



BOOKSELLERS

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Monday - Wednesday:
10:30 am - 5:30 pm
Thursday & Friday:
10:30 am - 8 pm
Saturday:
10 am - 6 pm
Sunday:
Noon - 4 pm

Did you know?

We have access to tens of thousands of titles — books, videos and DVDs in all categories. We are happy to special order *anything* for you.

We've had a good first three months here at The Mystery Company. It's been great to get to know you, to learn about what you like to read, and to have a chance to tell you about some of our favorites. And we've already had some really nice author events — terrific writers and lively discussion. We're delighted to have hosted Robert Wilson, Eileen Dreyer, Julia Spencer-Fleming and the trio of Brits (Stephen Booth, Danuta Reah and Don Hale). We're working on events for the summer and fall, and we'll keep you posted.

When I'm asked how things are going, I do have to admit that it's been a little slower than we expected. Opening a new bookstore during a war and in a month when the Census Bureau reports bookstore sales plunged double-digits from 2002 may not have been the best timing. But we're definitely seeing business pick up as more and more people are finding our store. We're patient, and we know that this takes time. In the meantime, we are enjoying this enormously.

We still have a number of new things to add to the store — some more fixtures, more lines of books, new programs, etc. — which we'll tell you about in this and in future newsletters. As the school year winds down, we're ready to help you find summer reading that you'll love.

If you're traveling this summer, don't forget our Deadly Destinations service — we'll help you find mysteries set where you're going, books that will help you get in the mood and enhance your trip. With a couple of days notice, we can find books for just about anywhere in the world, and in addition to the mysteries, we can get travel

continued inside ➤



Julia Spencer-Fleming, 4/20

Calendar

Sunday, May 26, & Monday, May 27

We'll be closed for the Memorial Day holiday

Thursday, May 29, 11:30 am and 7:30 pm

Discussion group organizational meetings

Interested in joining a discussion group at The Mystery Company? Come to either the lunchtime or evening session to help plan how our groups will run.

Thursday, June 12, 7 pm

Mystery 101 — An overview of the genre

I'll present an informal tour through genre history, the appeal of mysteries, the various subgenres, recent trends, and a "simple" definition of the genre.

Friday, June 20 leading up to midnight

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix party

We're planning a late-night Harry Potter party leading up to midnight when we can sell the new book. Details soon.

Tuesday, July 8, 7 pm

Libby Fischer Hellman and William Kent Krueger visit

books for you as well. Staying close to home this summer? You can travel the world vicariously by reading about far-off lands or travel through time with a great historical mystery. It's not just a matter of "where do you want to go?" but "when?"

Discussion groups

We're planning two organizational meetings — one during the day and one in the evening — for discussion groups here at The Mystery Company. Both meetings will be on Thursday, May 29, at 11:30 am and at 7:30 pm.

At the meetings, we'll talk about schedules and about possible approaches: what times and days of the week are best for you, and then what kinds of mysteries you'd like to discuss. We'll consider holding two groups, one during the day on weekdays and one on an evening or weekend. In terms of choosing books, we can take a structured approach — a survey that includes every type of mystery, an historical survey of the genre, etc. — or we can just pick books that look appealing each month. We might also talk about food: lunch with daytime meetings, or dessert in the evenings?

If there's interest, we'd also like to organize an additional parent/child discussion group, with mysteries for adults specially chosen for suitability for younger readers in the 11 to 15 or so age range. We believe that mysteries offer plenty of talking points for parents and kids. We are especially interested in how mysteries model problem-solving — for all readers, not just younger ones.

We hope you'll join us on May 29 with your ideas. If you can't make either meeting, then please call or email to tell us your preferences.

Awards, awards

Mystery awards come in two seasons. In the spring, we get the Dilys, Agatha and Edgar Awards.

I think the Dilys, given by the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association, is among the genre's most significant awards because it represents the collective wisdom of the most knowledgeable people in the business. This year's Dilys Award went to Julia Spencer-Fleming for her first novel, *In the Bleak Midwinter* (St. Martin's, \$6.99) — a terrific book we've been recommending to everyone from day one.

The Edgar Awards are given by the Mystery Writers of America. This year's winner for best novel is *Winter and Night* by S.J. Rozan (St. Martin's, \$6.99), and I'm really happy to see Rozan win. This is a strong novel in a terrific series that features a pair of New York private eyes. *Winter and Night* is darker than its predecessors, an indictment of a small New Jersey town's obsession with high school football. If you're not already familiar with this series, this novel's a good place to start. (We have a limited number of signed first editions priced at \$24.95.)

On the other hand, I'm somewhat less happy with the Edgar winner for best first novel of 2002, Jonathon King's *The Blue Edge of Midnight* (Onyx, \$6.99). It's very readable and it isn't a bad book. But I kept feeling that this tale of a former Philadelphia cop who lives in exile in the Florida Everglades

(after accidentally shooting a kid) and gets involved in a serial killing is too much in the mold of other mysteries. It's a good mold, but it would've been nice to see a distinctive spark.

The Agatha Awards are the other major mystery awards given in the spring. This year's best novel pick is Donna Andrews' *You've Got Murder* (Berkley, \$6.50), a fascinating attempt to make a computer — an artificial intelligence personality — into a mystery protagonist. I really admire the concept, and can recommend this to adventurous readers looking for something different. But ultimately, I didn't think the experiment was all that successful; Andrews put too much effort into making the computer act like a person instead of exploring what makes a computer different.

I am, on the other hand, extremely pleased with the results of the Agatha for best nonfiction of 2002. The award went to *They Died in Vain* (Crum Creek, \$13), a collection of essays about "Overlooked, Underappreciated and Forgotten Mysteries" that I edited.

Friends & Neighbors

Through our Friends & Neighbors program, we offer you a chance to read a new or forthcoming mystery without charge. All we ask is that you return the advance reading copy with your comments — a sentence, a paragraph, whatever you have to say (positive or negative) — and that you allow us to use your comments in the store, on our website and in this newsletter. Here's our first Friends & Neighbors review:

Murder Off Mike by Joyce Krieg
(St. Martin's Press, \$23.95)

If you imagine what Kinsey Millhone would be like if she moved north to Sacramento and became a radio talk-show host then you would start to have a pretty good picture of Shauna J. Bogart. She's tough, sassy, smart, loyal, skeptical, and glib. And she likes her jeans and a turtleneck better than a dress. Winner for Best First Traditional Mystery in St. Martin's Press' Malice Domestic Contest, *Murder Off Mike* introduces a Top 40 cast of characters and enough intrigue to fill a drive time slot. But what makes author, and veteran broadcaster, Joyce Krieg's book so compelling that you never consider "changing the dial" is all the great inside scoop on what goes on behind the scenes in a radio station off mike, and off the air. I've worked in radio for over a decade myself and not only found her observations sharp, accurate, and humorous, but I learned a few things as well. The only disappointment in this entertaining work is some sloppy editing — primarily with a few passages that are repeated unnecessarily — that distracts from, but doesn't interrupt the broadcast. If you like talk radio as much as you like mysteries, this book is worth tuning in to.

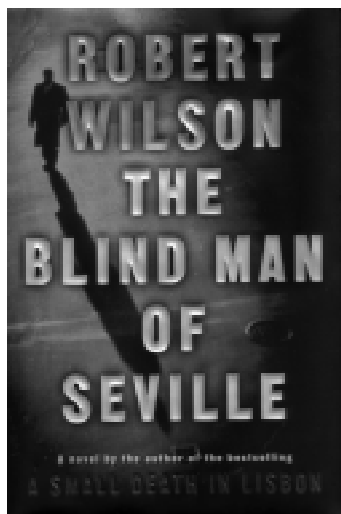
— M. Travis DiNicola

What we're reading

The Princeton Murders by Ann Waldron
(Berkley, \$5.99)

McLeod Dulaney is the proud recipient of a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting in Tallahassee, Florida. Though the

Mystery Company bestsellers



These are our 15 top-selling titles since we opened on February 28.

(• indicates that signed copies are available.)

- 1 • *The Blind Man of Seville* by Robert Wilson (Harcourt, \$25)
- 2 • *In the Bleak Midwinter* by Julia Spencer-Fleming (St. Martin's, \$6.99)
- 3 *A Small Death in Lisbon* by Robert Wilson (Berkley, \$7.99)
- 4 • *With a Vengeance* by Eileen Dreyer (St. Martin's, \$24.95)
- 5 • *Detecta-Croistics* by Jeanne M. & Jennie G. Jacobson (Crum Creek, \$18.00)
- 6 *The Eyre Affair* by Jasper Fforde (Penguin, \$14.00)
- 7 • *Shutter Island* by Dennis Lehane (Morrow, \$25.95)
- 8 • *Children of the Storm* by Elizabeth Peters (Morrow, \$25.95)
- 9 • *Blood on the Tongue* by Stephen Booth (Scribner, \$25.00)
- 10 *Somebody Else's Music* by Jane Haddam (St. Martin's, \$6.99)
- tie • *The Sinister Pig* by Tony Hillerman (HarperCollins, \$25.95)
- tie *They Died in Vain* edited by Jim Huang (Crum Creek, \$13.00)
- 13 *Black Dog* by Stephen Booth (Pocket, \$6.99)
- tie *Common or Garden Crime* by Sheila Pim (Rue Morgue, \$14.00)
- tie *Deadly Nightshade* by Cynthia Riggs (Signet, \$5.99)
- tie • *A Fountain Filled With Blood* by Julia Spencer-Fleming (St. Martin's, \$23.95)

Pulitzer is a prestigious award, there are no big changes in her life until she is invited to teach a semester class in journalism at Princeton University. What a change from Tallahassee where the pace was slow and relaxed.

On her arrival at Princeton, she meets Ginger Kingsley, the unofficial English faculty social director. That night, at her first party, she meets a college friend of her deceased husband. Their friendship is cut short by his unexplained death at a faculty cocktail party a few weeks later.

McLeod is not happy with the lack of explanation of the death of her friend so she and her students begin to ask questions. They are very good at this and make some people uncomfortable. Two more deaths occur. Can McLeod find answers before she is a victim herself? Faculty life can be dangerous!

This book is a fun and fast-paced read. An added bonus: Faculty Brunch recipes included.

— Edna

The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown
(Doubleday, \$24.95)

The Da Vinci Code lives up to its hype. From the very first page I was hooked; in fact, I stayed up to three o'clock in the morning to finish it — it was that good.

Robert Langdon, a symbologist from Harvard, is in Paris to give a lecture. A call in the middle of the night takes him to the scene of a murder. The victim, a curator at the Louvre, has been found dead in a sealed off gallery, his naked body displayed in a symbolic manner. It isn't long before Robert realizes he has been pegged as the murderer.

Sophie Neveu, a French cryptologist and granddaughter of the murder victim, aids Langdon in his escape from the French Judicial Police. As the two outrun the law, the real killer and the mastermind behind the killing, they try to solve the puzzles left by her grandfather for them.

The story's premise involves fact, myth and codes involving the Knights Templar, freemasonry, the cult of Mary Magdalene and the treasures taken from the Temple of Solomon during the Crusades. Dan Brown has woven a beautifully complex but coherent tale of what happens when fanatics start to believe their own press. Anyone who likes thrillers to be intelligent as well as fast-moving will love this book — and seek out the previous book about Robert Langdon, *Angels and Demons* (Pocket, \$7.99).

— Moni

The Fools in Town Are on Our Side by Ross Thomas
(St. Martin's, \$14.95)

Carmel isn't Swankerton, but a municipal election always makes me think of this 1971 classic. Fortunately, St. Martin's reprinted it, as part of a program of returning Ross Thomas to print, just in time for me to reread as we went to the polls.

Swankerton is a Gulf Coast city where things are bad, but not so bad as to motivate the voters to throw out the incumbents. So a group of reformers hires Victor Orcutt to corrupt the city even more, to the point where the voters are thoroughly fed up. Orcutt, in turn, hires Lucifer Dye to help. Dye is a fascinating character, and in this rich and complex novel, Thomas gives us his life story, from growing up as an orphan in China, to his work for a clandestine espionage agency, his unceremonious departure from the agency, and his work in Swankerton.

Every bit of Thomas' ingenuity is on display in this tour de force. Every one of the colorful characters in a Ross Thomas novel is smart; it's a battle of wits — multiple battles of wits! — with everyone at the top of their game. (There's never a moment where a character does something stupid just to make the plot move along.) Thomas' writing seems effortless and the pace is swift. The point of view is wry and unsentimental,

tough and yet funny in many spots.

Fools in Town isn't really typical of Thomas' work — he generally doesn't include so much back story. You might want to start with his Edgar Award winning first novel, *The Cold War Swap* (\$13.95), or his other Edgar-winning masterpiece, *Briarpatch* (\$13.95), both of which St. Martin's has also reprinted this year. These editions bear a quote from the *Times*: "America's Best Storyteller." I couldn't agree more.

— Jim

Meet our staff

In newsletter #1, I told you about Jennie and me, and promised that in each subsequent issue, you'd have a chance to meet one of the great people we have working with us.

Moni Draper, a life-long Hoosier and a Carmel resident for twelve years, has been a mystery fan since grade school. After reading all the Nancy Drew, Bobbsey Twins and Box Car Children mysteries, she graduated to Agatha Christie, Erle Stanley Gardner and Leslie Charteris. At one point in time, she had read every mystery the Little Turtle Branch of the Ft. Wayne, Indiana public library owned.

She is an attorney who now practices as an arbitrator/mediator and an author of suspense/thrillers. Writing as Monette Michaels, she has authored three novels, her fourth is due out in June 2003 and a fifth is scheduled for November 2003. *Fatal Vision* and *Death Benefits*, published by LTDBooks, a small press from Canada, are available at The

Mystery Company. *Vested Interests* is available only as an e-book from Atlantic Bridge Publishing, an Indianapolis e-book publisher. You can visit her in the store or on her website: <http://home.att.net/~medraper>.

In our next newsletter: Sherry Crane.

Your favorite mystery writers

Since we opened, we've asked everyone who's joined our frequent buyers' discount program to list five favorite mystery writers. So far, over 150 writers have received at least one vote each. The top vote getter is Sue Grafton; she and three others — Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle and Janet Evanovich — had enough votes to really separate themselves from everyone else.

In alphabetical order, here are the top 20 favorite writers named:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Nevada Barr | Arthur Conan Doyle |
| M.C. Beaton | Janet Evanovich |
| Lawrence Block | Terence Faherty |
| Lillian Jackson Braun | Elizabeth George |
| James Lee Burke | Sue Grafton |
| Agatha Christie | P.D. James |
| Jill Churchill | Elizabeth Peters |
| Michael Connelly | Ellis Peters |
| Patricia Cornwell | John Sandford |
| Robert Crais | Dorothy Sayers |



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