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We're celebrating our Agatha Award nomination Tuesday, May 8 at 7:30!

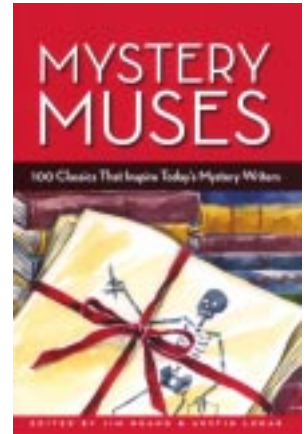
In addition to all the work we do here as retail booksellers, I also run The Crum Creek Press, a small publishing company that produces books for mystery lovers. We have nine titles in print, and our latest, *Mystery Muses: 100 Classics That Inspire Today's Mystery Writers* (\$15.00), is an Agatha Award nominee for best nonfiction of 2006.

The winner will be announced this Saturday evening in Arlington, Virginia, during the Malice Domestic convention. I'll be there with my fingers crossed. I've won two Agathas already, for *100 Favorite Mysteries of the Century* (2000) and *They Died in Vain: Overlooked, Underappreciated and Forgotten Mystery Novels* (2002). I'm absolutely thrilled to be up for a third.

Win or lose, we've decided to celebrate this nomination with a little party next Tuesday, May 8, at 7:30 pm. We'll have cake and cookies, and raise a toast to a project that I'm really proud of. You're all invited!

This book, which Austin Lugar and I put together, asks 100 published mystery writers: "Did a mystery set you on your path to being a writer? Is there a classic mystery that remains important to you today?" The result is a little gem, a book that far exceeded my expectations for how this might turn out.

The Wall Street Journal notes that "the essays ... are as compelling as the books they describe." Shelf Awareness says that *Muses* is "an entertaining and indispensable bibliography for mystery fans." For more information on the book, including a full list of contributors and their classics, visit our publishing website at: www.crumcreekpress.com



Calendar

Tuesday, May 8, 7:30 pm

Agatha Award nomination party for *Mystery Muses*. (See above)

Monday, May 14, 7 pm

Alan Gordon returns to talk about and sign copies of his new — and long awaited — Fools' Guild mystery, *The Lark's Lament*.

Wednesday, May 23, 7 pm

Discussion: *In a Dry Season* by Peter Robinson

Thursday, May 24, noon

Discussion: *In a Dry Season* by Peter Robinson

Friday, June 1 through Sunday, 3

A marathon 50 hour Read-A-Thon benefiting Indy Reads. More details shortly!

Saturday, June 2, 2 pm

Laura Bradford, Denise Swanson and Heather Webber visit to talk about and sign copies of their books.

Friday, June 15, 7 pm

Barry Eisler returns to talk about and sign copies of *Requiem for an Assassin*, the last novel in his John Rain series.

Saturday, June 23, noon

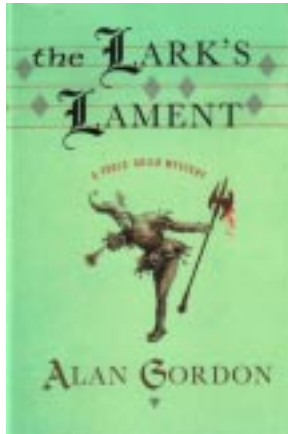
Hank Phillippi Ryan visits to talk about and sign copies of her first novel, *Prime Time*, set in the world of TV news. It's something that this Zionsville native knows well: she worked at Channel 13 here in Indianapolis, and also worked at WIBC. She's currently the investigative reporter for the NBC affiliate in Boston.

Alan Gordon visits Monday, May 14!

In a genre full of writers whose work I adore, Alan Gordon's books are among my most cherished favorites. I resisted reading them at first: I knew Alan from our days together in college. I'm always more than a little fearful of reading books by people I know and like. I hate to be in the position of liking a person and not liking their work — not that I thought that was likely, knowing that Alan is clever, funny and, like many others I met at Swarthmore, literate and erudite to an almost scary degree. But still...

Soon after Alan's first novel, *Thirteenth Night*, was published by St. Martin's Press in 1999, word started getting around that this was something special. Alan's book imagines that all medieval fools, including those in Shakespeare's plays, belong to a guild that operates like a Middle Ages CIA; they run around meddling in affairs. It's a great concept. Library Journal wrote: "witty wordplay, comical characters, and exaggerated circumstances mark this fanciful and entertaining historical." Booklist wrote: "This exceedingly clever novel is a treat for all mystery fans; it is delightfully constructed, featuring an intricate whodunit with political overtones, plenty of intrigue, and a healthy dose of humor. With an idea this original, Gordon, a New York legal-aid lawyer, could have skated through the novel, relying on the court-jesters-as-secret-agents premise to keep readers going. But he didn't; on every level — characters, plot, and style, in addition to premise — this is an outstanding first mystery and, one hopes, the beginning of a fine series."

I should never have hesitated to pick up *Thirteenth Night* (\$14.00 in a Crum Creek Press edition that I brought out right after St. Martin's let the book go out of print), a book that did indeed mark the beginning of an outstanding series. Each and every book subsequent book has been equally terrific, including *Death in a Venetian Quarter* (just published in paperback for the first time by St. Martin's, (\$13.95) and, finally, *The Lark's Lament* (St. Martin's,



\$24.95), sixth in the series.

This new adventure advances the series (after two books set largely before *Thirteenth Night*), sending Theophilus, his wife Claudia, their daughter Portia and an apprentice named Helga off to the south of France in 1204 where they are on a mission to recruit a troubadour turned abbot in the Fools' Guild's fight for survival. The story is built around a song. As the fools race to uncover its meaning, two people are killed. They realize that they're not the only ones on the trail.

I recommend these books to practically everyone, even folks who would not ordinarily pick up a historical mystery. The witty banter and the delightful characters are so original and so endearing that these books work for everyone. I hope you'll join us in welcoming Alan back to the store on Monday, May 14 at 7 pm!

Best new writer of 2006, now in paperback!

Louise Penny's protagonist, Inspector Armand Gamache, is described as a "Modern Poirot," and it's an apt description. Penny's first novel, *Still Life* is very much in the classic village mystery tradition, set in a rural town south of Montreal. The paperback edition has just arrived (published by St. Martin's, \$6.99).

Jane Neal is a lifelong resident of Three Pines, and a good friend to many in the community. Nevertheless, there are aspects of her life which she's kept hidden: no one's been past the foyer of her home, and though everyone knows that Jane paints, she's never allowed anyone to see her work. This year, Jane's entered a painting in the village's annual art show. Soon after a split jury votes to include the painting, Jane is found dead in the woods.

This is a stunning novel, perceptive and beautifully told. Penny's descriptions of how Jane's friends struggle to accept her death are especially well-done. It's the kind of detective novel in which the solution is uncovered through careful observation of behavior. Penny handles virtually every detail with grace and sensitivity.

I can't recommend this one highly enough, and I'm not alone. The Canadian and British crime writers organizations have both recognized *Still Life* with best first novel awards, and the book won the Dilys Award, given by the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association to the book member stores "most enjoyed selling" in 2006. The sequel, *A Fatal Grace*, will be here shortly.



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