

# CAPITOL CRIMES

*Sharing the thrill of mystery.*

JANUARY 2022

## From the President

### WELCOME TO 2022!

I haven't had the chance to meet many of you in person, but I've seen your faces on Zoom or your names in emails or the newsletter. And everyone at Capitol Crimes that I have gotten to know has been so welcoming that I've taken the leap to act as your President for this new year. I'm nervous, but also so excited and grateful for the opportunity.



Just a bit about myself. My name is Sarah Bresniker. I started taking my own writing journey seriously in 2019, and part of that was checking out Capitol Crimes. Before I knew it, I had volunteered to be Treasurer, because I know that I'm one of the few (only?) math majors in this group! (If there are others, let's talk!) I got to know Sonja a bit and to see her passion for this chapter, and learned the history of the amazing things that have already been done here.

2020. 2021. All of that. But one of the blessings of these years for me was working with an amazing group of people to keep this chapter going after Sonja died and during a pandemic. We tried new things and figured out how things had been done before. We learned how websites and Zoom work. We did our best to clarify roles and document how we did things, so that our 2022 board is going in with a strong foundation.

It was the people on these boards, and all of our members, who stepped up to offer their help, who gave me the courage to take on the role of President. I'm normally a behind-the-scenes girl, but I was too excited about this team to say no. And what a team we have this year! We've already been working hard to get things lined up for the first few months, and you're going to love what we have to offer!

*continued on next page*

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*From the President continued*

Mark our January meeting on your calendar, when you'll get to meet your new Vice President, Jennifer Morita. She wrote like a madwoman during the pandemic, did the research and the hard work, and got herself an agent! All while dealing with online school for her two daughters! You'll want to get to know her and hear all of the tips and fundamentals that she's learned in this querying process.

And there's so much more coming, but I'm running out of room! The most exciting is that we have a date for our workshop, May 14th. More details will be coming soon, but you won't want to miss it! And we'll have a variety of ways to get together both on Zoom, and, hopefully, in person, so check your emails and our website often!

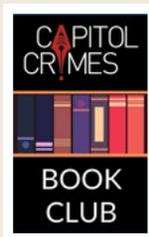
Oh, and what about my writing? I was lucky enough to get my first short story published in the 2020/21 Guppies anthology, *The Fish That Got Away*, and now I'm working on the first draft of my first novel. Being surrounded by so many talented and generous authors is what keeps me motivated as I try to figure out how to get this story in my head down on the page! Despite what all of those aunts and uncles and people in line at the grocery store tell you, it's harder than it looks! But I'm getting there, and Capitol Crimes is a big part of how I keep going.

Again, many thanks to our 2021 Board, especially Penny Manson, Rae James, Frank Rankin, and Dänna Wilberg, who are moving on to other roles. I hope we make you all proud this year.

—Sarah Bresniker, President



## Upcoming Events



### BOOK CLUB

***The Ninja Betrayed*** by Tori Eldridge

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

7:00 PM • Zoom (PT)

### Querying from A to Q with Jennifer K. Morita

Saturday, January 15, 2022

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM • Zoom (PT)



### Plan Like Carolyn Keene with James D. Keeline

Saturday, February 19, 2022 1:00 PM • Zoom (PT)

### First Ever Capitol Crimes Coffee Hour

Sunday, February 27, 2022 2:00 PM

Face in a Book Bookstore 4359 Town Center Boulevard El Dorado Hills, CA

Visit [www.CapitolCrimes.org](http://www.CapitolCrimes.org) for details and to register.

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# Chapter News



## BOOK CLUB

We are excited to begin our first Book Club meeting of 2022 on **January 11, 2022 at 7pm (PT)**, with national bestselling author **Tori Eldridge**. Her Lily Wong mystery thriller series has been a finalist for the Anthony, Lefty, and Macavity Awards.

We will be discussing Tori's latest mystery thriller, **The Ninja Betrayed**, which just won Suspense Magazine's Crimson Scribe Award for 2021 Best Book of The Year!

Tori isn't just a great writer, she's a wonderful speaker. This invitation is open to all mem-

bers and their friends. If you haven't had a chance to read **The Ninja Betrayed** in advance, you will be among others discussing and learning what this amazing story is about. We look forward to seeing you then. [Click here to register for this event.](#)

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

- **Time to Renew!** If you've not yet renewed your Capitol Crimes membership for 2022, your membership status in our database now shows as "pending." After reminders on January 1 and January 7, if you haven't renewed by January 14, your status will change to "lapsed." But your information will still be in the system, so you won't need to reenter it all once you do renew.
- **Member Database Improvement:** When our membership database was originally set up, mailing addresses were created so that street address, city, state, and zip code were all in a single large field. Since the pandemic began we've acquired a number of new members from beyond the Sacramento area—out of state and even international members. But the single address data field makes it difficult to track that membership because there is no easy way to sort by state or zip code or other portion of that field. Over the next few weeks (because I don't yet have a good feel for how long it will take), I will be working on creating the separate fields we need. So if you happen to log into your Capitol Crimes account and notice there are two copies of your mail address, don't worry—I won't be able to delete the giant single address field until I've finished copying all that data into the new individual fields for everyone.

— Mary Griffith, Membership Manager

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## Chapter News

A HUGE THANK YOU to member Patrick Whitehurst for his wonderful review of “Cemetery Plots of Northern California” in *Suspense Magazine*.

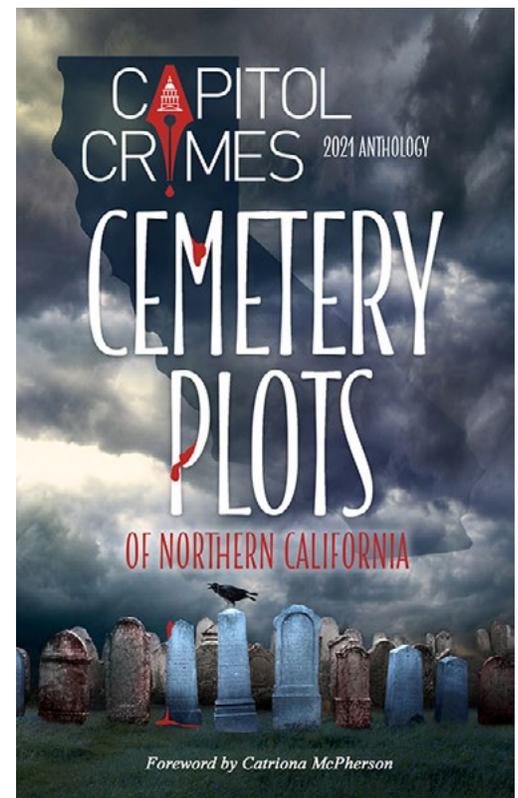
“Cemetery Plots of Northern California,” a rousing collection of cemetery-themed short stories from the members of the Capitol Crimes chapter of Sisters in Crime, offers deadly ‘plots’ aplenty.

The Sacramento group’s fourth anthology begins with an introduction by best-selling author Catriona McPherson and kicks off with a murderous tale set in the heart of the 2020 pandemic. Virginia Kidd’s “Murder in the Time of Covid-19” brings readers to Sacramento’s East Lawn Memorial Cemetery, where our protagonists are quick to find a body in the graveyard grass. Hugo de Leon’s “Dreamscape” ends the collection with a somber funeral and a strange mark just below the neck of the dearly departed Miss Betty. Buried within these pages are tales of murder, revenge, family drama, and small-town terrors, such as the Karen Phillips short, “The Secret of Thompson’s Hill.” Eve Elliot’s slow burn of a story, “The One,” introduces us to Amanda Stack, or whoever she is, while Jennifer Morita’s “Cranes in the Cemetery,” unveils a fresh corpse and a trail of paper cranes, as preparations for an annual Buddhist Church bazaar get underway. Other contributors include Donna Benedict, Melissa H. Blaine, Jenny Carless, Elaine Faber, Kenneth Gwin, Nan Mahon, Richard Schneider, Terry Shepherd, Kim Keeline, and

Joseph S. Walker. “Dreamscape” is included as part of a partnership with 916 Ink, a Sacramento charity that empowers youth through creative writing.

Simmering with dread, embalmed with humor, and full of thrills, “Cemetery Plots of Northern California” is a trip to the graveyard that’s anything but quiet.

Reviewed by Patrick Whitehurst



[BUY NOW ON AMAZON](#)

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## Member News

Hi, I won the book, *Bury the Past* by James L'Etoile, about the murder mysteries in Sacramento, Ca. Since I am from Sacramento, it was exciting to know all the parts of town he used for this mystery. It was a captivating thriller!! Thank you, James!

—Delores M. Griggs, author of: *Your Gift From God Is In Your Name*

*"The art of any relationship is to blend our differences rather than point them out"*

CEO, Rare Pearls Publishing

[www.rarepearlspublishing.com](http://www.rarepearlspublishing.com)

On January 6th, James L'Etoile will connect with the UpState South Carolina Sisters in Crime chapter as their guest speaker via Zoom. James will talk about how he found writing as a second career, his most recent thriller, *Black Label*, and give attendees a little peek at *Dead Drop*, which releases the summer of 2022.

On January 12th at 6:30 pm James L'Etoile will join Mark Leichter, Donna Rae Menard and Marlie Wasserman for a virtual "A Murderous Affair" 4 author panel discussion. The Lincoln Co., Wyoming Library is holding a watch party for the Zoom event. The authors will be discussing their craft, the variety of crime subgenres, and the flexibility of writing within the mystery category. Not only will they be talking about the art of writing, and their books, they will also be taking questions from the attendees for a dynamic conversation about books. [Click here to see the events calendar for more information.](#)

Presented by Lincoln County Library System

# A Murderous Affair: An Evening with Four Crime Writers

Wednesday, January 12th 6:30pm  
Go to [linclib.org/events](http://linclib.org/events) for Zoom link

LINCOLN COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM  
[linclib.org](http://linclib.org)  
307.654.7323

Virtual Author Panel

MURDER IN THE MEADOW  
THE OTHER SIDE  
BLACK LABEL  
MURDERESS MUST DIE  
JAMES L'ETOILE

MARLIE PARKER WASSERMAN  
MARK LEICHTER  
DONNA RAE MENARD  
JAMES L'ETOILE

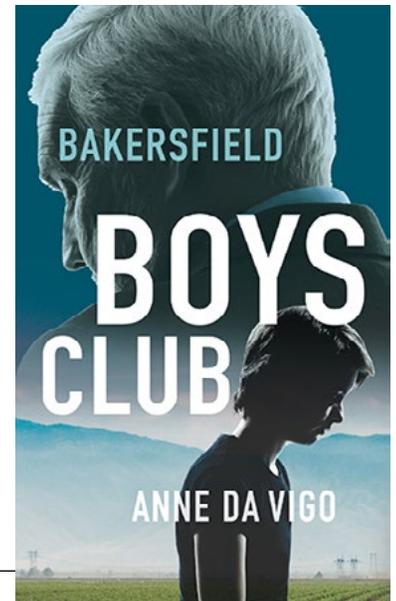
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## Member News

Anne Da Vigo will be featured at a Meet and Greet from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan 22 at Russo's Books in Bakersfield promoting her award-winning thriller, *Bakersfield Boys Club*.

[annedavigoauthor.com](http://annedavigoauthor.com)



*Saving La Familia* by Donna Del Oro

A romantic suspense comedy set in Silicon Valley, a young Latina teacher, Dina Salazar, is asked by her Mexican-born grandmother to rescue her cousins from a dangerous Mexican drug cartel. After all, her stern grandmother tells her, she is the “smart one” in the family. To do so, she has to recruit help from her hated ex-fiance. What’s a girl to do when “la familia” calls?

[www.donnadeloro.com](http://www.donnadeloro.com)

Did you publish a book in 2021? If so, you have until February 28th to enter it in the NCPA (Northern California Publisher's & Authors) Book Award Competition. The application form is available on the NCPA website for the following categories:

Non-Fiction: General

Non-Fiction: Memoir

Fiction: General

Fiction: Mystery/Thriller/Crime

Fiction: Visionary

Fiction: Historical

Fiction: Romance

Poetry

Children's

Young Adult

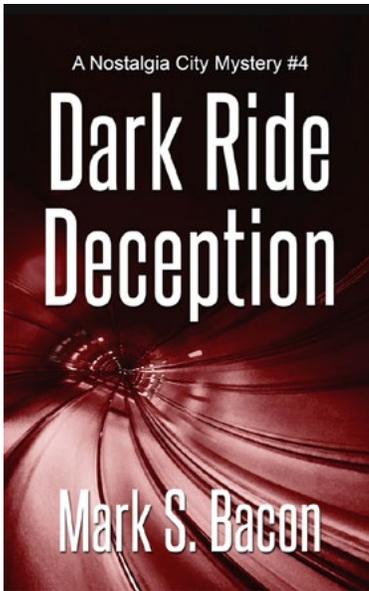
Trade Publication

Special Category: Design Competition

The cost and submission requirements are spelled out on the application. [Click here for more information.](#) If you have any questions, please contact Sharon S. Darrow at 916-803-1665, or email [sharon@sharonsdarrow.com](mailto:sharon@sharonsdarrow.com).

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## Member News



From Mark Bacon -

Announcing my new book, *Dark Ride Deception*.

Social media links:

[baconsmysteries.com](http://baconsmysteries.com)

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/mark.bacon.98871](http://www.facebook.com/mark.bacon.98871)

[www.facebook.com/markbaconmysteries](http://www.facebook.com/markbaconmysteries)

Twitter:

[twitter.com/BaconAuthor](http://twitter.com/BaconAuthor)

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Michele Drier, a 10-year member of Capitol Crimes who served as president for four years, is the incoming president of the NorCal (San Francisco Bay Area) chapter of Sisters in Crime. The NorCal Board is meeting for a planning session in late January and for anyone who's a dual member, if you have program suggestions, please let her know. Email: [micheledrier@att.net](mailto:micheledrier@att.net)

[www.sincnorcal.org](http://www.sincnorcal.org)

SISTERS   
IN CRIME  
Northern California Chapter

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**Members – feature your latest book cover\* in the **Book Cover Carousel** on the homepage of **CapitolCrimes.org**. Send cover art to [CapitolCrimes@gmail.com](mailto:CapitolCrimes@gmail.com)**

*\*one cover per author*



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## Member News

### BISAC Codes

Once the copyeditor returned my manuscript, I chose a self-publishing platform to distribute my book. During online registration, the form requested three BISAC codes for my book. BISAC codes? After a quick Google search, I learned not only what the codes were but their importance for authors.

The Book Industry Study Group, BISG, developed a system to categorize physical and digital products. Classification determines a book's placement in stores and online databases. There is a BISAC Subject Headings 2020 edition (also called subject codes list) for purchase, but the information is also available online for free. Downloadable versions are accessible in Excel, PDF and Word formats.

What BISAC code best suits your book? Choose the major heading most accurately describing your book. For example, my mystery novel, *Murder Is Revealing*, falls under fiction (FIC022000). The next sub-category is mystery & detective. Now comes the hard part. My novel qualifies for general, traditional, women and amateur sleuths sub-categories. Four separate BISAC codes. In addition, *Murder Is Revealing* fits under cozy. The cozy sub-category has several sub-sub-categories: cozy general, cats & dogs, crafts and culinary. From general to specific, BISAC codes allow for proper designation of your book to reach your desired audience.

Tread carefully. The natural temptation is to use as many codes as possible to reach a larger market. Readers will expect your novel to meet the criteria the code specifies. I suggest not using a romance BISAC code simply because your novel has a romantic component. Romance novels carry certain expectations. Book reviewers will not hesitate to express their disappointment when the love interest is murdered, and most of the novel involves searching for a killer.

Publishers allow a set number of BISAC codes per book, which again explains the importance of choosing an accurate code to represent your novel. Because I intend to have a long career as an author, I downloaded the BISAC codes onto an Excel spreadsheet. Since I am publishing widely, meaning I am using several platforms to self-publish my novel, each site has different requirements. Draft2Digital may have different requirements than Kobo.

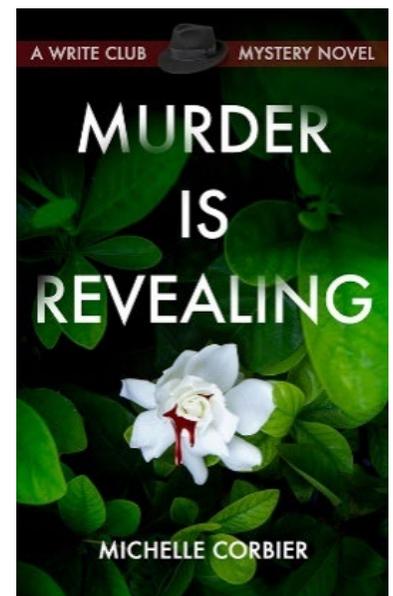
The BISG meets monthly and regularly updates the codes, so watch for any additions or deletions. In fact, you can suggest codes to the committee through their website. Check out the links below to increase your self-publishing education.

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Michelle Corbier is a writer living in Northern California. Check out her website for more writer resources and information on the May 2022 release of *Murder Is Revealing*.

[www.michellecorbier.com](http://www.michellecorbier.com)

<https://bisg.org/page/BISACSubjectCodes>



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## POV - Terry Shepherd's monthly thoughts about The Craft

Terry Shepherd distills ideas about creation, tech and promotion into actionable ideas every author can leverage to build their brand and sell more books.

### Three Hacks to Finish That Book in 2022

Getting a first draft done! That's always our biggest challenge. As we start the new year, here is a reminder of three powerful tools to focus you on finishing.

**Word Count** – When John Grisham began his writing career, he was still a practicing lawyer and a new father. He set a daily goal of just 300 words. That's a page a day. It took him two years to complete his novel. Set your daily word count goal to meet your own deadlines. Keep track of it. You will be surprised at your progress.

**Same Time / Same Place** – A great piece of advice I got early in my corporate career was to schedule everything, including procrastination! My weekday calendar has my writing and narrating time scheduled before anything else. I write from 9-10 a.m. and narrate from 10-Noon. I'm at my computer, in my office, rain or shine to meet those commitments. Same time, same place. Often, if the muse, and my day cooperate, I'll write longer. And if my grandkids need me, I'll reschedule. But that's the key: scheduling it. What's scheduled gets done.

**Find an Accountability Buddy** – In the acknowledgements for *Chasing the Captain*, I think my friend and fellow author, Kate Anslinger, for being my accountability buddy. We set up an agreement to text one another our word counts every day before bed. Like having a personal trainer commitment, the requirement to report provides an additional incentive to do what we say we'll do. And tell the truth! Some nights, I'd get a text where Kate would confess that life had intervened, keeping her from her goal. I admit to sometimes missing my counts, too. We both kept weekly word count tallies and didn't beat ourselves up if we were in the ballpark. That one tactic brought *Captain* over the finish line.

There are other psychological motivators: Setting a deadline to have your draft to your editor, commissioning the cover before you're done and posting a copy next to your workstation, and sharing a chapter or two with beta readers as you are writing the draft can also press you forward.

The more tools you use, the more likely you are to finish the job. Commitment, especially when you have lots of other stuff going on, can be elusive. Engage your imagination and visualize what it feels like to be done. Imagine holding that finished product in your hands, autographing it at a signing and answering podcasters questions about your marvelous creation. The excitement that creates has been a proven motivator to keep you going when it feels like the path forward is full of obstacles.

Find the right mix of persuaders, commit to completion and that story dancing in your mind will find its way to print in 2022.

Terry Shepherd / Terry@TerryShepherd.com

[TerryShepherd.com](http://TerryShepherd.com)

[Facebook.com/TerryShepherdWrites](https://Facebook.com/TerryShepherdWrites)

[Twitter.com/TheTShepherd](https://Twitter.com/TheTShepherd)



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## Interesting Reads- a bi-monthly column by member Carol Newhouse

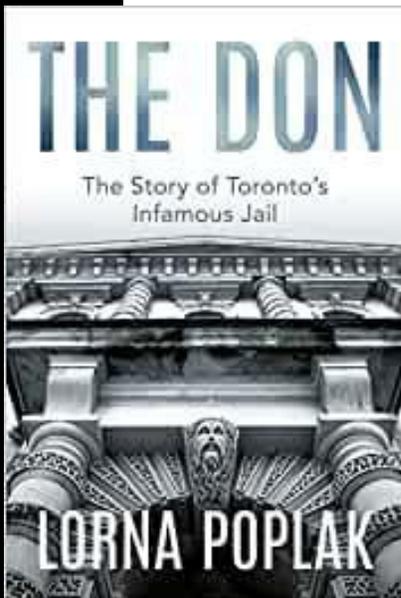
Carol Newhouse is a member of the National Sisters in Crime and the Toronto, Los Angeles, Guppies and Sacramento chapters. She writes stories for inclusion in anthologies, four newsletter columns, and is hard at work on her first book in the Zookeeper Mystery series. When not dreaming of dead bodies or taking virtual exercise classes, she plays competitive bridge, hangs out at the Toronto Zoo, and paints with watercolors. She can be reached at [newhouse.carol@gmail.com](mailto:newhouse.carol@gmail.com).



### LET'S GET REAL

Every once in a while I take a break from fiction and turn to non-fiction. However, being rather one note, my reality-based reading usually hinges on information about bad guys. What can I say?

This column's Interesting Reads looks at three authors all capable of turning out riveting books based on the world of crime and punishment.



Lorna Poplak's latest, *The Don*, portrays Toronto, Ontario, Canada's Don Jail in meticulous and fascinating detail. We read of the controversies surrounding the location and construction of the jail and stories of hangings where sentences of capital punishment were carried out on its grounds. If aspiring authors dig deep, fictional tales of fraud and worse can be constructed from these threads of history.

Poplak explains the rationale behind waves of penal reform and tells tales about characters housed in the Don, including Vera the Elusive and the Polka Dot Gang.

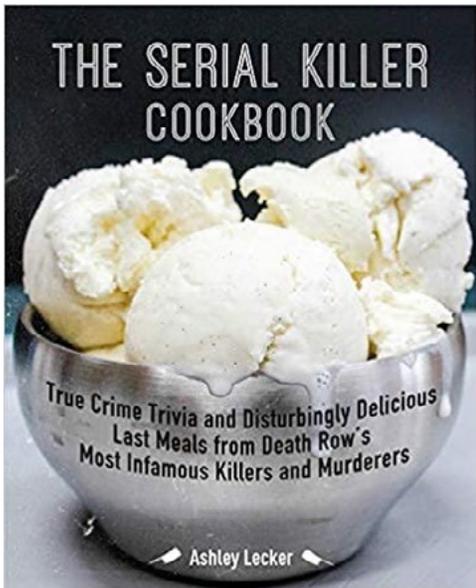
This book follows *Drop Dead* which is a history of capital punishment in Canada. Painted with a broader brush, readers meet the "principal players" in the deadly Hangman game. And Poplak brings a wealth of information about a potentially depressing topic to the table using humor and, in one chapter, a braided technique that marries the art with the science of hanging.

Lorna Poplak's *Drop Dead* and *The Don* are studies in how an author can organize a mountain of research into a page turner. If history appeals or you seek a situation or setting on which to base a mystery, adventure story or even ghost story, these books are must reads.

When I crave a change of pace, I pick up Ashley Lecker's *The Serial Killer Cookbook*. The premise of a cookbook based on the last meals of serial killers holds a dark appeal for anyone with morbid curiosity. While this slim volume doesn't provide recipes for all of the items in each last supper of the soon-to-be-executed, instructions to make at least one item are provided.

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A sweet finish for the condemned? Five recipes for ice cream populate the pages and none require an ice-cream maker. Almost one third of the recipes detail desserts.

The featured foods, simple to prepare and tasty, would not be appropriate for someone on a diet. Steve Wayne Anderson's grilled cheese is made with 3 pieces of American cheese. The One Pot Mac and Cheese ingredients include 4 ½ cups of whole milk, 4 ounces American cheese, 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar, ½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese and ½ cup Colby jack cheese.

Fascinating tidbits abound in this book. For example, one convict, Ricky Ray Rector, ordered steak, fried chicken, cherry Kool-Aid

and a piece of pecan pie, but saved the pie for later, even though for him there would be no later.

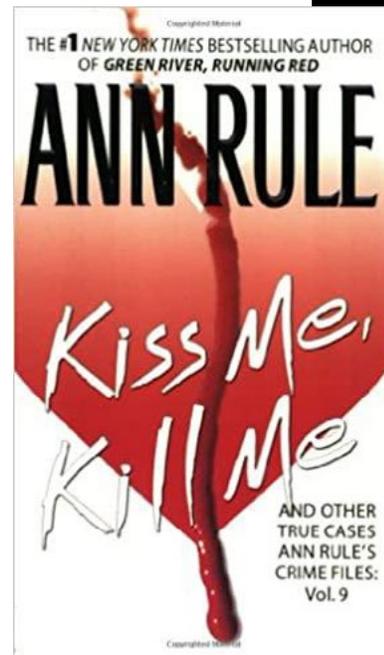
*The Serial Killer Cookbook* is perfect for the murder/foodie aficionado.

I love true crime and Ann Rule, who died in 2015, still reigns as a Queen in that world. The author of thirty-five books, my favourites are her "crime files" which consist of one longer case and four or five other, less complex stories. Often arranged by theme, *Worth More Dead*, Crime file #10, *But I Trusted You*, Crime file #14 and *Fatal Friends*, *Deadly Neighbours*, Crime file #16 have self explanatory titles.

Rule details the how and why of criminal behaviour but spends ample time on the casualties too. I've read several books on the Green River Killer, but learned more about Gary Ridgway's victims from Rule's *Green River, Running Red* than any of the other accounts. Rule brings back the dead and the reader can't help but feel a deep sense of loss.

Her accounts may remind us that with one wrong move, we too could become a statistic. How many women experience a nagging doubt about another person but bow to social norms instead of going with their gut? According to Rule in *The Lonely Hearts Killer*, *Kiss Me, Kill Me*, Shirley Bridgeford was disappointed in her date but she went out with him so as not to hurt his feelings. She never came home.

Non-fiction books chunk off a piece of reality and zoom in for a microscopic view. Informative and entertaining, they are interesting reads indeed.



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## In Other News:

**Mystery Writers of America (MWA)** - Check out the Northern California chapter website. Click on the Podcasts & Videos tab for lots of great presentations. On their Facebook page, coming January 8, 2022: "My Book is Published – Now What? Book Promotion." [Click here for more information.](#)

**Crime Writers of Color (CWoC)** Presents "*Mystery Hour* with Con Sweeney" - Monday, January 17, 2022, at 3:00 PM Eastern, virtual. Participating Crime Writers of Color Members: Abby Vandiver, Stella Oni, Raquel Reyes, Callie Browning, Jennifer Chow. [For more information click here.](#)

SinC Class: **Short and Sweet Part 2: The Structure of a Short Story.** Tuesday, January 11, 2022, 3-4:30 pm ET. Description: In the second of four sessions on the craft of writing short crime fiction, Art Taylor walks you through the ins and outs of crafting prose in a short story. [Click here to register.](#)

The 18th annual **San Francisco Writers Conference** will take place over Presidents Day Weekend – February 17-20, 2022 at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco. [Click here for more info.](#)

**New York Pitch Conference** - professionals are looking for marketable commercial and literary stories and novels. March 10 - 13, 2022 (Zoom Online) March 17 - 20, 2022 (Live in NYC). [Click here for more info.](#)

**Malice Domestic** April 22-24, 2022 Conference, Bethesda, Maryland (Live and In Person!) [Click here for more information.](#)

**Left Coast Crime 2022:** Southwest Sleuths. April 7-10, 2022 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. [Click here for more info.](#)

**Bouchercon 2022,** September 8-11, 2022, Hilton 1001 Marquette Ave S, Minneapolis. [Click here for more information.](#)

**Romance Writers of America (RWA)** - Offers many classes and webinars for all genre writers. [Click on the Events tab for more information.](#) (Note: You do not need to be a member of RWA, but you must create an account in order to register for a class or event. There is often a fee for the class or event.)

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### GOT CONTENT?

Send your press-ready article to: [CapitolCrimes@gmail.com](mailto:CapitolCrimes@gmail.com)  
Put "Newsletter" in the subject line. Due by the third week of the month.  
We will publish the first Monday of the following month.

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