



Home
Join
Newsletter
Conference
Writing Contest
Manuscript Review
Tips & Ideas
Resources
Feedback
Member's Pages
Links
Cop Tales 2000
Mailing List
Contact Us

PUBLIC SAFETY WRITERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Late Spring 2010 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.

IN THIS ISSUE:

[MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT](#)

[MORE ABOUT THE PSWA CONFERENCE](#)

[SNAPPY WORDS](#) (and other tidbits)

[MEMBER TIPS](#)

[CONTROLLING RUNAWAY VEHICLES](#)

[TURNING BACK THE CLOCK](#)

[HANDGUNS PART II](#)

[A FIREFIGHTER'S ROAD TRIP, DAY I](#)

[MEMBER NEWS](#)

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Only a few weeks remain until the PSWA annual conference. Thanks to Marilyn Meredith and the work of many other dedicated members, we have a record number of people registered and it promises to be the best conference ever.

If you haven't checked out the agenda on this website yet, I'd suggest you do so. As you can see, we have a terrific lineup of speakers this year and there's still time for you to register to attend.

Whether you are an accomplished, published author, just thinking about writing for the first time or somewhere in between, I guarantee this conference will provide the most valuable several days you could possibly spend.

In addition to information on every facet of writing and publishing, you will also have the chance to network with dozens of your fellow writers - contacts that will prove invaluable to you in the years to come. So, right now, right this minute, click on [Conference](#) and sign up for the conference. You will be ever so glad you did.

Marilyn Olson, PSWA President

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MORE ABOUT THE PSWA CONFERENCE

by Keith Bettinger

Hi Everyone. You're going to enjoy this conference. Marilyn Meredith has put together a great line-up of speakers. The competition for writing awards is tightening up with 80+ entries. The hotel is great. We are staying at the Orleans Hotel and Casino. It is right on West Tropicana Avenue, a short ride from the airport. You can either take a cab or one of the transportation buses that makes the rounds to all the hotels. Just ask in the airport luggage area and the staff there will point you in the right direction.

The hotel has great restaurants, don't miss out on the buffet, it's a great one. If you want to take in a movie, they have 16 to pick from. If you're into bowling, go to the bowling alley in the casino and bowl a few games. If you want to gamble, I've heard there are some machines or tables looking to make your acquaintance. Bring your bathing suit and enjoy the pool. Ringling Bros, Barnum and Bailey Circus will be performing in the Orleans Arena. You can get tickets when you arrive from the box office. If you want to stay in the room and read all the great books you buy at the conference, you won't be disappointed in your room. They are very nice and the price is great. The hotel will also provide you with free shuttle service to the Las Vegas Strip so you can sightsee and people watch. Make sure you see the water show at the Bellagio at night. Also go in and enjoy the ornamental garden in the lobby. Take a trip up the Eiffel Tower and view the strip from 700 feet above.

If you want to do some sightseeing, there is much to see, and a lot of it is free. If you don't have the information I sent out previously on Shows, Shopping and sightseeing email me, and I will try and find it again for you. It is buried deep inside my computer.

If you have materials to handout at the conference or books to sell, and don't want to transport them on the plane, ship them to my home. Make sure you send me your tracking numbers so I can be prepared for their arrival. I will deliver them to the hotel for you.

Be comfortable at the conference. The hotel is air conditioned, the outside world is not. It will be over 100 degrees when you arrive, but don't worry, it's a dry heat. Don't sit on metal wire benches unless you want a waffle pattern tattooed to your butt. Do not stand for too long in one spot with rubber bottomed shoes, they might melt. Enjoy the pool, but remember it's out in the sun. Sun-block is a must have. If you don't bring any see my wife, she sells AVON. If you don't like my wife, see Nancy Farrar, she's another AVON cult member. (It is a cult, they just don't have animal sacrifices at their meetings.)

If you come to conference, add a couple extra days for some fun in town. There is more to this town than gambling. It really is a fun place to visit. It's also a lot of fun to live here.

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SNAPPY WORDS: A FREE Online Visual Dictionary and Word Choice Tool

by Ed Nowicki

Writers can never have enough resources when it comes to being a better writer. That said, Snappy Words is certainly worth your consideration. Snappy Words is a Free Online Visual Interactive English Dictionary and Thesaurus that allows you to find meanings of words and other associated words in a visually interactive display. Lookup a word and see other related words of main query, each with meaning.

Some of the reasons for using Snappy Words are:

- Easy to use dictionary and thesaurus.
- Learn how words associate in a visually interactive display.
- Get ideas to help write content for your blog, article, thesis or simply play with words!
- No registration required.
- No limit on number of searches. Look up as many words as you need anytime.
- No software installation needed. All you need is an internet connection and a browser (Firefox, Safari, Internet Explorer and others).
- It's free and fun!

Not very computer savvy? Not to worry, even a computer neophyte can use it, since it's easy to use. It may even replace your dictionary or thesaurus. Just go to: www.snappywords.com/

When looking (“looking, looking for — the act of searching visually”; “search, hunt, hunting — the activity of looking thoroughly in order to find something or someone”) for the best words to express (carry, convey, show, evince, verbalize, utter, pour out, voice) your thoughts, consider using Snappy Words to look up the first inadequate word that comes to mind. Snappy Words presents a visual, dynamic network of all related words and their definitions.

Type words in the search box and click Go or simply hit Enter. Once the words branch off the main query, you can double click a node to find other related words. To explore the features:

1. Place the mouse cursor over a word to view the meaning.
2. Double click a node from the branch to view other related words.
3. Scroll the mouse wheel over words to zoom in or out. This helps you see more associations or view words and meanings more clearly.
4. Click and drag a word or branch to move it around and explore other branches.

The Snappy Words interface queries the WordNet (<http://wordnet.princeton.edu/>) lexical database developed by Princeton University and made available for students and language researchers. This dictionary groups synonyms into synsets through lexical relations between terms. These meanings and semantic relationships are revealed graphically by the interactive web technology made available by Snappy Words.

If you use Firefox as your browser, you can get the add-on at: <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/13971>

Ed Nowicki is a Law Enforcement Writer and Consultant

Other tips from Ed: Here's a link to the 591 word article, "Writing For Money - Top Ten Paid Writing Websites" <http://ezinearticles.com/?Writing-For-Money---Top-Ten-Paid-Writing-Websites&id=4188428>

Did you know that you can download a number of books for Amazon's Kindle Book Reader for FREE (The price is right!), many others for \$3 or less. Just go to Amazon.com and plug "free kindle books" in your search. The freebies include: The Dark Tide; My Soul To Lose; The Wild's Call; The Man Who Would Be King; Gulliver's Travels; Serial; Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Wickedly Lovely; The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin; Fairy Tales Every Child Should Know; and, many others.

Editors Note: Many of our PSWA authors have books on Kindle.

We know that writers are some of the most voracious readers, so wouldn't it be nice to have a list of the best websites to download FREE E-Books? Well, there's a website that lists 20 places to download FREE E-Books. Simply go to the following website: www.hongkiat.com/blog/20-best-websites-to-download-free-e-books/

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MEMBER TIPS

Kregg Jorgenson said, "I sent an article out to a magazine and it was rejected. Just to test a theory I changed the title of the article and mailed it back and guess what, they bought it! Sometimes the editors or readers may not read everything in their slush pile so we need to grab their attention with a catchy title." Remember that when coming up with titles for your articles.

Ed Nowicki sent this along. Do you like to create digital books? If so, here's a list of the top ten digital book creators compiled by David Kapuler, media and technology specialist at the Greendale (WI) School District.

1. [Mixbook](#) - far away the best site for creating a digital book to either share w/ others or order for a hard copy.
2. [Bookrix](#) - one of the best sites for advertising your digital book, very user friendly, and a nice social environment.
3. [Panraven](#) - a nice site for creating, sharing, and purchasing your digital book.
4. [Bookbuilder](#) - nice educational site for creating digital books, user account must be created.
5. [PDF Flash](#) - upload a PDF to create a nice looking flash-based digital book.
6. [My Publisher](#) - free software which allows user to create fancy looking photo/digital books.
7. [Tabblo](#) - create a user account to make digital books w/ photos.
8. [Smilebooks](#) - create beautiful looking storybooks w/ either online/download software.
9. [Blurb](#) - great site for making photo books to order.
10. [LuLu](#) - create real/ebooks w/ this nice looking site.

And here's another from Ed Nowicki: Great website for overcoming writer's block at: <http://grammar.about.com/od/yourwriting/a/wblockquotes.htm?nl=1>

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CONTROLLING RUNAWAY VEHICLES

by John Schembra

There has been much publicity lately regarding the "problem" of stuck accelerators and runaway vehicles. One of the most publicized incidents where a driver claimed he was unable to stop his Toyota Prius from accelerating to 94 mph, eventually regaining control with the help of a quick thinking California Highway Patrol, has been mostly de-bunked as not happening the way the driver claimed.

Regardless of that, it is possible for a vehicle accelerator to stick, causing the car to gain speed quickly. There could be a mechanical problem, a software glitch, or as simple as something, such as a floor mat or debris, interfering with the gas pedal that causes the sudden and continuous acceleration.

Incidents like this are extremely rare, but that doesn't mean we should not be prepared for it. Should your accelerator stick there are some quick, easy and common sense steps that can be taken to prevent the vehicle from getting out of control. These steps must be done as soon as the driver realizes there is a problem, though.

The first thing I would do is stomp on the gas a couple of times. Do it quickly, like pumping the brakes, and don't spend a lot of time trying this. It may cause whatever is causing the accelerator to stick to un-stick.

If that doesn't work and the car is still gaining speed uncontrollably, the next best thing is

to put the car in neutral. During a radio interview I did, some callers expressed uncertainty in doing that as they were fearful they would somehow put the car in reverse. That can't happen, as all cars have a "lock" system that prevents the car from going into reverse from the drive and neutral positions.

If you do put the car in neutral, you will be able to safely brake the car to a stop as you pull off the road. Your engine may still be racing, gaining RPM's (revolutions per minute), and there may be some damage to the engine because of the excessive RPM's. Remember, engines can be fixed, and the alternative is a lot worse.

Another trick is to shut the engine off. Just turn off the key or hit the off button. You will be able to brake and steer safely until the car comes to a stop. In older cars, if the engine was turned off the driver would lose the power steering and power brakes. It doesn't mean you would not be able to brake or steer, just that it would be more difficult. The brakes and steering would still work, though.

With most newer cars, the power brakes and steering are controlled by a vacuum and/or hydraulic system, and there is enough residual pressure in those systems to allow them to function normally for one stop if the engine loses power. The car will still have proper steering and brakes until it comes to a stop. I have tested the police training cars we use at the Sheriff's Department, and at fifty MPH, with the engine turned off, I was able to easily and safely steer and stop the car. Once the car came to a stop, the power brakes and steering ceased to function properly.

All the above suggestions will work, but it requires the driver to keep calm- don't panic! And, the best way to prevent panicking is for the driver to know and understand the vehicle. That means they should test their car out, find out how it feels and responds if they do need to put it in neutral or turn off the ignition.

I suggest everyone take their car to an empty parking lot somewhere and drive in a straight line at 25-30 mph. Put the car in neutral, or leave it in drive, and turn off the ignition. Apply the brakes and try the steering so you know what to expect if it becomes necessary to do so in an emergency. Everyone who drives the car should do this, too.

Knowing what the car will do in such an emergency is the best way to prevent panic, making us all safer drivers. Knowledge is power!

* * *

TURNING BACK THE CLOCK

by Sunny Frazier

If you could go back and start your writing career over, would you do anything differently? I have thought of this question many times as I push forward. I think it's good to stop and evaluate once in awhile. Am I on the right track? Could I have avoided the pitfalls? Can I learn from my mistakes? What I came up with may surprise you. It certainly surprised me!

1. I wish I'd started earlier. I wrote every chance I could, in secret as a child. My mother thought it was a waste of time when I could be outdoors or doing chores.
2. I wish I'd understood the teachers who raved about my talent instead of being embarrassed to be singled out.
3. I wish I'd been the homecoming queen instead of the editor of the high school newspaper, guaranteed to kill one's social status.
4. I wish I'd grabbed opportunities that presented themselves. If I'd married the scarred Vietnam vet, his father promised me a writing career on the AAA travel magazine. I could have had a terrific career and a bad marriage. I ran in the other direction. I joined the Navy.
5. I wish I hadn't settled for being a dental tech in the military. Schools weren't guaranteed for women back in 1972 and dental training was all I was offered. Later I

- found out that if I had passed on the offer, I would have been mopping floors until I could “strike” for a journalism position. While I didn’t take the gamble, I did volunteer at every base newspaper where I was stationed.
6. I wish my college profs wouldn’t have pushed me to interview for a local newspaper in my junior year. I was the token woman and apparently wasn’t suppose to score three front page stories in one edition. The men resented me and my love of journalism died.
 7. I wish I had started my first novel earlier. Instead, I went on to work in the narcotics division of the sheriff’s department and realized I had everything to become a mystery writer—including great plots.
 8. I wish I’d published before I was seasoned. All sorts of options were there: Publish America, Xlibris, the new e-book format. Instead, I watched and learned from other’s mistakes. I studied the trends in publishing, learned about the industry, weighed my chances with a large publishing house and finally made a decision. I picked a growing publishing house that NEEDED me as much as I needed it. I found I liked making decisions with the publisher and having my ideas heard.
 9. I wish I’d known that I was a good public speaker. Instead, I practiced with a video camera and worked on my flaws (stop the hair flipping, no “uhhs”). Volunteering on panels and not worrying so much about being judged as being listened to took awhile to sink in.
 10. I wish I’d censored my tongue and my prose. My opinions sometimes raises eyebrows and provokes responses. So do my novels. I get kicked off or moderated on list serves. People remember who I am. I’m controversial. Oh wait—that’s a good thing, right?

So, would I do anything differently if I could rewind the clock? No, I don’t think so. Everything in my life, every crazy decision I made and strange road I followed made me the writer I am today. I guess I trusted my judgment and stayed true to my ideals. I couldn’t ask for more or done anything differently. And anyway, time doesn’t go backward, it only moves forward. So should we.

* * *

HANDGUNS PART II

by Tim Dees

Semi-automatic handguns

Semi-automatic firearms are often and erroneously called “automatic weapons” or “automatic pistols,” confusing them with full-auto weapons. A fully automatic firearm will continue to fire bullets as long as the trigger is held down, or until it runs out of ammunition, whichever comes first. A semi-auto fires one round for every pull of the trigger. The “auto” part refers to the mechanism that fires the cartridge in the chamber, ejects the casing of the cartridge that was just fired, and chambers a new cartridge from the magazine, all from a single pull of the trigger.

Semi-auto pistols have a flat profile when viewed from any perspective than the side. Revolvers bulge out more, having to allow for the round cylinder. The flat construction makes the semi-auto more comfortable to carry and conceal.

Most semi-auto pistols in common use have their ancestry in the M1911 .45ACP (the “ACP” stands for “Automatic Colt Pistol,” but is almost never spelled out) pistol, usually referenced as just the “1911” by gun enthusiasts. As the name implies, the 1911 was adopted in that year as the standard issue sidearm by the U.S. Army. Prior to this time, troops who carried sidearms were usually equipped with .38 revolvers, although some carried revolvers chambered for the larger .45 round. John Browning designed the 1911 for the Army, and the primary vendor was Colt Firearms. The .45 was a masterpiece design that has not changed much in the nearly 100 years it has been in use. The pistol itself was issued to troops in all U.S. branches of the service until 1985, when it was

phased out in favor of the Beretta 9mm. This is a very long time for any design to remain in favor, especially one so complex as a firearm. Colt no longer manufactures these guns, but the design is copied by several other manufacturers in several variations.

Ammunition comes from a magazine that is loaded before being inserted into the weapon, usually at the base of the grip or handle (these are names for the same thing). The magazine is a rectangular metal or plastic "chimney" that contains a follower plate and a spring. The spring forces the follower upward, and is compressed as ammunition is loaded into the magazine by pressing in each round from the top. The magazine can be a "single stack" variety, where the rounds stack vertically, or a "double stack," where each round is offset from the one above and below it by roughly half the round's diameter. Double stack magazines are thicker, and shooters with smaller hands may have difficulty getting a good grip on guns that use these.

A semi-auto pistol functions very much like a semi-auto rifle. With at least one round loaded into the magazine, the shooter inserts the magazine into the gun with some force to ensure it is seated properly. Unlike a revolver, this action is insufficient to fire a round. Before the gun will fire, the shooter has to first chamber the first round from the magazine by pulling the slide back ("racking" it) and letting it go, allowing an internal spring to push it forward. When a round is fired, the expanding gas from the burned gunpowder forces the bullet down the barrel and toward the target. A portion of this gas is directed to the slide, which is forced backward. When the slide moves back, the chamber is exposed to the ejection port, and a mechanism picks up the fired casing and forces it out of the gun, usually flying slightly up and to the right. When the slide reaches the limit of its travel backward, the spring forces it forward again. As the slide moves forward, it picks up a new cartridge from the top of the magazine and forces it into the chamber, ready to be fired at the next pull of the trigger.

Loading and reloading

Most, if not all, police officers carry their semi-auto pistols with a round already chambered. Movie and TV cops often do not, so they can draw their guns and dramatically rack the slides to chamber a round before going into battle (TV cops with revolvers will occasionally open the cylinders of their guns to ensure they're loaded. Whenever I see this, I have to think, "You're a model cop, and you don't remember whether you loaded your gun?") If a real cop was to do this, the cartridge already loaded in the chamber would eject, flying out and wasting the round unless someone were to retrieve it and reload it into a magazine.

A semi-auto pistol does something a revolver can't do—it tells you when you're out of ammunition. When the last round from the magazine is fired, the slide will lock back when it tries to pick up a new round from the magazine and finds it empty. This tells the shooter—and anyone who happens to be watching—that he's run out of bullets.

A full-size semi-auto handgun carries between eight and 18 rounds with standard magazines. Semi-autos are reloaded by pressing a magazine release, which usually causes the empty magazine to fall from the gun by the force of gravity, then inserting a new magazine. A typical shooter can do this in two or three seconds with practice, but an expert can reload in under a second, as is depicted [here](#). If the slide has locked back, the shooter can press the slide release with his thumb and release the slide, chambering a new round and getting back in the fight.

Magazine capacity can be a political issue. In the 1990s, then-President Clinton signed the so-called "Brady Bill" into law, placing what turned out to be a ten-year restriction on the sale of certain firearms and accessories. One of the restrictions was to outlaw the sale of magazines with capacities exceeding ten rounds, with an exception for the military and law enforcement agencies. Magazines holding more than ten rounds were serial numbered and tracked by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE). Magazines manufactured before the ban went into effect could be sold without restriction, to anyone who wanted them.

The net effect of this was to make police equipment more expensive. The manufacturers had to produce two types of magazines, and there was far more demand for the ten-round versions than for the full-capacity types. Private gun owners paid more than \$100 for full-capacity, pre-ban magazines that had sold for \$10 when they were new. After ten years, the "sunset" option of the Brady law came around, there was a Republican president in office, and the Brady law quietly went away. There are still some states that ban the sale and/or possession of high-capacity magazines today, however.

Running out of ammunition, or shooting the gun "dry," is frowned on by skilled pistoleros. At one advanced handgun school that caters to LE officers, anyone who is seen with a locked back slide during a course of fire must buy a case of beer for later consumption. Experienced shooters are supposed to count their rounds and know how many remain in the magazine. Reloading is done from behind cover when the remaining ammunition in the magazine is low—not out.

So as to have the maximum amount of ammunition available, most cops will "top off" their magazine when loading the gun. This is done by loading a full magazine into the gun, racking the slide to chamber a round, then extracting the magazine and replacing the round that was just loaded into the chamber. This way, a pistol with a magazine capacity of eight rounds can actually have nine rounds available before it is empty. Cops who do this often regard the ones that don't as lazy or complacent.

Many people refer to magazines as "clips." This is incorrect nomenclature. There are ammunition "clips," but they are used (rarely) with revolvers or World War II-era M1 rifles. These are small pieces of sheet metal that hold several rounds of ammunition by the small groove at the base of the shell casing.

Law enforcement officers carry reload ammunition on their Sam Browne equipment belts. In the revolver days, most officers carried a total of 18 rounds—six in the gun, and 12 more on the belt. For many years, the most common method of carrying extra ammo was either in bullet loops or dump pouches. Bullet loops were the strips of leather tacked to the belt, each loop holding one cartridge, Wild West-style. The cartridges were removed one or two at a time, then loaded into the gun. A slightly faster method, though one still heavily dependent on fine motor control (which goes to hell real fast under stress), was to use a dump pouch, a rectangular case that held six rounds, stacked on their sides. When unsnapped, the pouch would fall forward, being attached to its backing at the bottom. The shooter got all six rounds in his hand at one time.

Two innovations allowed the shooter to load either three or six cartridges in one movement. Half-moon clips held three rounds at the base of the casing, in the same arrangement as the cylinder. The shooter would take a clip out of a belt case, insert the three rounds into the cylinder, then slide the clip out to drop the cartridges in. Later, speedloaders allowed the loading of all six rounds at one time. A speedloader has a plastic cylinder that resembles the one in the revolver. In the middle, there is a six-pointed star with its points pressed against the sides of the cartridges to hold them in the speedloader. When the speedloader is inserted into the cylinder, the cartridges are released either when the center of the cylinder presses against the star, rotating it slightly so that the points move off the sides of the casing, or when the shooter turns a knob on the back of the speedloader, depending on the speedloader's design.

Two half-moon clips or a single speedloader with six rounds occupies a space about the size of a golf ball. Two reloads makes for an awkward package on the front of the Sam Browne belt, where these are usually carried.

Reloading a revolver requires two hands under most circumstances, and the gun is disabled and off target while reloading. To reload a revolver, the shooter uses his thumb to press a catch that releases the cylinder, then transfers the revolver to his left hand, gripping it by the frame. The fingers of his left hand push through the frame to rotate the cylinder out of the gun frame, and then presses an extractor rod at the front of the cylinder with his thumb, pointing the barrel in the air. The extractor rod moves a star on the rear of

the cylinder that has edges inserted into the grooves at the bottom of the shell casings, pulling the empty casings from the cylinder and allowing them to drop to the ground. The shooter then uses his right hand to retrieve the reloads from the bullet loops, dump pouches, or speedloader/half-moon clip carriers, and inserts them into the chambers. The shooter then grasps the gun with his right hand in the conventional grip and uses his thumb or inertia to rotate the cylinder back into the frame of the revolver until it locks closed. The shooter adjusts his grip to the conventional shooting position, and re-engages the target.

With practice, this can be done quickly, but the semi-auto shooter will still beat the revolver shooter every time. Moreover, the semi-auto shooter nearly always has more ammo in his magazine than the revolver shooter has in his cylinder, so he has to reload less often. If one hand is injured, the revolver shooter can reload by inserting the barrel of the revolver into his waistband to hold the gun while he uses his good hand to perform the steps listed above. This, of course, takes even longer. While it also takes two hands to reload a semi-auto, the evolution is not nearly so complex.

Books and TV/movie dramas occasionally include some discussion of "safeties" on firearms. Possibly the one that I see most often, and that irritates me the most, is something like, "Our hero entered the dark warehouse, drew his service revolver, and snapped off the safety." Revolvers do not have safeties. If you pull the trigger and there is a live cartridge under the hammer when it falls, the gun will go off.

Semi-autos usually have safeties, but they're implemented in different ways. The aforementioned 1911 .45 has two, and sometimes three: a manual safety, a grip safety, and sometimes a firing pin block safety. The grip safety is an inset along the upper rear of the gun grip that is depressed when the gun is held in the conventional shooter's grip. If the grip safety is not depressed, the gun won't fire. The firing pin block safety was not part of the original design, but it often used in later models. As the name implies, it blocks the firing pin from the primer until the trigger has been pulled almost to its maximum rearward travel.

The manual safety is the one most evident, composed of a lever at the top of the grip, just below the external hammer. On a 1911 .45, when pushed up, the manual safety locks the slide, and internally a portion of the safety blocks the sear that releases the hammer. When the manual safety is pushed down, the slide is free to move and the hammer is unblocked, but the pistol will fire only if the hammer is cocked. The 1911 .45 is a single action semi-auto, and requires that the hammer be cocked, either by pulling it back to its last stop or by racking the slide.

Fans of the .45 have their own jargon describing the way the guns are carried. The most popular method is "cocked and locked," also known as Condition One. This means that there is a round in the chamber, the hammer is cocked back all the way, and the manual safety is on. Firing the gun requires only thumbing off the manual safety and pulling the trigger. Condition Two is with a round chambered, but with the hammer lowered, uncocked. This requires a little finesse, as the hammer has to be lowered slowly and manually, and there is a potential for an unintended discharge. The shooter will have to manually cock the hammer to fire a round. Condition Three is with the chamber empty and the hammer lowered. Firing the pistol requires that the shooter rack the slide back to chamber a round, then pull the trigger. The hammer will be cocked by the racking action of the slide. TV cops who are observed racking the slides of their guns before going into battle are carrying their guns in Condition Three. Very few real shooters do this.

Any gun that will fire a bullet when the trigger is pulled is characterized as being in "battery condition." Activating a manual safety, lowering the hammer on a single-action weapon, or having no live round in the chamber removes it from battery condition. The condition of the weapon is a factor in assessing the intent of the person in possession of it. If a person robs a store using a gun in battery condition, it creates a presumption he was ready to shoot to complete his crime or effect his escape. If the gun is unloaded or no round is in the chamber, one may presume the gun was carried for intimidation purposes (although all

that is necessary to charge armed robbery is to threaten to use or simulate a gun during the commission of the crime; there doesn't have to be an actual gun present, battery condition or otherwise).

More modern designs of semi-auto pistols, such as those carried by most law enforcement officers today, have manual safeties that also function as "decocking levers" or just "decockers." (The Glock is an exception) When the levers are up, the pistol will fire. When the lever is pushed down, the trigger is disconnected. Pulling the trigger does nothing. If the pistol is cocked, lowering the manual safety/decocker also drops the hammer safely, as there is a block between the firing pin and the primer. In firearms training with guns of this type, shooters are conditioned to push the decocker lever down, then up again before reholstering. If they have a round chambered, this will return the gun to the normal carry condition of a round in the chamber with the hammer down, manual safety off. Most modern semi-auto designs are double action, so pulling the trigger both cocks the hammer and drops the firing pin on the primer.

Those decocker levers are important because of another characteristic of most semi-autos—the first pull of the trigger is different from the ones that follow it. Assuming the weapon is being carried with the hammer uncocked, the first pull of the trigger is a long one, so as to cock the action and then drop the hammer. When the first round is fired, the slide racks back, re-cocks the hammer, and chambers a new round from the magazine. The next trigger pull is a short one, because the hammer is already cocked. This "short pull" trigger continues until the shooter runs out of ammo or presses the decocker lever to return the gun to double action. This is a significant difference between firing a revolver and firing a semi-auto.

A few semi-auto designs include a magazine safety, also called a magazine disconnect. If there is no magazine loaded and seated in the gun, the trigger is disconnected the same as if the manual safety is engaged. It is usually impossible to determine if a semi-auto pistol has a round in the chamber without pulling the slide back slightly and looking into the ejection port. Someone who sees a semi-auto pistol with no magazine inserted might assume the gun is unloaded, but will get an unpleasant surprise if they pull the trigger. When there is a magazine disconnect designed into the gun, it will not fire unless the magazine is seated into its well in the grip of the gun.

Some law enforcement officers regard the magazine safety as a safeguard, while others see it as a hazard. If an officer loses control of his magazine safety-equipped gun in a struggle, he can push the magazine release with his thumb and disable the weapon. If the bad guy then gets it away from him completely, he probably won't be able to figure out why it won't fire until the cop can take measures to overcome him or retreat. But if the same cop is in a gunfight and has to reload, his gun is useless while he changes magazines. If he is assaulted in mid-reload, he can't fire. The debate as to which is the greater disadvantage is ongoing, but many cops (and sometimes their departments) disable the magazine safety in their guns. Unless someone checks the gun for function or takes it apart to examine it, there is no outward way to tell if this modification has been made.

Transition training and jams

As gang crime increased in the 1980s, many police officers felt outgunned when up against gangbangers with "nines" (9mm semi-auto pistols) and the occasional MAC-10, TEC-9, or Uzi submachine gun. A wheelgun with six bullets just wasn't cutting it anymore. Law enforcement agencies started scrapping their revolvers in favor of semi-auto pistols with greater ammunition capacities. 9mm pistols were the first choice for most departments, but many reconsidered after some shooting experiences. The 9mm bullet is roughly the same size as a .38 Special, but typically has a lower velocity. Officers were putting six or more 9mm rounds on target without seeing the bad guy fall down. Some agencies still carry 9mm pistols, but the .40 and .45ACP calibers are more common now.

Officers who had used revolvers their entire careers had to complete "transition training" before they could carry the new guns. Some of the training was intended to develop the

"muscle memory" to draw, aim, fire, eject a spent magazine, reload a new one, and decock the gun before re-holstering. This is mostly repetition of the movements until they become second nature, and they're the same every time. Shooters also had to get used to the first shot from their semi-autos being double-action, then each subsequent shot being single-action, until the decocker lever was lowered. There were two other issues that never came up with revolvers: stoppages and "limp-wristing."

The latter problem has nothing to do with a shooter's sexual orientation. Revolvers rotate a new cartridge into position after one is fired with no dependence on recoil. A semi-auto uses some of the recoil force to move the slide back, ejecting the spent casing and chambering a new one. If the shooter doesn't maintain a stiff wrist and firm grip, much of the recoil will be absorbed by the shooter's arm, and the slide may not get enough energy to fully compress its spring. The slide may not move back far enough to eject the casing cleanly, or the new round won't fully seat in the chamber. When this happens, the result is often a stoppage or "jam." Limp-wristing is usually remedied by doing some exercises to strengthen the grip and lower arm muscles. If you see a police academy student walking around with a tennis ball in one hand, that's usually why.

One common stoppage is a "stovepipe," where the spent casing sticks out of the ejector port vertically, blocking the slide from returning to battery condition. A "failure to feed" occurs when the gun doesn't fully chamber a new round. This is usually caused by a magazine that is either dirty or not fully seated in the weapon. A "double stack" is when two live cartridges or a live cartridge and a spent casing are both in the chamber, like a rear-end collision. A dirty weapon can also cause any of these problems.

Firearms instructors drum the mantra "tap, rack, shoot" into their students. If the gun fails to fire when the trigger is pulled and the slide isn't locked back (indicating it's out of ammo), the shooter is supposed to

1. TAP the magazine butt plate to seat the magazine in the magazine well, just in case it isn't already there,
2. RACK the slide, pulling it back all the way to the rear, then releasing it so the compressed spring will force it forward. This should eject any stovepiped or misfed rounds from the chamber, and load a fresh round into the magazine. Then,
3. SHOOT. Don't waste time examining the gun to see if it looks okay now. Get back on target and re-engage.

If pulling the trigger doesn't produce the desired effect, repeat the drill until the stoppage is cleared.

Revolvers were far more forgiving with regard to routine maintenance. Most of the delicate workings of a revolver were sealed behind a side plate that might not ever be opened. Some cops laughed at the notion of cleaning their guns, so that sergeants conducting roll call weapons inspections had the opportunity to use the cliché "There's a spider in that barrel who's been there so long he has hashmarks." A semi-auto that isn't cleaned and oiled after it's been fired may develop carbon and gunpowder deposits on its rails and feed ramps that will cause frequent stoppages. Cops who work in damp climates have to clean their guns more frequently to ensure against rust. Those who work in hot, dry areas are careful not to use too much oil, as it will dry out and leave gummy residue behind. Good cops always have clean guns, and can tell you exactly when his weapon was last cleaned.

Glocks

Glock semi-auto pistols are the most popular make carried by American law enforcement officers, with about 65% of the guns in U.S. police service. They are in favor for good reason. Glocks are exceptionally reliable and easy to shoot. Tommy Lee Jones, playing the U.S. Deputy Marshal Sam Girard in *U.S. Marshals* affirmed this in a scene toward the end of the movie, while examining another character's Glock sidearm:

"These things are so cool. They can shoot underwater, pour sand in them and they'll

shoot. They shoot every time."

The Glock differs from traditional designs in that the grip and lower receiver are made of a polymer (plastic) with metal parts inside. The magazines are also mostly plastic, with metal springs. When Glocks first appeared on the U.S. market, there was a brief scare because uninformed pundits (or possibly competing gun manufacturers) claimed the guns would easily get past metal detectors at airports and other security checkpoints. In fact, Glocks have almost as much metal in them as most other guns of similar size, and they aren't any easier to get past a metal detector than the others.

Glocks have a distinctive appearance, and it is, frankly, ugly. Where other pistols may have beautiful wood grip panels, polished metal slides, and receivers of contrasting tone, Glocks are completely black, with a dull finish. The only moving parts are the trigger, a magazine release button, and a takedown lever on the slide, used when the gun is field-stripped for cleaning. It has three safeties, but only one is visible, and it is inconspicuous. There is an internal "drop safety" that keeps the hammer from falling on the primer until the trigger has moved 5mm to the rear. There is a firing pin safety that also disengages at the 5mm mark. Finally, there is a "trigger safety" that consists of a small lever close to the tip of the trigger. When the shooter's finger is on the trigger, the trigger safety is pushed back and the trigger can be pulled back. If the trigger catches on its lateral edge, as it might on the lip of a holster, the trigger safety prevents the trigger from moving. The design is simple but ingenious, characteristic of the Glock overall.

The pistol was designed by Gaston Glock (1929-), an Austrian engineer who is still involved in the day to day operation of his companies worldwide. Prior to designing his pistol, he had little experience in firearms, his expertise lying more with polymers. This novice approach served him well, as his designs were a significant departure from those already in manufacture.

Besides their reliability, Glocks were a popular choice for agencies transitioning from revolvers to semi-autos because firing them was so much like firing a revolver. Unlike most other semi-autos, the trigger pull on the Glock is the same every time. There is no external hammer or decocking lever, and every shot is a double action shot.

The dependability of Glocks to shoot every time someone pulls the trigger has been the downfall of some Glock shooters. Some of them have pulled the triggers of their guns and for some reason expected something other than "bang" to occur. Self-inflicted wounds in hands, feet, legs and buttocks are a bit more commonplace than one might expect from people who are allegedly skilled and experienced in handling firearms. Because of this phenomenon, there are four rules for handling Glocks:

1. Keep your finger off of the trigger.
2. Keep your goddamned finger off of the trigger.
3. Keep your finger off of the goddamned trigger.
4. Keep your goddamned finger off of the goddamned trigger.

If a Glock is shot "dry," the slide locks back, like other semi-autos. Reloading can be a little different, though, depending on what kind of magazine is in the gun. The Glock was designed originally for the European military, and combat troops treat firearm magazines differently than cops do. Soldiers are issued a "combat load" of magazines, and they're supposed to come back from the field with them. A soldier can cover a lot of ground during a firefight, and if he drops his empty magazines on the ground, he will have difficulty recovering them later. The sides of the polymer magazines in a Glock bow out slightly, and offer a little resistance as they're inserted and removed from the magazine well. When the shooter presses the magazine release, the magazine doesn't drop out. It has to be pulled out by the shooter. This helps the combat troop hang onto his magazines.

The magazines in most semi-auto pistols and rifles drop out by the force of gravity when the magazine release is pressed. Cops are trained to reload by allowing the empty magazine to drop to the ground, reloading a fresh magazine and getting back on target as

quickly as possible. For this reason, some aftermarket manufacturers have produced “drop free” magazines for the Glock, which don't require any assistance to get out of the gun. Glocks are made for most of the semi-auto calibers, but most police weapons will be chambered in 9mm (also called 9mm Luger), .40, and .45ACP. In addition to being produced in multiple calibers, most Glocks are produced in small, medium and large frames. The large frame models are most often carried by uniformed officers, the medium frame guns by plainclothes and off-duty officers, and the small “Baby Glocks” for backup guns and also for off duty use.

These small-medium-large models are made even more versatile because most of the magazines for them are interchangeable. The principal difference between the different sized guns of a like caliber is in the size of the butt and the length of the barrel. The receiver and trigger mechanisms are identical. This makes it possible to insert the magazine from a large frame Glock 9mm into a Baby Glock of the same caliber. If an officer who is carrying a full frame 9mm Glock loses his gun, he can pull out his Baby Glock backup, shoot it dry, and reload from the magazines he was carrying on his belt for the regular sidearm. The larger magazines will stick out several inches from the butt of the smaller gun, but they will feed just fine. The sole exception to this rule is with the Glock Model 36, chambered in .45ACP. The .45 is a big cartridge, and a double stacked magazine of them makes for a gun comfortable only for people with big mitts. The Glock 36 uses a single stack magazine of .45ACP rounds, and is a subcompact, Baby Glock model.

Each size and caliber Glock is assigned a two-digit model number, which is not the same as the serial number. Serial numbers are unique to each gun from a single manufacturer, Glock or otherwise. Glock owners may refer to their guns by the caliber or the model number. If a shooter says he has a “Glock 40,” he's referring to the .40 caliber, not the model number, because the model numbers only go up to 39 (as of late 2009). You won't know what size gun frame he has. However, a Glock Model 38 is the compact (medium size) pistol in .45ACP. There are no Glocks chambered in .38 Special, which is a common revolver cartridge.

For many years, Glocks were delivered in a plastic box with a snap-on lid. This led to some Glock owners calling them “Tactical Tupperware.” The box has a projection on the bottom that fits inside the trigger guard and keeps the gun from sliding around inside the box. Some novice Glock owners experience an unpleasant surprise if they try to store the Glock in the box while loaded, as the trigger guard projection forces the trigger back, firing the gun if the chamber is loaded. Glock placed a warning on the box to store the gun unloaded only, but not everyone reads the instructions.

* * *

A FIREFIGHTER'S 2010 ROAD TRIP

by Robert Haig

DAY ONE

I got off to a good start on Jan. 9th. I left Sharon's house headed for Chicago. It was clear all the way to Jackson Michigan. I ran into a snow storm. There were several spin-out accidents and one semi overturned in the median.

I decided to stop at Joliet, Illinois where I walked around looking for the Blues Brothers but couldn't find them. At the Empress Casino I talked to a pit boss. He comped me a five star room for the night. The television showed the Cowboys kick the hell out of the Eagles.

Grabbing the shuttle taxi, I headed for the casino. Riding with me was a big guy named Harley and his, Indian-Mex, girlfriend Jeannie. They told me that a poker dealer, named Oscar, was spreading a rumor that Jeannie was pregnant. They were going to talk to Oscar about it. They asked me to be the child's godfather in case the rumor was true.

I signed up for a seat at the hold-em table and walked around to see if Jake or Elwood were in the Casino. I only found old fat ladies who were sitting at slot machines smoking. A loudspeaker called me to the poker room. A guy with hunched shoulders and a black patch over his eye took me to my seat. I thanked him and he replied, "Arrrrrr."

I sat down and discovered that I was at a table where Harley and Jeannie were arguing with a dealer named Oscar. They were glad to see me and introduced me to the group as the "Godfather". The guy next to me edged his seat away from mine and didn't make eye contact. It was a fun group. The conversation was lively. One old timer at the end of the table said he had seven wives. We were amazed. I asked him how he did it. He said six of them were married to other people. It was a fun game and I ended up winning \$80.00.

It was getting late. I went to the bar to watch a three piece hillbilly band singing Johnny Cash tunes. The lady singer sounded exactly like Johnny Cash. She kind of looked like him too. The guitar players resembled the two mountain men from the movie "Deliverance". The guy with no teeth kept grinning at me. I sat next to a lady who was singing along with the band. Her friend was playing the video poker machine with a vengeance. We started to talk and found we had several mutual friends.

Deb, the sing-along lady, told me she was writer. Theresa, the other lady, said she had once been married to a Chicago firefighter. That is where we had mutual friends. She even knew about Sarge and Ghetto Skunk. These were two dogs me and my fellow firefighter, Greg Pearn, were introduced to while attending a Union convention in Chicago. They were Labrador Retrievers. The men at the fire house had painted black sergeant stripes on the shoulders of the yellow lab, the black dog had a white stripe running from his nose to the tip of his tail. We asked, "Why the paint job?" The firefighters told us the dogs liked to roam the neighborhood and frequently got lost. They said it made it easier for the Chief to see them when he made his rounds. He would pick them up and bring them home.

It was nice to have mutual friends. It was like visiting with family. We talked about writing books and they asked me for a copy of "Fire Horses." I gave them one and Deb asked if I would review her latest effort at writing. I told her to e-mail it to me. I think I recruited her into a writer's club I belong to. I asked her if she wanted to come to my room to see some of my essays. She declined. It was a fun night and I turned in with a smile on my face. It was a good trip so far.

* * *

MEMBER NEWS

Coming in May of 2010 to all major bookstores: **"BAD COP, NO DONUT."**

This is a crime fiction anthology, edited by John L. French, that will consist of numerous stories by various crime authors about bad cops and their behavior.

PSWA Member, Michael Berish's story, "Hammer & Frye," is featured in his book, **"REFLECTIONS FROM THE PIT,"** and has been fortunate enough to have been selected as one of the stories that will be appearing in this up-coming anthology. Please look for it in your local book store when it is released.

* * *

From PSWA Member Sarah Cortez:

AKASHIC NOIR SERIES

\$15.95, 300 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1-936070-05-3, Pub. date: June 2010
A Trade Paperback Original, Fiction/Mystery Anthology

Indian Country Noir edited by **Sarah Cortez & Liz Martínez**

The sharpest, most stylized, and ambitious anthology of Native American literature ever

published.

Brand-new stories by: Mistina Bates, Jean Rae Baxter, Lawrence Block, Joseph Bruchac, David Cole, Reed FarrelColeman, O'Neil De Noux, A.A. Hedge Coke, Gerard Houarner, Liz Martínez, R. Narvaez, Kimberly Roppolo, Leonard Schonberg, and Melissa Yi.

With a foreword by Richard B. Williams, president & CEO of the American Indian College Fund

STEP INTO INDIAN COUNTRY. Enter into the dark welter of troubled history throughout the Americas where the heritage of violence meets the ferocity of intent. The protagonists of these stories—whichever side of the law they're on—use their familiarity with Indian cultures to accomplish goals ranging from chilling murder to a satisfying participation in the criminal justice system.

AUTHORS WITH INDIAN HERITAGE or blood join non-Indian authors in creating stories in settings as diverse as the terror-ridden atmosphere of the Indian boarding schools to the dubious sleaze of contemporary casinos.

SARAH CORTEZ (coeditor), a law-enforcement officer, is the award-winning author of the poetry collection *How to Undress a Cop*. Cortez coedited with Liz Martínez the fiction anthology, *Hit List: The Best of Latino Mystery*. She brings her heritage and blood as a Tejana with Mexican, French, Comanche, and Spanish to the written page.

LIZ MARTÍNEZ's (coeditor) stories have appeared in *Manhattan Noir*, *Queens Noir*, and *Cop Tales 2000*. She is also the author of the nonfiction book *The Retail Manager's Guide to Crime and Loss Prevention*, and her articles about security and law enforcement have appeared in publications around the world. She is a member of Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers and she lives in New York.

Launched with the summer '04 award-winning best seller BROOKLYN NOIR, Akashic Books continues its groundbreaking series of original noir anthologies. Each book is comprised of all-new stories, each one set in a distinct neighborhood or location within the city of the book.

The End

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