

*Sisters
in
Crime* 

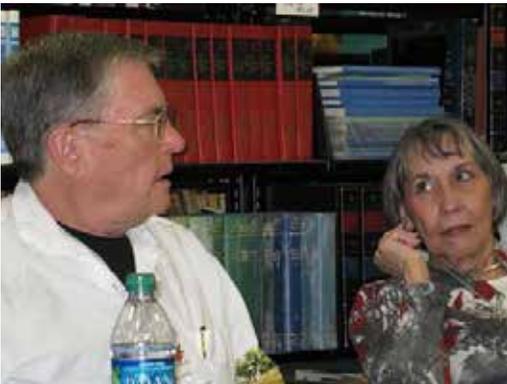
HOTSHOTS!

HEART OF TEXAS Chapter
www.hotxsinc.org



Audience Enjoys "The Halls Of Mystery"

Joan Upton Hall and Russ Hall presented "The Halls of Mystery" at the April 13, 2014 Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas program. This mini-workshop included everything everyone wanted to know about writing. There was lively audience participation and Joan and Russ rose to the occasion by answering every question—from grammar to publishing to creating characters.



Joan and Russ, who have a number of books under their belts, have always been more than happy to help fledgling writers

learn the craft of writing. Both have received Sage Awards from the Barbara Burnett Smith Mentoring Authors Foundation. The award is given to an author who demonstrates an outstanding spirit of service in mentoring, sharing and leading others in the mystery writing community.

A former English teacher, Joan Upton Hall is an author, editor, writing instructor and speaker. Her books run from historical nonfiction to futuristic mysteries and the paranormal. She offers sample chapters and more on her website. Her books include *The Shadow of Excalibur*, *Dream Shifters*, *Just Visitin' Old Texas Jails*, and *RX for Your Writing Ills*.

<http://joanuptonhall.com/home>

Russ Hall has had fifteen novels published,

including: *The Blue-Eyed Indian*, *Wildcat Did Growl*, *Island*, *No Murder Before its Time*, *Goodbye She Lied*, *Talon's Grip*, *Bones of the Rain*, and *South Austin Vampire*. He has also co-authored (as well as ghost written) numerous non-fiction books. Russ is a frequent mentor and judge for writing organizations. In 1996 he won the Nancy Pickard Mystery Fiction Award for short fiction.

<http://www.russhall.com/>

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

BARBARA BURNETT SMITH ASPIRING WRITERS EVENT

On May 18, 2014 Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter will host the Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event (BBSAWE) at 2 p.m. at Recycled Reads in Austin. This is the culminating event for the Tenth Annual 2014 Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Project.



The program will include remarks by W.D. Smith and Russ Hall, acknowledgement of Esteemed Mentor Authors and Valued Aspiring Writers and readings from each

Valued Aspiring Writer's work. A buffet supper will be served, and Valued Aspiring Writers and Esteemed Mentor Authors will meet in their individual pairs.

June 8, 2014

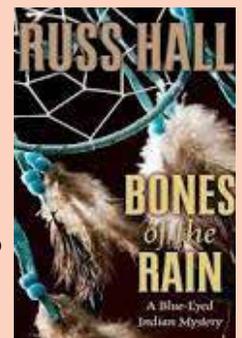
Mindy Read, Free-lance Editor - 'Trends in publishing and independent editing'

July 13, 2014

Panel Discussion: 'Critique Groups: Advantages and Disadvantages'

August 10, 2014

Mark Pryor, Travis County Assistant District Attorney, author of the Hugo Marston Mystery Novels - 'Writing and the Law'



Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter meets at Recycled Reads (part of the Austin Public Library system). The address is 5335 Burnet Road, Austin, TX 78756 (512) 323-5123. Recycled Reads is located between North Lamar Boulevard and MoPac (Loop 1), near the intersection of Burnet Road and West North Loop Boulevard.

The Lonely Road to the Lone Star State: One Writer's Journey to Publication

In just a few weeks, I will be arriving in Texas, and I have a few numbers to share with you first. I think these will mean something both to writers who are struggling to get published, and to authors who have books out already.

Eleven years, eight novels, three agents, and fifteen almost-offers.

That's what it took before I received an offer of publication on my "first" novel. (This debut was actually the eighth one I'd written). The almost-offers came from editors who hoped to buy one of my books, but couldn't get approval during the acquisitions meeting that proceeds a project being taken on by a major house.

Trying to get published was a long, slow, painful slog for me. Maybe it is for everyone. My journey finally came to an end—or a beginning—thanks to one very special Sisters in Crime member. But to explain how that happened, I think I'd better back up.

In 1998, before the days when we all communicated with brief blips of sentences, and carried around a connection to the world in our purses and back pockets, I was working as a psychologist-in-training at a rural mental health center. My life resembled something out of a suspense novel. For example, I was treating this cherubic blond child who'd just killed the family pet; another patient took a gun out during group therapy and threatened to shoot herself.

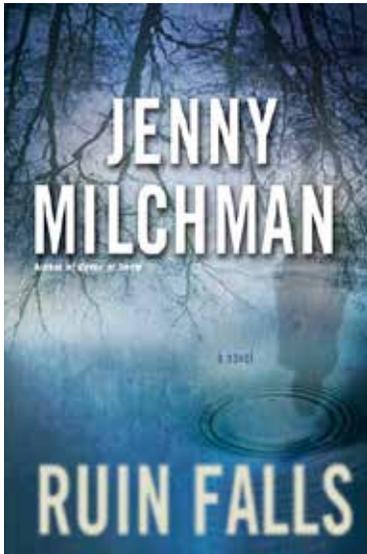
I had wanted to write since I was five, but had put it aside for the more practical career trajectory of becoming a psychologist. But fiction was always my refuge, my escape. And now, with life so overwhelming, I sat down and began writing what would become my first novel. The words just poured out of me...all 180,000 of them.

This was back in the days of snail mail, and I was lucky enough to get typewritten responses from the agents I queried with all the hubristic breeze of the beginner. I expected to get published instantly, not knowing that geologic time moves faster than publishing, and was quite surprised when instead of an offer of representation, Jonathan Kellerman's agent sent me a page packed with feedback. Amongst other things, he said that he didn't like spending so much time in my "neurotic protagonist's head."

Ouch. I had no idea I'd created a neurotic protagonist. It was especially stinging because, like many first novels, mine was semi-autobiographical, and so my protagonist was an awful lot like, well, me.

Of course, it was pure gold to be critiqued by the likes of such an agent, although I didn't know that back when I was stomping around saying things like, "What does he know?"

But after a few weeks, my sore feelings began to ease and my unused fingers started to tingle, and I sat down at my computer and looked at the novel again. And I saw why my protagonist was nuts, and better yet, saw what I could do about it. I cut 60,000 previously-thought-to-be-essential words in just two weeks.



That trimmed down manuscript earned me offers of representation from two agents. By now it was the year 2000. Still no cell phones, or not many of them anyway. I remember that I had broken my foot the day before the first offer came in. I returned from the ER on crutches and sent my husband up the unnavigable flight of stairs to play the messages on our answering machine. One was from an agent.

I dropped to my knees, crutches and all. "At last!" I cried. "I have been sorely tested—more than one whole year trying to get published—but I have made it through the wilderness. At long last, now I will be published."

I didn't know then that agents don't sell all the projects they take on. Or that one year is but a blip in publishing time. I was the publishing equivalent of the first amoeba starting to crawl out of the primordial ooze.

My first novel didn't receive an offer, but just to really drive in the stake, it looked at first as if it would. In fact, there came a day when my agent called me up at 9:40 in the morning—the publishing world typically wakes up around 10 am—and said the magic word.

Auction.

You see, not one but three editors wanted to acquire that novel sans its neurotic protagonist. They were big editors, too. One had acquired *Clan of the Cave Bear* back in the day and was a grande dame in the publishing world.

All three hoped for offers dissolved during acquisitions meetings. Just so much primordial muck in the pond of my writing career.

The next ten years went about the same way. At a certain point I said to myself, "Well, published writers write a book a year, so I'm going to try and do that." At the very least, it would give me more chances to write something someone might like. I was on more or less continuous submission with five of those novels. Each always attracted editor interest; each editor was always turned down by her board.

After my second novel failed to sell, my agent politely suggested we part ways. New York publishing loves the idea of the next big thing, and the same author-agent pairing can start to feel a little stale by the time the second or third unsuccessful book submission. So during this decade, I was

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Lonely Road *from page two*

often querying new agents as I continued to write.

I tried other things, too. I went to conferences, I joined organizations. Like SinC. I attended author readings and events, trying to discern the secrets they knew that I didn't.

I had been working for three years with the agent I now call my forever agent, and we were about out of options. My seventh novel had climbed all the way to the publisher at the helm of the house that was considering it, only to be turned down at the very top. My eighth novel was now making the circuit and meeting with the same dead ends.

My agent said to me, "I am your agent. No matter how you publish, even if it's with the smallest of presses, no real money to be had, you can count on me."

At the same time, the world had changed. Self-publishing had become a viable option. It had become in some ways, for some writers, a better option even.

But it wasn't a better option for me.

At this stage of the game, self-publishing precludes or at least sorely limits a writer's entrance into bookstores and libraries, and for me that was a huge part of trying to publish, as opposed to simply penning stories in my garret. I had this dream of meeting readers and booksellers and librarians all over the country.

One of the authors whose career I had begun to follow wrote a novel in 2010 that particularly spoke to me. *The Scent of Rain & Lightning* by Nancy Pickard uses the weather and its setting in a way I aspired to do with the town and the season in my eighth book.

Along with the advent of cell phones and emailed queries, there had also arisen a phenomenon known as social media during the span of time I'd been trying to get published. And via the mixed miracle of Facebook, Nancy Pickard knew about my many near misses. At a certain point she agreed to take a look at my latest unpublished novel.

It was during the early dark of a January evening, when the very last submission door had slammed shut, that Nancy sent me an email.

"Jenny," it said. "I couldn't wait to tell you how much I am enjoying your book. If it doesn't let me down at the end—and I can't imagine that it will—I will want not only to

offer you a blurb or endorsement, but to put it into my own editor's hands."

I remember thinking two things when I read that email. First, what a literary angel this woman is. To write novels as dazzling as she does *and* go out on a limb like this for an unpublished writer. Wow.

And second, It won't matter one whit. I had been on this ride for almost thirteen years. I was still just so much primordial soup, and one more long shot wasn't likely to change that.

But I was wrong. Nancy Pickard's editor turned out to like my book and to make an offer on it. And that is how I finally came to be published.

But it doesn't get me to Texas, does it? That happened in a whole other way.

Remember I mentioned staying on the traditional publishing road out of a desire to connect face-to-face? After my debut novel finally came out, my family and I set out on a seven month book tour, hoping to meet on the literal road all those people who had supported me during my long figurative road to publication.

We even met Nancy Pickard!

The tour went so well that with my second novel soon to appear, we are about to set out again. It will be "car-schooling" for the kids, working from the road for my husband, and for me—getting to meet some of you.

That's a story for another piece, though. For now, it's time to head for Texas.

Jenny Milchman's journey to publication took thirteen years, after which she hit the road for seven months with her family on what Shelf Awareness called "the world's longest book tour". Her debut novel, Cover of Snow, was chosen as an Indie Next and Target Pick, and nominated for a Mary Higgins Clark award. Jenny is also the founder of Take Your Child to a Bookstore Day and chair of International Thriller Writers' Debut Authors Program. Jenny's second novel, Ruin Falls, just came out and she and her family are back on the road. Jenny is a member of Sisters in Crime, Inc. Please follow along at: <http://jennymilchman.com/tour/over-the-falls-2014>

Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter Celebrates the Legacy of Barbara Burnett Smith

The Tenth Annual 2014 Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event will celebrate the legacy of Barbara Burnett Smith, a published mystery author who helped many writers in the Austin community. Valued Aspiring Writers will meet with their Esteemed Mentor Authors, who are published mystery authors in the Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter.

W.D. Smith will speak about his mother's legacy and Russ Hall will talk about mentorship. Following these remarks, each Esteemed Mentor Author will introduce

his or her Valued Aspiring Writer who will read from his or her work.

Following the program, a buffet supper will be served and Valued Aspiring Writers will meet with their Esteemed Mentor Authors in individual pairs. Jan Grape mentors Jane Shaughness; Russ Hall mentors Alex Ferraro; Helen Ginger mentors Shelby O'Neill; Susan Rogers Cooper mentors Lindsay Carlson; Caroline Shearer mentors Eileen Dew; Elizabeth Buhmann mentors co-authors Sue Cleveland and Dixie Evatt.

Legal Matters That Matter to Writers- Professor Tonya M. Evans

If you have created an original literary or artistic work in some tangible form - in writing or on film or tape or canvas, for example - then you don't have to do anything. You automatically own a copyright in your work.

What rights do I have if I own a copyright? Copyright is not one right but actually a bundle of rights. In general, the law gives a copyright owner the exclusive right to do and to authorize others to do the following:

1. Copy the work
2. Prepare derivative works based on the original
3. Distribute copies of the work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending
4. Publicly display
5. Publicly perform

Professor Evans provides advice to writers at <http://legalwritepublications.com>

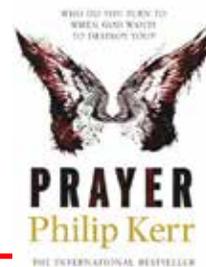
MURDER AT BOOKPEOPLE

Saturday May 10 4:00pm

MysteryPeople Presents Bestselling Author PHILIPP KERR

speaking & signing Prayer

Crime fiction fans, don't miss tonight's event with internationally bestselling author, Philip Kerr. *Prayer*, his new stand alone, is set in Houston and follows an agent with the FBI's Domestic Terrorism Unit who plays a role in condemning an innocent man to death row. He says a prayer: to know God is there. As problems heat up in Houston, it seems he can't escape the power of God or murder.



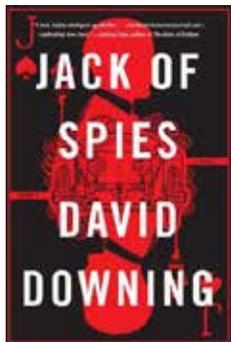
Sunday May 18 4:00pm

MysteryPeople Presents Acclaimed Author DAVID DOWNING

speaking & signing Jack of Spies

Acclaimed British crime fiction author David Downing is here this afternoon with his latest, *Jack of Spies*. It's 1913. Jack McColl, a Scottish car salesman with an uncanny ear for languages, has always hoped to make a job for himself as a spy. Moving from Hong Kong to Shanghai to San Francisco to New York, McColl faces knife attacks, arrest warrants and a vivacious American suffragette journalist as he comes to realize what his aspiration might cost him.

BookPeople • 603 N. Lamar Blvd • Austin, TX 78703 • 512-472-5050 ext. 404



MURDER AT BARNES AND NOBLE

Wednesday, May 14th, 7:30 p.m.

The **Mystery Book Discussion Group** meets in our store monthly to discuss great selections in the genre. This month's selection is **The Mephisto Club** by Tess Gerritsen. The sixth in the 'Rizzoli and Isle' series proves that evil exists. Join us for a lively discussion!

Barnes & Noble Arboretum is located at 10,000 Research Boulevard, Austin, TX 78759. For information on this and other events, call 512-418-8985.

Sisters in Crime is an international organization of women and men whose purpose is to support women mystery writers, and combat discrimination against them. Speakers include published mystery authors and technical experts who help writers craft better mysteries and readers enjoy what they read. Meetings are free and open to all. For more information, check out the Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter website at www.hotxsinc.org.

For more information on the Heart of Texas Chapter contact- hotxsinc@yahoo.com

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