

CAPITOL CRIMES

Sharing the thrill of mystery.

DECEMBER 2021

From the President

So My Dear Tribe,

Here we are at the end of another year. I have to say its been a hell of a ride and one I would never have wanted to experience with anyone but all of you.

You made me better. A better leader, a better person and only time will tell, but I hope a better writer too. Over the past 18 months you have heard me refer to myself as your “reluctant” leader. I never wanted to be President. I was happy standing in Son-ja’s shadow, but the old saying is true, “You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometime, you’ll find, you get what you need.”

I by no means did this on my own. Besides you wonderful peeps, I had the best board any President could have asked for to help me keep my eye on the goal, (A stronger, more involved chapter) and step in where I was inarguably in over my head (social media, doing an Anthology, Zoom, WiFi, and taming the Wild Apricot).

There’s a strong wonderful group of people ready and willing to take us to the next level. The chapter is ready for the guidance and structure our new board can provide. As we step out of the fear and uncertainty of 2020 and 2021 into a new normal, a new reality, I can’t wait to see what new heights we climb. It’s time and we’re ready. There are so many great things to look forward to next year: meeting our new Vice-President and hearing her speak on the query process at the January Chapter meeting, Tori Eldridge sharing her latest book, *The Ninja Betrayed*, with us at Book Club, AND back after a long drought; **A “Killer” Workshop - Save the Date: May 14th, 2022. Details will follow soon.**

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From the President continued

Just so you know, I am not leaving, I'll still be around but it's time for me to turn my attention to other people and things which need me more. BUT speaking of need, I'm desperately needing to see as many of you as possible at the **Face to Face Holiday Party** on December 18th. I can still use some help the day of the event with registration and setting up and breaking down after the party. For those live too far away, or for whom face to face is not feasible, I hope you will join us to bid adieu to 2021 on December 28th on Zoom.

From the bottom of my heart, Thank you for supporting me, tolerating my learning curve and helping make this chapter stronger than ever.

So have yourself a merry little Christmas (Kwaanza, Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, Festivus or however you celebrate the season) and let's all use our super powers to write (and support by reading) the type of world we want to create.

 Happy Holidays , Stay healthy, keep writing, keep reading and God Bless.

-Penny Manson, President



Upcoming Events

FACE TO FACE Fa La La HOLIDAY PARTY 2021

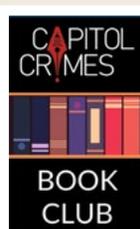
Saturday, December 18, 2021 • 1-3 pm

Only \$15 for the Best Party Ever! [Register here by 12/15.](#)

NAME YOUR POISON: End of Year Virtual Cocktail Party

Tuesday, December 28, 2021 • 5-6:30 pm (PT)

[Register here for this exciting event!](#)



BOOK CLUB

The Ninja Betrayed by Tori Eldridge

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

7:00 PM • Zoom (PT) **[Register here.](#)**



Querying from A to Q with Jennifer K. Morita

Saturday, January 15, 2022

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM • Zoom (PT) **[Register here.](#)**

Visit **www.CapitolCrimes.org** for details and to register.

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Cost: Only \$15
Click here to register by
December 15th.

Face to Face Fa La La Holiday Party 2021

Potluck, Book Exchange, and Face to Face Merrymaking Bring your whole self to our in-person holiday celebration! Show up with your best "Festive Apparel": holiday sweater, t-shirt, head adornment or all of the aforementioned.

Come prepared to test your holiday and mystery trivia skills! Book exchange: please bring a wrapped book for our traditional book exchange.

Capitol Crimes will provide:

- Coffee (Leaded and unleaded)
- Hot apple cider
- Water bottles

To keep everyone safe and avoid having communal dishes or utensils, please bring individually packaged items to share like:

- cupcakes
- individual egg roll bites, spinach squares, or an appetizer
- plastic bags of cookies, candies, pretzels or other nibbles

Current COVID precautions for the county will be followed. More details will be sent out a few days prior to the event.

Name Your Poison: Capitol Crimes End of Year Virtual Cocktail Party

The Capitol Crimes Board invites you to join us for a casual online year-end cocktail hour!

We'll be showing Danna Wilberg's year-in-review video. Penny and Sarah will talk about what we've done in '21 and what's new in '22. And those of us with book releases in The New Year will have a chance to give the membership a sneak peek.

After registration, you'll receive a personal email inviting you to share your favorite holiday cocktail recipe and alert our host if you want screen time to talk about your 2022.

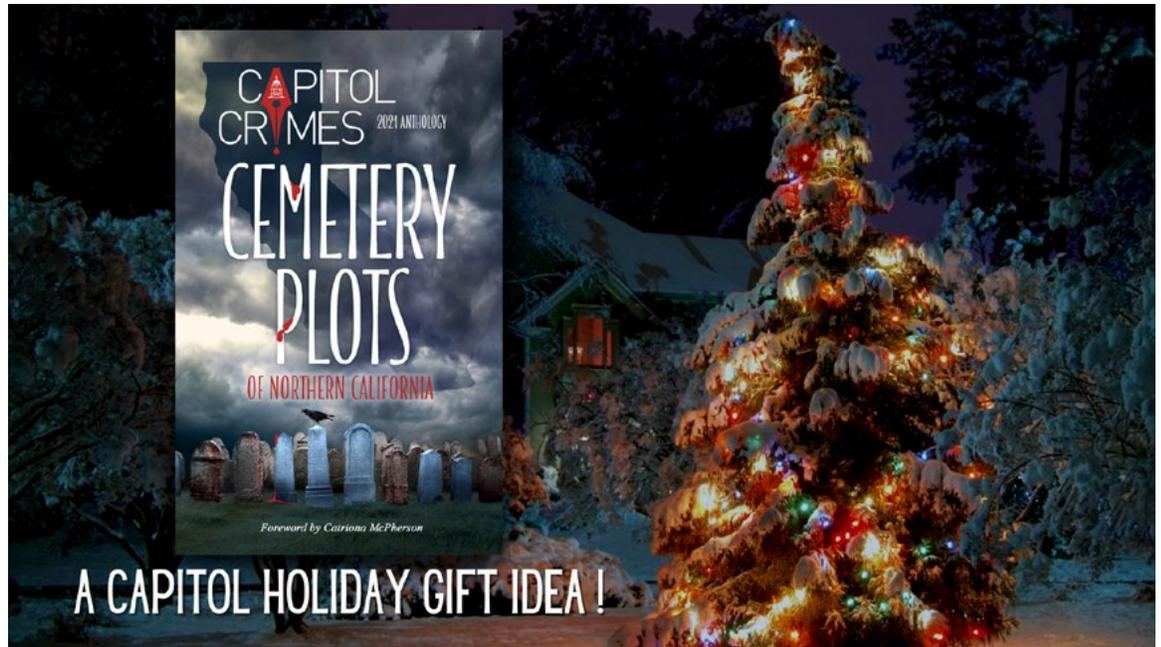
It's a mellow conclusion to a challenging year and we look forward to gathering to give 2021 the send-off it deserves! [Click here to register.](#)



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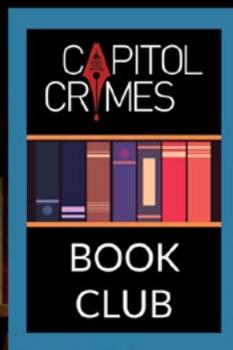


[BUY NOW ON AMAZON](#)

Help us make 2022 Amazing!

We want to know a bit about you and what you'd like to see from Capitol Crimes in the new year. If you haven't already, please take a few moments to respond to our [Members Survey](#). (Note: You'll need to be logged in as a member on our website at CapitolCrimes.org to access the survey.) Thank you so much for taking the time to help us with planning the new year, and if you have any questions, feel free to email us at CapitolCrimes@gmail.com. The survey will be open through December 13th.

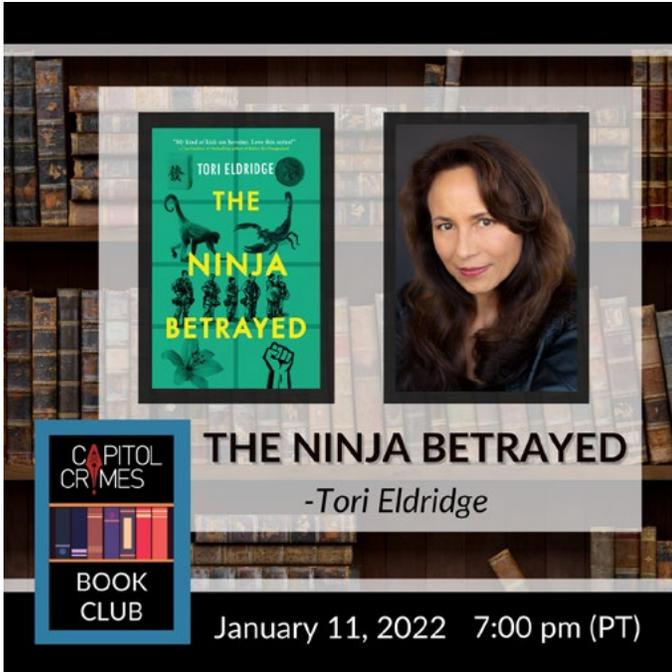
Now Taking
AUTHOR
APPLICATIONS
for 2022!



Now taking submissions for Book Club in 2022. [Click here for more details and for the submission form.](#)

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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**. Tori isn't just a great writer, she's a wonderful speaker. This invitation is open to all members 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.](#)

Thank you to **Marshall Karp** and member Frank Rankin for a fun and enlightening interview on November 20th.

Marshall has co-authored the NYPD Red series with James Patterson. He is the author of the Lomax and Biggs mystery series.

His newest book, **SNOWSTORM IN AUGUST**, is more thriller than police procedural and launches a new series introducing retired NYPD Captain Danny Corcoran. Pub date: June 7, 2022

Visit his website for more at: KarpKills.com



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Member News

A Glimpse Into The Final Acts of John le Carré

By Kenneth Gwin

The problem I have with many books, especially popular crime and mystery stories today, is the same problem I have with fast food. It might be entertaining in the moment, but by the next day, I can't recall one lasting thing.

Maybe I can name the main character of a story, describe the general plot, and so on, but remember who actually "did it" in the final reveal after all that furious page tuning? Well, that part of the story is usually the first to go.

Why?

I might suggest it is a lack of real meaning—the difference between genre and literature. A really good story is hard to write. There are lots of writers producing lots of books making lots of money filling lots of nightstands, but how many leave you with any lasting sense of time and place, any lingering feelings, thoughts, or questions to consider after the final page has been turned?

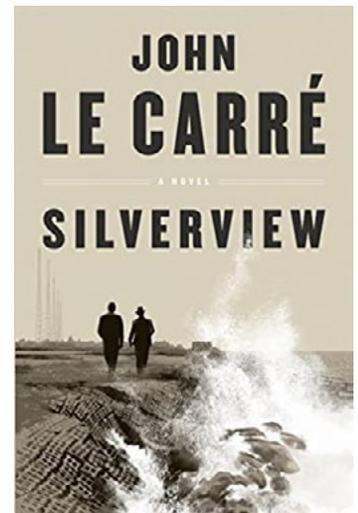
I have just finished reading *Silverview*, and here my mind rests.

Unlike some earlier works by John le Carré, such as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, which are complex and weighty, with endless layers of Cold War betrayal and secrecy, this little volume is a thoughtful summary of what those years of struggle might have meant after all is said and done.

And, unlike *Agent Running in the Field*, this story doesn't use the novel to inform the reader how the West is losing the war through personal and political greed, propaganda, and *kompromat*. Instead, this is a look inside the hearts and struggles and the very personal cost to those that served.

This is a simple book of few pages, of spare, but eloquent prose, and only a few converging plots or threads. There are no gun fights, no car chases, no murderers running amok. In it, a young man takes an early retirement from his rapacious and profitable life as a British Wall Street shark to open a bookstore in a small town. This could have easily been a cozy. Then an older gentleman wearing a Homburg walks in and immediately ingratiates himself into this young man's life and business. Who is this strange man, really? To find out, the story dips into underground bunkers, MI6, remnants of the Cold War, Poland, Bosnia, State Secrets, the Service, and into the private world of heart, loyalty, and the grey landscape of moral ambiguity.

While the narrative does build to a gentle climax, there are those who have complained this book doesn't have a proper ending. Curiously, I do remember exactly how this story ends. It's tone and atmosphere linger in my mind. It is all very clear in my memory. There are important things at play here, things hidden deep inside the caring souls of old warriors and what needs to be done to try to resolve the pain of one's personal past.



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Last month, Joan Merriam's first novel, *A Just Reckoning*, was named a Finalist in the Independent Author's Network 2021 Book of the Year Awards in the Mystery category. The novel centers on investigative journalist Tess Alexander's hunt for the leaders behind an international sex trafficking ring, a pursuit that takes her from the comfort of her northern California home to the streets of Kiev, the Black Sea coast of Crimea, and the city of London. In the process, she almost pays with her life.



Joan's second book in the Tess Alexander Mystery series, *A Cruel Oblivion*, was published in mid-November. This time, Tess is investigating the death of Rennie Matlock, daughter of a wealthy San Francisco real estate tycoon, who plunged a letter-opener into the back of her mother's neck when she was just a teenager. After a decade in prison, Rennie was free and finally opening the door to a new life that perhaps even included extending herself a fragment of mercy, if not forgiveness. Then suddenly, inexplicably, she took her own life.

A native Californian, Joan's first book, *Little Girl Lost: A True Story of Innocence and Murder*, sold over 250,000 copies worldwide in the late 1990s and early 2000s. She is currently finishing a work of literary fiction, along with her position as an instructor of Communication Studies at Sierra College. She also writes a semi-monthly column on life with dogs that's syndicated in four California and Colorado newspapers, works as a fundraising consultant for a Nevada County animal rescue organization, and volunteers with Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue.

REMINDER - Renew your Capitol Crimes membership.

Unless you've already done so, or have recently joined since September 1, your membership renewal is due on January 1, 2022.

HELP WANTED

We are looking for a copy editor and someone to "glean" events to go in "Other News" for the newsletter. This is a once-a-month job. Time spent is minimal - approximately 1-2 hours.

If interested, please send an email to CapitolCrimes@gmail.com and put "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Thank you, in advance!



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Member News

– *from member Leanne Bell*

You've probably experienced this: you have an idea for a thriller set high in the mountains. Suppose your characters are snowed in, or a raging storm threatens their very survival. What if the hero is a former Army vet suffering from PTSD? You can picture it vividly, based on all the movies and tv you've watched over the years, but as you sit there, fingers poised over your keyboard, your mind goes blank.

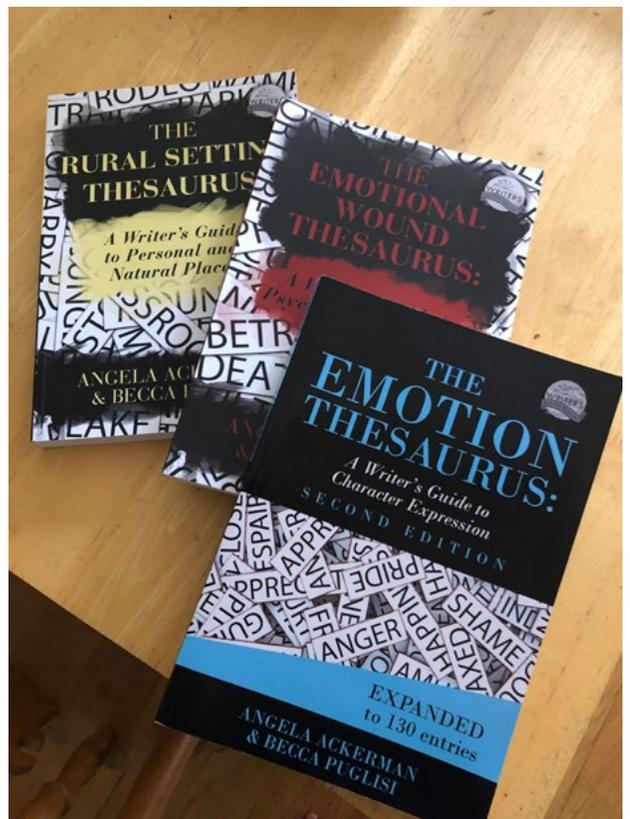
You've never set foot in the mountains. You don't know what it feels like to hike in the woods, you can't recall sights, sounds, or smells, let alone those more nebulous feelings that a place can evoke. You've never known anyone with PTSD, either. A thesaurus just won't cut it - there are only so many words for snow (unless you're Inuit), and researching PTSD online would take more years than earning a PhD.

How do you capture all the sensations of a place and use powerful, elegant prose to describe it, when you don't know the first thing about it?

Authors Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi faced this problem, and came up with a brilliant solution. Together they've written an entire series of guides such as ***The Rural Setting Thesaurus***, ***The Urban Setting Thesaurus***, ***The Emotional Wound Thesaurus***, ***The Occupation Thesaurus***, ***The Negative Trait Thesaurus*** and more.

These guides are a life-saver. Each entry is filled with details like sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures, and goes on to suggest possible sources of conflict appropriate for that setting, and other notes. It's an absolutely fascinating read, even if you aren't stuck for ideas or descriptions. The amount of work the authors have put into these guides is extraordinary. We have them to thank for providing endless prompts, ideas and notes that our plot-addled brains may be too weary to dream up ourselves.

Do yourself a favour and pick up a couple. They will definitely help sharpen your writing and bring authenticity to your characters and settings.



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POV - a monthly column with video content by member Terry Shepherd

Terry Shepherd's POV distills tech and promotion into actionable ideas every author can leverage to build their brand and sell more books. From selecting the right gear to getting your message across, POV shows you how, with a treasure trove of proven tips and tricks that deliver results.

A Message of Thanks

As we think about the holidays, especially Thanksgiving, the expression of gratitude can be a powerful professional advantage. The relationship guru, **Keith Ferrazzi (Never Eat Alone)** reckons there are a fixed number of persons in our circle who determine the extent of our happiness or our suffering. Bracketing those good folks and nurturing those relationships is crucial to your success.

But how do you make meaningful connections?

When I interviewed Keith many years ago, he told me that the secret to getting the most out of an association investment may seem incongruent: ***You must give without the expectation of return.***

In our world, gratitude lives in the little things. Do more than just like a social media post. Write a sentence about why you like it. These don't need to be complicated. "I really appreciate your comments about..." or "Your message touched my heart today," work like magic.

It's that simple.

And nothing beats an appreciative handwritten note. My scrawl is terrible, so I use **Postable**. The service features a wide array of cards for all occasions. Users can upload their own graphics or pictures for the cover. And the interior message can be rendered in a half dozen realistic handwriting fonts. Using a tool like Postable also lets you keep track of how many messages you've sent and to whom. There's an address book that makes creating cards super easy. And when you compare them to a trip to the Hallmark shop, the cost of sending them is competitive.

Especially now, we're all feeling like our world is upside down. Every person carries burdens we can't see. And we're all second guessing our ability to make a difference. Kindness is the highest form of wisdom. And you never know when a kind word may be crucial in a pivotal moment.

When I began my writing journey, I singled out four of my author heroes. I sent them each a fan letter and teed up the question, "If you could give me one piece of advice for a new author in my situation, what would it be?" That's led to rewarding friendships that grew deeper than I ever imagined.

Gifted people can show us the way to making our dreams come true. The secret is—just like us, they thrive on affirmation. Finding ways to appreciate others and add value to their lives, without expectation, can grow into mutually beneficial relationships that takes everyone to new levels of achievement and happiness.

Think about who has been an important part of your journey this holiday season. Take a moment to thank them.



Questions? Comments? Write to Terry@TerryShepherd.com



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Food for Thought- 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.



WHY LISTEN TO OTHERS?

If writing is a creative art, should you listen to anybody other than yourself? There are several schools of thought.

The first goes that since creativity flows from the right brain, to force left brain logic on your output makes no sense. Terms like free write or admonitions to write from the heart abound. Pantsters, those who write novels without an outline and from the seat of their pants, present some compelling reasons to shun anything deemed arbitrary. Let the characters talk to you, don't force them into cubbyholes to suit a plot point. Craft questions, such as how can I surprise readers if I over plan and can't surprise myself, are difficult to answer.

If this advice applies to the actual writing does it also apply to the generation of ideas? Some say yes. Write what you want; write what you feel. Write from random prompts. Don't write based on what is popular in the market now because by the time you publish or are published, tastes may have changed. Witches or shapeshifters may be old news by the time your book hits Amazon.

Then there are those that contend since writing can be so solitary, writing with others can stimulate creativity and give comfort. Some call it the monkey see, monkey do school of thought and it is increasing in popularity both in-person and on zoom among members of writing groups. NaNoWriMo or write a novel in the month of November is another popular version of parallel play. Studies show that even if there is no interaction, children engaged in parallel activity do learn from one another. It is easy to extrapolate these findings from kids to adults. Does it constitute listening to others? Perhaps.

Accountability partners are another new wrinkle in the world of writing. Generally these are people who will act on each other to increase the motivation to write – a personal monkey see monkey do instead of a more anonymous group. My experience with accountability partners is that the system works, if only because I want to have something to report when we meet on zoom every week or two. However, accountability partners do not critique and, at least in my group, are not even supposed to offer opinions unless specifically asked.

A third approach is to base what you write on a variety of external elements. If you are writing within a genre, there are expectations of which tropes will appear. Harlequin editors distinguish tropes and hooks as follows. Tropes are plot devices, situations

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that characters find themselves in. Three examples of tropes would be snowed in, marriage of convenience or fake relationships. Hooks are integral to the story itself and could include babies or cowboys (character hooks), ranches (setting hook), etc.

What are the reader expectations? No matter how you feel, mystery readers expect justice to prevail by the end of the story. Cozy mystery fans do not want violence or a lot of forensics whereas readers of police procedurals expect accurate depictions of the organization and of the science that supports police work. Is it wise to tailor your writing to the expectations of others? That may depend on your goal.

If you are writing for yourself, there is no need for anyone else to weigh in on your manuscript. But if you are writing with an eye to becoming traditionally published, the opinions of others matter a lot. In that case, submission guidelines become a shopworn guide.

Many writers attribute their success in part to their critique partners. And some established authors run successful sidelines as mentors. I know that when I was tailoring a submission to the specific line of a traditional publisher, a mentor long published in that line advised me to dump one of my protagonists. The publisher was full to overflowing with that type of character she said. Sage advice even if it meant overhauling the whole manuscript.

On the other hand, you should know the background of the person offering advice. A friend of mine who is regularly published in established literary journals reviewed a scene of mine where a solicitor reviewed the contents of a Will with the beneficiary. He suggested I could raise my game by incorporating more legalise vocabulary into the attorney's speech. However I remembered my intended audience consisted of average people reading for entertainment so I thanked him for his input but did not act on his recommendation. I believe too much specialized language pulls readers out of the narrative instead of adding flavour.

So should you listen to other people when you write? The answer is, it depends. Be mindful of your goal. Whether it is to improve your wellness, convey information, impress your friends or reach a wider audience through self publishing or using mainstream publishers, the path you choose will determine whether you should listen to others.



**Members - feature your latest book cover*
in the **Book Cover Carousel** on the homepage
of **CapitolCrimes.org**. Send cover art to
CapitolCrimes@gmail.com**

**one cover per author*

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Other News:

Nicholas Buccola "Five Things I've Learned About Love from James Baldwin"
Presented in partnership with Book Passage. LIVE: Wednesday, December 85:00pm pacific / 8:00pm eastern - Price: Single ticket - \$40.00. [Click here to register.](#)

A Seat At The Table Books & Coffee in Elk Grove - Grand Opening is December 11, 10-6pm! [Click here to register.](#)

Crime Writers of Color (CWoC) Presents "A Look Back at 2021" - Thursday, December 16, 2021, 7:00 PM Central, virtual. Join Murder by the Book and hosts Kellye Garrett and Alex Segura as they chat with Sujata Massey, Mia P. Manansala, Robert Justice, K.D. Richards, Paige Sleuth, and Cate Holahan. [To register 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.](#)

Guppy Class: **Block-Busting: Putting the Joy Back in Writing** with Laurie Schnebly January 3-14, 2022. *Note: Must be a member of the Guppies.* [Click here to register.](#)

The 18th annual San Francisco Writers Conference will take place over Presidents Day Weekend—Feb. 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.](#)

The Bay Area Book Festival, May 7 & 8, 2022, in downtown Berkeley, CA. Call for Proposals. [Click here for more info.](#)

Bouchercon 2022, September 8-11, 2022, Hilton 1001 Marquette Ave S, Minneapolis. [Click here for more information.](#) Submit your story to the Bouchercon 2022 anthology - deadline for submission is December 31, 2021. [Click here for more details.](#)

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GOT CONTENT?

Send your press-ready article to: 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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