

Myster-E Press

October Speaker: Dr. A. Michael Maclean

A practising psychologist with Maven Health and Wellness, Dr. Maclean has worked for the Calgary Health Region as a diagnostic consultant on some of the most complex cases in the Region's facilities. He will talk to Ink about assessment and treatment of psychological disorders, with a focus on anxiety disorders, and will take questions on whatever facet of psychology Ink members are curious about. For a more complete biography, see the Maven website at

www.MavenHealth.com

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Volunteers Needed

For the smooth functioning of Ink over the winter, we are still in need of bodies in a few positions. Below are the positions available, with a short synopsis of the bottom-line duties required. If you think you could fill or expand one of these positions, please contact Past President Anne Jayne (anne@annejayne.com) and current Vice-President Bernie Visotto (lvisotto@hotmail.com)

President – run the business portion of the speakers meetings; call and run board meetings; co-ordinate with the Secretary and Treasurer to ensure that vital paperwork is done and bills are paid in a timely manner; run the AGM and clarify ongoing Ink operations to the incoming President.

Secretary – take minutes at board meetings; handle Ink correspondence in conjunction with the president; maintain records of minutes and correspondence; and submit the small amount of necessary government paperwork promptly after the AGM (in conjunction with incoming Secretary).

Membership – organize member introductions and icebreakers at regular meetings; seek out new faces at meetings and make them feel welcome; help solicit volunteers for special events and ongoing duties ie facilities assistance.

Publicity – email meeting announcements to Fastforward and other community-announcements media once a month from existing list of contacts; update contacts list appropriately; assist with publicising any workshops or other special events; (optional) update the speakers poster and send copies to the Calgary Public Library’s central office in time for September distribution.

Newsletter – collect news, short articles and announcements of interest to Ink members; compile into an email newsletter and send to database manager once a month for distribution; print two paper copies for our archives and send two paper copies to the National Archives of Canada to maintain our ISSN number.

Ink Field Trip to Queen's Bench: Update

The Ink field trip to observe a **murder trial** in the Court of Queen's Bench is scheduled for **all day Friday, September 28**.

The morning session is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. There was a break for lunch on Sept. 21 around 12:30, with resumption in the afternoon scheduled for 2 p.m. The lunch break time will vary from day to day.

You may enter or leave the court room when the proceedings are underway. Enter as quietly as you can. Many of the court staff and lawyers pause at the door, look in the judge's direction and bow very slightly, as a gesture of respect. This is not mandatory, but it is nice.

It is okay to take notes. Cellphones must be turned off. No photography allowed.

If you are planning to attend the afternoon session only, you can catch up with us at lunch and get an update.

Lunch venue: Food Court at Eaton's Centre, a short walk from Queen's Bench. We'll sit in the room with the fireplace that is just north of Thai Express. Lots of windows with a view of 7th Ave.

Trial: Room 504, at the old Queen's Bench court house at 611 4th St. SW. The building has big shiny golden doors. It is just across the street from the downtown Sears (former Eaton's).

Elevator advice: There is an elevator just inside the main doors. While this is designated for handicapped use, anyone may use it-- which means it is used by a lot of people and thus can be slow. If you walk down half-a-flight of stairs, you'll find several more elevators available.

Muddled, Mushy, Marvelous Middle

By Sharon Wildwind

Here I am at book #3 in my Vietnam veterans mystery series. *Soldier on the Porch* hits the ground running on October 17th. Jayne asked me to comment on how it feels to be in the middle of a series.

Well, muddled. Not the writing itself. It's the muddle-headedness of publishing and marketing. Authors are far outstripping publishing and distribution in leaving the old ways behind. Web sites are passé (but you still need one), blogs are overloaded (but you still need one), and authors have moved into podcasts and video book trailers as a matter of course. Unfortunately, distributions systems are still stuck in the early 20th century. We can get the word out about our books, but we can't get the books themselves out. The old systems are crashing and the new systems are not in place to replace them.

Next I feel mushy. Selling the fourth book is the key point in a writer's career, and so far, book #4 has not sold. I decided to write it anyway. I need to finish this series and have it on the shelf. And, I have a stand-alone in the planning stage, just to cover all my bets.

Finally, I feel marvelous. I'm really, really doing this. Maybe not as well as I'd hoped, but as well as I can, and I'm having a great time. I've made tons of acquaintances in the mystery community. I'm a part of critique groups. I know far more about the business end than I want to, or than anyone sane person should have to contend with, but basically, being in the middle is a great place to be.

Short Mystery Fiction Society: [SMFS WRITING POSTLET #50: First Readers](#)

By Stephen Johnston (reprinted with permission of the author)

You know those all those Postlets that talk about how we as writers are too close to our work to really edit our stories properly without putting them away for a bit first?

Well, it's true. Putting our stories away for a while does help. But there is also something else we can do to ensure that our stories are the best they can be.

We can have somebody read them before we send them out.

I have what I call a First Reader (actually, I think Stephen King called them that and that's probably where I picked it up, just like the Boys in the Basement term. You *have* read Stephen King's book *On Writing*, haven't you?).

Now, a First Reader is basically somebody who can read your story and tell you what is wrong with it before you submit it. It prevents the "Oh Darn!" scenario as you come back to your desk from the mailbox (or go back to your story after pressing the Send button) and immediately find a mistake in your work.

Here are my rules for choosing a First Reader:

1) Choose somebody whose opinion you respect. They should be well acquainted with the craft of writing, or at the very least be a voracious reader. You don't want somebody whose opinion you can ignore because they don't know enough about writing. You want somebody whose opinion you *can't* ignore.

2) Choose somebody who has respect for you. You want somebody who starts off with a basic respect for your work but who will then tell you what is wrong with it. In other words, if your First Reader thinks you are a lousy writer, hates short stories and *really* gets annoyed by mysteries, you probably want to consider somebody else. They don't have to be another mystery or short story writer, but they should at least feel comfortable with what you are writing.

3) Choose somebody who will be brutally honest. You aren't looking for compliments here. In fact, you are looking for the very opposite. You need somebody who isn't afraid to tell you where the trouble spots are.

Here is my golden rule for sending work to a First Reader:

1) NEVER send them unfinished work. NEVER EVER. Why? Because this will allow you to say things like "I was going to elaborate on that" or "I haven't added all the characterization yet" and so on. Not only will this virtually eliminate any constructive criticism from having a full effect, it will also annoy your First Reader, who is taking a lot of time to review your work, only to have their comments immediately discounted. Send them your manuscript after you have taken some time away from it and re-revised it. As far as you are concerned, it should be ready to send out.

Here are my rules for taking advice from First Readers:

1) Always accept their comments graciously. After all, they are trying to help, just as you have asked them to do so. Take their advice with a cool head and an open mind.

2) Never argue with them. If they say "I don't understand why Joe Sleuth didn't just dive out of the cab as they were speeding across the bridge" don't say "How could you not understand? I specifically wrote two lines before that he would have slammed his head into a concrete abutment if he did that!" No, don't say that. They may have a point. Go back to your story and check to see if you really have described the situation as clearly as you think. You may find that you put the abutment on the other side of the car, or had it in there and then took it out, or whatever. Basically, the rule is this: If your First Reader doesn't get it, other readers might not get it either. Go back and check.

3) Don't take all their advice without consulting yourself first. You may indeed have described the speeding car situation perfectly. Maybe your First Reader got distracted at that part. Look at their advice and use what you can (or what you agree with) to make your story better. Use your best judgment.

4) Always thank your First Reader. You don't have to tell them which bits of advice you chose not to take. And there is no need to tell them they were wrong - it will prevent them from being as honest next time. But it is always nice to let them know how their advice helped your story, especially if it gets published.

And here is my final First Reader rule:

1) Let your First Reader know that you are there to help them with their stories as well. Nothing gets as stale as fast as a one-way relationship. And mutual benefit is always in everybody's best interest. Of course, the relationship may not work as well the other way around, and you may find that you are a better First Reader for somebody else. In any case, I highly recommend this First Reader stuff from both sides. You'll learn a lot about your own work in the process.

Take-away message: Choose a First Reader that you trust, send them finished work, approach their advice with an open mind, and offer similar advice in return. This will keep the relationship on an even keel, and will help you tremendously with your writing.

Stephen is currently president of SMFS. His short story "Fish" was nominated for a 2005 Derringer Award, his short story "Mr. Sparks" appeared in the print anthology Doses of Death, and his story "Jimmy Crick" won both First Place and the Readers Choice Award in Jason Evans' Clarity of Night Contest. He has also published stories in Amsterdam Scriptum, Web Mystery Magazine, and SENSE ezine. Stephen lives with his wife and two boys in the Netherlands, and when he's not writing short mystery fiction he works in Amsterdam and Brussels as a copywriter and editor for a strategic consultancy firm. Feel free to pop on over to his website at <http://www.sjohnston.com>.

Reminder: Ink Memberships are due by September 30

Membership \$45/year

Early Bird bonus: Renew by September 30 and save \$5

Drop-In Fee: \$5 at the door

The mailing address is: 223 12th Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2R 0G9.

Calgary's **World Fantasy Convention** takes place over the Halloween weekend: Oct 30 to Nov 2, 2008. Our theme is **Mystery in Fantasy and Horror**. Great guests: Barbara Hambly and David Morrell (authors), Tad Williams (Toastmaster), Tom Doherty (publisher) and Todd Lockwood (artists). <http://www.worldfantasy2008.org/>

Courses and Community Events of Interest to Mystery Writers:

University of Calgary Continuing Education

Dead Men Do Tell Tales! An Introduction into Forensic Anthropology

Murder, mass disasters, missing persons and fire are all contexts in which human remains are found and require the expertise of the forensic anthropologist. The skeleton retains valuable evidence that can be revealed through careful scientific examination. Learn how a forensic anthropologist, through the analysis of skeletal remains, determines the sex, age, race, height, personal habits, lifestyles and sometimes cause of death. This course helps unravel the mysteries of forensic work, and how forensic information is used in solving crimes.

Instructor: Milan Gillespie, MSc

Oct. 4 - Dec 6, Thursday 7 - 9 p.m.

Fee \$225 - 20 hours

(Inkster Jayne Barnard took this class a few years ago and is willing to rave about it to anyone who asks. But it was on Tuesday evenings that year, not Thursdays, so no hard choice about attending either it or Ink meetings was necessary)

Mystery Writing Workshop

If you've always wanted to write that mystery novel, or you've got one on the go and just need a little help, join mystery author **Eileen Coughlan** (former Inkster) for a one-day workshop designed to get you started and keep your mystery writing on track. Explore what makes a great mystery. Learn about plotting, developing great beginnings that sell, and creating compelling characters. If you have a manuscript, bring the first ten pages.

Instructor: Eileen Coughlan

Sept. 29, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Fee \$100 - 6 hours

Chinook continuing education—Calgary Board of Education

(information provided by Inkster Claudia Zakrison)

Criminal Justice System. 7 – 9:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 16. \$10 fee—plus an additional \$5 if you bring along a friend, spouse, or partner. Contact: 777-7224.

Information here:

<http://www.chinooklearningservices.com/ContEd/AdultCourses/CriminalJusticeSystem.html>

Youth Criminal Justice Act. 7:00 – 9:30, Tuesday, November 13

\$10, plus additional \$5 if you bring along a friend, spouse, or partner

<http://www.chinooklearningservices.com/ContEd/AdultCourses/YouthCriminalJusticeAct.html>

Citizens Police Academy, Calgary Police Service.

CPA is a 14-week course offered by the Calgary Police Service. Application forms are available at District Police officers. More information here: <http://www.calgarypolice.ca/community/cpa.html> (this information forwarded by Anne Jayne, who took advantage of this opportunity a few years ago and is willing to rave about it to anyone who asks).

Public Library Programs of Interest:

The Calgary Police Service – An Illustrated History

Calgary Police Service Interpretive Centre staff talk about Calgary's early police history, followed by a tour of the Centre. Wednesday, October 17, 7-9 p.m. at Central Library (4th floor North meeting room) and then proceeding to Interpretive Centre.

Maverick in the Sky – by Shirlee Smith Matheson

Join Shirlee as she reads from her latest book, about the aerial adventures of World War 1 Flying Ace and Canadian hero Freddie McCall. Wednesday, November 28, 7-8:30 p.m. at Alexander Calhoun Library

Visit the Ink discussion board (through the website at mysterywritersink.com) to connect with other members who are interested in attending any of these events or activities.

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The mailing address is: 223 12th Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2R 0G9.

Links of Interest:

Lots of useful background on policing on the Calgary Police Service website:

<http://www.calgarypolice.ca/community/index.html>

How cold case squads work: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/bja/coldcasesquads/bja2.html>

Member Good News:

Out-going Ink Secretary Anne Rothery has a magazine article published, in *Acreage Life*, another piece coming out in *Pets Quarterly* at the end of this month, and yet another piece will be published in *Horizon Magazine* in October. Congratulations, Anne, on building up your writing resumé!

Ink Board of Directors

2006 – 2007 Meeting Year

President – vacant
Vice President – Bernie Visotto
Treasurer – Marg Brick
Secretary – Anne Rothery
Membership – Peter O'Brien
Director-at-large
 – Shirlee Smith
 Matheson
Past President – Anne Jayne

Program Committee
 – Sherry Wilson
 McEwen
 – Marilyn Lewis-Steer
 – Davis Neave
 – Shirlee Smith
 Matheson

Facilities – Anne Jayne
Library – Susan Calder Arnold
Website - Jayne Barnard
Reception – Bernie Visotto
Newsletter – Jayne Barnard
Publicity – vacant

Autumn Meeting Schedule:

Second Thursdays, Old Y
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
(except where otherwise noted)

Thursday, October 11:

Dr. A. Michael Maclean speaks on anxiety disorders and other psychological issues of our mystery characters.

Thursday, November 8:

Thriller writer Jeff Buick talks about building suspense and dramatic tension into your novel.

Thursday December 13:

Meeting at Vertigo Mystery Theatre for “The Mystery of Edwin Drood”

“wildly warm-hearted musical...The title character disappears one stormy Christmas Eve – but has he been murdered?”

http://www.vertigotheatre.com/main/page.php?page_id=2

Contact Marilyn Lewis-Steer of Ink for ticket info.

Mystery Writers Ink Society

223 – 12th Avenue SW, Calgary Alberta T2R 0G9

Mission Statement: *Mystery Writers Ink shall support writers of mystery fiction by providing networking opportunities and by educating and informing writers about writing techniques, publishing, and marketing.*