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PUBLIC SAFETY WRITERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER VOLUME XIV FALL 2009

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

Just a few days ago one of our members who had been considering a literary agent posted two questions on the PSWA list serve: Do any of you know anything about this agency and do any of you have any suggestions as to how I can create a marketing plan for my book? Within hours of his posting, our member began to receive responses from fellow members. One referred him to a book she had written: *Blitz your Book to a Best Seller*. Another member replied that she had a copy of the book proposal she used in contacting an agent that represented her and offered to give her fellow member a copy of her marketing plan. Another fellow member suggested that when searching for an agent or publisher it is always a good idea to look that prospective agent up on the *Editors and Publishers* website which "helped me avoid a couple of 'predator' agencies I was considering." Another fellow member suggested going to *Writerbeware.com*. Yet another suggested the *Predators & Editors* website. And yet another fellow member offered to help the member create a website. **All of that invaluable information was provided to the member making the inquiry within 24 hours!**

That same day, another member wrote a big thank you to Keith Bettinger who created and

maintains our members-only list of publications that accept work from freelance writers. This member wrote: "I got the listing for Nebraska Trooper from (the list) and have sent them three stories (for each of their last three issues) and they have published all three. Now, I have a fourth pending for their magazine next year."

There are, of course, many other benefits to becoming a member of PSWA – the writing contest, the manuscript review, the conference. And many other success stories like the ones I've just cited.

Wherever you are in your writing career, PSWA can help.

Go to the [Join](#) page on this website today and find out how you can take advantage of the opportunity to join with other writers across the country. As you can clearly see, they're always willing to network with you and work with you to achieve your writing goals.

Marilyn Olsen
President
Public Safety Writers Association

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2010 CONFERENCE PLANS

Autumn is fast approaching and the 2009 Public Safety Writers Association conference in Las Vegas is over for this year. However, if you want to learn about writing, see your name as a byline in publications like this one, don't worry, plans are already being made for the 2010 conference.

The 2010 Public Safety Writers Conference is going to be held at the ORLEANS Hotel and Casino on West Tropicana Avenue in Las Vegas, Nevada, from June 17-20, 2010. The 20th is Father's Day, and a trip to Las Vegas as a Father's Day gift is wonderful present.

Marilyn Meredith is once again organizing the conference speakers and panels. If you check our website at www.policewriter.com you can see who we have early commitments from, who our guest speaker is, and while you're there, fill out the application and either mail it in along with your check or sign up electronically and use PayPal and take advantage of the early bird special.

Why Las Vegas you might ask? Well, Las Vegas is one of the easiest and cost effective locations to get to. McCarran Airport is home to many airlines, and others use it as a hub. Also, you can't be bored in Las Vegas. If you want to gamble, our hotel has plenty of different gambling venues. If gambling isn't for you, take in a show, either a live performance in the showroom or in the multiplex movie theater. Oh did I tell you, they also have a sports arena attached to the hotel. If you like to bowl, they have 60+ bowling alleys for you to try. If all you care about is eating, the ORLEANS has that as well, from Seattle's Best Coffee, to Ice Cream, Subway, other snack bars, a coffee shop, a buffet for 3 different meals a day, and let's not forget the gourmet restaurants. There is an assortment of locations in the hotel where you can sit down and indulge yourself in some liquid libation. For all of this you don't even have to leave the hotel.

Do you want to see more of Las Vegas, well let me tell you what the hotel is doing for us. They have reserved a block of rooms for our attendees at very reasonable prices. They have done so for three days either side of our conference dates. That allows you to combine a conference with a wonderful vacation. The hotel provides shuttle service to the Las Vegas Strip. From where they let you off, you can walk the entire strip and enjoy the water shows, free shows along the strip, souvenir shopping, and sampling the food and beverages along the way. When you're done visiting the "strip" either wait for the shuttle bus to pick you up, or take a cab back to the hotel.

If you're into sightseeing like I am, Red Rock Canyon, Valley of Fire, Hoover Dam, Lake

Mead and Mt. Charleston to name a few attractions are all nearby. If you don't have a car, tours are available. One that I have seen is the "Pink Jeep" tours. They even stop at a park on the way to Hoover Dam and introduce you to a herd of Long Horned Mountain Sheep who graze in the park. Ghost tours and Mob tours are available at night. There are even helicopter tours of Las Vegas and surrounding areas.

If you are a firefighter or interested in fire trucks, the Clark County Fire Academy is right across the street from the ORLEANS. You can always stop by and watch the instructors torture the recruits. If you go to the fire academy, or anywhere else, please be careful crossing the street, many drivers make up the rules of the road as they drive.

Now you are probably wondering what I should wear. At our conferences we hope you will consider the other attendees and wear clothes. The type of clothes you should bring – casual, the more casual the better. Remember to bring your bathing suit along as the hotel has a beautiful pool.

Realize we have 4 seasons in Las Vegas; winter, spring, summer and fall, just like other places. In winter we even get snow on occasion. Spring and fall it only goes from the 70s to the 90s, but it's a dry heat. Even though summer doesn't officially start until the day after the conference it will be pushing the mercury to 100. July and August is when you hear, "Oh my God, my shoes have melted and I'm stuck to the sidewalk." Don't complain about the little inconvenience of the daytime heat, evenings are fantastic and feel cool, and the 'Strip" must be seen at night to enjoy all the lights and festivities. Besides, Phoenix is always at least 10 degrees warmer.

If you want to learn to write or improve your writing come to our conference. If you are interested in meeting people in the writing field, here's where you want to be. Do you want to be an award winning writer? Submit articles, stories, books, screenplays, poetry or whatever you're working on to our annual contest. Nothing looks better on a resume than seeing that you're an award winning writer. If you don't see a category that covers your writing, let us know. We might have just overlooked that genre. Submission guidelines and membership benefits are listed in our website. Take a few moments to visit with us and consider joining us for lots of fun and a great learning experience.

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HOW TO WRITE TRAINING ARTICLES by Ed Nowicki

If you started to read this article, this shows that you already have an interest in writing training articles. Now, you need a game plan on how to go about writing an article for publication. You need to want to share knowledge and information that will benefit the law enforcement community beyond your agency.

You already have writing experience. You've probably been writing or approving incident reports for many years. Now, you'll just need to shift gears into a different mode. OK grasshopper, we now begin a CliffsNotes® version of a college course on non-fiction article writing.

How do you come up with an idea for an article? This sounds difficult, but it isn't. If you don't believe me, go to the magazine section at Wal-Mart®, and look at a few different women's magazines. (Men, don't worry about friends and neighbors seeing you perusing women's magazines. Tell them you're doing field research.) Look at how many articles are written on how to lose weight. Yet, there's only one basic way to lose weight, and that's to burn more calories than you consume - that's it!

Think of what you know and what law enforcement officers should know. You should also know which law enforcement periodical could be a good match for your article. You should be very familiar with various law enforcement periodicals by reading a few issues. Knowing what type of articles are published a certain magazine can help you understand what an editor wants, besides saving you time.

Is the potential reader of your article is a supervisor, trainer or administrator? If so, *Law and Order* would be a good periodical to approach. There may also be some editorial focus overlap among the various periodicals.

If you visit the *Law and Order* web site (<http://www.hendonpub.com>) you will see that, "The goal of *Law and Order* is to inform, rather than to entertain. The purpose is to improve police operations in the widest sense. For instance, this may be accomplished by informing police departments across the country of a successful program being implemented by one particular police department." This is only a small example. You can read much more on their web site.

If your article is directed to the broad law enforcement community, or even security, *Police and Security News* may be your market. Patrol officers who work the streets would be a good fit for *Police* magazine. A firearms and officer survival slant works best for *The Police Marksman*. An article for SWAT officers and tactical officers would benefit the readers of *Tactical Response*.

If you believe that you have a topic meant for a specific periodical, ask for the editorial guidelines for submitting articles to that periodical. You can sometimes download the guidelines from the periodical's website or send an email asking for them. It is very important for you to follow each periodical's guidelines. If they want mainly "how to" articles of 1200-1500 words written in the third person, then you need follow that basic guideline.

Got an idea for an article? If you are a new writer, you should write a query letter to the editor. Think of the query as your letter of introduction to the editor. Get your point across quickly, and make sure that your query letter is flawless and well organized. If your query looks like it was written on a napkin by a second grader, you now have a guarantee that the editor won't consider you or your article.

The query letter must capture the editor's attention. It must be written so the editor will think that your article is needed. In essence, your query is a well thought out plan, much like a high-risk traffic stop plan. You need a beginning, which usually states the problem. The middle solves the problem with details of how this is done. The ending generally restates the problem with the best solution.

If you are a new writer, and you have a good query letter, the editor may ask you to submit your article on speculation, or "on spec." This means that the editor likes the idea for your article, but the quality and style of your writing is unknown. If the editor wants to publish your submitted article, you will generally be provided with a contract listing payment, if any, and terms, including copyright ownership of the article. The contract is a formal agreement to the terms specified in the contract.

If you believe that you have a great idea for an article that is meant for publication in a certain periodical, you may want to submit your article to the editor before your query letter. Generally this is not a good idea, but if you feel that strongly, do so. Just don't take it personal if you get a form "ugly duckling" letter rejecting your article. If your rejection letter has some hand-written notations, that means that the editor is taking valuable time to let you know what the problems are, so feel very good about that. You may only need to do some reformatting or rewriting.

There are generally two different perspectives of being a writer for a professional periodical. You can write from the perspective of being an expert. For example, you may want to write an article dealing with a particular firearms training method, which is a big plus if you are a firearms instructor.

You can also write as an objective writer who researches a particular topic, which can include well researched and documented facts along with interviews of experts in that particular field. You would report on the facts and quote the experts. There needs to be a certain caution when writing about a commercial product, so your article is not disguised as a glorified commercial advertisement.

Getting useful quotes from various experts in the field can help you write half your article. These quotes show that you connected with individuals who are well known in the field, or who may be well known because of their specific title, say Chicago Police Superintendent Phil Cline. Well-placed and relevant quotes add luster to your article.

This article is mainly written in the second person, since this writer has written this monthly "Training" column for almost seven years. As a beginning writer, you should probably write in the third person, using an active voice. If you want to write a first or second person piece, check with the editor to get that approved.

It's a good idea to do what you can to read about being a non-fiction article writer. The public library is a good place to check out books. You may want to subscribe to the monthly periodical, *Writer's Digest* (www.writersdigest.com), which is filled with information focused for writers of both fiction and non-fiction.

If you want to be a regular writer, you should also own a few reference books, such as a dictionary, a thesaurus, a language guide, a writer's guide and a book of quotations. Most of the information contained in these books is available for free by going on-line. The Internet is also a great source of information and misinformation, so check the facts to make sure that they are, indeed, facts.

In all probability you will need to submit your manuscript electronically, so make sure that you use MS Word. This also works for Mac's, as long as you name the manuscript as PC users would name it. Use a 12-point font, such as Times New Roman, and double space.

In addition to being a writer, you will need to be a photographer. Most periodicals want digital hi-resolution photos. Make sure that you use a digital camera with photos with a minimum of three-mega pixel photos. There may also be a way for you to submit 35 mm roll of film and received a CD with digital photos taken from the film.

You may want to do a bit of research before you purchase a digital camera. The monthly *Consumer Reports* magazine does periodic reviews of digital cameras, including naming a "Best Buy" designation to get the most camera for the least amount of money. Chances are that your public library subscribes to *Consumer Reports* and that they archive recent issues.

Submitting photos can be extremely important. One good photo may be worth more than the proverbial thousand words. Space limitations for this article prohibit including more information about photos.

Get a good camera with a good lens that can result in good photos. You take the photos, not the camera, but you also need a good camera that is capable of taking well composed and properly lit, clear photos. A tripod is a must that should be used whenever possible. Once again, use your public library in order to obtain material on photography composition.

Law and Order has photo submission guidelines that state, in part, "Digital Images must be high-resolution files in jpeg or tiff format only. Digital images cannot be BMP and cannot be sent through MS Word. The definition of high-resolution is 300 dpi in a 5x7 inch minimum or 72 dpi in 16x18 inch minimum. Digital images 500KB or larger are preferred, images less than 100KB are unacceptable.

Please make a special effort to photograph fully uniformed officers whenever possible, even for situations normally associated with training. Photos should be based on whatever setting is correct for the article or department."

There you have it! You can contribute an article and share your knowledge with the law enforcement community. It's also nice to see your name in print. One last bit of advice, "NEVER submit poetry to any law enforcement periodical."

About the Author: Being a writer for more than 25 years, Ed Nowicki had over 500 articles published. Ed is also an award winning book author for his book of police stories, *True Blue* (St. Martin's Press - July, 1993), which had 2 printings. He has written, and continues to write, the "Training" column for *Law and Order Magazine* for the past 10 years. Ed is currently working on a number of book projects, including *American Blue*, which is a police story anthology.

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How to Put Humor into Your Mystery

(You'll be surprised how much you already know!)

Like any story, this is essential: It must be **LOGICAL, SURPRISING/UNPREDICTABLE, & IMAGINATIVE.**

The **Three S's** of Comedy Writing Are: It's OK to **SUCK, SKIP, AND** use your **SUBCONCIOUS.**

The **Three C's** of Comedy Writing Are: **CONSISTENCY, CHARACTER, AND CONFLICT.**

Character must: **HAVE A CLEAR GOAL, be EMPATHETIC & BELIEVABLE, & have FLAWS.**

Three Types of **Conflict** are: man against **SELF, WORLD, AND NATURE.**

The **paradox** of good comedy: be **UNIQUE BUT UNIVERSAL. IE. Know your AUDIENCE.** The class clown tells the joke everyone gets; the nerd tells the joke that only he gets.

Word choice can be very important.

Some funny **sounds** are: **Explosives: B, D, G, K, P, and T.**

Therefore, funny words usually use at least one of these explosive sounds. Some examples of funny words are: **KUMKWAT, TWINKIE, RUTABAGA, POOF, AARGH, DUMBKOPF, HOCKEY PUCK, COCONUT, DINGLEBERRY, & BABALOO.** Many are Yiddish, such as **SCHMUCK.**

Types of Humor:

1. The Power of **THREES.**

2. Word play: **PUNS, OXYMORONS, TOM SWIFTIES, DOUBLE ENTENDRE, REFORMING, ALLITERATION, HOMONYM & SYNONYM.**

3. Situational: **JUXTAPOSITION/INCONGRUITY** and/or **REPETITION/VARIATION ON A NORM.**

A. Juxtaposition: **SLAPSTICK, ABSURDITY/BUILD ON REALITY, WISECRACK, & UNDERSTATEMENT.**

B. Repetition: **RUNNING GAG, MOMENTUM BUILDING, CLICHE TWIST, & the TRUTH.**

In my humble opinion, try to avoid: **UNNECESSARY CURSING, OBSCENITY, INSULTS/PUT DOWNS, & SARCASM.**

--Dawn M. Kravagna

--<http://www.CattleCapers.Com>

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GUNS by Tim Dees

At the last PSWA conference, there were two excellent presentations on details of police procedure that books and movies seldom get right. I'm going to expand on that topic a bit, starting with firearms.

Long guns

There are a number of ways to classify firearms. Physical size, type of barrel, method of feeding ammunition, size and type of ammunition, and other characteristics I haven't thought of are just some of these.

"Long guns" and "handguns" take in most personal firearms. By "personal firearms," I mean those that are normally carried and operated by one person. There are military weapons, such as LAWS (Light Anti-tank Weapon System) rockets, which are carried and operated by a single person, but this guide isn't intended to address the very wide range of military weapons.

A "long gun" is usually, as the name implies, longer than a handgun. This is not necessarily the case, as there are some handguns with ridiculously long barrels. These are seldom used for actual shooting, and are more often for collectors or exhibition. Long guns are typically fired as "shoulder weapons," meaning that the shooter tucks the stock (the rearmost portion of the weapon) into the hollow of his shoulder in order to aim and fire.

Long guns can be further subdivided into two more groups: rifles and shotguns. The principal difference between the two is in the design of their barrels. Rifles, as the name implies, have rifling, or grooves, milled into the inside of their barrels. The grooves impart a spin onto the bullet as it moves down the barrel, which gives it gyroscopic stability while in flight. This ensures the bullet will travel pointy-side forward and also helps to keep it from wandering outside of its intended path. The rifling is also what makes the distinctive marks on the sides of a bullet that allow it to be matched to the weapon that fired it.

Shotguns

Shotguns have smooth barrels, with no grooves. Shotguns fire shotgun shells, which have a very different appearance from rifle ammunition. A shotgun shell has a brass casing that contains gunpowder for propellant, but the front-facing portion of the shell is plastic or sometimes cardboard. The plastic portion usually contains "shot," round metal pellets varying in size from a piece of Tic-Tac candy to grains of coarse sand. The largest size shot are size 00 (always said as "double-ought"), down to "snake shot."

Shotgun shells can also contain projectiles other than shot. Protective fathers and orchard owners have been known to load rock salt into their shotgun shells to discourage plundering of their daughters or fruit. At anything but very close range, the rock salt would produce a shallow but extremely painful wound. Shotguns can also fire rifled slugs. A rifled slug is a very large (about an inch long and the diameter of a cigar) bullet with the riflings on the projectile instead of inside the barrel. Rifled slugs don't have a lot of range, and aren't especially accurate as compared to rifle bullets, but they can fracture an engine block and put a car permanently out of commission.

Shotgun shells can also carry tear gas and incendiary (fire-starting) charges, but these are rarely used.

Weapons with the outward appearance of shotguns have come into common use in recent years. These are modified to fire only "less lethal" ammunition, such as rubber balls, small sandbags, and capsules containing pepper spray liquid. These shotguns will not fire regular shotgun ammunition, and they're usually marked by stocks that are bright orange.

Rifles

Rifles used to be reserved for tactical (SWAT) teams, but in the last few years police departments have come to recognize that their patrol officers are increasingly likely to roll

up on heavily armed suspects or "active shooter" incidents and have to handle them before the tactical team can respond. Thus, patrol rifles are commonly found in marked squad cars operated by regular uniformed officers. Officers often purchase their own rifles (their agency will usually prescribe a model of rifle) and must train and qualify with the weapon before they can carry it into the field. Patrol rifles are usually mounted alongside the shotgun, in an upright rack between the front seats and on the front side of the screen between the front and back seats, or horizontally on the screen, behind and above the front seat occupants' heads.

Rifles can—and usually do—fire larger and heavier projectiles than do handguns. However, the greater lethality of the rifle has to do more with projectile velocity and accuracy. The longer barrel of the rifle and the larger powder charge in a rifle cartridge allows the bullet to be accelerated to a much higher speed than would be possible in the smaller handgun.

Bullets are accelerating only as long as they remain in the barrel of the gun that fires them.

Once they leave the barrel, they both begin to slow down from friction with the air, and yield to the pull of gravity. The bullet has no airfoil, like a wing, to keep it airborne, so it immediately begins to fall. If you were to hold a marble at the same height as a rifle barrel pointed parallel with the ground, and drop it at the same instant as the bullet left the barrel, both the bullet and the marble would hit the ground at the same time (assuming the bullet didn't hit something else first). The bullet might be close to a mile away by then, but the gravitational influence on them is identical.

Of course, it's possible to keep a bullet in flight longer by firing it upward in a parabola, like a quarterback throws a football, but that technique is only effective with artillery, which explodes on impact.

Unless the range is extreme, most rifle ammunition will penetrate standard body armor. Combat troops wear very heavy external body armor that provides more protection, but most law enforcement officers wear Level II or Level III concealable body armor underneath their uniform shirts. This is sufficient to protect them from most handgun rounds. Ammunition common to military-style rifles such as the AR-15 (the non-military model of the venerable M-16 carried by combat troops since the Vietnam era) and AK-47 (copies of the Kalashnikov rifle used by the military and insurgent forces outside of North America and Europe) and that used for big game hunting will only be slowed down by police body armor.

Most rifles have semi-automatic mechanisms. This means that when the rifle is fired, most of the energy produced by the expanding gas produced by the burning gunpowder is used to push the bullet down the barrel towards its intended target, but a small portion is ported to the action of the firearm. This portion of gas pushes a spring-loaded bolt to the rear of the weapon, opening the chamber and ejecting the spent shell. As the bolt is forced forward by the spring, it picks up a new cartridge from the magazine that is inserted below the rifle's action, usually just forward of the trigger housing. The new cartridge is seated in the chamber and the rifle is ready to be fired again. This process takes a few hundredths of a second.

A single action rifle requires the shooter to manually eject the spent shell and chamber a new cartridge before firing again, usually by pulling a handle attached to the bolt back and counter-clockwise. Most modern single-action rifles are designed for hunters and snipers.

Full-auto

A fully automatic weapon continues to fire bullets as long as the trigger is held down, until its ammunition is exhausted. The terms "semi-auto" and "auto" or "automatic" are often confused. The mechanical difference between a semi-automatic and an automatic weapon is a very small piece of milled metal in the trigger mechanism called a "sear," and one can be made into the other rapidly by switching out the semi-auto sear for a full-auto sear (or vice versa). A gunsmith can do this in under a minute. Doing so without the proper licenses will earn you five to twenty years as a guest of the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

TV and movies make full-auto fire look devastating, but that is largely a myth. A hand-held weapon firing at full auto is close to impossible to control. The barrel tends to rise immediately, and maintaining any semblance of marksmanship is laughable. The AR-15 rifle has a full-auto firing rate of 800 rounds per minute. An extended AR-15 magazine holds thirty rounds of ammunition (the standard magazine has twenty). Do the math, and you'll see that Tommy Terrorist gets to fire his rifle on full auto for 2.2 seconds before he runs dry. So much for those protracted firefights you see in the movies.

There is a saying among law enforcement shooters, "I'd rather be missed by a .45 than hit with a .22." A .45 is a big bullet; a .22 is a tiny one. The intended meaning here is that the size of the weapon or the lethality of the ammunition in it has little import if the shooter can't hit his target. When Gary Gangbanger is changing magazines after his full-auto "spray and pray" attack, a skilled marksman could take him out by putting a .22 through his eye socket.

Bottom line, full-auto shooting is highly overrated unless you're operating a heavy machine gun on a bipod (a pair of legs attached to the gun's frame to stabilize it against the ground) or mounted on a heavy vehicle, ship or aircraft. The closest thing to full-auto that is actually used by most combat troops is a "burst" setting, where each pull of the trigger fires three rounds. Ammunition is heavy, costly, and if you run out, it's a horrible feeling.

As the distance between shooter and target increases, the degree of difficulty in hitting the target increases exponentially. A skilled deer hunter can place his shot within a few inches of the deer's heart out to 100 yards or so, but even experienced hunters miss completely. A sniper trying for a small target (such as someone's head) has a much more difficult job, and may have to pull it off from farther away. Snipers usually require a "bench rest" for their rifle, using sandbags, a bipod, an improvised shelf, or some other aid to relieve themselves of most of the weight of the rifle and the need to compensate for the tremors of their own body. Ideally, they will have a "spotter" to assist them. The spotter provides lookout for the sniper, who can't take his eyes off his telescopic sight, and uses binoculars or a telescope to monitor the area surrounding the target and the backstop behind it. The backstop is the area where a missed shot or a through-and-through will land. Unless collateral victims are an acceptable risk, all shooters have to be mindful of the backstop.

Long range snipers do much more than sight in on the target and pull the trigger. They take into account distance, wind direction and velocity (which may be different at the target's location), air temperature, humidity, and the elevation difference between their rifle and the target. They know the bullet will fall a predictable distance while in flight, that it can be pulled off target by wind, and that humid air will offer more resistance and slow the round, extending the time in flight and influencing the other calculations. High temperatures create refraction errors, making a target appear to be someplace it's not. There are various calculators, some built into wristwatches, that will accept all these parameters and tell the sniper how to adjust his aim to put the round on target. If you come across someone wearing one of these watches, it is far more likely that they want you to think they are a sniper than they actually are one.

I probably ought to have defined my terms earlier. As for bullets, rounds, cartridges, shells, etc.:

- The bullet is the actual projectile that issues from the firearm's barrel.
- The shell is the brass casing that contains the gunpowder, held in on one end by the bullet and on the other by the primer cap.
- The primer is a small machined pellet of (typically) some combination of barium, lead and antimony compounds that will explode and ignite the gunpowder when the firing pin of the weapon strikes it. The primer is the little dot in the middle of the flat end of a cartridge.
- A cartridge is the entire assembly of bullet, powder and primer.
- A "round" is a less specific term, roughly synonymous with "shot." Pistol and rifle magazines are characterized by the number of rounds they can contain, and rangemasters will order shooters on the firing line to fire X rounds.

Because I've used the terms semi-interchangeably, you might also be wondering the difference between a "rifle" and a "gun." There is a [scene in the movie Full Metal Jacket](#) that graphically illustrates the U.S. Marine Corps' view, but the technical difference is this: a rifle is carried, fired and serviced by a single person. A gun is a crew-served weapon. Military machine guns normally require two troops. One carries the machine gun and ammunition; the other, called the loader, carries even more ammunition and an extra barrel for the gun. A machine gun fired even a few minutes will get so hot the barrel will warp and/or strip out the internal riflings. When firing, the loader feeds the belts of ammunition into the gun. Artillery pieces are guns, as they require two or more troops to aim, fire and load them. Handguns are technically not guns, but pistols.

And we'll talk about pistols more next time.

* * *

TID-BYTES

by Sunny Frazier

I'm a scavenger. A bottom feeder. I attack the Internet the same way I did on the job when I worked in Narcotics at the Sheriff's Department in Fresno.

I was an "office assistant" for a 10-man narc unit. The sheriff gave us a double-wide trailer in a nectarine orchard as our base of operations. Free fruit from the farmer in the summer. Little supervision from the brass at headquarters. We referred to ourselves as "Trailer Trash." It was a great job.

I also got access to all sorts of sites the other office assistants were barred from. DMV records, of course, but fun stuff like jail visitation logs. I handled drug allegations and had my own system of cross-referencing. The county got away with paying me low wages by forcing the title of office assistant on me, but the detectives and I knew I was much more: they referred to me as an "Information Specialist."

I'm not going to go into stories of crimes I helped solve or cases I created, the search warrants I wrote, the outside agencies that came to tap into my expertise. We all have such stories and bragging rights. But, I'm going to tell you how my narc secretary skills continue to help me now in my writing career.

People ask how much time I spend on the Internet because I seem to be marketing like a crazy woman. The truth is, I spend less time than you'd think, but I do it efficiently. The cross-referencing system I developed to expedite things for drug-busting I've converted into how I currently cross-promote.

I decided to share with my PSWA friends some quirky sites I've come across in my cyber sleuthing. Oh, and on a side note: I checked a book out of the library called "The Everything Guide to Magazine Writing," publication date 2007. In the back, (Appendix A, page 288) is listed "Public Safety Writers Association." It made me all warm & fuzzy inside.

Here's the Hit List:

IN REFERENCE TO MURDER

<http://www.inreferencetomurder.com/html/associations.html>

Of course, we already know everything about everything, but this is still a fun site to tap into once in awhile.

THE RAP SHEET <http://therapsheet.blogspot.com>

"Send Us News: The Rap Sheet is always on the lookout for information about new and forthcoming books, special author projects, genre innovations, and distinctive crime-fiction-related Web sites. Shoot us an e-mail note."

Yeah, I think we can accommodate them!

CRIME ALWAYS PAYS <http://crimealwayspays.blogspot.com>

"Crime is but a left-handed form of human endeavor." W.R. Burnett
Irishman Declan Burke has coined a new genre: Screwball Noir. Haven't read his novel THE BIG O yet, but I find the title, um, *intriguing*.

THE LINEUP: POEMS ON CRIME <http://poemsoncrime.blogspot.com>

Sarah Cortez, your peeps are calling!

CRIME RANT <http://www.crimerrant.com>

Authors Gregg Olsen and M. William Phelps are "Deliberating Crime Coast to Coast." I'm thinking of letting them know PSWA exists.

CRIME FICTION DOSSIER <http://www.crimfictionblog.com/>

Listed as an "Award-losing commentary on books, authors and publishing," David J. Montgomery dishes with criminal intent. Montgomery is the thriller/mystery critic for The Daily Beast and the Chicago Sun-Times.

THE GRAVEYARD SHIFT <http://www.leelofland.com/wordpress/>

"There are no perfect crimes, merely imperfect investigations."

O-kay. . . .The author of Police Procedure and Investigation, A Guide for Writers, Lee Lofland holds forth interesting views and info.

CRIME SPOT <http://www.crimespot.net>

A round-up of the latest in the crime fiction blogosphere.

MOMENTS IN CRIME <http://twitter.com/MomentsInCrime>

"Location: In the Shadows of Your Mind."

For those of you who like your info short and tweet.

That's my list. Have you found a criminally good site guaranteed to amuse or confuse?
Send it to me at sunny69@comcast.net

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HOW I BEE-CAMED A RITER by John Bellah

My father was James Warner Bellah, who wrote for *The Saturday Evening Post* for many years prior to WWII. After the war the motion picture industry purchased many of his stories and turned them in to John Wayne movies: *Fort Apache*, *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* to name a few.

If you had asked me 30-years ago if I intended to become a writer like my dad, my answer would not only be; "no," but "Hell NO!"

So what happened? In my early adulthood I worked as a mechanic/technician for various automobile agencies in the Los Angeles area and later, I owned and operated *MotorMedic of Santa Monica*, which was a mobile automotive maintenance/service/repair station mounted in a large van and I could go to the customer. A great idea but started up at the wrong time—the 1973-4 energy crisis. At that time many independent repair shops were also gas stations and they practiced legalized extortion. "Let me do your brakes, and tune-ups and I will let you buy a few gallons of gasoline." As I didn't sell gasoline...

After eight years in automotives I was ready for a change and became a cop. What the cop shows on TV don't tell is there is a lot of paperwork which is required—and I wrote a lot of reports. Back then we had to write our reports by hand, and often we had to write them while sitting in the cruiser in-between calls. Early in my career I became a Field Training Officer, which meant I would field-train new officers. Later on I became a detective, but by then, computers were becoming popular, which was a Godsend when it came to writing up tedious documents such as affidavits and search warrants, which previously had to be written by an old antique, called a typewriter.

Early in 1991 I saw an ad in a law enforcement publication from a deputy in the Midwest looking for input on Chrysler Corporation police cars. It seems he was intending to write a book on the subject. The idea fascinated me as I had always had an interest in police vehicles, which are somewhat different than civilian vehicles, due to their heavy-duty equipment. For a short period in my career I served as a fleet supervisor, and would occasionally recommend or purchase vehicles for my department. In doing so I had amassed some police vehicle brochures and information.

I wrote the deputy a letter and enclosed some photocopied documents from my collection. The deputy wrote me back and asked if I could supply some more information and I replied that I would try. Soon I was sending thick Manila envelopes with photocopied information and a few weeks into the project I not-so-subtly hinted that perhaps he would consider me becoming a co-author. Silly me—at that point I had never written professionally (as in for money).

The deputy was rather cool to that idea—he had been burned in the past, and I don't blame him. However, about six weeks later I got a six-page typewritten letter from the deputy, explaining how he re-considered my proposal and as I had the needed input and contacts from the West Coast, he wanted me to write six chapters, he would pay so much per chapter, and give me co-authorship credit.

There was still a lot of research to conduct. I interviewed people from various departments, visited libraries, and various swap meets to obtain old photographs and magazines. I figured if I filled up one file storage box I would be ready to put the information down on paper. Was I ever naive. Two years later I filled up 2 ½ boxes and I spent a good part of my vacation banging away on a typewriter. The end result was *Dodge Plymouth & Chrysler Police Cars 1956—1978* and the sequel covering the years 1979—1994. 240,000 words and NO sex! Eventually I contributed text and or photos to five other police car books.

The deputy took a position as editor for a major law enforcement publication, which meant he had to give up freelancing to competing publications, however, I was able to pick up where he left off. Eventually the publisher started a police fleet publication, to which I contribute to regularly, as well as other publications.

Over the years it has been a long and wild ride. Occasionally I will be assigned an out-of-town assignment, such as covering the annual Michigan State Police or Los Angeles County Sheriff Vehicle Testing Program or a fleet conference. As exciting as it is, with the economy being what it is, I still keep my day (but mostly night) job.

* * *

BOOK REVIEW

P.D. James, *New Adventures*, and a Likable Thief *Book Review by M.M. Gornell*

Adam Dalgliesh (P.D. James) is my favorite male protagonist, even surpassing my beloved Hercule Poirot, Hamish MacBeth, and Albert Campion. When I settle in with these characters, I feel safe and comfortable. I know without a doubt it will be an enjoyable read, and high on my life experiences scale.

But an author I've never read, a protagonist I've never heard from, now that's an adventure!

Every new book I open is with the expectation I'm about to experience a great discovery. Sometimes, I'm disappointed. *Sometimes*, it's a wonderful ride.

J. Michael Orenduff's "The Pot Thief" was a *wonderful ride*.

Let me first confess my initial biases. Having met the most likable Mike and his wife Lai at the latest PSWA Conference, I was expecting a protagonist I *would* like. Also, I'm fond of New Mexico and Albuquerque, pottery and potters (I dabble myself), and tales with a strong sense of place.

Mike had some big expectations to surmount. And he didn't disappoint.

First off, I loved our hero's name from the start—Hubert “Hubie” Schuze! But there's more to Hubie than a not-to-be-forgotten name. Mike gives us a protagonist who's witty, marches to his own conscience, is a good thief (you'll have to read the book to figure that out), and is a kind person without being a sap.

Then there's the snappy and intelligent repartee between Hubie and his friends—Susannah in particular. What I found most refreshing was Mike's ability to use vocabulary a-cut-above, and still weave a nicely paced story with twists and turns.

Indeed, what I love about P.D. James is that she never writes-down. While reading “The Pot Thief” I enjoyed the refreshing note of not being written-down-to—yet no reader stops were required to pull out the dictionary. It was wonderful reading a good story, with a hero I dearly liked, written with intelligence and skill.

And then there's the fact New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson recommended “The Pot Thief.” Who am I to disagree with a Governor for goodness sake?! (*I know, I know... Never use a question mark and apostrophe together. Or sneak in ellipses.*)

* * *

MEMBER NEWS

Earlier this summer, I sold my # 6 book New Orleans Detective series to Desert Breeze Publishing. All are romantic suspense and will be released in a variety of ebook formats, including one for the Kindle. The first book, ***Cherished Witness***, will be released in September 2009.

More info can be found here:

<http://stores.desertbreezepublishing.com/-strse-39/%3Ci%3E%3ENew-Orleans-Detectives-Book/Detail.bok>

The other books and their release dates are:

Prime Suspect - February 2010

Chosen Target - June 2010

Beloved Captive - October 2010

Unwilling Accomplice - February 2011

Perfect Partner - June 2011

In addition, I have a single title RS, Skeleton Bayou, coming out in December from The Wild Rose Press in both ebook and print.

--Melanie Atkins

<http://www.melanieatkins.com>

<http://melanieatkins.wordpress.com/>

CHERISHED WITNESS--Desert Breeze Publishing, September 2009

SKELETON BAYOU--The Wild Rose Press, December 11, 2009

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My latest Deputy Tempe Crabtree mystery, ***Dispel the Mist***, is now available from the publisher, <http://www.mundaniapress.com> and all the usual places, and is also an e-book. My elevator pitch for this one is, “While Native American Deputy Tempe Crabtree



investigates the murder of a popular county supervisor, she has an encounter with the Hairy Man.”

The Hairy Man is the Yokut Indians version of Big Foot. There is a 500 to 1000 year-old pictograph on the wall of a rock shelter on the Tule River Indian reservation near where I live. The cover is a depiction of the pictograph of the 8 foot tall Hairy Man.

Marilyn Meredith
<http://fictionforyou.com>

<http://marilynmeredith.blogspot.com>

The End

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