

FRIENDS OF MYSTERY
MEETING
THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2007

SPOTTED OWL COMMITTEE NAMES TWO WINNERS FOR 2007

Detective Dwight Onchi of the Sherwood Police Department will be our speaker at the May 24th Bloody Thursday meeting of Friends of Mystery. Det. Onchi has been with the Sherwood police for over 15 years. He had the first case in the state of Oregon in which DNA evidence was used in a conviction; he was involved in the recent big prescription drug ring bust; and more notably (in Sherwood) "cracked" the famous garden gnome case, which had "pestered" local authorities for many years. Because he was the only detective in town for so many years he has been involved in solving all kinds of crimes. His topic will be "Policing Suburbia."

We hope you join us for what promises to be an interesting and informative presentation. The meeting will be held at the auditorium of Good Samaritan Medical Center, 1040 NW 22nd Avenue (corner of NW 22nd and Marshall.) The evening will begin at 7:00 pm with a social hour and used book sale, and the program begins at 7:30 pm. The meeting is free and open to the public.

Kristine Kathryn Rusch, better known to mystery fans as Kris Nelscott, was named a Spotted Owl winner for her 2006 Smokey Dalton novel, *Days of Rage*. This is the fifth in the series that began in 2000 with *A Dangerous Road*, followed by *Smoke Filled Rooms*, *Thin Walls*, *Stone Cribs*, and *War At Home*. *Stone Cribs* was also the 2005 Spotted Owl winner. These novels have received many national nominations and awards.

Set during the time of the anti- Viet Nam demonstrations, the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention and the trial of the Chicago Eight, we are taken along on the investigations of Smokey Dalton. Kris creates a strong sense of time, place, circumstances and characters that takes the reader back to that era.

Kristine Kathryn Rusch is also an award-winning science fiction and fantasy author and editor, as well as a romance author writing under the pen name of Kristine Grayson. She lives on the Oregon coast with her husband, author Dean Wesley Smith.

The Spotted Owl Committee is presenting an award this year for a debut mystery novel. *Lost Angel*, by Mike Doogan was selected for this 2007 award. Mike Doogan was a journalist

for the Anchorage Daily News for 19 years and was a recent contributor to a collection of mystery short stories titled *Wild Crimes*. In *Lost Angel*, Nik Kane is a former Anchorage police detective with a checkered past. He is hired by a religious community to find the granddaughter of its leader. While searching for the teenager, he also gets involved with solving a gold mine payroll robbery. It is a tightly written novel that echoes the cold of Alaska and the independent spirit of its residents.

Runners up for the 2007 Spotted Owl award are:

- G.M. Ford for *Blown Away*
- Aaron Elkins for *Unnatural Selection*
- Heather Sharfeddin for *Mineral Spirits*
- Michael Lawson for *Second Perimeter*
- Patrick McManus for *The Blight Way*
- Daniel Kalla for *Rage Therapy*
- J.A. Jance for *Dead Wrong*
- Robert Dugoni for *The Jury Master*
- Mark Schorr for *Borderline*
- Kenneth Lewis for *Little Blue Whales*

The committee evaluated 71 books. Members of the committee are Pete Scott, Marilyn Katz, Marlyne Stucky, Jeannette Voss, and Carrie Richards.

BOOK SALE

Friends of Mystery will be having it's annual book sale preceding the May 24th Bloody Thursday meeting. There will be hard back and paperback books plus related items, all priced to sell!

If you have any books to donate for the sale, call Elinore Rogers at 503-244-5271 for pick up, or bring them to the meeting.

SAVE THESE DATES FOR THE 2007-2008 BLOODY THURSDAY SEASON

The Bloody Thursday 2007-2008 dates are as follows:

- Thursday, September 27, 2007
- Thursday, November 15, 2007 -Kris Rusch (Nelscott)
- Thursday, January 24, 2008
- Thursday, March 27, 2008
- Thursday, May 22, 2008

Look for a list of FOM author/members who have recently published new books in our September newsletter!

BOOK REVIEW

THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES

By Stanley Johnson

In their beginnings, and for many years afterward, detective novels were set mainly in big cities and featured male protagonists – Sherlock Holmes and Lord Peter Wimsey in London, Ellery Queen and Nero Wolfe in New York City, Perry Mason and Philip Marlow in Los Angeles, Sam Spade in San Francisco, and Charlie Chan in Honolulu.

The greatest influence in developing the female of the species was Agatha Christie, who, starting with **Murder at the Vicarage** in 1930, began a long series of novels featuring Miss Jane Marple set in the quiet English village of St. Mary Mead.

Since then, many women novelists have created female investigators in off-the-beaten-path settings, and have sent them into remote and sometimes dangerous areas to solve crimes.

One of the earliest writers in this a female category was Elizabeth Peters, who introduced her fearless heroine, Amelia Peabody, an indomitable Victorian anthropologist, in **Crocodile on the Sandbank** in 1971. Fiercely independent, Amelia goes from London to Egypt with a woman companion and sails up the Nile to an archeological outpost where she encounters a rather lively mummy and a kidnapping threat. Of course, she triumphs over all the plots against her.

In succeeding novels, as time passes, she marries and has a son who accompanies her on her expeditions to Africa. Her further adventures include **The Hippopotamus Pool** and **The Last Camel Died at Noon**, playful titles that suggest the dangers from which she escapes so blithely.

Another writer with a long series of novels to her credit, Nancy Pickard uses sleuth with a more mundane setting and occupation, but she too finds dangers in unexpected places.

Her series character, Jenny Cain, is the director of a Civic Foundation in the mythical port city of Port Frederick, Massachusetts. Even there, in such a civilized location, murder occurs in strange shapes, as in **Generous Death**, in which a museum patron is found dead in a priceless old Chinese bed. In a more recent novel, **Confession**, young David Mayen finds his parents dead. Murder or suicide? Jenny Cain investigates, and runs into dangers of her own.

An outstanding example of the type, a Northwest resident who has been an FOM visitor and supporter, is Skye Kathleen Moody, creator of a central character bearing the exotic name of Venus Diamond. Venus is a government Fish and Wildlife agent whose work often takes her into remote and dangerous territory, as in such early books as **Rain Dance** and **Wildcrafters**. A typical recent work, **Habitat**, has Venus investigating the death in a fire of a woman scientist working on the freezing and cloning of embryos of endangered species. Her own life is threatened when she faces high-level forces that oppose the scientist's work. She ultimately exposes a plot against that scientist as she moves throughout the Puget Sound area.

A long-time standard in this field is Dana Stabenow, whose novels are set in Alaska and feature a private investigator into Aleut mysteries, Kate Shugak. She can do anything a man can do with guns or wild game in order to survive in a wilderness.

In a new novel, **A Deeper Sleep**, Kate is up against a possible serial killer who has thrown the entire area into a state of panic. Joining with the tribal community in pursuit of the killer may be a bad mistake – but Kate does so, adding a human threat to the dangers she usually faces from snow and wilderness.

Another writer who lives in Alaska, uses an Alaskan setting, and likewise sends her female character into dangerous territory, is Sue Henry, who began her series of novels years ago with **Murder on the Iditarod Trail**. Her continuing character, Jessie Arnold, is a "musher" and dog-sled guide.

Her adventures continued in such titles as **Dead North** and **Murder on the Yukon Quest**.

In a recent work, **Death Trap**, Jessie's favorite sled dog vanishes – and she finds that his disappearance is somehow linked to a recent murder of a small time hoodlum. Jessie's search for a solution takes her through the lush forests and remote mountains of Alaska's interior – and leaves readers shivering as they experience vicariously the bitter cold she encounters.

The newest girl in this category is Jamaica Wild, a young female agent who works for the Bureau of Land Management in a tiny Indian pueblo in New Mexico. She makes her debut in **Wild Indigo**, a first novel by Sandi Ault. On her job she sees a man trampled in a buffalo stampede. His death is deemed a suicide by his tribe – a decision Jamaica refuses to accept. Her inquiry into his death puts her in conflict with his tribe – but she pushes on even though she strains her relationship with her own organization and puts her own life in danger in a flash flood.

The book is a promising beginning and is especially interesting for its use of Indian rituals from birth to death in the background. It makes the reader look forward to more from Ault and Wild.

Let's end with another debut novel, this one by a new Oregon writer. It is **Murder of the Month** by Elizabeth C. Main, who raised a family and worked in a bookstore in Bend, Oregon, before turning to writing. Like the author, the book's central character, Jane Serrano, is a middle-aged mother and a bookstore clerk. When she suspects that the local district attorney has killed his wife, she enlists the help of her local reading group, the "Murder of the Month Book Club." She becomes especially persistent when it appears that her own daughter might be involved in the killing. The book is an impressive debut that makes good use of its setting – the central Oregon city of "Jupiter," which, not surprisingly, bears an uncanny resemblance to Bend.

Good going, Ladies!
Give us more!