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THE DAMES' DOCKET

A Bimonthly Newsletter from Level Best Books



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GREETINGS FROM THE DAMES

Here we are, moving into fall, and COVID, which we hoped would be a thing of the past by now, is still going strong. Life has changed dramatically for most of us, and I keep asking myself: “who would have ever thought?”

Looking at the brighter side of the world we’re living in, I’m grateful that my loved ones are safe and well. I’m not in danger of losing my home, or employment, and don’t have to worry about putting food on the table. I sincerely hope that you all can say the same, and that we all have networks that can lend a helping hand if circumstances were to change.

And, I'm grateful for Level Best Books. As a publisher, how exciting it is to enable writers to see their books in print. As the long-time Grants Chair of Malice Domestic, Ltd., it is my pleasure, on behalf of the organization, to assist new writers along the path to publication. And now, along with Shawn and Verena, Level Best can publish promising authors ourselves.

I'm grateful that our company is growing, and I can enjoy meeting with our authors on Zoom and through Slack. Thank you to Mally Becker, Tina deBellegarde, and Jen Moore, who took the initiative to create these networking venues. While the three Dames live in close proximity, but still hold our Board meeting on Zoom, LBB authors reside all over the U.S., England, and Canada. But we're all meeting and sharing information from the comfort of our own homes. I, for one, think that's great!

Warm congratulation to those of you who have had books published in July and August. The Dames hope you're feeling happy and inspired. I know we are!

For the Dames,
Harriette

IN CONVERSATION WITH M. GLENDA ROSEN (MARCIA ROSEN)
THE GANGSTER'S DAUGHTER

HS: Marcia, first of all, I must ask you what life was like growing up as a gangster's daughter?

MR: Unusual. While my friends went to Country Club dinners with their parents, I visited my dad at his pool hall and saw poker games being played in a back room. I once called my Mom a gun moll. Until I was older and married, it truly seemed normal to me. Yet somehow I think I knew it wasn't. After all, my father's friends and cohorts were incredibly kind to me. When I would be at a restaurant on a date and they were there, they insisted on paying. I guess my date liked that!! I also realized young men on dates with me knew who my father was and played it very safe.

HS: Level Best Books is happy to announce the publication of the third book in your Senior Sleuths Mystery Series. *Dead in THAT Beach House* once again features Dick and Dora Zimmerman. What has been your inspiration for writing this series, and this book, in particular?

MR: I loved the Thin Man Series. I love old noir mystery movies and mystery television shows, especially those on PBS. I love doing puzzles. I love writing. Kind of a perfect fit. The main characters in Senior Sleuths and who are also in the book "The Gangsters Daughter," along with Zero The Bookie, are based on some of the people I met when I was growing up...such as Doc, Gimp, Fat Lawyer, etc. And I always include an issue I care about and is important. In this third book, there is a lot about the issue of Elder Abuse, stressing how to not let anyone take advantage of you or abuse you, just because you're older. Report anyone who does.

HS: Marcia, you're the author of a variety of other books, both fiction and nonfiction. Tell us about them.

MR: My first mystery series, *Dying To Be Beautiful*, is based in the Hamptons where I lived for about 14 years and came in contact with many people with a sense of arrogance and entitlement. I was witness to crooked actions and criminal behavior when I was involved on several boards and did public relations for some of them. One day, at the hair dresser here in Carmel, there were a couple of people acting with the same arrogance, and I just found myself developing these book ideas. *Without A Head* began at that hairdresser's salon. There are four books in the series, and Level Best Books is re-releasing them.

I wrote my award winning, "My Memoir Workbook," using information I presented in numerous memoir writing classes I gave when I lived in Albuquerque about seven years ago. There was a terrific response to the classes and workbook. The mystery book store, Murder on The Beach, has asked me to do two Zoom Classes in November and December on memoir writing. I believe it will be open to the public.

When I wrote *The Woman's Business Therapist: Eliminate the MindBlocks and RoadBlocks to Success*, published by Chandler House Press, it was after years of working with many business and professional women. The chapters were called sessions, each addressing the practical and emotional issues women were facing. I served on a dozen boards for women's agendas and won several awards for my work on behalf of them. I did a year-long author tour speaking to women's organizations all across the county. I loved it.

HS: In addition to your writing career, you owned a national marketing and public relations agency. I'm sure that expertise has been invaluable as an author.

MR: It truly has. I founded and owned the agency, Rosen and Associates, for 25 years, serving a wide array of local and national clients. When I started it in Albuquerque, New Mexico, it became the 2nd largest agency in the state. I eventually sold it, moved to NYC, and began a successful Boutique Marketing Agency there.

HS: Would you care to give a shout out to any authors who have made a lasting impression on you?

MR: Elizabeth Peters, Umberto Eco, Robert Parker, Georges Simenon, Donna Leon, Anthony Horowitz, Alexander McCall, Martin Walker, Mark Pryor, Ann Cleeves, and Barack Obama.

HS: Based on your experience, do you have any words of wisdom for aspiring writers?

MR: Author Roger Rosenblatt in his book, "Unless It Moves The Human Heart," wrote, "Write from your soul...if you can't borrow someone else's." Wow, as a writer, I love that quote! It's meant to be inspiring and motivating same as I hope for with any of my writing classes and Zoom programs I'm now doing. I'm excited about doing them and am pleased with the positive responses I'm getting to proposals and requests I've made. I believe each writer and aspiring writer should listen to their own voice, not any negative ones, and pursue their dreams and ambitions.

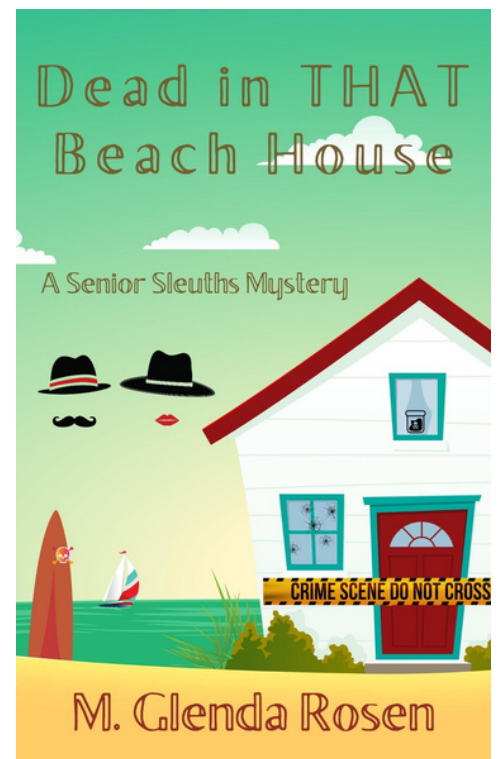
HS: Marcia, you live in Carmel, California, a heaven on earth. Does your beautiful town inspire you?

MR: I wish I could say yes, surely it is a beautiful place for people to visit. I'm a city person and prefer the life and energy of bigger cities. I'm here, for now, because of family encouragement. My advice is don't listen to your kids who say move near where they live unless you think you will love it!!!!!!!

But I do love them very much!



Marcia Rosen (aka M. Glenda Rosen) is author of ten books including The Senior Sleuths and Dying To Be Beautiful Mystery Series and The Gourmet Gangster, Mysteries and Menus (with her son Jory Rosen), published by Level Best Books.



An Author's Viewpoint

IF YOUR BOOK DROPS AND NO ONE IS THERE TO HEAR IT, DOES IT MAKE A SOUND?

by Kelly Oliver

Publishing a book without marketing and publicity reminds me of the famous question asked by the 17th Century philosopher Bishop Berkeley: If a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?

With somewhere in the neighborhood of a million books published a year, it's impossible to get your book noticed without advertising and publicity.

There are several places where authors and publishers can advertise: [Bookbub Ads \(Tutorial here\)](#), [Facebook Ads \(Tutorial here\)](#), [Goodreads Ads](#), [Amazon Ads](#), [Pinterest Ads](#), [Snapchat Ads](#), [YouTube Ads](#), and more. You don't have to spend a lot of money. You can run Bookbub or Facebook or any of these ads for just a couple of dollars a day. I have a Facebook ad running now that costs 1 cent per click and I spend \$5 a day for 500 clicks to my website. Of course, most of those people don't end up buying the book then... but who knows, maybe they'll buy it later.

A [Bookbub featured deal](#) can catapult your book onto a bestsellers list, especially when you stack promotions on other sites at the same time. And becoming a bestselling author is something you can use in future marketing and advertisements.

A publicist can help create "buzz" about your book. Publicists can get nice write-ups in news media. And blurbs from those can be used in direct marketing and advertising.

Of course, winning awards can also help you promote your books. And you can mention awards in marketing and ads.

It helps to have an email list of readers who like your books. Developing this list takes time. You can use your ads to build your list and sell your books at the same time, and then you can use your email list to publicize new releases or special deals and sell your books in the future.

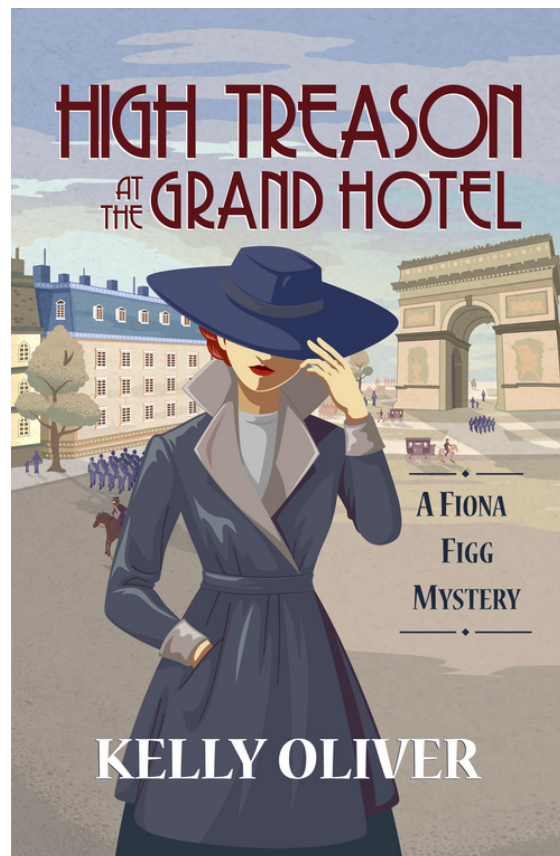
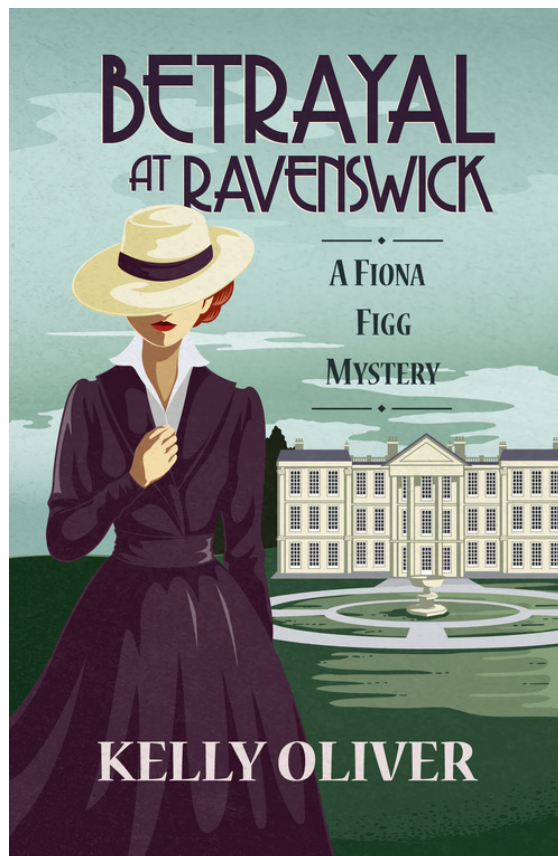
Publicity, direct marketing, advertising, and email lists all build on each other to create sales and get your books noticed. So, when your book drops, people hear it.

In case you're wondering, Bishop Berkeley's answer was YES, if a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, it does make a sound because God hears it.

If you're happy with just God hearing your book drop, then you don't need to worry about marketing and publicity. But, if you want mere mortals to hear it too, then you need to advertise.



Kelly Oliver is a Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University, and the author of fifteen nonfiction books, and over 100 articles. She is the author of the Fiona Figg Mystery Series published by Level Best Books.



VISIT TO OLD EL PASO

A TALK WITH SANDRA MARSHALL

HS: Congratulations on the publication of the first in your Rose In Old El Paso series. I particularly enjoyed reading about a time and place that I knew little about. Can you talk a bit about *Death in the Time of Pancho Villa*?

SM: Thank you, Harriette. The book is about a young woman, Rose Westmoreland, who leaves her sedate, upper-middle-class home in Ohio and comes to El Paso to find her missing husband. The time is May, 1911, and the city is gearing up to watch a battle between two Mexican armies, literally a stone's throw from the El Paso city limits. Rose finds the place, the people, and the situation fairly surreal. Nothing, neither the city itself nor the fearsome bandito Pancho Villa, are at all what she expected. She must learn who to trust and who to doubt and, most of all, learn to trust herself.

HS: As a resident of Las Cruces, New Mexico, you've recently been elected as chair of the City Historic Preservation Commission. Tell us about your interest in and commitment to historic preservation.

SM: I earned a B.A. and M.A. in anthropology, with an emphasis in archaeology, and worked as an archaeologist for many years. Archaeology is, essentially, studying humans through their material culture; that is, all the things that humans make and use. I developed an interest in architecture, which is just large material culture. I earned a second M.A., in public history, with an emphasis in architectural history. My student internship was learning adobe restoration: making sun-dried bricks and laying on mud plaster. This led to jobs in Texas and California recording buildings and structures and nominating them to the National Register of Historic Places. In Las Cruces I became involved with the restoration of Phillips Chapel AME Church, the oldest existing African American church building in New Mexico, dating from 1911. It was good to get my hands dirty again. Later, I was asked to serve on the committee to draft a historic preservation ordinance for the city. It took four years, but was finally accepted last December. I volunteered to serve on the commission and was voted in as chair. We currently meet via Zoom and are working on some projects that we hope will spark interest and pride in our community.

HS: How did your life experiences serve as inspiration for your book?

SM: I've loved history since I was a child. My favorite books were *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes and *Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol Ryrie Brink. I was depressed one whole summer when I was eleven because I hadn't been born in pioneer days and so I missed all the exciting times. Before I could read properly, my father brought home a library book with pictures of people I'd heard of: Annie Oakley; Wild Bill Hickock; Calamity Jane. I asked him what kind of a book that was. He said, a history book. I said, "get some more of those." My family lived in El Paso for a year when I was in grade school, back when the alligators in the plaza were still real. When I moved to Las Cruces, only a forty-minute drive away, it struck me as a good setting for a mystery. My interest in photography led me to make Rose a photographer, too.

HS: Can you talk about the research you did?

SM: I read many books and articles on El Paso, the Mexican Revolution, and biographies of real persons like Pancho Villa and Francisco Madero. I checked out research done on the international oil companies' interest in Mexico and possible attempts to influence the outcome of the Revolution. The real treasure is Timothy Turner's memoir of his time as a reporter in El Paso and Mexico. I was able to buy a copy of *Bullets, Bottles and Gardenias* online. Tim is one of my real-life characters, and my book would not have been the same without his personal contributions. Internet sites were helpful in tracking down resources and for instant research. For instance, what did women's footwear look like in 1911? A few clicks and I had scores of illustrations to look at. I found a copy of a Sanborn Fire Insurance map of El Paso from 1908 online. I printed out each page, cut and taped them together, and now it's spread across one wall of my study. It's incredibly detailed, and I can stand up close, peer at it, and almost see Rose walking along, crossing a street, catching a streetcar. El Paso was crawling with photographers at this period, and the El Paso Public Library and special collections at the University of Texas at El Paso have hundreds of photographs, many of them online. Also, because I live so near, I can take my own referential photographs of the many places that still exist, especially in the historic districts such as Sunset Heights where Rose and her friends live. But don't look for their house there. There is a house that looks like theirs, but it's not where you'd expect to find it.

HS: What writers have left a lasting impression on you?

SM: Hilary Mantel is brilliant. Wonderful character development and period detail. I haven't read *The Mirror and the Light* yet because I'm not sure I can take the ending we know is coming. Simon Schama for his fresh takes on everything he writes about, from art to the French Revolution. Charles Dickens for his rollicking humor and sincere pathos. Stephen J. Pyne for his lucid writing on the environment. Dorothy L. Sayers, one of the three queens of the Golden Age of Mysteries, whose witty and literate books were the first mysteries I ever read.

HS: If you had one piece of advice for new authors, what would it be?

SM: Read, read, read, and write, write, write. Writing guides can be helpful, especially ones that are specific about word usage and such, but the only way to understand those more abstract concepts like rhythm, pacing, arcs, is to submerge yourself in good books. That way you internalize it all painlessly. The guidebooks can't really explain very well how to do it; they can only tell you what to call it. Then write, every day for at least a little while, if you possibly can. If you have trouble moving on in the larger piece you are writing, or if you don't yet have a large piece, do something short and descriptive. It keeps your writing muscles in shape, like going to a head gym. You'll be surprised at how much your writing will have improved when you go back and reread your earlier work. If you're lucky you have a few book-loving friends whom you can trust to be honest critics. Remember that the book is yours and nobody can tell you what to do with it, but if more than one reader points to a scene or passage and says there's something wrong there, do take a second look.

Finally, when you have something you feel good about, keep those query letters going out. Stories abound about the unbelievable number of times authors were rejected before hitting it big. For God's sake, don't be like John Kennedy Toole who, in despair, killed himself and had to win the Pulitzer Prize posthumously. Think of everything good he missed.

RECENT RELEASES

