Newsletter

Editor: Marilyn Meredith, mmeredith@ocsnet.net

This is your newsletter, please contribute articles, your news, book reviews, or anything else you think might be of interest.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Although it's still not even spring here in the Pacific Northwest (still in the 50s and raining) for the rest of you out there the sunshine and warm weather should remind you that if you haven't done so, there's still time to register for the [2011 PSWA conference](#) to be held in Las Vegas July 14-17. All the details are right here on the website, including the agenda with a roster of really outstanding speakers and panels.

No matter where you are in your writing journey, from thinking it may actually be time to start that great American novel you've been putting off, or author of an impressive resume of published articles or books, this is the conference for you.

Want to know how to compose a really effective elevator pitch for your work? Want to know how to avoid those embarrassing gaffes in your detective novel so prevalent on today's TV cop shows? Want to know what it's like to be a police psychologist? Or a firefighter? Or how to get your articles published in trade publications and online?

Want to know how best to use forensic evidence in your book, or create more credible characters or improve your skill at writing dialogue or action scenes?

Want to know what kind of promotion works best? Or how to find a good editor? Or the pros and cons of writing with a collaborator?

All this great stuff and more will be presented along with plenty of time for questions and the opportunity to network with writers and soon-to-be writers just like you. We pack in a lot of content, but always keep the atmosphere informal so anyone, whatever their level of expertise, will leave with enthusiasm and a notebook full of ideas for the next writing project. (Proving that not EVERYTHING that happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!)

If you'd like to attend the conference but aren't yet a member of PSWA – no problem. You can submit your membership dues along with your conference registration. And, if you have any questions about any of this, go to the Contact Us page on the website and send a message to, well, me. I'll make sure that if I don't know the answer, I'll direct you to someone who does.

So, stay on the website today, check out all the benefits of membership and specifically all the details about the conference. We look forward to seeing you in July.

Marilyn Olsen
PSWA President

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DON'T MISS OUT ON THE PSWA CONFERENCE

If you haven't already signed up for the Public Safety Writers Association conference, you still have time. As they say the more the merrier. The conference is loads of fun and attended by writers of every caliber and genre. If you never attended before now is the time to join those already signed up and start networking and improving your writing.

If you have attended before, it is time to learn the newest and latest things in writing, and to meet up with old friends you haven't seen since last year's conference. I promise the food will be excellent at the conference, and thanks to Billie Johnson and Las Vegas Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 1, there will be coffee for you every morning.

The writing contest has attracted many talented writers to submit work in numerous categories and we have a new and impressive awards certificate.

The hotel, The Orleans has many venues to eat at and provides round trip transportation to the Las Vegas Strip. It also has a wonderful pool to relax at. The rooms are \$30 a night for the weekday nights and \$80 for Friday and Saturday nights. They have also extended the same rates to our members for a week on either side of the conference dates so those who wish to go sightseeing have the opportunity.

My wife, Lynn, and I recently visited the Clark County Museum here in town and explored "Old Las Vegas", early homes, businesses, railroad trains and terminal, vehicles, and desert gardening. The price was a staggering \$2 per person. Fortunately, we are now senior citizens and only paid \$1 a piece.

The Hoover Dam, one of the wonders of the modern world, is a short ride out of town and the view from the new bypass bridge, with its protected walkway, is a

photographer's delight for taking photos of the dam.

See the 9-11 memorial at New York, New York. The display of Public Safety shirts and written memorabilia will bring a tear to your eyes.

Contact Marilyn Meredith, she's a sweetheart and I am sure you can sweet talk her into letting you have the early bird special price if you hurry up and register. (mmeredith@ocsnet.net)

Keith Bettinger

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HOLLI CASTILLO PRAISES THE PSWA CONFERENCE

If anyone is on the fence about attending the PSWA conference in Las Vegas, allow me to push you over. I speak from personal experience when I say it's a great conference. It's smaller than the big guys, although I prefer the term intimate. It's particularly appealing if you're alone and/or don't know anyone who is attending, because everyone is so friendly. And if you're painfully shy like me, they'll drag you right into the mix of things.

PSWA always has excellent speakers and presentations—and I'm not just saying that because I'm presenting—as well as interesting and informative panels. I like that it has only one track so I don't have to miss anything, because there is no panel or presentation I don't think I couldn't use. Too many double negatives? To clarify, I find all of the information provided useful and entertaining.

It's a jambalaya of experienced and award-winning writers, publishing gurus, experts in all types of law enforcement and public safety fields, first-time writers looking to get published, and generally an agent or publisher or two. If you have books in print, bring them along and for a small percentage they'll even sell your books for you while you're at the conference.

It's a great opportunity to meet and greet in the second greatest city in the world (you know I had to put New Orleans first.) And if you're traveling with family, there's plenty for the kids and spouse or significant other to do while you're picking up writing and publishing tips. My girls choose Vegas over Disney World every time.

And for a little lagniappe, the conferences lunches are pretty good too.

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WHAT IS AN ELEVATOR PITCH?

At the PSWA conference we are beginning with everyone who wants to giving an elevator pitch for one book. (For those who don't have a book, no more than a 2 minute introduction. This is a 45 minute session and we want to make sure everyone gets a chance.)

An elevator pitch is a one or two sentences describing a book. In TV guide, an elevator pitch is given for each movie on the schedule. An elevator pitch is the briefest of descriptions you can develop—a very short, succinct pitch.

Besides at the conference, where would you use an elevator pitch? It could be the short blurb for you book. You might also use it to promote yourself to the local media, to book a speaking event, or to pitch to a blog where you'd like to do a guest post—and of course to a publisher or an agent.

An elevator pitch needs to be short and to the point.

Use simple language.

Needs to be an attention grabber.

Look at the back of the books in your personal library and check out the short blurbs to give you some ideas. (These are the blurbs about the book, not the short review blurbs.)

You may have to write several to come up with the very best one.

Marilyn Meredith aka F. M. Meredith author of the Rocky Bluff P.D. series

Angel Lost Blurb: A pervert threatens women joggers on the beach, a robber threatens wealthy homes on the bluff, and an angel watches over the townspeople from a downtown window. F. M. Meredith's latest Rocky Bluff P. D. novel is a gentle human drama about loneliness and change, through which the reader is pulled, page after page, by an assortment of compelling criminal curiosities. (This one was written by a fellow author.)

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A MIST OF CONSPIRACY

by John Bray

The New York City Police Department in the mid-nineteen-sixties projected the image of an inbred and secretive culture. This impenetrable world has been graphically described in books and motion pictures about two police officers, officially commended within the department, unofficially reviled among their peers. Frank Serpico and Robert Leuci, memorable for their devastating revelations, (Serpico, book and movie and Robert Leuci, Prince of the City, book and movie and his later memoir, All the Centurions,) were largely responsible for the reorganization of the methods used by the police department of their era to enforce the existing narcotics and vice and gambling laws.

Serpico had worked in the vice and gambling enforcement system, then called simply "plainclothes." Police officers, officially designated "plainclothesmen," investigated and arrested those involved in bookmaking, the illegal numbers racket, prostitution, and the unlawful sale of alcohol. Serpico had struggled futilely against the inherent corruption then existing in plainclothes and elsewhere. He could not accept the idea that collecting money from bookmakers and numbers bankers was part of the everyday business of gambling and vice enforcement. Leuci became a detective in Narcotics and did at first succumb to the temptations of a sub-world awash in cash. Both episodes were related admirably in their stories and the films recounting them. These old ghosts are invoked here to illustrate the climate of the Department as it then existed. In time gone by it became inevitable that at some juncture in a police career, especially in sensitive assignments, choices had to be made. Often peer pressure impelled participation in activities that would later prove ill-advised. Serpico fought against it, Leuci became enmeshed in it.

From the investigations that ensued, the Department reorganized. It entrusted to the newly formed Organized Crime Control Bureau (OCCB) both narcotics and vice and gambling enforcement. The reorganization provided these units with closer supervision. It abolished decentralization and significantly impeded the organized conspiracies rife among plainclothes units. Plainclothes details had operated within division and borough offices, but burdened by the enormous task of managing the precincts under them, the commanders of these larger departmental subdivisions relied on sergeants and lieutenants to supervise their plainclothesmen. Often these supervisors themselves became part of the problem.

In the Narcotics Bureau, then grouped within the Detective Division, a central squad, the

Special Investigations Unit (SIU), achieved a certain dark celebrity. (Remember the *French Connection*?) In addition, outlying squads were stationed in detective borough offices throughout the city. In the shadowy world of narcotics trafficking, enormous amounts of money were available to these detectives. There was nothing about such enterprises not understood by everyone from the Commissioner to the average uniformed officer working on the street.

Such conditions existed forty years ago, but the structure of the NYPD is now vastly different. The significant resources and talents of the Department are enlisted to address the many urgent missions that confront modern police work. Further, there is no implication that every police officer of the time was dishonest. Quite the contrary, most members of the force served honorably. There were many highly decorated and brave men and women called upon to shed their blood, and too often they gave their lives in service to the people of New York City.

Call it tradition, culture, climate, an expectation had existed in some quarters that there was money to be made. The political powers that ran the City turned a blind eye. Not only was it expedient to ignore the obvious, there was always the danger that some blame would wash over the courts, the District Attorneys' offices or City Hall, were too much scrutiny brought to bear. An examination of the history of the era will disclose that often such seats of power were themselves engulfed by scandal. Political pressure had inevitably blunted the impact of most investigations focused on these governmental agencies. Nonetheless, influential men spent sleepless nights waiting for the drop of the next tasseled loafer. The Police Department took most of the blame; low-ranking cops and detectives bore many of the accusations and suffered the larger share of the indictments.

The Knapp Commission, appointed by the mayor and chaired by Whitman Knapp, a prominent attorney, focused media attention on the ugly underbelly of the Department. They held televised hearings and received continuous front-page coverage in the New York newspapers. The New York State Special Prosecutor's Office, appointed by the governor, employed especially ruthless tactics in their efforts to "root out corruption."

Headed by Maurice Nadjari, a former prosecutor from Suffolk County, New York, the Special Prosecutor's office used their own extraordinary Grand Jury subpoena power and slanted press releases to intimidate and denigrate those who surfaced in their crosshairs. No entity was spared. Judges, attorneys, police officers, anyone unfortunate enough to attract their attention was subpoenaed to testify. Carefully timed articles in the press announced those to be called before a Grand Jury, often publicly tarring the reputations of targets who had no provable involvement in wrongdoing.

The office did not prosecute many cases before it was disbanded. Eventually, even the press turned on them. Their heavy-handed and barely ethical methods were repugnant to any right-minded observer. Federal prosecutors in the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York demolished the Narcotics SIU due in large measure to the cooperation of Bob Leuci who was compelled finally to give up his fellow detectives. The department restructured internally and placed the gambling and narcotics enforcement squads within the OCCB. Not much was left to pursue with regard to major integrity cases of which Nadjari's Office was aware.

The fog of secrecy began to lift, the code of silence penetrated. Slowly and painfully the Department faced what it should have confronted long before. Many more sad chapters were written; more police officers were indicted, tried and sentenced. The light of public attention was focused where it had seldom shone before and at great human cost. The passage of time will validate whether these lessons were fully absorbed by those who oversee the Department.

There was, however, one particularly ill-fated aggregation that did come to the attention of Nadjari's office. In many precincts, groups of uniformed sergeants formed into what were euphemistically called "Sergeants' Clubs." Difficult to infiltrate, protected by an

unarticulated secrecy, this tradition continued unabated and unprosecuted. The scheme involved precinct sergeants who visited businesses involved in marginal or minor unlawful activities. Illegal parking in front of stores, unlicensed sidewalk vending, and various code violations were typical infractions that brought harassing police enforcement and expensive summonses unless the merchants were forthcoming with regularly scheduled payments. As in other situations, detection could only occur when a participant overstepped or when an insider reported the arrangement and dragged the whole group into the unwelcome spotlight.

One such hapless sergeant in Queens was overheard on a Federal eavesdropping device focused on an unrelated criminal target. Apprehended by Internal Affairs and forced to cooperate, he wore a body wire against his colleagues. Virtually an entire complement of sergeants from one precinct was compelled to divulge their own involvement, testify before the Special Grand Jury and implicate their brother sergeants. All were prosecuted criminally. One sergeant who denied his participation was indicted, tried for perjury and sentenced to prison.

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ZEN AND WRITING

by Victoria Heckman

Writing is hard. Most of the time. Ask any real writer, and sooner or later, the process gets stuck. In an interview once, I guess I went on about how hard it was, and I was asked, "Why do you do it?" Excellent question. I do it because I have to. I have stories to tell, and people in my head, and they need to get out. Sometimes they are very insistent about getting out. Many years ago, at the Cluefest Conference in Plano, TX, a little old lady named Malama kept pestering me about "her story". I bargained, I scolded, I whined. Still, she wouldn't let me alone until I wrote her. (She is a Hawaii lady, so I couldn't figure out why she came on so strong in Texas, but oh, well.)

My "process" is to postpone the actual writing, since most of the time, I don't know exactly what I'm going to write. That doesn't mean I'm not disciplined. When I am in writing mode, I write every day. I'm not allowed to have fun until I've written my pages. Well, that sounds responsible, doesn't it? However, getting those pages out requires a lot. I check my email. I organized my Post-Its. I re-check my email. Just in case. I review what I wrote the day before. I edit what I wrote the day before. I still won't be allowed to go out and play until I've created new work. That's the rule. So what happens next?

The Zen of Writing happens next. I focus. I step into the world of my book and my characters. I am also an actor and view my books like a movie. Only, I'm IN the movie as opposed to watching the events unfold. Or a video game if you're so inclined. When I'm describing Coconut Man's jungle, I'm in the jungle. It's 3D. I can see, hear, taste, touch and smell that world. It's a little creepy sometimes. Where I physically am, my office in my house, disappears and my hands do their own thing on the keyboard. All the outside world is gone, and that is why I have to be left alone when I write. I prefer to know the house is empty, because often someone just "needs a quick question" or some other non-emergency emergency and that is hard on me physically. It is actually painful at times to be removed from my writing world before I'm done. (Okay, think of an inappropriate comparison and you get it.)

Writing is a form of meditation, of Zen. Of removing myself from the "regular" world. I am the age, gender, and physical being of the thing(s) I'm writing about. My hip doesn't hurt. I am not sleepy or tired or hungry. Unless, of course, my character is. It is the most powerful place I've ever been, and it's unlimited.

So, to continue my Zen education, I am actually going to spend a few days in a Buddhist monastery this summer. That is a desire that has been building for a few years now. I am busier and busier it seems and need some tools to quiet the world and my brain.

When the opportunity arose I jumped at it. For those of you attending PSWA, I will have returned from my monastery just two weeks prior, and I will be happy to let you know what happened. Unless I'm just sitting on a cushion in a corner looking inscrutable and meditative. Then, maybe not.

Victoria Heckman, Sisters in Crime-Central Coast Chapter President, Author of the K.O.'d in...Hawaii Mystery Series:

www.victoriaheckman.com

& the Ancient Hawaii Mystery Series

E versions available!

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B004YWG716> & Smashwords!

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PSYCHODOG AND THE BURGLAR

by Tim Dees

The police department where I worked organized the patrol division (officially the "Field Services Bureau," as someone thought that sounded way more cool) into teams of six to eight officers, supervised by a sergeant. Each team worked together for six months, and had the same days off, shift, and section of town to work in. Each team also had assigned to it at least one field training officer (FTO), who was usually the senior officer on the team and kind of an assistant sergeant. I was the FTO for the K-9 team.

I enjoyed working on the K-9 team. The handlers would cover all of the building searches and alarms on my beat, and I would handle their traffic accidents, any drunk drivers they happened to stop, and would transport agitated prisoners who would otherwise rile up their dogs. It was a nice, symbiotic relationship. The new officers I would take as trainees were usually apprehensive about working on the K-9 team, not knowing what to expect. I would jerk their chains a little before the first patrol shift, warning them that they had to spend the first week riding in the back with their head out of the window, drooling on the door. I also warned them to be prepared the first time they saw the handlers get together and greet one another, as that butt-sniffing could get really disgusting.

Most agencies that have a K-9 component spread the dogs and handlers around the schedule so there will be a dog available for building and area searches when needed. Our management was of the belief that this sort of arrangement was too difficult from a logistical perspective, and assigned all of the dogs and handlers to regular patrol beats, effectively depriving about 4/5 of the department of that resource.

Police dogs have a number of functions, depending on the training and capabilities of the dog and handler. Dogs trained only for the detection of specific items such as drugs, explosives, or decomposed bodies are often "gentle" breeds such as Labrador retrievers or beagles. These dogs are perceived as less threatening and work better in places like airports and cruise ship terminals. Most patrol dogs are large, relatively aggressive breeds like German shepherds, Belgian Malinois, and Rottweilers. These dogs have the acute sense of smell common to most canines, but they are also large and strong enough to bring a man down. Even though a dog might weigh half what a suspect does, when they charge that mass is 100% attack, and extremely effective.

Faced with the prospect of being attacked by a patrol dog, most suspects will immediately surrender. The few occasions when they don't are what the dogs and handlers live for. The dogs are seldom mean, either by nature or training. They are taught that chasing after and biting a bad guy is a game, and for them it is no more mean-spirited than when your pooch runs to fetch a tennis ball.

That's usually the case, anyway. Psychodog was an exception.

Most law enforcement agencies procure their patrol dogs from breeder/trainers who

specialize in this area. Pedigreed puppies are tested and trained at an early age to select for those with the best instincts for the work. When the dog is fully grown, the new handler is brought in for a week or two to train and bond with the dog before they return to the agency where they will work. Dogs like this represent an investment of several thousand dollars, but the end product is highly reliable. My employer (motto: "Quality Is Our Least Important Product") procured dogs from the city animal shelter and from citizens who occasionally donated dogs. The handlers would try to train the dogs for the work, and were often successful. There were, however, some memorable failures. When this happened, the many man-hours invested in training were wasted. If everyone was lucky, the failure didn't result in a civil lawsuit where the city wrote a huge check to the injured party.

You don't want to walk up to a police dog with the intention of petting it without first consulting with the handler. Most of these dogs live with the handlers' families, and at home they are family pets, though more protective than most. The dog takes his cues from the handler. If the handler tells the dog you're okay, the dog will treat you like a buddy. If the handler doesn't get the opportunity to do this, the dog may assume you are going to injure the handler, and goes into "master protection" mode. That won't go well for you.

I had made a point of getting familiar with all of the dogs on the team, even though the handlers at first objected to this. I pointed out that the day might come when I had to aid the handler and/or get an injured handler out of a wrecked patrol car, and I wanted to be able to do that without having to first shoot the dog. As a result, I could get in and out of all the K-9 cars without the dogs going nuts, and all the dogs would take simple commands from me. All, except Psychodog.

Psychodog had a less pejorative name, but I can't remember what it was. He was mostly German shepherd, but had a rangy appearance that bordered on being emaciated. His handler had come on the team with the proviso that Psychodog would have to prove himself and become "certified," that is, perform to the expectations of the team sergeant. On patrol and in the motor pool, the handlers left their back windows down, and the dogs would hang their heads out and watch the world go by. This wasn't possible with Psychodog, as he would bark furiously at anything that moved and launch himself out of the window at it if he could. The inside door windows of his handler's car had vertical grooves, ground in by Psychodog's fangs as he tried to get at whatever was on the other side of the glass. Still, Psychodog and his handler would patrol their beat each night, the dog barking and snarling constantly through the closed window.

One warm summer night, I was working alone, without a trainee. I was drinking coffee in an all-night diner when Psychodog's handler was dispatched to a report of a burglary in progress in a residential neighborhood. The handler was some distance away, and I was considerably closer. I used my portable radio to tell dispatch that I would also respond to the call.

As burglars are necessarily stealthy fellows, it is fairly rare to catch a burglar in the act of burgling. They will occasionally be caught inside a building once all of the exits have been secured, and now and again a sharp-eyed patrol officer will stumble on one going over a fence or kicking in a door. Far more often they are caught transporting or fencing the fruits of their crimes, and are traced back to the burgled premise either by admission or by matching stolen items to the crime reports.

As I drove down the broad street that connected the address of the call to the rest of the city, I saw Psychodog's car in my rear view mirror, about six blocks back. His handler would be only a few seconds behind me as I turned the corner onto the street where our complaining witness lived.

I was quite surprised to find the burglar standing in the street. His physical appearance and clothing exactly matched the description broadcast in the original call, and there was no one else in sight, it being about three in the morning. In his hand was a large toolbox.

Had he been carrying a cloth bag labeled "SWAG," his activities could not have been more obvious.

I stopped the car, turned on the overhead lights, and got out. I pointed my gun at the burglar and told him to put his hands on his head. He did so. I should have known this was going far too well.

Psychodog's handler parked his car behind mine and walked toward our suspect. "I'm going to go hands-on," he told me, indicating he would handcuff the suspect while I maintained my cover position. I nodded my approval. The burglar apparently sized up the two of us, oblivious to Psychodog's barking and snarling in the background, and correctly determined he could outrun us. He took off at a determined and highly motivated gallop.

On seeing the pace the burglar was maintaining, I knew immediately that I wouldn't have been able to catch him on the best day I ever had. I probably wouldn't even have tried, but the handler was in foot pursuit, and accompanying him seemed to be the right thing to do. Clomp-clomp-clomp went our boots on the pavement, occasionally shouting discouraging epithets and promises of grave bodily injury into the darkness.

It was then I became aware that Psychodog's snarl was getting louder. Our K-9 cars had spring-loaded rear doors that were opened when the handler pushed the button of a garage door opener remote control they carried in their shirt pocket. The handler had let Psychodog out of the car, and Psychodog was rapidly closing the distance between me and his jaws.

"I am about to be bitten in the ass," I thought, until Psychodog raced past me. I then wondered if the handler was about to suffer that fate, but Psychodog ran past him, too. Now I was the one who was motivated. Psychodog was about to have this burglar as a chew toy, and I wanted a front row seat.

Psychodog barked constantly as he drew up behind the burglar, and continued as he ran alongside. They raced one another until the burglar came to a back yard fence. The burglar went over the fence, with Psychodog standing on his hind legs, cheering him on.

We never saw the burglar again.

The handler looked back at me and shrugged. I walked back to my car, collected the tool box, and took the crime report from the complainant. The sergeant was waiting for me when I got back to the station. When I told him the tale, he replied, "Well, it's Psychodog's last night."

Somewhere, there is a junkyard where no trespasser dares enter because of the snarling beast penned within. It is all for show; help yourself to anything you like. Psychodog will just make sure you make it back to the fence okay.

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WRITING ABOUT CONVICTS

by Holli Castillo

Mysteries, police procedurals, and other books involving law enforcement officials often feature or include convicted felons. If you are writing about a felon, it's important to make sure you're accurate with background information, things that might not seem important but can cause credibility problems if you get them wrong.

First, if you're mentioning a defendant who is being sentenced or has been released from prison after serving a sentence, you should know the sentencing scheme of the state in which your defendant was convicted. Many states have what is called

indeterminate sentencing, where the judge will sentence the individual to a range, such as twenty to life, as opposed to a definite sentence. Other states, like my own, Louisiana, have determinate sentences for every crime. In those states, while the state law may provide for a sentencing range, the sentencing judge must impose a particular sentence within the range, such as thirty years.

In the first case, where a defendant is sentenced to a range, the state's parole agency will generally determine the amount of time the defendant serves, based upon the factors that state's law provides. That defendant will ordinarily serve at least the minimum of the range, with the parole agency determining exactly how much time above the minimum the defendant will serve. In the second case, while a defendant may be eligible for parole after serving a particular amount of the sentence he is given, he starts out with his actual sentence, and he may be given good time credit which reduces his sentence.

Added to this, some states do not allow for parole for certain crimes. In Louisiana, there is a list of violent crimes, which includes most sex crimes, which are ineligible for parole. So if you're writing about a victim who is worried because a defendant is about to be released on parole, make sure you know if your state allows parole for the charge. Also, a sentence of life means different things in different states. In Louisiana, life is life, with no parole or good time. Some states allow life sentences to be reviewed by the state's parole board.

It's also important to be sure to know the law if your bad guy is on probation. Special Victim's Unit on NBC loves to have guys out on parole or probation followed by the police or watchdog groups or even victims. And yes, it occasionally happens, although not as much as TV crime drama would like for you to believe. Just make sure if your guy is walking around on probation, the crime he was convicted of allows for probation. Some states also allow probation on a first offense, but not a subsequent offense, so if your guy was on probation after his third robbery conviction, make sure the law in that state allows for a third offense robber to get probation.

Sex offenders also have their own special rules. Every state has some type of sex offender registration requirement as part of sentencing. In Louisiana, even prostitution convictions have sex offender registration requirements. While it sounds like free advertising to me, our legislature thinks hookers should have to publish their names and addresses in the newspaper. Registration here involves a plethora of requirements designed to protect the community, including notification to the local sheriff or police department, school superintendent, park's director, neighbors within a certain distance depending upon the size of the city, landlord, and publication of the information in the newspaper two different days. The notification must also include a photo. There also is a requirement for the offender to notify evacuation shelters of his sex offender status. We had some issues in Louisiana with sex offenders at evacuation shelters during Katrina.

If you're writing about a sex offender who has been released from prison, even if he's served his full sentence, he will probably have registration requirements. Registration is not just a requirement of parole or probation, but generally an ongoing requirement even after the sentence is served, and failing to register is usually a crime in itself. Make sure you know what the state law is regarding sex offender's release if you're writing about one.

Sex offenders make interesting villains, and many, many convicted sex offenders either don't register or don't fully comply with all of the registration requirements. Many are also recidivist, and will offend again if they find the opportunity. One problem with registration, however, is it often treats all offenders equally. For example, in some states, an adult who solicits a prostitute, a 19-year-old male who pleads guilty after having consensual sex with his 16-year-old girlfriend, and a 17-year-old girl who sends a naked photo of herself on her cell phone to her boyfriend can be labeled sex offenders and required to register in the same manner as a hard-core rapist or a convicted

pedophile. Judges can not waive the registration requirement, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the conviction.

www.familywatchdog.us/ is a website that allows you to put in an address and see how many sex offenders are registered near that address, or to search for a particular individual. It takes a few seconds to load, but if you click on the box at the offender's address, it not only gives you the address and his name, but also his photo, and what and when he was convicted of. It's a good way for a character to find out where sex offenders are living, or to broaden a suspect pool if a registered sex offender is murdered in a novel.

Information such as a state's sentencing scheme or probation and other requirements should be relatively easy to research with a Google or Bing or other internet search engine, but in the end, if you don't feel like doing the research, it's better to be vague than to include incorrect information. Writing that someone just got out of prison is better than losing credibility by writing someone just got out on parole for a crime that's not parole eligible in that state, or guessing and keeping your fingers crossed that you're right, especially if the reason for the prison release is not integral to the plot. Most people may not know if your information is incorrect, but you can bet some will, and you don't want to lose a reader over something that is easy to fix.

<http://www.gumbojustice.net/> and coming soon, Jambalya Justice

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WHERE IS PATRIOTISM?

by Keith Bettinger

Recently I wrote an article asking Where is our Patriotism – I received this today from a dear friend. Always suspect of things that sound too good to be true, I checked the story on FACT OR FICTION. I am happy to say Ping Golf Equipment has helped answer my question. I have now found where some of our patriotism is.

Today, my friends at the Shields of Long Island, gathered once again to place American Flags at the graves in Long Island National Cemetery in East Melville/East Farmingdale. They have contributed to our patriotism. In Orange County California last weekend, an "oldies" radio station, K-Earth 101, and the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort & Spa provided 21 military couples with a wedding and honeymoon. The brides in gowns and most of the grooms in military dress, their families watching. For most of the couples it was a formal renewal of their sacred vows, after impromptu weddings by justices of the peace prior to deployment.

When I travel along Rte. 215 here in Las Vegas, there are American flags that fly from the tops of mountains. I don't know who these intrepid souls are that climb up there anonymously and place these flags every time the wind takes one away, but I know these wonderful people are making a contribution to our patriotism.

A few years ago, on the 4th of July, Eric Dixon, an Eagle Scout Candidate who placed 300 plus American flags on a hillside in a Las Vegas area park. These flags were placed for military personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan – innocence lost remembering the fallen. This weekend is Rolling Thunder – Vets on motorcycles traveling to Washington DC to the Viet Nam Memorial, making sure the fallen are not forgotten. And finally, how about ANGEL FLIGHT – organizations loading World War II vets, all in their 80s or older, on airliners and flying them to Washington, DC to visit the World War II Memorial so they can see it before they're gone.

Yes, I think many in this wonderful country have answered my question, Where is Our Patriotism? It is here, not looking for glory or honors, but caring about those that have sacrificed so much to keep us safe.

* * *

CODE BLOOD

by Kurt Kamm

Chapter 1

Station 88, squad and engine respond to vehicle accident on Pacific Coast Highway at the Surfrider Restaurant.

When the tone sounded, Colt Lewis was replacing the IV bags in the drug box. A surge of adrenaline pulsed through him. He ran to the engine bay, stowed the box in the side-panel of the squad—the paramedic truck—and pulled on his gear. Brian, his partner and preceptor during his eight-week internship in the field, slid behind the wheel and grabbed his headset. Colt punched the red button on the wall and jumped into the passenger seat as the heavy metal garage door rumbled up.

"You good?" Brian asked. He hit the lights and siren.

Colt nodded and heard the deafening wail before he put his headset on. They rolled down the driveway onto Pacific Coast Highway and turned right. It was an early Sunday afternoon in mid September and PCH was crowded with people coming to the beaches. Colt was living his dream. He had just become a Los Angeles County Fire paramedic stationed in Malibu. He was part of the firefighter brotherhood. The men on his shift replaced the family he no longer had.

Vehicles moved aside to let the squad pass. Brian wove through the sea of traffic to the center divider lane and picked up speed. "Squad 88 responding," he called in. "What have we got?"

"Single vehicle accident," dispatch radioed back.

Colt's adrenaline spike subsided. He shook his head. You never knew what you might find when you were toned out. People drove at high speeds on PCH and collisions were common. The worst were the devastating MVA's—multiple vehicle accidents. During his two years as a firefighter before becoming a paramedic, Colt saw several MVA's with torn flesh and metal spread across the pavement. A one-car accident at the Surfrider sounded harmless. An old woman with blue hair probably bumped her head when her husband touched the brakes in the parking lot.

In his side view mirror, Colt watched the LifeLine ambulance fall in behind them. Further back, he glimpsed the red lights on top of the 88's engine, caught in the traffic. The squad screamed past Ferraris and Porsches, SUV's, motor homes with satellite dishes, Jeeps with surfboards, Harleys and sport bikes—all trying to squeeze over into the right hand lane. A black and white from the Sheriff's Department made a sudden U-turn and preceded them for the short trip down the coast. After five years in California, Colt was still amazed at the congestion. In Wyoming, where he grew up, the land was empty. The entire population could be on the highway and no one would notice.

A mile from the Surfrider, traffic was backed up to a standstill. Sheriff's deputies had placed their cars diagonally across the highway in front of the restaurant, stopping traffic in both directions. Brian swung out into the center lane again. As the squad approached the Surfrider, Colt saw a metal light pole lying on the ground, one jagged end in the parking lot and the other, with a smashed streetlight still attached, sticking out into the right hand lane of PCH. A silver pickup rested on the cement pad where the pole had been anchored. The impact had driven the front bumper, grill and hood halfway to the windshield. Colt looked for the telltale circle of smashed glass and blood and hair on the inside of the windshield, but saw nothing.

Brian pulled into the parking lot and stopped. Several feet away, a crowd from the beach wearing bathing suits, restaurant customers wearing shorts and tank tops, and the

Surfrider staff dressed in black pants, white shirts, red suspenders and bow ties, had collected. A surge of excitement pulsed through the throng. People shaded their eyes to get a better look, pointed and spoke to their companions. Several took photos with their cell phones.

Brian was out of the squad before Colt had his hand on the door handle. "Let's go," Brian said. "Glove up."

Colt grabbed the orange drug box and followed Brian.

The ambulance arrived seconds later and the LifeLine EMT's trailed after them across the parking lot. The crowd parted as they approached. Colt saw a deputy kneeling next to a girl wearing a blue T-shirt, lying on her back. The next thing he saw was what remained of her right leg—a stump with shreds of muscle and tendons in place of her foot and ankle. Blood from a severed artery formed a puddle on the ground next to the deputy. Colt felt a new rush of adrenaline.

The deputy turned toward them. "Glad you guys are here," he said. He had pulled everything off his belt and was using it as a tourniquet. His flashlight, radio, mace, gun and holster, two sets of cuffs and bullet clips lay in a pile at his side. He held the thick brown belt tight around the girl's right calf, but blood continued to leak from her severed limb. Nervous sweat ran off his face, dripped onto the blacktop and mixed with the blood. His tan shirt had dark rings of perspiration under the arms.

Colt couldn't take his eyes off the stump of the girl's leg. His job was to help those who needed it. Although he would never admit it, sometimes when he knew the victim had done something stupid, Colt was a little less concerned. The person lying in front of him wasn't one of those reckless jerks injured in a motorcycle crash, or some lunatic who raced down Pacific Coast Highway weaving through traffic. This victim was a girl, badly injured and bleeding out from a severed foot. Although surrounded by Sheriff's deputies and curious strangers, she seemed alone. Colt didn't see anyone trying to comfort her.

Brian pulled a tourniquet from the drug box and tightened it around the girl's leg above the deputy's belt. "How long have you been here?" he asked the deputy.

The deputy loosened his belt and slipped it off the girl's leg. He wiped his face on the shoulder of his shirt and looked at his watch. "It happened about fifteen minutes ago, say around 1420. The dispatch was a Code 3. They should've said it was a Code Blood."

Brian wrote the time on the tourniquet with a black marking pen. The medics in the ER would want to know how much time had elapsed since the accident.

Colt realized the girl was wearing a blue CALIFORNIA T-shirt. He paused and stared at the vivid blue color with the white letters.

"Colt, damnit," Brian said. "Get her vitals."

Colt knelt down. "Miss, can you give me your name?"

Her eyes were open and she turned her head slightly toward him. Her lips barely moved. Her voice was inaudible. Colt had seen the glazed look of shock before. It was not a good sign.

"Do you know your name?" he repeated, and leaned toward her. He thought he smelled scented soap on her skin.

"Bibi," she whispered.

"Bibi," Colt said to Brian. "She says her name's Bibi." He turned back to the girl. "Do you

know where you are?" She looked at Colt but said nothing. He read the response in her eyes: *help me*.

He touched her palm. She had a delicate hand and white skin, but her nails were dirty and ragged. "Can you squeeze my finger?"

She could not.

"A-O times one," Colt said, giving the paramedic shorthand assessment of her alert and oriented condition.

Help me.

"You writing this down, Colt?" Brian didn't ask, he ordered.

"Uh...yeah," Colt said, looking away from the girl's face. He pulled out his pad and began to make notes. The LifeLine EMT's stood by, listening and making their own notes on the girl's condition.

The deputy stood up, dangling his belt like a dead snake between his gloved thumb and forefinger. He looked at the spots where blood had stained the leather and shook his head. While his partner picked up his gun and equipment and took everything to their patrol car, the deputy coiled up the bloody belt, held it in one hand and pulled the latex glove inside out over it. He pulled the second glove off over the first, creating a casing of latex around the belt.

"Get a C-Spine on her," Brian told Colt. When Brian was in action, there was no idle chatter. He spewed out staccato commands and expected immediate execution.

Colt took out the collar, gently wrapped it around the girl's neck and immobilized her head. Trying to stay ahead of Brian, he yanked two saline bags and IV kits out of the drug box, bent over the girl, found a vein and inserted the first needle into her arm. As he hooked up the saline, Colt glanced at her face again. Ocean blue eyes looked back at him. Colt had never seen such a beautiful color. She appeared to be in her early twenties, had short blond hair and a California tan. She could have been a cheerleader from nearby Pepperdine University. Her white shorts, probably spotless when she put them on that morning, were spattered with blood and soiled from the dirt on the parking lot. The blue CALIFORNIA T-shirt matched her eyes and reminded Colt of a picture of his mother wearing a similar blue T-shirt.

Colt leaned toward her and held her hand. "Don't worry," he said, "we're here to help you." He squeezed her hand gently, then moved to her other side, held her arm and searched for another vein. He worried they might be collapsing from lack of blood pressure. He watched the blue T-shirt rise and fall as she took quick, shallow breaths. Colt pressed his fingers against the radial artery above her wrist and felt her pounding pulse. It only took a few seconds to count the beats. "One-thirty-two, she's going tachy," he said to Brian, who was still holding the tourniquet. Colt pressed his wrist against her forehead. In the warm afternoon sunlight, her skin felt cool and damp. Her body was shutting down and shunting what blood remained to her main organs. She was going into hemorrhagic shock from loss of blood. It was a standard case study from his training.

He found a vein and started the second IV.

"Cold," she whispered. "Cold."

For a split second, he thought she had uttered his name, Colt, and that she knew him. He took her hand again and held it in his own for a few seconds, trying to give her a sense of reassurance. "We'll take care of you, Bibi." He looked at her. "Don't worry. It'll be OK, I promise." He wasn't so sure it would be OK, but that's what he was trained to

say. "Get us some blankets," he called to one of the LifeLine EMT's. "She needs blankets."

As he bent over the girl, Colt's peripheral vision registered the bare feet, sandals, tennis and running shoes and the shined Sheriff's boots surrounding the girl. Where was *her* foot?

An EMT returned with a gray blanket. Brian told him, "Hold the tourniquet, keep it tight."

Brian took the blanket and spread it over the middle of the girl's body. He stood up, stretched his back, and turned to one of the deputies. "What happened?"

The deputy lowered his voice and looked at the silver pickup. "That asshole was texting when he veered off onto the shoulder. He had to be doing close to 50 because that's what it takes to bring down a metal pole." The deputy shook his head in disgust. "He's lucky he had his seat belt on or he'd have gone through the windshield and ended up on the other side of the restaurant. He passed a breathalyzer test, but he's definitely on something. This poor gal was standing out here and the pole sheared off her foot when it came down. It happened so fast she couldn't get out of the way. We were parked in the lot and saw the whole thing. "

"You saved her life," Brian said.

So far, Colt thought.

Brian radioed a size-up to Captain Ames, still caught in traffic a minute away. "We've got a trauma case, severed foot and we need the AirSquad."

Colt looked at Bibi's face again. He looked out at the white sand and the water beyond. It was a beautiful afternoon. The sun was warm and the sky was blue, sprinkled with the thin cirrus clouds that hover over the Southern California coast during the late summer. The surf crashed onto the beach throwing up a fine mist. The smell of saltwater hung in the air. Gulls circled and fought for scraps of food from the restaurant's trash bins. Two lifeguards with deep tans and wearing red shorts had run up from the beach to check out the situation, one of them carrying another drug box. How terrible is this, Colt thought. This beautiful girl is lying here on the blacktop bleeding out when she should be down on the sand enjoying the last hours of the weekend. Instead, some moron had taken her down.

Colt wiped the sweat off his face and motioned to the other EMT. "Hang on to these," and handed him the saline bags with the drip lines inserted in the girl's arms. Colt began a quick assessment. He didn't have to pull the girl's jaw open to make sure her throat was clear, she had already whispered a couple of words, but he ran his hands along her body to check for broken bones and further injuries. He remembered the half-joking words of one of his instructors: "Trauma calls look dramatic, but just splint the twisted stuff, plug the holes, start an IV, immobilize the back and get the patient to the trauma center." Right now, it didn't seem so simple. How do you plug *this* hole, Colt wanted to know.

Brian finished briefing Captain Ames, put his radio away and called out to the crowd, "Is anyone here with her? Does anyone know this person?" No one responded. Brian lifted her arm, placing his fingers above her wrist. He tried to find a heartbeat, then dropped the arm and stuck his fingers on her carotid artery. "Her pulse is dropping," he said to Colt. "It's down to 60." Brian frowned.

Engine 88 finally rolled into the parking lot and Colt waved them over. Moose jumped out, took one look at the situation and ran to the squad to get the backboard. Captain Ames joined them clutching his radio. Colt heard him talking to the AirSquad stationed in the hills above Malibu.

"We've got a trauma run," Captain Ames said. "A female patient, foot amputation. She's going into shock. We're at the Surf Rider Restaurant. The SD's clearing a landing zone on PCH. This is ALS, repeat, advanced life support."

Colt heard a small chopper. It sounded like a lawnmower. He knew it couldn't be the AirSquad and looked up. A news helicopter circled overhead. He saw another coming up the coast from Los Angeles. In minutes, news crews in vans would arrive, extend their satellite transmission poles, broadcast pictures of the accident and fan out to find people to interview. In the process, several spectators would have a moment of fame on Los Angeles network television. The accident would be a good lead-in on the 11:00 p.m. Sunday night news, but the anchors would be disappointed that a Malibu celebrity wasn't involved.

Moose joined them with the backboard and laid it down next to the girl's body.

Brian checked the C-spine. "Ready guys? On my count."

The men prepared to roll the girl on her side.

"Be careful," Colt said.

Brian gave Colt a quick look and said, "One, two, three."

In unison, they rolled her onto her side, Moose pushed the board in toward her and the men laid her back onto it.

Colt thought he heard her utter a faint moan. While Brian secured the head brace and straps across her body and prepared her for transport across the beach, he looked at her bloodied leg again. "Where's the foot?" he shouted. "Does someone have her foot?" She still wore one delicate leather sandal.

"We can't find the sucker," one of the deputies told Colt.

"Can't find it? How's that possible?" Colt said. The girl needed her foot. They had to ice it down before the tissue started to die. It might be reattached. "It has to be here somewhere." He went over to the damaged pickup.

The driver of the truck sat with his head down, behind the metal screen in the back seat of a black and white. A sheriff's deputy stood outside, questioning him through the window and writing on his notepad. Colt interrupted. "Where's the foot?" He was met with a shrug and a blank stare from the deputy. Colt looked at the driver of the pickup, a man about his own age, and hated him.

Colt walked around the pickup. Glass shards from a headlight and pieces of plastic lay on the ground. He knelt in a pool of green coolant dripping from the smashed radiator and looked under the front of the truck. The foot wasn't there. He stood up and looked around. Thirty or forty people stood in the parking lot watching the activity.

Colt grabbed the arm of the deputy who was questioning the driver. "Help me out. We have to find her foot." The crowd backed away as Colt and the deputy walked a circle around the truck and the cement base of the pole, scanning the ground. Colt shouted to the crowd, "We have to locate this girl's foot. Has anyone seen it?" A few heads shook as a buzz went through the crowd: a foot was missing. *A severed human foot was somewhere in the parking lot.*

Colt scanned the crowd of spectators, hoping for a response. He noticed a short man holding a take-home food bag, wearing a black hat, dark sunglasses, tight black pants and a long sleeve black shirt, buttoned at the neck and wrists. Standing among the people wearing shorts, swimsuits and T-shirts on a beautiful hot day at the beach, the

guy looked like someone from a Goth horror movie. Next to him was a girl wearing a skimpy tank top with tattoos covering her neck, shoulders and bare arms. Colt did a double take and ran his eyes over her body before he resumed looking for the foot. While the deputy continued to circle the area, his eyes glued to the blacktop, Colt searched the area around the end of the light pole and saw the blood on the sharp, ragged metal.

Colt looked over at the deputy, who shrugged his shoulders and said, "Nothing,"

The deep *whack, whack, whack* of one of the AirSquad Blackhawks echoed as it flew in over the hills. It stopped overhead, hovered and began to descend slowly onto PCH, tail and nose bobbing up and down, threading its way between power lines and telephone wires. Bystanders near the road turned their backs on the sandstorm and debris kicked up by the rotors. The backwash sandblasted a few cars and sent blue and green plastic trash containers flying.

In a well-rehearsed rescue ballet, the rotors had barely come to a stop before the AirSquad crew in dark blue flight uniforms and white flight helmets opened the side door and jumped to the ground. The EMT's and the men from the 88's, trailed by Brian holding the IV bags, carried the girl on the backboard across the parking lot, up along the shoulder of the highway and across the pavement to the waiting helicopter. As the aircrew took charge and loaded her inside, the engines gave off a high-pitched whistle and the rotors began to turn again.

One of the AirSquad medics shouted from the door, "Where's the foot?"

Brian shook his head.

Everyone backed away as the departing Blackhawk churned up another sandstorm. When it lifted off, Colt was still searching the parking lot. He looked up at the belly of the yellow and black bird as it headed for the California University Hospital. "I hope you make it Bibi."

When Brian returned from the beach, Colt told him, "We looked everywhere. Her foot isn't here."

"It has to be," Brian said. "Let's check again. It didn't just walk away." He gave Colt a small smile.

Colt was still unaccustomed to the paramedic "crispy critter" jokes. He understood humor was a way of coping with the terrible things they saw, but to him the jokes made everything seem worse. They walked the area again and came up empty. Reluctantly, they returned to the squad.

It was time to write reports. While the girl in the AirSquad was fighting for her life, everyone on the ground had a form to fill out. The Sheriff's deputies had to record the details of the accident and the people involved. They were already measuring the distances between the base of the light pole, the spot where it fell and the place where the girl was injured. One deputy had to submit a request for a new belt. The driver of the pickup was already on his way to the Lost Hills Sheriff's Station for booking and a drug test. The LifeLine EMT's sat in their ambulance and prepared their own run sheet, even though they had not transported a patient. In the squad, Colt grabbed the metal clipboard with the patient assessment sheets. He looked at the list of questions. He knew so little about the girl and had so little to report:

Name – *Bibi?*

Address – *unknown.*

Age – *23?* Colt made a guess, and then crossed it out.

M/F – *F.* At least he knew that.

Assessment – *Severed Right Foot. Not Found.*

Colt went on to fill in some of the vital signs they had recorded earlier and to write a brief description of the accident. He wanted to add, *life of a beautiful girl ruined by speeding idiot on drugs.*

The entire incident had taken less than an hour, but the expenditure of nervous energy was enormous. Now that the girl was someone else's responsibility, Colt could relax and begin to decompress. He felt exhausted. Activity in the parking lot returned to normal. The news crews finished their interviews. The spectators dispersed—some departing, others returning to their meals at the Surfrider. A tow truck prepared to haul the pickup away. The crew from the 88's helped direct traffic while they waited for CalTrans to arrive and drag the pole off the highway.

Colt finished the assessment sheet and decided to circle the area around the cement base of the pole one last time.

The deputy who interviewed the truck driver joined him. "Did you find her foot?" he asked.

"No."

"Someone probably picked it up."

"Picked it up? Colt was incredulous. "Who would do that? Not possible.

The deputy shrugged. "You never know. This is Los Angeles. Plenty of nut cases running around."

On the way back to the station, Colt said to Brian, "'Bibi.' I wonder what kind of name that is." He couldn't stop thinking about the foot and wondered if it could have even been reattached. They were trained to retrieve any severed body part—fingers, toes, hands, feet, even a penis—put it on ice and get it to the trauma center in a cooler as fast as possible. From that point, it was up to the surgeons to do their best. Colt refused to accept the fact that the foot was gone. A body part didn't just disappear from the scene of an accident. He was disappointed. It was his first real life and death situation as a paramedic and he felt he had failed. He promised Bibi with the ocean blue eyes that he would take care of her. She had been his responsibility while she lay injured on the blacktop. Now someone would have to tell her that her left foot had disappeared from the parking lot at the Surfrider Restaurant.

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Just released this ebook on Amazon. [Lessons From The Street](#) a collection of articles I've written over the years. Also, the Kindle version of my last thriller, [Targeted](#), has been reduced to \$3.99.

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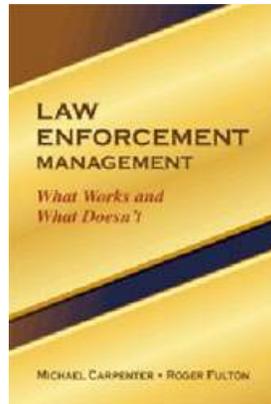
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The first book in *Marilyn Meredith's* (F.M. Meredith) Rocky Bluff P.D. series, **Final Respects**, is only available as an [e-book on Kindle here](#).

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**Law Enforcement Management:
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The third book in the Mitch Malone Mystery series by **W. S. Gager** will be released at the end of June. ***A Case of Hometown Blues*** has our wayward hero drowning his sorrows at the bar after trying to teach a seminar to the small newspaper in his hometown. As his spirits plummet he remembers his teenage years that were filled with death and sorrow, his pubescent crush and homecoming queen invites him to join her for a drink. The tet-a-tet becomes an entire class class reunion with connections he doesn't want to renew. His cousin, the bully, and his fellow torturer is now the chief of police, haven't outgrown their power trips. The pressure mounts when his crush is found dead the next morning and he was the last to see her alive. The police chief is measuring him for strips. The town turns against the prodigal son and Mitch must uncover the small town's secrets before the founding fathers throw away the key to his cell.

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