

*Sisters
in
Crime*



Heart of Texas
Chapter
www.HoTXSinC.org

HOTSHOTS!
September 2009

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Sisters in Crime is an international organization of women and men whose purpose is to promote mysteries written by women and to 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 website at www.hotxsinc.org

Sunday, September 13, 2009

2:00 p.m.

Joan Upton Hall

Presents

***Location, Location:
Where Characters Come to Life***

Westlake Barnes & Noble bookstore
located in The Village at Westlake shopping center
at the southeast corner of Loop 360 and Bee Cave Road
512.328.3155



Explore how to use setting not merely as a backdrop, but also to put readers into the viewpoint character's skin. How a character perceives her surroundings makes her more real while also grounding readers in a sense of place. Thus immersed in the story's setting, readers don't just read what is happening, they experience it. Joan Hall helps you think cinematically – but with all five senses.

Former English teacher, Joan Upton Hall is now a freelance author and editor, writing instructor, and speaker. Her manual, *Rx for Your Writing Ills* and "Demystifying Writers' Demons" column, carried by various writer newsletters, have helped countless writers. She has long been a newspaper columnist (travel and humor) and has published short stories and articles in magazines as diverse as *Texas Highways*, *American Jails*, *The Roswell Literary Review*, and writers' magazines.

*This meeting is free and open to anyone who enjoys writing or reading
Mysteries: Whodunits, Cozies, Thrillers, Suspense, True Crime.*



*News and
Announcements*

HOTxSinC Writers Retreat Fundraiser

**Opening Doors In New York Or
How to Conquer the Giants!
Workshop and Retreat**

**Saturday, November 14, 2009
9:30 AM-3:30 PM
Georgetown, Texas
Led by Russ Hall**

*Geared toward published and unpublished
authors seriously seeking New York publication*

FEE: \$50

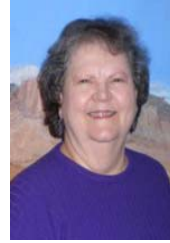
Award winning mystery author and **HOTxSinC** member **Russ Hall** has graciously agreed to donate his time and expertise to lead a writing workshop/retreat with all proceeds going directly to our chapter.

Russ worked for more than twenty-five years as an editor for major publishing houses, ranging from Harper & Row to Simon & Schuster to Pearson. He has had more than a dozen books published, including a series featuring Esbeth Walters and a previous collection of short stories featuring the Blue-Eyed Indian, which won the **Nancy Pickard Mystery Fiction Award**. Two hardbacks in the Blue-Eyed Indian series, *Bones of the Rain* and *South Austin Vampire*, come out in 2010.

This is a rare opportunity to learn first hand from a man who's certainly "been there and continues to do it." *Attendance will be limited to the first twenty (20) applicants.*

**Fee includes workshop, beverages and snacks.
Please bring a bag lunch.**

**For a more information and reservations,
please contact Sylvia Dickey Smith at
sds@suddenlink.net.**



The American Crime Writers League presents *Murder Past, Murder Present*, coedited by HOTxSinC member **Jan Grape** and **R. Barri Flowers**, with an introduction by **Jan Burke**.

The anthology will be released by **Twilight Times Books** on

September 15th.

For more information visit:

<http://www.twilighttimes.com/index.htm>

**HoTxSinC Booth
Texas Book Festival
October 31-November 1, 2009**

We are pleased to announce that the HoTxSinC Chapter will again sponsor a booth at this year's **Texas Book Festival**. We have the contract in hand. Please mark the dates of October 31, - November 1, 2009, on your calendar.

All SinC members are eligible to sell their published books at our booth. Please contact Sylvia Dickey Smith at sylvia@sylviadickeysmit.com to reserve your time slot. This is a great opportunity to meet the public and make new fans. Don't let the opportunity slip away. If you are not yet published, but wish to help work at the booth, let Sylvia know and she'll be happy to put you to work!

**Short Story Master Class
Saturdays, October 3 and 17, 2009**

Amanda Eyre Ward, author of *Love Stories In This Town*, will teach the inaugural **Short Story Master Class** at the O. Henry Museum, in Austin, Saturday, October 3rd and Saturday, October 17th.

Students will leave the two-part class with a finished story that will be judged by a **Texas Book Festival** author for the chance to be acknowledged at the festival and published on the O. Henry Museum website.

For more information, visit: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/ohenry/programs.htm>.

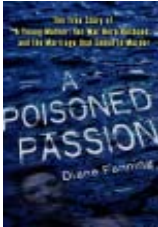
News & Announcements - Continued from Page 2

Announcing the release of *A Poisoned Passion* by **Diane Fanning** from St. Martin's Press



Michael Severance, a C-130 crew chief in the Air Force, survived five tours of duty to the middle east but he could not survive five months of marriage to veterinarian Wendi Davidson.

Domestic violence expert Susan Murphy-Milano wrote: "In my twenty plus years working with crimes of passion I am always interested in the mind of the person behind the crime. For me, it is a learning tool to save lives. Very few writers have the insight and gift to take a true story and make it one hell of a page turner. In my opinion, Diane Fanning does just that in *A Poisoned Passion*."



Read the first chapter:
<http://www.dianefanning.com/poisonedpassionchapter.html>

Out and About with Our Members

Patricia Wynn

September 30- October 4, 2009 - Novelists, Inc. St. Louis, MO

HOTxSinC member **Patricia Wynn** will be a featured speaker at the annual **Novelists, Inc.** convention in St. Louis, MO, September 30-October 4, speaking on Small Press.



Novelists, Inc. is an organization devoted to the needs of multi-published genre authors, the average member having published 16 novels.

For more information visit:
<http://www.ninc.com/conferences/2009/index.asp>

Russ Hall

Russ will be signing and presenting at the following events. More information to follow.

September 13, 2009
6th Annual Mike Blakely Fandango,
Luckenbach

October 31-November 1, 2009
Texas Book Festival, Austin

November 13, 2009
University of Texas Forum, Thompson Conference Center on campus, Austin, 11 a.m.

November 14, 2009
Leader/Facilitator
HOTxSinC Workshop & Retreat
Georgetown, TX
9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.



Micqui Miller



September 19, 2009
Dominican Academy
Reception/Signing: 11:00 a.m.
Detroit Marriott - Troy MI

October 8-11, 2009
RomantiCon 2009
Richfield OH
Book Signing October 11

October 31-November 1
Texas Book Festival, Austin, Texas
Signing books at the Sisters in Crime booth.

Sylvia Dickey Smith

September 25, 2009
East Texas Book Fest
Tyler, Texas
Hours: 10:00 AM-6:00 PM
Ornelas Activity Center, Tyler
Leading a discussion group. Hope all the east Texas folks will come by my table for a visit.



October 17, 2009
Writers Club of Pasadena
Pasadena, Texas
San Jacinto College Central Campus
All day meeting, speaking at 1:00 p.m.

Joan Upton Hall September 2009 Spotlight Member

Joan Upton Hall -- author, teacher, speaker, mentor -- is most certainly a woman for all seasons. Charming, funny, and generous with her time and talent, Joan is a sought-after guest presenter at civic and educational venues throughout Central Texas. This month she will speak to our chapter about the important role settings play in our novels.

MM: How long have you been writing?

JUH: I've dabbled in it as far back as I can remember – full time since I retired from teaching.

MM: Do you ever suffer from writer's block? If so, what do you do about it?

JUH: When I'm stumped in the middle of a story, I put it aside and write something else, maybe a short story or nonfiction. Nine times out of ten, when I go back to the first story, my subconscious has worked out the problem. (My subconscious is much smarter than I am. It's like getting outside help!)

MM: What comes first: the plot or the characters?

JUH: A character in a tense situation. I put myself in that character's skin and go from there. The plot happens.

MM: When did you first consider yourself a writer?

JUH: Before I learned how to read and write, I made up stories as I scribbled pages. Then I "read" them to my parents or anyone who would listen.

MM: Are you in a critique group? Are all members of your group published? How often do you meet? Do you meet in person?

JUH: Yes, we call ourselves the Last Writes, and we email our sections to each other, then meet twice a month to talk about it. All of us learn from each other while also having fun discussing the work. Two of us are published; I expect the other two to see their work between book covers soon.

MM: What has been the best part about being published?

JUH: I'd like to say "counting my money," but at this point, that doesn't take long. Instead, I'm a sucker for hearing from readers who talk about my characters and places as if they were real and ask when my next book is coming out.

MM: What advice would you give a new writer just starting out?

JUH: Have fun and focus on writing the best you can and learn your craft before rushing to publish. I shudder to think how embarrassed I'd be if a publisher had taken my earliest work. There's often a good reason publishers send it back to you. It's especially helpful if they'll tell you what they didn't like.

MM: Let's talk about your current release. Will you share with us how you came up with the idea for this book?

JUH: My urban fantasy trilogy, *Excalibur Regained*, comes from a question I grew up thinking about: "King Arthur promised to return when we need him. How bad does it have to get?" Therefore, I have the king and others reborn into our own time when a worldwide plague breaks down civilization as we

know it.

MM: Who is your favorite character? Is he or she patterned after a real person?

JUH: Nilson, the Merlin counterpart. Patterned after my father, full of wit and wisdom, he interacts with the good guys (such as the Arthur and Guinevere counterparts) and the bad guys.

MM: It is said that authors write themselves into their characters. Is there any part of you in your characters?

JUH: Probably a little of "me" in all my characters since I like to immerse myself into their skins from their point of view. Yes, even the evil characters start with some feeling or idea I've had but not carried to extremes. Haven't we all secretly wanted to "wring some jerk's neck"?

MM: What is your favorite part of the book?

JUH: The ending of each book – which I can't tell you.



News & Announcements - Continued from Page 3

Out and About With Our Members

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Sylvia Dickey Smith

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October 22-24

Golden Triangle Writers Conference
Beaumont, Texas

October 31- November 1

Texas Book Festival, Austin, Texas
Signing books at the Sisters in Crime booth

December 5, 2009

The Christmas Stroll

Hill Country Bookstore on the square in
Georgetown, Texas

February 24, 2010

Hyde Park Reading Club, Austin TX
Luncheon: 11:30 AM
Holy Cross Lutheran Church

REMINDER: It is not too early to begin thinking about becoming more involved in HoTxSinC. Elections are held in December. All terms are one year, and all seats are open except the President's. The Vice President of Programs is also the President-elect, and steps up to the Presidency at the end of his or her term.

For more information, please contact HoTxSinC President, Sylvia Dickey Smith, at sds@suddenlink.net.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 is the deadline for News, Reviews, Announcements and Articles for the **OCTOBER 2009** edition of **HOTSHOTS!**

Send info to Micqui Miller at micquim@yahoo.com

Upcoming Chapter Programs

October 11 - Chapter Indoor Picnic/Potluck -
Sylvia Dickey Smith - *Marketing for Fun and Profit*

November 8 - Jim Bryant - *Sherlock Holmes, Mysteries and Statistics*

November 14 - 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM
Opening Doors In New York or How to Conquer the Giants! Workshop/Retreat led by award-winning author Russ Hall with over twenty-five years' experience as an editor with major New York publishing houses. **Space limited!**

December 12 - Field Trip: Docent-led Tour of the Edgar Allen Poe Exhibit at the University of Texas - Harry Hunt Ransom Humanities Research Center.

~ 2110 ~

January 10, 2010 - Pat Ricks - *History: The Greatest Mystery-Three Hours Research for Three Lines. Really.*

February 14 - Love Them to Death: Mysteries with Romance Panel - Panelists: Dave Ciambrone, Russ Hall, Micqui Miller, Weslynn McCallister, Sylvia Dickey Smith

March 14 - Greg Lawson - *The Media, GPS and Serial Killers*

April 11 - Chief Art Acevedo - *Update on Policing in Austin, Texas*

May - Texas Mystery Month

June 13 - Dave Ciambrone - *Sherlock Holmes, the Man: Who Is He?*

July 11 - Jerry Hurst - *The Evolving Science of Fire Investigation and Role of Personal Bias*

August 8 - Sylvia Dickey Smith, Jessica Fletcher: *Why America Loves Her*

September 12 - Ed Martin - *An Update on the Case of Madelyn Murray O'Hair*

September Spotlight Member

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MM: If this is part of the series, where does it fit?

JUH: The most recent release, *Shadow Of Excalibur*, is Book 2 in the series, *Excalibur Regained*. Book 1 is *Arturo El Rey*, and I'm currently writing Book 3, *Arturo's Grail* (working title), scheduled for release in 2010.

MM: What vehicle would you drive if money were no object?

JUH: A Lexus.

MM: Where can we find your book?

JUH: Book stores (special order if not on the shelves) or the usual online sources.

MM: Do you have a website?

JUH: Yes, <http://www.joanuptonhall.com>. If you go there and click on the Books page, you may click on the covers of my books to read the first chapters, and/or to see other features. It's also easy to click the online stores that list my books all in one place to order.

MM: What do you want readers to remember and carry with them after reading your novel?

JUH: My main characters are reborn to correct mistakes they made in a former life. Do you think they succeeded? And what if all of us have that second chance to "get it right"?

MM: Do you write full time? If not, what do you do in your career?

JUH: Formerly an English teacher, I now write full time as a second career.

MM: Are you a morning person or a night person?

JUH: As a night person, I often get up and write in the middle of the night to keep from losing an idea. However, any time I've slept through the night, my "muse" is trained to work at 6 A.M. before I've had time to talk to anyone, and I'm still tuned in to my subconscious.

MM: What are your hobbies?

JUH: Investigating places and their history, about which I write travel articles and nonfiction books. A side benefit is the "What if...?" factor that makes me dream up fictional characters in those places and/or times.

Visit Joan Upton Hall at:

www.joanuptonhall.com

MM: Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extravert? Did you ever morph from one to the other?

JUH: By nature I'm an introvert and tend to stay home a lot. But people are so darned interesting, I morph into an extravert whenever I get out among them.

MM: What vehicle would you drive if money were no object?

JUH: A Lexus.

MM: If you could wish for anything, what would you wish for?

JUH: To have more and more readers affected positively by my books, and for my family to be proud to proclaim I'm a writer.

THE SHADOW OF EXCALIBUR: EXCALIBUR REGAINED, BOOK 2
By Joan Upton Hall

Publisher: Zumaya
Otherworlds 2008
Paperback: 312 pages
ISBN-10: 1934135003
ISBN-13: 978-1934135006



In a plague-ravaged future world, King Arthur, reincarnated as Arturo el Rey, has fulfilled his promise to return, and with the help of his wife, Shanna, has established an orderly civilization.

But ancient mistakes rise to tear it all down. Arturo and others must confront the dilemmas from their past lives: the infidelity of Guinevere and Lancelot, a former lover's vengeance, and an illegitimate son's ambition. Will knowledge of those long-ago errors prevent them from repeating, or is the second Camelot doomed as surely as the first?

What they're saying about the Excalibur Regained Series:

"Arturo el Rey ties very closely with the legend of King Arthur, but also matches it with the end-of-civilization themes found in *Earth Abides* and *The Stand*. I found myself totally enthralled with the storyline." - *Tracy Farnsworth, Roundtable Reviews*

"In a gritty and surprising revisit to the legend of King Arthur, Hall creates compelling characters faced with the task of finding true love and saving the world." - *M.K. Preston, winner of the Mary Higgins Clark Award for Song of the Bones*



In June 2009, P. J. Nunn spoke to the members of HoTxSinC about Debunking the Promo Myth. The following information is for those who were unable to attend, or those who attended and would like a quick refresher.

What do you know about book promotion?

By P. J. Nunn

1. When should an author start thinking about promotion?

- About a month before the book's release
- About six months before the book's release
- While writing the book
- About a year before the book's release

The best answer to this is (c). Of course, if you don't start that soon, there's still time, but many times I'm called upon to find a good hook for a particular market and it's usually something either in the book itself (although it may have nothing to do with the storyline) or in the author's background. If you want to get regional newspaper coverage, you might want to include references to an historic landmark or notable location in the story. If your protagonist has a particular weakness, or perhaps a pet, you may be able to use that in marketing. Look what Stephanie Plum did for Krispy Kreme's and Tastycakes over the years. Maybe your character is an alumnus/a at your university. Whatever you decide, make it positive and make it realistic.

2. A typical first time author can expect the publisher's publicist to:

- Set up book signings
- Set up radio interviews
- Set up TV appearances
- None of the above

A typical first time author can realistically expect the publisher's publicist to do (d) none of the above. That doesn't mean it will never happen, but most of the time, it doesn't happen. The publishers I work with on a regular basis, both small and large, have wonderful publicists in their employ, and they work hard for the authors to which they're assigned. But let's face it. They're often young and eager, but overworked and underpaid with a long list of authors to handle. High performing authors will have some of their tours or events arranged for them by the house publicist, but a far larger number

do not. Most can count on the publisher to send arcs (advance reader copies) of their new releases to the major review publications and that's about it.

3. The most effective thing an author can do to assure his/her books are on store shelves is:

- Send postcards announcing the book's release to the stores
- Call the store managers and owners
- Make sure the publisher provides co-op funds
- Systematic book signings throughout the local region

The answer here is (d). Although popular opinion often says otherwise, it's really the most effective way to get placement, especially for smaller press titles. Start within your own neighborhood. Chain booksellers generally only have the authority to purchase titles for 10-15% of their shelf space. Everything else is filled by regional book buyers.

If you're a local author, stores will often want to order copies of your book and keep them on the shelf. If you're not, the best way to get them there is to offer to do a signing. One thing booksellers don't want is to order in books then have to return them because they didn't sell. If you ask them to carry your title, it's always nice to offer to come in and help sell them. It's also a little known fact that book buyers check records of titles they're considering ordering. If none have sold in the area (and how could they if they've never yet been in the stores?) they're not likely to buy any for other stores UNLESS they see by the computer records that the author has scheduled appearances in the area. If they believe the author is actively promoting his/her work, they're much more likely to order a few copies for the stores in their region.

4. In seeking radio interviews, which of the following is true?

- Unless a program has 100,000 or more listeners, it's a waste of time
- Readers only listen to NPR programs
- Even the smallest programs reach thousands of listeners
- All of the above

In seeking radio interviews, (c) even the smallest programs reach thousands of listeners. I've had quite a few clients over the years who insisted that they only wanted placement on the largest of shows. While I do work with several national

What do you know about book promotion?*(Continued from Page 7)*

markets on a regular basis, they can be hard to book and won't schedule just any author. Unlike the guest bookers in smaller markets, they often ask what other programs the author has been on and if the author has sample clips so they can hear how they perform on the air. Radio interviews can be a very fast paced and often surprising experience. It takes practice (or experience) to be good. So don't be hesitant to start small. And remember, a great book signing event might give you an opportunity to talk about your book to 25 or even 50 people. The smallest radio show probably has at least 1,000 listeners or it wouldn't stay on the air. And interestingly enough, the most accomplished and well-known authors I work with are happy to be interviewed on programs of all sizes. It's usually the less experienced authors with just one or two titles who are the most demanding and insistent that we only schedule them on programs in large, metropolitan areas or on NPR programs.

5. Book signings are important only if you have a few books out and people will come.

- a) To sell a lot of books
- b) To establish a track record of promotion
- c) To impress booksellers

Book signings ARE important, but not to sell a lot of books (not that that's a bad thing, of course, just that it's not the primary reason you're there).

They're important to (c) establish a track record of promotion to influence book buyers as mentioned above. AND they're important to meet and develop a relationship with booksellers who will hand sell your books long after you've been in the store.

While it's true you may only sell one or two books at some signing events, that's not why you're there. Many booksellers report that they sell more of an author's books after the fact than they did during a signing event. Don't lose sight of that.

6. Most publicists cost:

- a) \$25,000 or more
- b) Too much for the average author
- c) An unreasonable amount
- d) None of the above

Publicist costs vary, but they do tend to be somewhat high across the board. I personally know of several who charge \$15,000 - \$25,000 for a basic campaign. I know more who do not, including myself. The best answer to the question above is (d) even though any of those answers might be true in a given situation.

The important thing is to know what you need going in, and to do your homework. I know of at least 2 agencies that present themselves very well and seem to have good client lists, yet I've worked with several authors who've spent thousands or tens of thousands of dollars and didn't get much in return. It's a tough biz, granted, and I've been doing it for more than 10 years. It's often unpredictable and air time and print space vary greatly depending on what kind of news day it is. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and to abide by the old adage: *when in doubt, don't.*

7. Timing is everything; book promotion is pointless after:

- a) The week of the book's release
- b) The month of the book's release
- c) The year of the book's release
- d) Never

Once again, the best answer is (d). While there are some in the industry who insist there's no point in trying to promote a book after the first month or so, I simply don't find that to be true and am currently promoting a few titles that are well over a year old. A book is new until a person hears about it and I find that no one is nearly as preoccupied with release dates and copyright dates as those within the publishing industry. I typically talk to several broadcast and print journalists a day, and many booksellers, librarians and event planners each week. Very few ask me when the book came out. I say as long as you have books to sell, do what you can to get the word out. Customers won't buy what they don't know is out there.

Happy promoting!

P. J. Nunn

In 1998, PJ Nunn founded BreakThrough Promotions (BTP), now a national public relations firm. PJ and her staff serve as consultants as well as scheduling book tours. In the last decade, PJ has established a strong reputation in her field, often working with national writing organizations such as Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, Romance Writers of America and others. She is also a frequent speaker for these groups and has written numerous articles for national publications.

For more information, contact P.J. at BreakThrough Promotions at:

www.breakthroughpromotions.com