

Winona Kent CWC Regional Newsletter July 2022

“**Bob Notes**” by CWC Associate Bob Harris

June was a busy month for me and THC. The what? THC...I'll explain later. For now, permit me to acknowledge a few BC folks.

Kudos to Erik D'Souza, Merrilee Robson and Joanna Vander Vlugt for a fine job moderating panels at *The Maple Leaf Mystery Conference* in May.

- If you missed that 4-day show, make a point of looking it up online for the recorded sessions. Producer Mike Martin and his team did amazing work. <https://writers-first.com/maple-leaf-mystery-conference/>

Nice to see so many regional members were shortlisted for the CWC Awards of Excellence. Congratulations to Elizabeth Elwood for winning Best Crime Short Story – *Number 10 Marlborough Place* (Dell Magazines), sponsored by Mystery Magazine.

I am so pleased that Canadian indie publisher ECW Press stepped up to the plate with more sponsorship this year and that BC's Dietrich Kalteis scooped Best Crime Novel for *Under an Outlaw Moon* (ECW Press).

- A sidebar: My American colleague Jeanne “Hollywood” Basone is currently working on her autobiography with Dan Murphy, one of ECW's prominent sports writers. Jeanne is the original star and first girl signed to the 1980's G.L.O.W. syndicated television series (1985-91). She's endorsed A.J. Devlin's 'Hammerhead' Jed character (*Cobra Clutch, Rolling Thunder*) and added his books to her merchandise table at large FanFest shows and Comic Con events in the USA.

Have you ever done three instore book signings in week? Winona Kent and Rick Alexander Jr. did and we had a blast at Indigo Robson, Granville, and Metrotown in June.

- Books were signed and sold, and we enjoyed conversations with readers and browsers. The real kicker was the amount of quality

photo and video footage we shot at each location for marketing and social media postings. Comin' atcha soon!

If you are doing book signings in retail locations, consider acquiring photo and video content. Bookstores provide excellent scenes for the creative-minded and the booksellers love the exposure.

Is your work ready for the screen:

Erik D'Souza has lined up a CWC sponsored panel on "Optioning Novels for TV and Film" featuring A.J. Devlin and M.N. (Mark) Grenside at Calgary's **When Words Collide** conference at 10:00 AM (MDT), 9:00 AM Pacific on Sunday, August 14th. Erik will moderate. The online session is free.

Websites:

When Words Collide – A festival for readers and writers. Friday to Sunday, August 12–14, 2022.

https://www.whenwordscollide.org/Events/Festival_Program.php

A.J. Devlin – CWC award-winning author and screenwriter.

<https://ajdevlin.com/>

M.N. (Mark) Grenside – UK/Malta-based award-winning Producer and author. <https://mngrenside.com/>

"You never know":

In my May column, I touted the UK's bestselling **Writing Magazine**—published monthly by Warners Group Publications—as the best on the newsstand for writers, in my opinion.

Shortly thereafter, I mentioned to a writing colleague my intent to tell the editors I liked their magazine and had touted it in a newsletter. I was asked, "Why and what for?" I replied, "Well, you never know."

So at 3:00 AM I emailed my note of appreciation to the editors, keeping in mind the 8 hour time difference in the UK. Within minutes, I had a "thank you, that's marvellous and please ping it over" from **Tina Jackson, Assistant Editor**.

By 4:30 AM and several email exchanges later, Tina had read and expressed gratitude for the tout, informed me she was going "flag up" the piece to **Fahrenheit Press**, the UK publisher of her novel *The Beloved Children*, and had invited me to submit a piece with a photo

for a spot in Writing Magazine's *Writers' Circle* page. Whew! That was fast.

Websites:

Tina Jackson – award-winning writer and editor, journalist, dancer and variety performer <https://tinajacksonwriter.wordpress.com/>
Fahrenheit Press – a new publishing house founded by international publishing veteran Chris McVeigh <http://www.fahrenheit-press.com/>
Writing Magazine (online) – <https://www.writers-online.co.uk/>

So here's the thing:

About THC...it's the acronym for *The Harris Circle*. A group of folks I've put together and enjoyed working with for quite a while now. We share our networks, promote each other's work, exchange ideas, and communicate regularly about the book biz.

- We are three CWC Professional Author Members and three Associate Members. Winona Kent, our BC/Yukon rep and national Vice-Chair; BC writers A.J. Devlin and Rick Alexander Jr.; and International Associates Mark Grenside (Malta) and Jeanne Basone (Nashville, Los Angeles).

When asked about THC, my reply is: "*gifted with talent, seasoned with life experience, and buzzed with amazing stories to tell and sell.*"

- It is this CWC group that will be profiled in the piece I'm sending over to Tina Jackson for publication in WM's *Writers' Circle* page.

And you know, I'll bet there will be some positive spin-off and good opportunity for the THC writers. You never know. But I'll sure let you know when we hit the newsstand—I buy my copy at Indigo Chapters.

Do you have a writer's circle? Tell me about it. I would be happy to give you a nudge in this column.

About this month's interview: I'm featuring Joanna Vander Vlugt, a fascinating lady from Vancouver Island. She's a writer, an illustrator, and a podcaster.

- Next month you will meet Meredith Hambrock, a Vancouver fiction and television writer whose debut crime novel is *OTHER PEOPLE'S SECRETS* (Crooked Lane Books, NY).

That's a wrap for this month. Enjoy the summer. See you in August!

Bob Harris – Writer, book promoter, publicist / Vancouver

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My conversation with Joanna:

Your debut thriller *The Unravelling* is set in the world of lawyers and the courtrooms of British Columbia's capital city Victoria. Explain why you chose that setting and your research.

I remember hearing, "Write what you know." I worked as a Supreme Court Assistant in the Crown Counsel (prosecutor's office) for 13 years. It annoyed me that in 2001, the criminal law novels out there were all situated in the U.S. William Deverell was the only lawyer I was aware of who wrote about criminal law situated in Vancouver.

Canadian law is different from American law. I wanted to write about the Canadian legal system and B.C.'s prosecution process, despite being told by publishers that a novel situated solely in Canada would never sell. I always liked Victoria, it is a recognizable city, and it was only a 2-hour drive from where I lived in Nanaimo. As it happened, when I was working on the final rewrites of *The Unravelling* in 2001, my family moved from Nanaimo to Victoria. It was fantastic to live and work in the city I had researched for my novel.

How did your protagonist Jade Thyme emerge? What is her lifestyle and motivation?

Gosh, Jade has been around since 1998. I originally wrote *The Unravelling* in 1998. I wanted a strong, independent, intelligent, yet flawed prosecutor as my protagonist. Jade makes mistakes. She second guesses herself. She's single, living her life, experiencing culture, and before "foodie" became a word, Jade was and is a "foodie". Ultimately, Jade fights for injustice.

***The Unravelling* was written many years ago, but not published until June 2019. Explain the resurrection process. How long did it take?**

Some people believe I'm a new author. Under my old pseudonym of J.C. Szasz, I had two short stories published in two Crime Writers of

Canada anthologies, and a personal essay published in an anthology, created by the late Carol Shields and Marjorie Anderson.

I was mailing *The Unravelling* to publishing houses in the early 2000s. Around that same time I became a fitness instructor and personal trainer. I switched from writing fiction to personal training articles. I didn't believe I would return to writing fiction. It was approximately 6 months after my mother died, that I took out *The Unravelling* manuscript, and I remember thinking that if I "found something salvageable", I would re-write it. That's exactly what I did.

It took me approximately seven to eight months, working with an editor, to re-write *The Unravelling*.

Several contemporary issues are present in *The Unravelling* such as cronyism and corruption, wealth gap, homelessness and drug addiction. What did you retain from the original manuscript, what did you cut, and what did you add?

The court scenes and the law office scenes were retained. When I originally wrote the novel, I worked in a prosecutor's office that had 10 prosecutors and only two of them were women. That has changed. How the murder victim was murdered was retained. Granted, I did think twice about it.

The issues of homelessness and drug addiction were added to the story. When I moved to Victoria, I thought it was a city of elderly ladies and high tea. I was surprised when I saw the homeless problem Victoria had back in 2001.

In the original novel Jade never had a sister. It was amazing to bring Sage into the novel. I now can't think of Jade without thinking of Sage. One legal issue I changed had to do with cannabis. At the publication of *The Unravelling*, cannabis was legal. In 1998, cannabis it was not.

You are an author, illustrator and podcaster. How do they interrelate in terms of your creativity and your professional profile as a writer?

My art and writing I refer to the Yin and Yang of creativity. I have illustrated over 30 motorcycles. When I was re-writing *The Unravelling*, it only seemed natural that Jade and Sage would ride motorcycles. I had started my Woman Empowered motorcycle series, and Jade and Sage fit right in with that series. I then decided that if

007 could have different sports cars, then Jade could have different motorcycles. I've illustrated friends and female riders for scenes in my book.

I never thought I would be a podcaster. Podcasting came about as a desperate attempt to connect with other authors during the pandemic. Being a writer can be isolating and the pandemic magnified that isolation. I was a writer, and again, I thought, "talk about something you know." Writing seemed the logical choice.

Your second book in the series, *Dealer's Child*, was published in September 2021. It reached number 60 in Amazon's Top 100. As an indie author, how was that accomplished?

I wish I knew! I have book three coming out in the spring of 2023 and I'm hoping it can place the same, or better.

But seriously, I believe it has to do with the three categories, Amazon allows you to categorize your book. Two of my categories are Lesbian Fiction ebooks and Lesbian Literature & Fiction. Jade's sister, Sage, is bi-sexual. Sage had a hard life growing up and being accepted by her father.

I remember when I was writing *Dealer's Child*, I wanted Sage to experience love and happiness. When Gillian with a "G" appeared in a scene, my challenge was to type fast enough to keep up with their dialogue. I wanted to show their relationship.

Both your novels and your illustration portfolio contain motorcycles. Why? Are you a rider?

I am not a motorcycle rider. I have seriously thought about taking lessons. My first commission was a Sprint car, a wife wanted me to illustrate for her husband as a birthday present. I then did a number of car illustrations. I was still a University of Victoria personal trainer during this time. I saw a photo of a personal trainer I knew, and she looked so cool. That was the start of my Woman Empowered motorcycle series.

I am itching to get back to illustrating a motorcycle, but it must be the right motorcycle. I really like the Royal Enfield bikes and Nortons. It will sound nerdy, but there's something really cool making a gas tank, pipes, or tires beautiful, seeing purple in tire tread.

Do you know anyone who has a motorcycle they would like illustrated?

Is there a third book developing in the Jade & Sage Thyme series?

Yes, there is. As with the two previous books, I'm keeping my tradition of opening with a courtroom scene. In book three, Jade is in trouble with the Law Society as a result of an ad hoc prosecution she conducted. Jade has serious life decisions to make about her future as she is pulled into the world of espionage.

Reflecting on your journey as a fiction writer and illustrator, who influenced you the most and why?

I have read every Dick Francis book. He wrote about horseracing. His novels were different, and he immersed me into a new world.

In terms of illustrations, my two favorite fashion illustrators are David Downton and Hayden Williams. With only a few brush strokes, David Downton can create the most dazzling fashion illustrations. He's illustrated everyone.

Hayden Williams got me hooked on Copic markers. He creates bright fashion illustrations. As a teenager during the '80s, I drew portraits, supermodels, and I loved drawing clothing. I didn't know then that what I loved were fashion illustrations.

What is the best piece of writing advice you've received?

I think the best advice I received was told to me by different people in different circumstances. My mother always told my sisters and I to "never quit". I can still remember her telling us, "You're not a quitter." I also remember an author telling me that no matter how awful that first draft is, keep going. Don't edit, just write whatever comes to you until you get to the end. You create a book through re-writes.

As an indie author, what can you pass on to emerging writers?

I would tell emerging writers the same advice. Do not quit. I refer to my first draft as the "porridge draft". It has a lot of lumps and doesn't look to appetizing but through re-writes, that porridge can be whipped into something special. But more importantly, write to entertain yourself. Some readers will love your book, some will hate it, the reader you need to impress is yourself.

What have you read recently?

The Honeybee Emeralds by Amy Tector.

The Ghosts of Paris by Tara Moss.

Cut Out Cookie by P.D. Workman.

Fall Out by M.N. Grenside.

Who are you reading now?

I'm interviewing Gordon Mott about his novel, *Tears of Jurate*. That is the book I'm currently reading.

Joanna's website is: <https://www.jcvartstudio.net/>

Her debut thriller *The Unravelling* was a Canadian Book Club Awards finalist. Her motorcycle illustrations have been purchased world-wide and her Woman Empowered motorcycle art series has been featured in on-line art and motorcycle magazines.

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