

# **MYSTERY READERS JOURNAL**

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## Long-Ago Lawmen

by Jim Doherty (Chicago, Illinois)

**A list** (actually four of 'em) of historical police procedurals.

Seems easy enough. We all know what's meant by a "police procedural," right? A piece of fiction that depicts the profession of law enforcement with technical accuracy, or at least with the appearance of technical accuracy.

Thing is, not everyone agrees on exactly what constitutes "historical" fiction.

I know of one writer who makes a distinction between "historical" fiction and mere "period" fiction, the latter being stories that just happen to be set in some past era, while the former are stories that fictionalize specific historical events.

Another writer of my acquaintance insists that a story can't truly be historical unless everyone who was alive at the time the story takes place is now dead, a definition that would, for example, render Margaret Mitchell's **Gone With the Wind** (Macmillan, 1936) something other than historical fiction, since there were Civil War veterans still living into the 1950s.

I didn't impose such strictures on myself when assembling these lists. For me, a piece of fiction counts as "historical" if it's set long enough ago that we can look at the era with a sense of historical perspective. Somewhat arbitrarily, I figure twenty years, roughly a generation, is long enough ago to pass muster.

Of course, the story has to actually be *written* at least twenty years after the time it's set. Hence, Collin Wilcox's **The Lonely Hunter** (Random, 1969), about a San Francisco homicide cop investigating a case in the Haight-Ashbury district in the late '60s is, quite obviously, not an historical novel, while David Daniels's **White Rabbit** (St. Martin's, 2003), also featuring a San Francisco homicide cop investigating a case in the Haight-Ashbury district in the late '60s, just as obviously, is. (However, for reasons I'll get to presently **White Rabbit** is also not on my list.)

I also felt that I had to decide on a definite beginning point. Should stories featuring Regency-era Bow Street Runners count? How about one with a Roman centurion fighting crime in the far-flung reaches of the Empire circa the time of Christ (maybe it could be called **The Old Centurions**)? How about stories featuring frontier peace officers in the Old West?

Well, the *raison d'être* of the procedural is technical accuracy, which leads to a problem. To a degree, past a certain era, one can only make educated guesses about how police work was conducted. For example, Anne Rule, famous for her novels about the London Metropolitan Police in the late 19th century, has admitted that, to some extent, she's winging it when she describes how Victorian-era Scotland Yard operated. So I concluded that I needed a comparatively recent starting era for my lists.

Again, somewhat arbitrarily, I eliminated any stories set before 1920. I chose that date for two reasons. First, in the years following World War I, police work, like many professions, went through major changes, and the fact of the matter is that a cop in the Roaring Twenties has more in common with his contemporary colleagues than he does with colleagues from just a few years previously. Second, it was in the 1920s when stories that we can now, in retrospect, identify as true police procedurals first began to appear (though the term itself wouldn't be coined until the 1950s). Authors like Basil Thomson (a former policeman himself) and Henry Wade in Britain, Georges Simenon in France, and William MacHarg here in the States, all began writing stories in which police work was treated with an authentic approach never before seen in crime fiction. It was only a trickle at that time, a movement occurring under the radar of most critics and observers, but the 1920s were, nevertheless, the decade in which the police procedural was truly born, and, consequently, seemed like the most appropriate date to use as my cut-off.

Finally, I decided, at least in the “novels” section, not to include any stories that I’d either listed in previous articles for *MRJ* or intend to list in upcoming ones. Hence, excellent books like Howard Browne’s **Pork City** (St. Martin’s, 1988), which I listed in an article for the Chicago issue, or Stephen Hunter’s **Hot Springs** (Simon and Schuster, 2000) and Stuart Woods’s **Chiefs** (Norton, 1981), both of which were listed in an article for the Southern Mysteries issue, are not included, not because they don’t deserve to be, but because eliminating them was a convenient method for culling the list. Similarly, the aforementioned **White Rabbit** and Kirk Mitchell’s **With Siberia Comes a Chill** (St. Martin’s, 1990) aren’t listed because I intend to use them for an article in the upcoming San Francisco issue.

I freely admit that I wasn’t the least bit consistent here, and the restrictions on yarns mentioned in past or future articles wasn’t applied to the lists of short stories, movies, or TV shows.

So with the ground rules set, here are my choices for the ten best historical cop novels, short stories, films, and television programs.

## Novels

1. **Drums Without Warriors** (Doubleday, 1976) by Fred Grove.

In the early to middle 1920s, the FBI, then a small, comparatively obscure agency of the US Justice Department that had been operating pretty much outside of the public eye since Theodore Roosevelt’s administration, was handed its first high-profile case. Huge oil deposits had been discovered in Osage County, Oklahoma, and since the mineral rights in all of Osage County were owned by the Osage Indians, a Sioux-speaking Plains tribe numbering about 2000, the tribe had, virtually overnight, become the wealthiest population group, per capita, on the face of the planet. Within a few years, as ruthless men conspired to acquire the oil “headrights” of the Osage, they also became the most murdered population group, per capita, on the planet. Public outrage over the murders focused worldwide attention on the booming rural community. Unsatisfied with the way these crimes were being investigated by local

authorities, the Tribal Council appealed to the US Government to take over the case.

A young Justice Department lawyer named J. Edgar Hoover had just been appointed the Bureau’s Acting Director. He knew that his permanent appointment to the post hinged on solving the Osage murders. He also knew that a career bureaucrat like himself was unlikely to be able find that solution. For that he’d need a career cop. He chose a former Texas Ranger named Tom White to be his point man. White, the first FBI agent to earn the rank of “Inspector,” in turn gathered a collection of agents from all over the Southwest, each of them with a good deal of local or state law enforcement experience prior to entering federal service, each of them with a good deal of general knowledge about the culture of Plains Indians (one of the agents, in fact, was part Ute), and had them assume undercover roles in Osage County to ferret out the conspirators.

Award-winning novelist Fred Grove, part Osage himself, was, as a child, actually present at one of the murders. The case was one that haunted him, and he would eventually write three different novels based on it. In my opinion best, of this “Osage Trilogy” was **Drums Without Warriors**.

Changing names, and telescoping time somewhat, Grove tells the story of the murder investigation through the eyes of one of those undercover agents, Sam Colter. Perfect for the job since he actually grew up in Osage County, Colter has assumed the role of a race horse breeder and trader to carry out his investigation.

Colter knows that, when an Osage dies, his or her headrights pass on to his or her heirs. Hence, a family consisting of a father, a mother, and one son, would each get one headright apiece. If the mother and father both died, their headrights would pass to their son, who would then become the beneficiary of three headrights.

It soon becomes evident to the investigators that one Osage family in particular has been plagued by the murders. The surviving member of the family, a young Osage woman, has recently gotten married to a member of a prominent white family in the County. Has her family been slowly wiped out in

order to concentrate their headrights in one single person? Is she now in danger from her own in-laws who stand to inherit if she dies?

Colter has to find the evidence that will convict the murderers, and he has to find it quickly enough to prevent at least one more murder. Is he successful? Well, as we all know, Hoover *did* get that permanent appointment.

Grove also fictionalized the case in **Warrior Road** (Doubleday, 1974), in which a young member of the Osage tribe takes it on himself to investigate the murders, and in **The Years of Fear** (Five Star, 2002), which follows the facts of the actual case somewhat more closely, using actual names and dates (in fact, it was originally written as a non-fiction account, and was slightly fictionalized in later drafts so it could be marketed as a novel). Significantly, though set in the Roaring Twenties, **Drums Without Warriors** and **Warrior Road** were both marketed as “Double D Westerns” rather than as “Doubleday Crime Club Editions,” and **The Years of Fear** as a “Five Star Western.” Nevertheless, they are all top-notch historical crime novels.

Other fictional depictions of the case include **Mean Spirit** (Atheneum, 1990), a Pulitzer Prize nominee for fiction by Chickasaw poet Linda Hogan; **A Pipe for February** (University of Oklahoma, 2002) by another Osage novelist, Charles H. Red Corn; **Black Gold** (St. Martin’s, 2004) by three-time Spur-winner Matt Braun; a radio drama, “The Osage Indian Murders,” which was broadcast in 1935 as a two-part episode of the series *G-Men*; and a short portion of the 1959 film *The FBI Story* (see below).

The case is particularly important to me personally. A non-fiction article I wrote about it, first published in my book **Just the Facts: True Tales of Cops & Criminals** (Deadly Serious, 2004), won a Spur Award from the Western Writers of America.

2. **Butcher’s Dozen** (Bantam, 1988) by Max Allan Collins.

Eliot Ness is most famous as “The Man Who Got Capone.” Leaving aside the fact that he was, as he was always the first to admit, only one of the men who got Capone, that label obscures what might have

been his most significant accomplishment in law enforcement. Years after Capone was jailed, Ness traded his federal investigator’s badge for that of a big-city police chief. As the Director of Public Safety for Cleveland, Ohio, Ness cleaned up a corrupt police force, drove organized mobsters out of town and ultimately out of the state, instituted a program of strict traffic enforcement that cut fatal accidents down dramatically, and kept a lid on labor racketeering. One goal he set for himself, however, that he never quite reached, at least publicly, was the apprehension of a serial killer, called “The Mad Butcher of Kingsbury Run,” whose five-year reign of terror roughly paralleled Ness’s tenure as the head of Cleveland’s police force.

Ness’s term as Cleveland’s Safety Director is the subject of four novels by historical mystery specialist Max Allan Collins, and the second of these, **Butcher’s Dozen**, fictionalizes Ness’s personal investigation into the Butcher slayings. Years later, Ness would claim that he actually had solved the case and put the killer out of circulation, but that, due to political considerations, was not able to publicize the successful conclusion to his investigation. Skeptical at first about Ness’s claims, Collins’s research ultimately showed that Ness was telling the truth. The novel he weaves around Ness’s efforts to find the killer, and his frustration when the powers-that-be prevent him from claiming credit when he does, is a fascinating, compelling read.

Collins expanded the novel from a short story called “The Strawberry Teardrop,” in which Ness was a supporting character and the actual ball-carrier was Collins’s private eye character, Nate Heller. For the book-length version, Heller was excised completely and Ness moved to center stage.

The case has also been fictionalized in John Peyton Cooke’s novel **Torsos** (Mysterious, 1994); in a e-book by Marilyn Bardsley called **Diary of a Serial Killer** (Dark Horse, 1996); in a stage play by Peter Ullian called *In the Shadow of the Terminal Tower*, which was followed by a musical version, *Eliot Ness in Cleveland*, with a book by Ullian and music and lyrics by Robert Lindsay Nassif; and in a comic book (or “graphic novel,” if you prefer) called **Torso** (Im-

age Comics, 2001), written and illustrated by Brian Michael Bendis.

But Collins's novel was the first. And the best.

### 3. **Honor at Daybreak** (Doubleday, 1991) by Elmer Kelton.

It's the Roaring Twenties and oil has been discovered in and around the tiny town of Caprock, Texas. Business is booming in Caprock, criminal business along with rest. Prior to the discovery of petroleum, Sheriff Dave Buckalew's job mostly amounted to keeping a few drunken cowboys in line on a Saturday night. Now he's got a full-fledged crime wave to deal with. Brothel operators, bootleggers, armed robbers, and dope dealers have all followed the oil speculators to Caprock.

And it's about to get worse.

A major league mobster named "Big Boy" Daugherty (no relation to your obedient servant) has decided that Caprock needs a single firm hand running its various criminal enterprises. His hand. And when he decides something, he has a foolproof way of dealing with anyone who stands in the way of his implementing that decision.

He kills them.

Sheriff Buckalew isn't getting out of Daugherty's way, and a year of hard combat in the trenches of Europe has made him pretty hard to kill. But Daugherty and his henchman represent a level of criminality he's never before encountered. His one deputy is not exactly reliable, and he's reluctant to call in the Rangers for help, seeing it as an admission that he can't do the job he was elected for. Aside from that, the rough-and-tough style of policing the Rangers practice doesn't sit all that well with Buckalew. Will he have to stand alone against gangsters intent on taking over the town, or will his community stand with him?

Kelton, a seven-time winner of the WWA's Spur Award, and twice winner of the title of the "Greatest Western Writer of All Time" in a polls of his peers conducted by WWA, based Caprock partly on his own home town of Crane, Texas, a town that experienced its own oil boom when Kelton was a child.

"Early Crane had its share of casual violence,"

says Kelton, "but was spared much of the organized viciousness that beset some other boomtowns, the type that invades Caprock in this story."

As Kelton suggests, the influx of Mob-style violence into boomtowns was more the rule than the exception in the 1920s. Texas towns like Borger and Mexia, and Oklahoma towns like Cromwell and (as we've seen) Osage, all suffered from it, and all required drastic measures to tame them.

A number of crime stories have dealt with attempts to clean up oil boomtowns. Perhaps the first was Horace McCoys's *Black Mask* short story, "The Mopper-Up," based on the then-contemporary town-taming activities of Texas Rangers like Frank Hamer and Manuel "Lone Wolf" Gonzaulas. It depicted a determined Texas Ranger captain who rides into a wild and wooly Texas boomtown and single-handedly rids it of gangsters. More recently, Frederic Bean's *Black Gold* (Forge, 1997), not to be confused with Matt Braun's identically-titled novel, also tells the story of a Ranger resisting the influx of Eastern Mafia hoods into a 1920s boomtown.

One particular novel about gang-busting in oil boomtowns, Matt Braun's *One Last Town* (St. Martin's, 1997), published under the title *You Know My Name* in some editions, is a book particularly close to my heart. It tells the story of the final law enforcement assignment of the greatest peace officer of the Old West, Bill Tilghman. In 1924, at the age of 70, he was called out of retirement to become the police chief of Cromwell, Oklahoma, and drive out the gangsters who had taken over the town. This book, along with its prequel, *Outlaw Kingdom* (St. Martin's, 1996), which depicted the legendary lawman as a young man chasing bandits in the newly settled Oklahoma Territory, sparked my interest in Tilghman, who became the first subject I wrote about in my "Just the Facts" true-crime column, which ultimately led to the publication of my first book, a collection of those columns, and to my winning my own Spur Award.

Braun also touched on the taming of Cromwell in his Spur-winning multi-generational saga, *The Kincaids* (Putnam, 1976). But I found *Honor at Daybreak*, in a very close decision, to be the best of all

the books and stories dealing with this subject.

4. **The Song Dog** (Mysterious, 1991) by James McClure.

In 1991, after a seven-year hiatus, McClure returned to his popular, award-winning series featuring the team of Afrikaner Detective Lieutenant Tromp Kramer and Bantu Detective Sergeant Mickey Zondi. But, with apartheid turning into a bad memory by then, he decided to make this book, which would be his last Kramer and Zondi novel, a prequel to the rest of the series, and reveal how the two cops first met.

It's 1962, and South African authorities have just imprisoned a black rabble-rouser named Nelson Mandela. But Lieutenant Kramer has no time for politics. He's too busy trying to track down whoever planted a bomb in the house of the estranged wife of another cop, blowing her and yet another cop to proverbial smithereens. Was it the victim's husband? Or was he perhaps the actual target of the murder attempt?

At the same time, Sergeant Zondi's pursuing another killer, a native who butchered a couple of missionary nuns — a native who happens to be Zondi's cousin.

As their paths keep crossing, and their cases keep intersecting, the two cops develop a wary mutual respect, and maybe just the beginnings of something like a friendship, though this can never be acknowledged. Working together, they bring their respective cases to successful conclusions.

As they congratulate each other on catching the killers, we are given a chilling hint of what their ultimate fate might be years later in post-apartheid South Africa.

McClure passed away in 2006, so there will be no more entries in the Kramer and Zondi series. But **The Song Dog** is a fine ending, and, as a prequel, a fine beginning for this great, justly well-regarded series.

5. **Jitterbug** (Forge, 1998) by Loren D. Estleman.

It's 1943, and while World War II is being waged in Europe and the Pacific, Detective Lieutenant Maximilian "Zag" Zagreb is defending the home

front as the commander of Detroit PD's Racket Squad, a special unit made up of 4-F's and retrained called out of retirement to replace younger men who've gone off to war. Usually, the Racket Squad's beat is organized crime types who, with a war on and rationing in force, are getting heavily into black marketing. But when a psychopathic killer the papers dub "Kilroy" starts killing people he thinks are hoarding ration stamps, it's Zagreb's unit that's assigned to bring him in.

At the same time, black people from the South are moving into Detroit in unprecedented numbers to work in the auto factories that have been converted, for the duration, into defense plants, and the rough methods Zag and his men are using to track down Kilroy are aggravating racial tensions.

Those tensions soon hit critical mass, exploding into a bloody race riot, but when the violence dies down, Kilroy is still at large. Zagreb has to lean on a local mobster and a young black factory worker in his efforts to find the killer.

**Jitterbug** is one of a series of historical crime novels Estleman wrote, each set at different times in Detroit's history. One of the finest crime writers currently practicing, Estleman does for Detroit what Hammet once did for San Francisco and Chandler for Los Angeles. He knows the town. He knows its cops. He knows its crooks. And he knows its history.

Another entry in his "Detroit Crime Series," **Stress** (Mysterious, 1996), will also be of interest to fans of historical police procedurals. It's set in 1973, and juxtaposes the hunt for a radical terrorist financing his movement through armed robbery, with the investigation into a controversial police shooting.

6. **River of Darkness** (Viking, 1999) by Rennie Airth.

When the bodies of a local squire and his wife, along with two members of their household staff, are found butchered in their home outside of London, the local police know right away that they're in over their head, and call in Scotland Yard.

The general consensus is that the victims were killed in a home invasion, a robbery that went

wrong, but one of the Scotland Yard men assigned to the investigation, Detective Inspector John Madden, isn't so sure. But it's 1921, the term "serial killer" won't be coined for another five or six decades, and nobody's prepared to believe that they're dealing with a madman who kills people simply because he likes it. Still less are they prepared to believe that he might have done it before. Or might do it again.

As more murders occur, and past murders are uncovered, it becomes clear that Madden is right. They're dealing with more than an armed robber. They're dealing with something they can't really understand.

Gumming up the works is a publicity-hungry celebrity cop whose high rank and wide renown is owed more to his contacts in the media than to his ability as a detective. He can't stand not being at the center of such a high-profile case, and insists on horning in on the investigation.

At the same time Madden's hunting for the killer, life is starting to look like it might be worth living again. Long years of trench warfare in France have left Madden haunted and dispirited, and whatever potential for joy he might still have had when he was mustered out was crushed when he lost his beloved wife and child to disease. Now he lives for nothing but the Job, until he begins a relationship with a pretty young widow, a local physician he's met in the course of the investigation. Now he just might have something else besides catching criminals to live for.

This book has it all. Compelling characters, a frightening villain, suspense, action, romance, and one of the most solidly constructed plots I've seen in a long time. Though the reader knows who the murderer is almost from the start, the meticulous steps taken by the police to track down the killer are fascinating, and we find ourselves rooting them on. The period detail is totally convincing, and the sense of place is strong.

This novel created quite a buzz when it first appeared. Though nominated for an Edgar, an Anthony, and a Macavity, it failed to actually win any awards. I think that's a shame.

Readers who enjoy **River of Darkness** might also

be interested in a series of novels by Charles Todd featuring Scotland Yard Inspector Ian Rutledge. Like Madden. Rutledge is a haunted veteran of trench warfare who, after the Great War, has returned to his civilian job as a policeman without quite coming to terms with how much that war has brutalized him.

#### 7. **Bottled Spider** (Severn, 2002) by John Gardner.

When John Gardner passed away in 2007, what most obituaries mentioned was his tenure as the "continuer" of the adventures of James Bond. In fact, Gardner wrote more books about Bond than Ian Fleming himself did.

In a way, it's too bad that his Bond novels overshadow so much of his other work, because, had he never written a single word about 007, he'd still be remembered as one of the best spy novelists ever for his Herbie Kruger series, his "Secret" trilogy, and even his satirical Boysie Oakes novels.

But spy fiction wasn't all John Gardner wrote. Along the way he dabbled in police procedurals, in Victorian mysteries set in the world of Sherlock Holmes, and even in some straight fiction.

During the last few years he'd been writing an ambitious series of historical police procedurals set in the early days of World War II, featuring a young policewoman, Detective Sergeant Suzie Mountford, who, because of the shortage of able-bodied men to staff the police force, is able to get involved in "real" police work, the "sharp end," rather than the clerical duties to which female cops tend to be relegated. Soon after the book opens, she's specially chosen for assignment to the elite Reserve Squad, better known to the general public as the "Murder Squad."

Suzie's a good cop, with the potential to be a great one, and with woman filling so many previously "men-only" positions while the war rages, she's going to get a chance to live up to her potential. One of the Yard's super-stars, handsome, aristocratic Detective Chief Superintendent Thomas "Dandy Tom" Livermore has spotted her, recognized her worth, and picked her out to mentor.

Her first assignment is a frightening one. She has to track down Golly Goldfinch, a psychopath who's an odd sort of cross between a serial killer, murder-

ing people for no other reason than the pleasure it gives him (possibly inspired by Gordon Frederick Cummins, the so-called “Blackout Ripper”), and a professional contract killer, murdering on orders.

Before she catches her quarry, she’ll experience a terrible personal tragedy, even as she starts to fall head over heels in love with her new boss.

In the background are a pair of twin brothers who are the main power behind organized crime in London, characters obviously meant to evoke the Krays (though Reggie and Ronnie Kray were actually from a later era).

A fine book, but not a perfect one. Suzie’s love affair with her commanding officer is a bit too “Harlequin Romance” for my taste, and Suzie herself has too much of a tendency to lapse into “damsel-in-distress” mode, needing Dandy Tom to rescue her at crucial moments. It should also be noted, since technical accuracy is what defines the police procedural, that Dandy Tom holds a police rank that didn’t exist until after the war.

But those quibbles aside, **Bottled Spider** is a fine introduction to a great character.

Suzie Mountford appears in five novels, the last of which, **No Human Enemy**, came out in the UK only a few weeks after Gardner’s passing, and will be released in the US later this year by St. Martin’s/Minotaur.

In this, her first appearance, all the elements that will make the series so compelling are already firmly set in place.

8. **The Bridge of Sighs** (St. Martin’s, 2003) by Olen Steinhauer.

Can a novel be historical if it’s set in a country that doesn’t even exist? Can a novel be a police procedural when there’s no actual law enforcement agency on which to base the activities of the fictional cops?

Olen Steinhauer’s ambitious five-novel project was to look at the history of a Soviet satellite, from the end of World War II to the fall of communism, through the eyes of its cops and its intelligence officers. The unnamed country he uses as his setting is specifically identified as *not* being Romania, or Po-

land, or Hungary, or Bulgaria, or any of the other Eastern European nations that found themselves on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain after the Axis was defeated. At the same time, it is, in a way, all of them.

That said, it should be acknowledged that his fictional communist satellite is probably more Romania (where Steinhauer lived for a year) than anywhere else. Indeed, though he’s also lived in Croatia and Hungary, Steinhauer says on his website that his year in Romania inspired him to write the this series.

It’s 1948, and Emil Brod, a rookie homicide detective in the People’s Militia, is looking forward to his new career with a bit of trepidation. After a disastrous beginning, he’s handed his first assignment, the investigation of the murder of the State’s most treasured song writer. Brod’s only 22 years old, and has no prior experience in police work, let alone murder investigation. But none of his colleagues, who are convinced he’s a spy for the country’s intelligence service, want to work with him.

Brod manages to muddle through somehow, and eventually begins to develop a suspect, a hero of the Great Patriotic War (that’s World War II to those of you on *this* side of the Iron Curtain) who may not have been what his publicity says he was. But the powers-that-be in his country don’t want the murder solved if the killer turns out to be their own local equivalent of Audie Murphy.

All of this occurs against the backdrop of the first great battle in the Cold War, the Berlin Airlift of 1948.

**The Bridge of Sighs** was nominated for a whole bunch of awards, including a CWA Dagger, an MWA Edgar, a Macavity, and an Anthony, but, as with **River of Darkness**, failed to win any of them. And, as with **River of Darkness**, I think that’s a shame.

9. **Death of a Nationalist** (Soho, 2003) by Rebecca Pawel.

Finally a book nominated for an award that actually *won* the award.

Ms. Pawel’s debut novel, the first in a series about Carlos Tejada, an officer in Spain’s Guardia Civil

during the early years of Franco's rule, won a well-deserved Edgar for Best First Novel.

It's 1939. War's about to break out in Europe, and already has broken out in Asia. But in Spain, after years of internal conflict, there's finally comparative peace, as the Francoist police force, the Guardia Civil, begins to impose order.

On foot patrol one night, Sergeant Tejada discovers the body of his close friend, another Guardia, shot to death on the streets of Madrid. A woman is kneeling down next to the body. She's a Red, and, concluding that she must be the killer, Tejada kills her on the spot.

But soon evidence is developed suggesting that someone else may have actually shot his friend, and politics may not have been behind it.

Tejada would have been perfectly comfortable to have been the executioner of a cop-killer, but if the woman he killed was innocent he must seek justice and somehow try to put right his tragic mistake.

Along the way, as he hunts for his friend's killer and tries to atone for the wrong he's done, he meets a beautiful leftist schoolteacher, and begins to feel the kinds of emotions that it's unwise for a Francoist cop to feel about a Red.

For an author to create a character who's dedicated to an evil cause, but is, nevertheless, fully believable, and even somewhat sympathetic is one thing. But to make him someone we root for, even as we hate the system he so sincerely believes in, is something else.

Ms. Pawel is a great talent, and her Carlos Tejada novels fine examples of historical police procedurals.

10. **Homicide 69** (Carroll & Graf, 2006) by Sam Reaves

It's 1969, and as Chicago Homicide Detective Mike Dooley is preoccupied with worry about his son, a Marine in the thick of combat over in Viet Nam, when he catches a particularly brutal murder, the torture killing of a beautiful young woman. It has the earmarks of a mob killing, yet the victim doesn't seem to be an organized crime type.

Further investigation reveals her identity and the

fact that she *was* connected to the Mob, at least peripherally. A former Playboy Bunny, she briefly dated a member of Chicago's Outfit. The manner of her death suggests that whoever killed her was trying to get information from her. Could her short-lived relationship with a mobster be at the root of her death? Or was it simply a mistake? Was she killed because she really didn't know anything and thus had nothing to give up to her torturers?

Dooley relentlessly pursues the case, disposing of other, unrelated murders as they arise, but always keeping the case of the tortured girl close to the front burners.

And, with the help of a friend of the victim, another former Bunny who will imperil Dooley's loving, but somewhat dull marriage, Dooley starts to come close to finding out the secret that got the girl killed. The Outfit can't have that. They attempt to head him off, first through their contacts in official channels, and, when that's unsuccessful, by trying to have him killed. But Dooley won't be scared off, and proves hard to kill off.

**Homicide 69** captures its era perfectly. Its depiction of a great American city at a particularly dramatic moment of history is excellent. And in its hero, a hard-working plodder whose by-the-numbers style of investigation has made him one of the best homicide cops in Chicago, Reaves has created a winning character. In books set in more contemporary times, other members of Dooley's family have taken center stage, but I hope Dooley himself makes a return appearance.

## Short Stories

1. "The Legacy" by Clayton Matthews (**Dear Dead Days**, Walker, 1972, edited by Edward D. Hoch).

Deputy Sheriff Jason Little, keeping the peace in rural Conroe County, Texas, during the 1930s, deals with a crime growing out of dysfunctional family relations in what is perhaps the best of a series of stories Matthews wrote about the Depression-era cop, most of which appeared in the now-defunct *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*.

2. "Dial Axminister 6-400" by James Ellroy

(**New Black Mask**, No. 8, HBJ, 1987, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Richard Laymon).

LAPD Det. Sgt. Bucky Bleichert, the protagonist of Ellroy's breakthrough novel, **The Black Dahlia** (Mysterious, 1987), contends with violent kidnappers, car chases, and a running gun battle in this rare example of the author's short fiction. Set in the late '40s, it was reprinted in his collection **Hollywood Nocturne** (Penzler, 1994).

3. "Origins" by Mike Resnick (**Dick Tracy: The Secret Files**, TOR Books, 1990, edited by Max Allan Collins and Martin H. Greenberg).

It's Chicago in the early 1930s, and aspiring young cartoonist Chet Gould is having a hell of a time coming up with a winning idea for a syndicated comic strip. When he meets a handsome, square-jawed police detective named Tracy Richards, and helps him solve a case, he gets an idea for a feature that might just have some staying power. It didn't really happen that way. But it should have.

4. "A Death on the Ho Chi Minh Trail" by David K. Harford (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, March 1998).

Army cop Carl Hackett investigates the death of a soldier, apparently killed in combat by the Viet Cong who, inexplicably, has no bullet holes in his shirt. The late Mr. Harford, a one-time Vietnam MP himself, regarded this "impossible crime" tale as perhaps the best of several Hackett novelettes he contributed to *AHMM*. Reprinted in **The Best American Mystery Stories 1999** (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), edited by Ed McBain and Otto Penzler.

5. "Snow" by Stuart Kaminsky (**First Cases, Volume 3**, Signet, 1999, edited by Robert J. Randisi).

During a bitter Moscow winter in the early 1960s, rookie uniformed cop Porfiry Petrovich Rostnikov distinguishes himself by an act of heroism in this Edgar-nominated prequel to Kaminsky's award-winning series. Reprinted in **The World's Finest Mystery and Crime Stories** (Forge, 2000) edited by Ed Gorman.

6. "Natural Death, Inc." by Max Allan Collins (**Diagnosis Dead**, Pocket, 1999, edited by Jonathan Kellerman).

Depression-era private eye Nate Heller takes a

temporary job as a special investigator with the Cleveland Police, reporting directly to his old buddy Eliot Ness, and goes undercover on the trail of a gang of murderous insurance scammers in this fact-based intersection of two of Collins's most popular series. Reprinted in his collection **Kisses of Death** (Crippen & Landru, 2001).

7. "Missing in Action" by Peter Robinson (*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, November, 2000).

Schoolteacher Frank Bascombe is doing his part for Blighty's war against Hitler by working part-time for his local police force as a "special constable." In this capacity, he tries to find a young runaway child. This moving, Edgar-winning tale was reprinted in his collection **Not Safe After Dark** (Pan/Macmillan, 2004) and in the anthologies **The Best American Mystery Stories 2001** (Houghton Mifflin, 2001), edited by Lawrence Sanders and Otto Penzler, and **The World's Finest Mystery and Crime Stories, Second Annual Collection** (Forge, 2001) edited by Ed Gorman.

8. "After the Great War" by Gary Lovisi (**Texas Rangers**, Berkley, 2004, edited by Ed Gorman).

A young WWI veteran returns home after the war and gets a job with the Lone Star State's legendary police force. As a Texas Ranger, it becomes his bitter duty to investigate the murder of an old war buddy who may have been killed for no other reason than that he was Jewish.

9. "Top o' the Hill" by L.J. Washburn (**Texas Rangers**).

A first-rate fictionalization of one of the last cases of the legendary Captain Manuel "Lone Wolf" Gonzallas, who wants to get the goods on a post-war gambling czar before he retires from the Rangers.

10. "Dragon's Teeth" by Martin Limón (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, October 2005).

Sergeants George Sueño and Ernie Bascom of the US Army's Criminal Investigation Division solve another military-related case in Korea during the 1970s in a recent entry in this highly-regarded series by retired professional soldier Limón.

## Movies

1. *The FBI Story* (Warner Brothers, 1959); writ-

ten by Richard L. Breen and John Twist from the book by Don Whitehead; directed by Mervyn LeRoy.

Agent Chip Hardesty (James Stewart) is conveniently on hand for just about every one of the Bureau's major cases, from the Osage Murder Case of the 1920s, to the gang-busting days of the Depression, through WW2 Nazi-hunting and Cold War commie-hunting in this filmic valentine to Hoover and his agency. Too worshipful, but hugely entertaining.

2. *The Purple Gang* (Allied Artists, 1960); written by Jack DeWitt; directed by Frank McDonald.

Barry Sullivan, as Detroit Police Lieutenant Bill Harley, fights a juvenile gang led by "Honeyboy" Willard (Robert Blake) that, over the course of a few short years, as the juvies grow to adulthood, becomes the major organized crime presence in Prohibition-era Michigan. Highly-fictionalized account of the real-life Purple Gang's rise and fall, and the personal tragedy one cop endures to bring them down. Blake's chilling performance as the psychopathic leader of the Purples is an interesting preview of the murderous home invader he would play years later in *In Cold Blood* (1967).

3. *Dillinger* (American International, 1973); written and directed by John Milius.

Highly entertaining dramatization of the FBI's single most famous case, with federal supercop Melvin Purvis (Ben Johnson) on the trail of the titular gangster who came to symbolize an era (Warren Oates). Retired FBI Agent Clarence Hurt (one of the officers who actually shot it out with Dillinger in real life) was the film's technical advisor, and ruggedly handsome, rough-and-ready, broad-chested Oklahoman Johnson's characterization of Purvis probably derives more from ruggedly handsome, rough-and-ready, broad-chested Oklahoman Hurt than from the slightly built, soft-spoken, gentlemanly Virginian that Purvis was in real life.

4. *Flic Story* (Adel Productions, 1975); written by Alphonse Boudard and Jacques Deray from the book by Roger Borniche; directed by Jacques Deray.

Dramatization of real-life Sûreté Inspector Roger Borniche's pursuit of France's post-war Public Enemy Number One, Emile Buisson. Top-flight

*policier* with French super-stars Alain Delon as Borniche and Jean-Louis Trintignant as Buisson. Originally released in the US as *Cop Story*.

5. *The Untouchables* (Paramount, 1987); written by David Mamet from the book by Eliot Ness and Oscar Fraley; directed by Brian DePalma.

Federal Agent Eliot Ness (Kevin Costner) puts together a special squad to get Capone. Historical hogwash. Great entertainment. Sean Connery won an Oscar for his portrayal of a Chicago beat cop drafted into government service to become Ness's second-in-command.

6. *Mississippi Burning* (Orion, 1988); written by Chris Gerolmo; directed by Alan Parker.

FBI Agents Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe relentlessly pursue the KKK murderers of three civil rights workers during a long hot summer in 1964. This fact-based drama won an Oscar for Best Cinematography and garnered nominations in six other categories (including Best Picture).

7. *L.A. Confidential* (Warner Bros., 1997); written by Brian Koppelman and Curtis Hanson from the novel by James Ellroy; directed by Curtis Hanson.

In the 1950s, three LAPD detectives (Russell Crowe, Guy Pearce, and Kevin Spacey) struggle to keep their integrity while they investigate murders without and corruption within. A whole passel of awards and nominations, including an Edgar for Best Screenplay.

8. *The Zodiac* (ShadowMachine Films, 2005); written by Kelley Bulkeley and Alexander Bulkley; directed by Alexander Bulkley.

Somewhat overshadowed by the release of the more highly budgeted, and more heavily hyped, 2007 film on the same subject (entitled *Zodiac* sans the definite article), this film takes a different approach, looking at the Bay Area's famous serial murder case through the eyes of the small-town cops, and one cop in particular (Justin Chambers as Vallejo PD Detective Matt Parish), who found themselves in over their head during the earliest days of the investigation. As in real-life, the film comes to no definite conclusion, ending with the Zodiac's first and only San Francisco murder in 1969, after which the "big city" cops stepped in. One mistaken detail

that annoyed the hell out of me: The Vallejo police badge is a seven-pointed star, not a shield.

9. *Lonely Hearts* (Millennium Films; 2006); written and directed by Todd Robinson.

Like *The Honeymoon Killers* (1970) and *Deep Crimson* (1996), this film dramatizes the case of multiple murderers Raymond Fernandez and Martha Beck, who bilked, and then murdered, a series of unsuspecting, lonely women in the late '40s. But unlike the earlier films, *Lonely Hearts* concentrates on the police investigation, and particularly on Nasau County Homicide Detective Elmer Robinson (the grandfather of writer/director Todd Robinson), played by John Travolta, who's using the case to purge himself of guilt over his wife's suicide. Great period detail, top performances. One major historical divergence; Latina hottie Salma Hayek looks *nothing* like the morbidly obese Martha Beck.

10. *American Gangster* (Universal, 2007); written by Steven Zaillian from the article by Mark Jacobson; directed by Ridley Scott.

In the late '60s, super-honest Jersey narc Richie Roberts (Russell Crowe) gets tagged to put together a special unit to go after high-level drug traffickers, and eventually discovers that the biggest drug lord of them all, Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington), has been operating in Harlem under the radar of law enforcement, acquiring his own supply direct from Vietnam, and underselling all his competitors with a superior product. Superb fact-based cop drama, inexplicably passed over for virtually all of the major awards.

## Television Shows

1. *The Lawless Years* (NBC series, 1959–61).

Barney Ruditsky, a real-life NYPD detective in the Roaring Twenties, acted as the technical advisor for this series that fictionalized his career fighting organized crime in the Big Apple. James Gregory played Ruditsky in this unfortunately forgotten series, largely overshadowed by a similar show that appeared a few months later called...

2. *The Untouchables* (ABC series, 1959–63; syndicated, 1993–94).

Robert Stack's forceful performance as Al Ca-

pone's real-life nemesis made Eliot Ness the most famous policeman of the 20th century. Best gang-buster series of them all. A syndicated version with a whole new cast, produced in the 1990s, was quite good but failed to make the impact the original series did.

3. *The Kansas City Massacre* (ABC movie, 1975); written by Dan Curtis, Bronson Howitzer, and William F. Nolan; directed by Dan Curtis.

One of two made-for-TV prequels (or maybe "in-between-quels") to the theatrical *Dillinger* in which Dale Robertson took over the role of Melvin Purvis from Ben Johnson. In this one, Purvis is on the trail of "Pretty-Boy" Floyd (Bo Hopkins) for the murder of four cops in the famous Kansas City shootout that basically *made* the FBI. Colorful and fun, with a cameo appearance by Lester Maddox as the governor of Oklahoma. Robertson's first TV-movie appearance in the role was in *Melvin Purvis — G-Man* (1974). Historical note: In real life, Melvin Purvis was nowhere near the KC Massacre. He did eventually track down Floyd (who denied having anything to do with the massacre), but that final confrontation is not shown in this movie.

4. *Murder in Coweta County* (CBS movie, 1983); written by Dennis Nemecek from the book by Margaret Anne Barnes; directed by Gary Nelson.

Johnny Cash, as real-life Georgia Sheriff LaMarr Potts, solves a supposedly unsolvable murder in the late '40s and gets the goods on a powerful Dixie mobster (Andy Griffith) in this excellent fact-based drama.

5. *Crime Story* (NBC series, 1986–88).

It's 1963, and Det. Lt. Mike Torello (played by former Chicago cop Dennis Farina), head of Chicago PD's Major Crimes Unit, will stop at nothing to nail rising young mobster Ray Luca (Anthony Dension). A great, great show, and the pilot, setting up the conflict between Torello and Luca, is nothing except one of the best single series episodes ever broadcast.

6. *Man Against the Mob* (NBC movie, 1988); written by David J. Kinghorn and John Rester Zondrow; directed by Steven Hilliard Stern.

*Very* fictionalized depiction of the formation of the Intelligence Division, LAPD's pioneering gang-

ster/organized crime detail, by Captain Jim Hamilton in the years immediately following WWII. George Peppard plays Frank Doakey, apparently a fictional counterpart to Hamilton (though he's a sergeant rather than a captain), who gets pegged to form and head up a "Gang Suppression Unit" to fight the encroachment of the Mob, while simultaneously trying to solve a young girl's murder. Apparently meant as a pilot, this Edgar-winner did not go to series, though there was one TV movie sequel, *Man Against the Mob: The Chinatown Murders* (1989). Shown under the title *Trouble in the City of Angels* in the UK.

7. *You Know My Name* (TNT movie, 1999); written by John Kent Harrison from the novel *One Last Town* by Matt Braun; directed by John Kent Harrison.

Dramatization of real-life frontier lawman Bill Tilghman's final law enforcement job, taming the gangster-ridden oil boomtown of Cromwell, Oklahoma, in 1924. Sam Elliott gives what may be his best performance as the legendary marshal who wore one badge or another for a half-century, from the era of Ned Buntline and Wyatt Earp to the era of Dashiell Hammett and Eliot Ness.

8. *Heat of the Sun* (PBS mini-series, 1998).

Trevor Eve portrays London detective Albert Tyburn, whose recent activities having caused some embarrassment to Scotland Yard, finds himself transferred to the Colonial Police Service in Kenya in the early 1930s, where he solves crimes among both the upper-class Brits and the native population. A first-rate presentation of *Mystery!*

9. *Foyle's War* (ITV/PBS series, 2002–present).

When Britain enters WWII, Detective Chief Superintendent Christopher Foyle (Michael Kitchen) wants to go back into military service, but is reckoned too valuable as a cop to be released. Meticulous period detail, fine writing, and great performances mark yet another splendid *Mystery!* series. One huge anachronism: there was no such rank as "Chief Superintendent" in the British police service until 1949.

10. *Jericho* (ITV/PBS mini-series, 2005).

Detective Inspector Mike Jericho (Robert Lind-

say, familiar as the titular hero's mentor in the *Horatio Hornblower* TV series) is a celebrity cop in the tradition of real-life Scotland Yard legend Bob Fabian (who, as played by Bruce Seton, was the hero of Britain's very first cop series on TV, *Fabian of the Yard*, 1954, which *Jericho* is obviously meant to evoke). With his long-time sergeant and a hero-worshipping young detective constable who's just been assigned to his staff, he solves major crimes on the mean streets of 1950s London. Great period detail, and both a faster pace and a tougher, grittier, more noirish atmosphere than is usually seen on *Mystery!* presentations.

**For some** of the articles I've written in this irregular series of "Top Ten Cop Stories," I've had trouble coming up with ten that actually fit the theme of the issue for which it was planned. By contrast, with historical procedurals, I truly found an embarrassment of riches. Perhaps the very broad nature of historical fiction allowed for greater scope, and greater variety than some of the other themes *MRJ* has covered in the past.

Consequently, despite all the methods I came up with for cutting the roster down to ten, there were still many books I wanted to list but ultimately couldn't. Some I've cited already.

Others that rate at least a short mention include H.R.F. Keating's Gold Dagger-winning **The Murder of the Maharajah** (Doubleday, 1980). But, though the historical and geographical details are both convincing and compelling, it struck me as less a *true* procedural, for all that its protagonist is the local District Superintendent of Indian Police, than a classic-style "cozy" whodunit. Great surprise ending for fans of Keating.

Speaking of Keating, historical mysteries set in India have become the stock-in-trade of Barbara Cleverly, whose novels about Joe Sandilands, a high-ranking Scotland Yard officer on temporary duty with the Bengal Police, have gotten lots of praise. One of them, **The Damascened Blade** (Carroll & Graf, 2004), won CWA's Ellis Peters Dagger for Best Historical Crime Novel.

I might also mention J. Robert Janes's masterful

WWII-set series teaming Surete agent Jean-Louis St-Cyr and Gestapo officer Hermann Kohler as uneasy police partners in Occupied France. Well-researched and well-written.

Tom Bradby's **The Master of the Rain** (Doubleday, 2002) tells the story of a rookie detective in the Shanghai Municipal Police caught up in an international case in 1926. Bradby's since followed up with a WW2 cop thriller, **The God of Chaos** (Bantam, 2005), about a British soldier assigned to the Royal Military Police, solving a case in war-torn Egypt as Rommel prepares to invade. Unfortunately, **The God of Chaos** hasn't yet appeared in the States.

Oscar-winning Screenwriter and novelist T.E.B. Clarke, who wrote the scripts for such classic British cop films as *The Blue Lamp* (1950) and *Gideon of Scotland Yard* (1958), was actually a special constable for the London Metropolitan Police during World War II, and his only police novel, **Murder at Buckingham Palace** (St. Martin's, 1981), has a definite air of "been-there-done-that" authenticity,

as well as fascinating behind-the-scenes details about how the British royal residence was run during the 1930s.

Laura Wilson's **Stratton's War** (Orion, 2007) is the first entry in an ambitious series that will take its hero, Detective Inspector Ted Stratton of Scotland Yard, from the beginning of WWII to the mid-1970s.

Of course James Ellroy's name is almost synonymous with historical police fiction, and, though he's represented by a short story and by a film based on one of his novels, it may seem odd that books like **Clandestine** (Avon, 1982) or **The Black Dahlia** (Mysterious, 1987) aren't to be found on this list. I've been told, however, that an *MRJ* issue devoted to Los Angeles mysteries may be in the works, and I decided to hold Ellroy in reserve for that issue.

The nature of a top ten list, after all, is that it only has room for ten, and, for better or for worse, these are the ten I've chosen.

At least for now.

## The Children's Hour: History Mysteries

by Gay Toltl Kinman (Alhambra, California)

**Thanks to** Molly MacRae, Carol Howell, Susanne Alleyn, Nikki Strandskov, Janice Doxtator, Triss Stein, and big thanks to Roberta Rogow and her marvelous "Child's Play" column in *Mystery Scene Magazine*, and Molly Weston for her "Kids 'n' Crime" list. See also [crimethrutime.com/juvenile/library/booklists.htm](http://crimethrutime.com/juvenile/library/booklists.htm).

Historicals have been reported on in previous columns. Please see list at end for reference.

### Middle Reader

**ALBRECHT, LILLIE V.** **The Grist Mill Secret** (Hastings House 1962).

"My grandmother wrote children's historicals back in the 1950s and '60s, and one of them could qualify as a mystery," states Susanne Alleyn, a mystery author in her own right. Heroine Tabitha and her family move to the country in Massachusetts and when she tries to find out what the secret of the grist mill is, she becomes involved in the American Revolu-

tion.

**BELL, ALBERT.** **Secret of the Lonely Grave** (Ingalls Pub. Group 2001); **All Roads Lead to Murder** (2007). [www.albertbell.com](http://www.albertbell.com)

**Grave** has a contemporary Kentucky setting, but the story is filled with an historical theme and facts. Steve Patterson and Kendra Jordan, both 11, are familiar with the lonely grave that is set apart from the others in the cemetery. The grave is that of Amanda, age 6, who died over 150 years ago. One day flowers appear on her grave. Why after all this time? The pair "discover a link to the Underground Railroad which their small town has forgotten and might not want to remember," states the author. The book won the Evelyn Thurman Young Readers Award given by Western Kentucky University.

**Roads** is a true historical featuring Pliny the Younger, 21, who takes charge of a murder investigation in Smyrna in 83 AD, with his friend, the historian, Tacitus. No lack of suspects for the devious

victim.

**CAPECI, ANNE.** *Danger: Dynamite!* (Peachtree 2003) *Daredevils* (2004) *Missing!* (2005) *Ghost Train* (2006) in the *Cascade Mountain Railroad Mysteries* series. The author includes notes on life in the period, including the railroad tunnel, silk trains and telegraph, with photos in the books.

**Danger:** In 1926, Billy Cole, 10, and his best friends, Finn and Dannie, search for a crate of stolen dynamite in Scenic, Washington, a rough and tumble western camp town. Throw in a train robbery and stolen gold.

**Daredevils:** The setting is the construction of the Great Northern Railway's eight-mile Cascade Tunnel, and isolated railroad construction camp. Elliston's Flying Circus does an air show there in which Finn's uncle, Ross, the black sheep of the family, is the star performer. He fascinates everyone with his stories of the Great War. This story involves bootleggers (it was Prohibition), barnstormers and chases.

**Missing:** Food and other items are missing from the camp, where Billy's father is foreman. Billy's younger cousin Mim, joins the trio of sleuths, but he bristles at the fact that she may be better at sleuthing than he is.

**Ghost:** Billy finds a note and a gun in a sack that suggest a train robbery. Can they stop it in time?

**GARFIELD, LEON.** Illus. Jason Cockcroft. *Smith* (Farrar, 1967); *Black Jack* (Nathan, 1981); *The December Rose* (Puffin, 1988).

**Smith,** 12, is a pickpocket in 18th century London. He lives with his two sisters who make their living as seamstresses. In true pickpocket form, he steals a piece of paper from a dying man — which turns out to be the reason he was killed. Now Smith is the focus of the murderers and falls into one desperate situation after another — how's he going to get out of this one?

**Black Jack,** a notorious murderer in 18th century London, has just been hanged, but isn't dead yet. Tolly has the unfortunate luck of saving him. Black Jack forces Tolly into a life of crime, and along the journey they meet an escaped lunatic, a carnival group and other nefarious characters.

In *Rose*, a Victorian London chimney sweep, Barnacle, overhears plans for a conspiracy, and faster than he can flick a brush, he's involved in murder and political intrigue. Fascinating characters of Inspector Creaker, Mrs. McDipper, who owns a barge, and her daughter Miranda, who becomes the bane of Barnacle's existence, and Tom Gosling, who saves Barnacle and gives him a home — on a barge.

**HARRISON, CORA.** *The Secret of 1798* (Merlin Publishing 1998). Illus. Orla Roche. *The Drumshee Timeline Series*.

In 1798, Catriona 12, hides a French sailor, Serge, from the English. In the old castle, they discover Malachy's books from *The Secret of the Seven Crosses*, a previous book in the series, and listed below.

**HILGARTNER, BETH.** *A Murder for Her Majesty* (Houghton Mifflin 1992).

In York, England, Queen Elizabeth I may have been responsible for the death of eleven-year-old Alice Tuchfield's father, which the latter witnessed. She hides in Yorkshire Cathedral as a choir boy while searching for the truth.

**JENSEN, DOROTHEA.** *The Riddle of Penncroft Farm* (Gulliver Books 2001).

In the present, Lars Olafson, 12, moves to Pennsylvania and makes friends with Geordie, who fills his life with stories about Valley Forge and George Washington. But — was Geordie really there? Starts out contemporary but has historical aspects. The mystery is about a missing will and is intertwined with the historical story.

**KASTNER, ERICH.** *Emil and the Detectives*. Trans. W. Martin. Illus. Walter Trier. (Overlook, 2008). Intro by Maurice Sendak.

There are many editions of this book which was first published in 1929, and listed in *Ethnic Detectives II*. However, this new edition was just released, with an excellent introduction. Set in Berlin in a summer of the late 1920s, Emil pursues the thief who stole his money.

**LAWRENCE, CAROLINE.** *The Slave Girl from Jerusalem*. (Orion 2007)

This series, about Flavia Gemina and her friends set in the world of Ancient Rome in the first century

AD, is in *Mysteries Set in Italy (Secondo)*.

The latest installment in ‘The Roman Mysteries’ series recreates the siege of Masada in southern Israel. As ever, the four young detectives have an important case to crack, and the plot weaves together Jonathan’s guilty feelings about past events with a gripping courtroom drama. Lawrence’s thrilling historical mysteries for children are about as good as the genre gets.

—Hatchard’s catalog, Spring/Summer 2007.

The story centers on the Roman legal system and the destruction of Jerusalem’s Second Temple. Good vocabulary in the back of the book as well as notes about the history.

LEPPARD, LOIS GLADYS. *The Mandie Series*. (Bethany House)

Titles in the series have been mentioned in previous issues. The stories feature Mandie, her friends Celia and Jonathan, rich grandmother Mrs. Taft and friend Senator Morton, and her ever-present cat. Snowball frequently gets Mandie into trouble but also leads her to clues. Mandie is Amanda Elizabeth Shaw, in Charley Gap, North Carolina, before and after the turn of the 1900s. A YA series begins when she leaves for college with Celia. Leppard states that she based Mandie on her grandmother. The stories are gentle and focus on the mystery. We learn a lot about life at the time. One of the unusual facets of the stories is that Mandie has an Indian heritage, a grandfather who is a full-blood Cherokee. There is always a mention or plot point involving this heritage. The final book in this series was **Mandie and the Graduation Mystery (#40)**.

MACK, TRACY & MICHAEL CITRIN. **The Fall of the Amazing Zalindas** (Orchard Books 2006). Greg Ruth, illus.

Citrin is a Holmes expert and the husband-and-wife teams have given faces and personalities to The Baker Street Irregulars, the kids who did Sherlock Holmes’ dirty work. These ‘street sleuths,’ led by Wiggins with friend Ozzie and Pilar, a gypsy girl, investigate deaths in a circus family — the title is literal. The associated mystery that Holmes and

Watson pursue is the theft of a royal 17th-century book — and the Prince of Wales might be involved.

RAY, MARY. **The Ides of April** (Bethlehem Books 1999). *The Roman Empire Sequence*.

In 63 AD, a Senator is murdered. His secretary Hylas, 17, a slave, will be executed with all the other Senator’s household slaves. This gives Hylas a strong motive to find the murderer. Told from various POVs, it reveals how cruel life was for those not in power in ancient Rome.

SIMMONS, ALEX & BILL MCCAY. **Buffalo Bill Wanted!** (Penguin 2007). *The Raven League series*.

Archie Wiggins, Jennie James, Dooley and Owens form the Raven League that helps Sherlock Holmes. Yes! Buffalo Bill is in London with his Wild West show. The League members sneak backstage and are involved when a police officer is — scalped. Who else could do this but a Sioux in the show? Holmes is not around so the League must solve the case.

WESTON, ELISE. **The Coastwatcher** (Peachtree Publications 2005).

This Agatha nominee story is set on the South Carolina coast in 1943 during World War II. Hugh, 11, with sister Sally, cousin Tom, and family, are spending the summer on the seashore. He becomes a Coastwatcher and sees a periscope in the ocean, then discovers other clues that point to a German sub and suspects that some of the men have come ashore. However, no one believes him — or wants to. Are the townspeople sympathetic to the enemy?

### **American Girl History Mysteries series**

I love this series from Pleasant Co., as I knew when I picked up any of the books, I would have a good read. There are over twenty in the series, each of the stories is multi-layered, but can be read only for the suspenseful story it tells. The stories are a snapshot of the time period, and capture the essence of what it was like to live in that particular place at that particular time. All have glossaries, and historical facts on which the story is based, or a “Looking Back” section that provides historical context. The books are a great contribution to learning the history of this country, and since copies are rarely in at my library — also popular. I would love to be one of

the writers in the series!

Kathleen Ernst reports that the History Mysteries as a series is no longer being published, but rather labeled as mysteries and only about the American Girl core (doll) characters. All the core characters are historical.

Illustrators are Jean-Paul Tibbles, Dahl Taylor, Greg Dearth, Douglas Fryer, and Robert Sauber, which gives a unique and uniform look to the books.

*Below is a sample of the original History Mysteries series.*

**COLEMAN, EVELYN. *Mystery of the Dark Tower* (2000).** She also wrote *Circle of Fire*.

Bessie Coulter, 12, and brother Eddie, are whisked away from Burlington, North Carolina in 1928 by their father, while their mother remains behind in a locked room, crying. They move in with their father's two sisters in Harlem, where many African-Americans settled. Then their father disappears. Bessie tries to find out where he is and why he left their mother behind. Harlem at the time was the lively home of painters, writers, jazz musicians, dancers — and, in this story, and Miss Flo, a Caribbean 'conjure' woman, whom Bessie tries to use to reunite her family.

**ERNST, KATHLEEN. *Betrayal at Cross Creek* (2004).** Ernst has been nominated for the Edgar, and for the Agatha, and has won the Agatha, and an award from Women Writing the West for her books in this series. She has written *Trouble at Fort La Pointe*, *Whistler in the Dark*, *Secrets in the Hills: A Josefina Mystery*, *Danger at the Zoo: A Kit Mystery*, and *Midnight in Lonesome Hollow: A Kit Mystery*.

*Betrayal* is set in North Carolina in 1775, involves the Scots who have settled there. Elspeth Monro, an apprentice weaver, newly arrived from the old country, tries to find out who is threatening her family because of their loyalty to the crown. The Patriots want them on their side and they are not above rough stuff. Although the Scots have no love for the English, they have been through enough struggles for independence to think twice about throwing their lot in with these unknowns.

**HART, ALISON. *Danger at the Wild West Show***

(2003).

In 1885, at the Louisville Kentucky Race Track, the Wild West Show is playing. Rose wants a bigger part in the show as a trick rider — but girls aren't allowed to do that. Before she can say giddyup, her sharp shooter brother is arrested for a real shooting. Luckily no one is killed. Rose knows he couldn't have done it so she does some investigating with the help of her Sioux Chief friend and a reluctant Oliver, the Show's owner's son.

**JONES, Elizabeth McDavid. *Secrets on 26th Street* (1999).**

Jones is an Edgar winner and an Agatha nominee, and has written *Peril at King's Creek*, *The Night Flyers*, *Watcher in the Piney Woods*, *Mystery on Skull Island*, and *Ghost Light on Graveyard Shoal*.

*Secrets* is set in 1914, in New York City, just before a big suffragist rally. Susan O'Neal, two sisters and Mum, take in a border, Bea from England, to help pay the rent. Life is suddenly better, but then Mum disappears. Susan tries to find out where she is, with Bea stopping her at every step.

*Below are new mysteries with core American Girl characters (all of whom are historical):*

**BUCKEY, Sarah Masters. *A Thief in the Theater: A Kit Mystery* (2008)**

Buckey has also been nominated for both the Edgar and the Agatha (twice). Her other books in the series are *A Smuggler's Treasure: Enemy in the Fort*; *The Curse of Ravenscourt: A Samantha Mystery*; and *The Light in the Cellar: A Molly Mystery*.

Kit Kittredge lives in 1935 in Cincinnati, wants to be a reporter, and is involved in the theater. A troupe arrives from New York City and brings with them more drama than even they expected.

**COLEMAN, Evelyn. *Shadows on Society Hill: An Addy Mystery* (2007).**

Addy Walker, 11, lives in Philadelphia in 1866. A rich architect asks her carpenter father to move into a house on the grounds of his home on Society Hill. Addy's family are only two years out of slavery. Prejudice rears its ugly head when a valuable necklace is missing and Addy is accused of stealing it. (Get real! — this is an 'American Girl'.) Addie

finds the real thief, and uncovers the secret of the house her family now lives in.

ERNST, Kathleen. **The Runaway Friend: A Kirsten Mystery** (2008).

Kirsten Larson, with a Swedish heritage, just arrives on the Minnesota frontier when her friend, Erik Sandahl, disappears. Although he owes money, Kirsten doesn't believe he ran away, but that something else happened to him.

HART, Alison. **A Spy on the Home Front: A Molly Mystery** (2005).

It's 1944, Molly McIntire is spending the summer on her grandparents' farm. Suddenly, her aunt, a WASP (Women's Air Service Pilot) is arrested as anti-war leaflets are found on her plane. Molly's friend, Anna Schulz, is a German immigrant. The FBI also suspects Anna's 17-year-old brother, Max, but what do they know? The girls find the real traitor.

JONES, Elizabeth McDavid. **Traitor in Williamsburg: A Felicity Mystery** (2008).

Felicity Merriman grows up in colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1774. A stranger appears and accuses her friend's father of siding with the British, thus making him tantamount to a traitor. Someone has to do something!

## Young Adult

ATHERTON, GERTRUDE BELL. **The Golden Peacock**. (Houghton Mifflin 1936).

Atherton, a prolific writer, was born in 1857 and died in 1948, so her books are doubly historical. Pomponia, 16, niece of satirist Horace in 19 BC, investigates the murder of her parents. A plot against Augustus Caesar may be in the offing. Many famous Roman historical figures are in the story.

BALDRY, CHERITH. **The Buried Cross** (Oxford University Press 2004); **The Scarlet Spring** (2004); **The Silent Man** (2004); **The Drowned Sword** (2005). The Abby Mysteries series.

Glastonbury Abbey in the 1190s is a draw for pilgrims, which means an income for the village. In **Cross**, Gwyneth, 13, and her brother, Hereward, are living in a time when a fire has ruined the Abbey and it is being repaired, so no pilgrims. However, the

bones of King Arthur and his queen may have been found and this would bring the pilgrims back. When someone steals the bones, the young sleuths investigate.

**Spring**: a blessed spring runs red, but this time it is not the blood of Christ, as the monks say, but that of a merchant. Who murdered him and why?

**The Silent Man** refers to a mute, Bedwyn, who is accused of the death of a young girl. But is she really dead?

**Sword**: Hereward finds a buried sword. Is it Excalibur? If so, everyone wants it, and not just the good guys.

CAVENDISH, LADY GRACE. **Assassin** (Delacorte 2004); **Betrayal** (2004); **Conspiracy** (2005); **Deception** (2005); **Exile** (2006); **Feud** (2006); **Gold** (Doubleday 2006). *The Lady Grace Mysteries series*.

This fabulous series was started by Patricia Finney who wrote **Assassin**, **Betrayal**, and **Conspiracy**; then the series was written by Jan Burchett and Sara Vogler. The premise is that we are reading the 1569-70 'daybookes' (later called diaries) of Queen Elizabeth I's youngest Maid of Honor, Lady Grace Cavendish, 13, hence the 'author.' Her mother was poisoned; poison meant for Elizabeth. Since Grace's mother was Elizabeth's best friend, Elizabeth has appointed the girl to her retinue. The stories are rich in historical detail and focus on the mystery. Endnotes include a glossary and comment on the background of the story. As you may have noticed, the titles are alphabetical.

**Assassin**: In 1569, the Queen arranges for Grace to be betrothed to a man whom she will wed in three years. Suddenly he is accused of murder, and she tries to prove that he isn't guilty.

**Betrayal**: Grace poses as a boy on the ship of Francis Drake, when a maid, Lady Sarah, has been kidnapped — even though everyone else thinks she has run away.

**Conspiracy**: During the summer travels, Grace believes something bad is happening, as the Queen barely escapes some 'accidents.' Is someone close to the Queen responsible?

**Deception**: A new coin is being made for the Queen, however there are many delays. The Maids of

Honor skate the frozen Thames to the Frost Fair. They discover a dead man — and Grace discovers corruption and counterfeiting.

**Exile:** Banoo Yasmine, an exile, from Sharakand has a pet panther — and the rare Heart of Kings ruby. When the gem is stolen, Grace's friend Ellie is accused.

**Feud:** Elizabeth is about to have her portrait painted. A troupe of players arrive and a maid of honor is taken ill. Some paints used by the artist also double as a poisonous murder weapon.

**Gold:** The subtitle of this book is **The Secret Diaries of Grace Cavendish: Daredevil Detective**. A gold shipment to the Queen is stolen. The clues point to different people, but Grace must find the real ones, and the real villain.

**CHEANEY, J. B.** *The Playmaker* (Yearling 2002); *The True Prince* (2004).

In 1597 London, Richard Malory, 14, seeks his father, joins an acting troupe, finds a traitor to the queen — and meets Shakespeare (the troupe's playwright!), Jonson, Burbage and others.

In *Prince*, it is a year later and two other boy actors join the troupe. One of them may be involved in theiving, and then the theater is threatened. Richard and friend Starling Shaw investigate.

**COOPER, SUSAN.** *The King of Shadows* (Alladin 2001).

Nathan Field in 1999 is to play Puck at the new Old Globe in London. He falls ill with bubonic plague! — and is transported back to 1599 and in the same Shakespeare's play.

**DEARY, TERRY.** *Who Killed Kit Marlowe?* Illus. Linda Birch (Watts Publishing Group 1996); *Who Shot Queen Victoria?* (1996); *The Truth About Guy Fawkes?* (1997). [www.terry-deary.com/homepage](http://www.terry-deary.com/homepage)

Part non-fiction, part-fiction. The title tells all — some narrative and some facts to discover who murdered this famous Elizabethan playwright. *Victoria* is the story of the underworld, revolution and robbery. *Fawkes* explores the mystery behind the facts of the Gunpowder Plot.

**GARFIELD, LEON.** *Jack Holborn* (Constable 1964).

Jack Holborn, 14, is an orphan who stows away

on the *Charming Molly*, which turns out be anything but, as he is soon discovered by pirates. On his journey out of this predicament he encounters pygmies, slave traders, jewels, cutthroats — you get the idea of this adventuresome story, a la *Treasure Island*.

**HAMLEY, DENNIS.** *Pact with Death* (Scholastic Point 1998); *A Devil's Judgement* (2000). *The Joslin De Lay Mysteries*.

In the 1360s, in *Pact*, Joslin arrives in London and finds a murdered man who would have died soon enough of the plague. In *Devil's*, Joslin joins an acting group in Coventry, and has to find out why someone doesn't want them to perform.

**HARRISON, CORA.** Illus. Orla Roche. *Murder at Drumshee* (Wolfhound Press 2002). *Drumshee Chronicles series*. *The Order of the Seven Crosses* (1997); *The Secret of Drumshee Castle* (1998). *The Drumshee Timeline series*.

*Murder* is the tenth in the *Chronicles*, but the only whodunit. Ireland in the 5th century has a law school that Ita, and friends, Mahon, Diarmuid, Fergal, Cathal, Aidan and Ninian attend. Gabor, their cruel teacher is dead, and the group must find the murderer, otherwise Mahon might be proven the guilty one.

In the *Timeline* series, Rory and his sister Mary search for the secret treasure of Kilfenora Abbey in *Crosses*. In *Castle*, Grace's guardians decide she is worth more dead than alive. All the books tell of life at the time.

**HOFFMAN, MARY.** *The Falconer's Knot* (Bloomsbury Publishing 2007).

Set in Umbria, Italy in 1316, Silvano stands accused of a murder and hides in a friary. Chiara, living in a convent for her own reasons. They meet and become involved in more murders, which they try to solve. In an interesting historical context, the friars and nuns are preparing the pigments for the artists who are painting the frescoes in nearby Assisi.

**HOBLER, DOROTHY & THOMAS.** Illus Gunta Alexander and Katrina Damkoehler. *A Samurai Never Fears Death* (Penguin 2007) *The Samurai Mystery series*.

Others in the series have been listed in *Murder in the Far East*. The Hooblers' books have been nomi-

nated for an Edgar and have won an Edgar. The latest is set in the 1730s in Japan. The series has samurai Judge Ooka, who was a real person, as the adoptive father of Seikei.

In **Samurai**, Seikei, now 16, returns to his home town where the Judge will be attending meetings in the castle. Seikei visits his old home and meets with his brother and sister, who now run the tea business. They take him to a puppet show — and find a dead man. Later another is killed and Seikei investigates. With teeth chattering from fear on more than one occasion, he repeats “A samurai never fears death.” Another fear is that his brother may be involved in the deaths. He is also trying to free his sister’s boyfriend, who was arrested for the murders and soon will be executed. As with the other Hoobler books, an excellent read, and window into the past.

**LEPPARD, LOIS.** *New Horizons* (Bethany House 2006), in *Mandie: Her College Days series*; and *Secret Money* (Random House 1995); *Suspicious Identity* (1995) in the *Lily Series*.

The YA Mandie series begins in 1906 when Mandie goes to Charleston Ladies College with best friend Celia. Their nemesis — April from boarding school — has been admitted also, and the conflict continues. Is April spreading negative stories about them? Will mysterious circumstances avoid Mandie? I doubt it!

In **Secret**, one of the two of the *Lily* series, Lily Masterson, 16, in 1901 returns from a trip to England with her younger sister, Violet, when their father dies in South Carolina. She faces the mystery of why the family farm is in foreclosure, and the death of her father.

In **Identity**, she discovers a letter in her father’s papers that says she has inherited all of her mother’s jewelry. When she returns to her old home, the new owner is living there. Finding the jewelry may be a problem.

**NAMIOKA, LENSEY.** *The Coming of the Bear* (Tuttle Publishing 2005); *Island of Ogres* (2005); *Village of the Vampire Cat* (2005).

In 1600s Japan, Konishi Zenta and Ishihara Matsuzo, two young samurai, become involved in a battle between the townspeople on the island of Ezo

and a bear. Was the animal trained to attack humans? **Island** is more of an adventure story, while **Village**’s story, somewhat similar, is about people being terrorized by a mysterious killer — cat or human?

**PARKER, ROBERT B.** *The Edenville Owls* (Penguin 2007).

MWA Grand Master and Edgar winner Parker’s first YA is set in a small Massachusetts coastal town in 1945 featuring Bobby Murphy, 14, who starts a basketball team at Center Junior High School, tries to help his teacher, Miss Delaney, and works at winning his girl back. Lots of lengthy game plays, which devotees of the game will love.

**SPRINGER, NANCY.** *The Case of the Missing Marquess* (Philomel, 2006); *The Case of the Left-Handed Lady* (2007); *The Case of the Bizarre Bouquets* (2008). Springer is a two-time Edgar nominee and winner.

Sherlock and Mycroft had a much-younger sister — yes! Enola Holmes, 14, who is as clever as both of her brothers, but even more charming and savvy, and a delight to be with on these journeys. She notes that Enola spelled backwards is ‘alone.’

In **Marquess**, Mrs. Holmes disappears on Enola’s fourteenth birthday. Enola disguises herself as a widow, and is soon involved in the kidnapping of the Marquess of Basilwether, while trying to elude her older brothers, who are looking for her.

In **Left-Handed**, “Enola Holmes is back in Victorian London with disguises, discoveries, deceptions and dastardly deeds,” states reviewer Robert Oksner. She is posing as a tracer of lost persons and things. Ironically, Dr. Watson wants her to find — herself, er, rather Enola Holmes for his friend, Sherlock. In the meantime, she seeks Lady Cecily, who is left-handed, something frowned upon in Victorian England, but being left handed is the least of Cecily’s problems at the moment.

In **Bouquets**, Dr. Watson is missing. A bizarre bouquet of hawthorn and white poppies is delivered. Enola knows this means death, and she must find him before that happens.

**STERNBERG, LIBBY.** *The Case Against My Brother* (Bancroft Press 2007).

This Edgar nominee writes the wonderful humorous Bianca Balducci detective series. About **Brother**, she states. "It's set in 1922 Oregon against the backdrop of an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant campaign." That year the state tried to outlaw Catholic schools. When Mattie's older brother, Adam, is accused of a burglary charge, the animosity against Catholics is so strong that he might be convicted, but Mattie knows he didn't do it.

THOMAS, CARROLL (pseud for CAROLE SHMURAK & TOM RATLIFF). **Ring Out Wild Bells** (Smith and Kraus 2001); **Under the Open Sky** (Antrim 2005).

**Bells**, nominated for the Agatha in 2002, features Matty Trescott, who is studying to be a doctor. She and cousin Neely help a woman who is brought into the hospital and who whispers some words to them that are quite mysterious. This causes them to investigate her death.

**Sky** is set in 1873 on Penikese Island off the coast of Cape Cod. Neely, a teacher, is with a group of other scientists. Each loses something and Neely tries to find out who has taken the possessions, as a young boy is accused of the thefts. Neely is sure he didn't do it.

Now out of print, some are available from the author. [www.MattyTrescott.com](http://www.MattyTrescott.com)

WALKER, ROBERT W. **Daniel Webster Jackson and the Wrongway Railway** (Oaktree, 1982); **Gideon Tell and the Siege of Vicksburg** (Royal Fireworks 2000).

**Railway** is set in 1852 in Missouri, and on the Mississippi River. Webster Jackson, 14, is a runaway from his foster home. He is white, but assumes a black identity. That's only the beginning of who is not whom they appear to be, including the plantation owner, the sheriff, and almost everyone Daniel meets. This deception is because there is a real Underground Railroad and a wrong one, the latter sending its escaping slave passengers into the deep South, not the North — and that's not good.

In **Siege**, Gideon, 14, comes of age in the Civil War while learning the new science of photography and working undercover. His goal is to get shots of the battlements at Vicksburg for General Grant, as

the city has been blocking Union supply lines on the Mississippi. He is apprenticed to Charles Rintree, a photographer. Gideon begins to suspect Rintree is not who he says he is, maybe a double spy, or does he have other plans for the photographs? However, as in **Railroad**, people are not who they appear to be. Rintree begins to suspect Gideon is not what he says he is either, and the latter has a hair-raising escape. Actual photographs are in the book.

WILLIAMS, JAY. **The Stolen Oracle** (Oxford University Press, 1943); **The Roman Moon Mystery** (1948).

Set in 21 BC, **Oracle** features Gaius, 14, and friend Rufus, as they search for the person who stole the sacred oracle — to prove they didn't do it.

In **Moon**, set in 58 AD, Captain Aquilius Justus, 18, and his corporal Umbrio, look into the murder of a wealthy Senator. Marcia, a Christian, has a different view of the matter, and the story is told from multiple POVs.

WULFFSON, DON. **The Golden Rat** (Bloomsbury USA 2007).

The title refers to Ka Di, a custom that allows a convicted criminal about to be executed to pay someone else to die in his place. Baoliu, 16, in the late 1100s becomes the golden rat and practically lives like one until he finds the real murderer of his step-mother, and also why the other man died in his place.

### Contemporary "Historicals"

**As I was working** on "The Children's Hour" column, I thought about Nancy Drew, The Happy Hollisters, Trixie Belton, The Famous Five — all of whom have fictionally graced just about every column. They all traveled widely — to the Far East, Scandinavia and other spots in the world where the themed MRJ went. I thought about Nancy Drew in her roadster and what the others toodled around in.

However, their authors did not write historicals, they wrote contemporary stories. The concept fascinated me — series written as contemporary that are now historical. They weren't written as historicals, but we can't consider them as contemporary stories now, for they are historical.

Nancy Drew first appeared in 1930, almost eighty years ago — which is now history. It's not only the date of the 1930s, but the fact that the world has changed so much! Ironically Nancy Drew is what many girls wanted to be then — and now — independent, drive her own car, be able to come and go as she pleased.

To put Nancy Drew in historical context, she was created ten years after women were allowed to vote, and several decades before being a career woman was socially palatable. Marriage didn't have to be the expected occupation.

But what we write today — how soon will that be historical?

**BENSON, MILDRED AUGUSTINE WIRT.** *The Penny Parker Mystery Series* et al.

Benson was an incredibly prolific writer — not only did she write individual mystery stories for children and young adults under her own name, but also books in various series for the Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate. And all the while she was a reporter and columnist all of her life.

She traveled and became a pilot — and it is noted that she had much in common with Nancy Drew in the smart, independent and adventurous departments.

Penny Parker first appeared in the **Tale of the Witch Doll** in 1939, published by Cupples and Leon, which ran for 17 volumes until 1947. Heroine Penny was impulsive and came up with wild and way out schemes to solve her mysteries. Other major series Benson wrote were: *C & L Mystery Stories for Girls* beginning with **The Twin Ring Mystery** in 1935 and ending with number five in the series; and *Trailer Stories for Girls* consisting of four volumes of mysteries about three teenagers who explore in their trailer.

For Stratemeyer, she was Julia K. Duncan, writing the four *Doris Force Mystery Stories* with Walter Karig, beginning in 1931. As Joan Clark, she penned several in the *Penny Nichols Mystery Stories* series; and as Dorothy West, five volumes of *The Dot and Dash Series* were written by her.

Benson also wrote other series under her own name, such as *The Brownie Scouts Series*, and *The*

*Dan Carter Cub Scout Series*, however these were mostly adventure stories.

**BLANK, CLAIR.** *The Beverly Gray Mystery Stories.*

**Beverly Gray, Freshman**, kicked off 26 volumes from 1934 to 1955 published by A. Burt Company, then in 1938 by Grosset and Dunlap, ending with **Beverly Gray's Surprise**. For the author, Clarissa Mabel Blank Moyer, it was a surprise when the publisher didn't want to continue the series, even though they had asked her to start another — *The Adventure Girls*. That series was short-lived.

Heroine Beverly was a newspaper reporter, traveled extensively and wrote about it. The series was unusual in that the heroine ages, as her life story continued from book to book. She started off with her college years, and progressed to her job as a government agent. A lot of adventures and mysteries confronted her. The other difference is that she was in a lot more danger of being killed than other series' heroes and heroines. However, she was older.

**BLYTON, ENID.** *The Famous Five Mystery Series* et al.

**Five on Treasure Island** was the first of the series starting in 1942 and running for twenty-one books until 1961. The series was also televised in 1995. The 'five' started off as four children and a dog — three siblings, Julian, Dick and Anne, meet up with cousin Georgina, shortened to George. (Shades of Nancy Drew's cousin!). The children (and Timmy the dog) were always one foot and paw ahead of the police in solving crimes.

*The Secret Seven*, fifteen novels from 1949 to 1963, featured seven (surprise!) children who solved various mysteries. The Adventure Books series were seven in number and featured four children — Philip and Dinah Mannering, and Jack and Lucy-Ann Trent — with their parrot Kiki. They managed to encounter and solve mysteries during school holidays. The children were very similar in age and traits to the Famous Five, however in these stories Detective Bill Smugs is being assisted by them, rather than being outsmarted, as the Famous Five did to the police in their stories.

*The Five Find-Outers* began in 1943 with **The**

**Mystery of the Burnt Cottage** featuring Fatty, Larry, Daisy, Pip and Bets, and Buster the dog. They outwitted PC Theophilus Goon, in what was a familiar pattern in Blyton's series. Her other series in the mystery line were: *The Put-Em-Rights*; *The Adventuresome Four* (Tom, Andy and twins Pippa and Zoe); and *The 'Barney' Mystery Series*.

Blyton lived from 1897 to 1968, and wrote *twenty-two* series. Yes, series! Over 600 children's books. She lived most of her life in Beaconsfield, 25 miles from London. Over 400 million copies of her books were published. She also wrote verse and short stories.

Further reading:

Blyton, Enid. **The Story of My Life** (orig. pub. 1952; Colliers 1986))

Eccleshare, Julia. **Beatrix Potter to Harry Potter: Portraits of Children's Writers** (National Portrait Gallery 2002)

Greenfield, George. **Enid Blyton**. Pocket Biography series. (Sutton Publishing 1998)

McClaren, Duncan. **Looking for Enid: The Mysterious and Inventive Life of Enid Blyton** (Portobello 2007)

Mullan Bob. **The Enid Blyton Story** (Hyperion 1987)

Ray, Sheila G. **The Blyton Phenomenon** (1982)

Rice, Eva. **Who's Who in Enid Blyton: From Amelia Jane to the Wishing Chair** (Richard Cohen Books 1997; rev. expanded with original illustrations, Orion 2002)

Smallwood, Imogen. **A Childhood at Green Hedges** (Methuen 1989)

Stoney, Barbara. **Enid Blyton** (Hodder & Stoughton 1974)

[www.enidblytonociety.co.uk](http://www.enidblytonociety.co.uk)

[www.enidblyton.net](http://www.enidblyton.net)

[www.btinternet.com](http://www.btinternet.com)

DIXON, FRANKLIN W. *The Hardy Boys Series*

Dixon had two dozen personalities, much like the other named authors in almost all the series by the Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate. The first story, **The Tower Treasure**, featured heroes Frank Hardy, who went from 16 to 17, and brother Joe, who also aged one year up from 15 in this long-running series.

Fenton Hardy, their father, was a former NYPD Detective, opting for private practice in Bayport on Barmet Bay, a city of 50,000, which turned out to be much like Jessica Fletcher's town in the ratio of murders per capita.

The series ran from 1927 to 2005 with 190 volumes and spawned two more book series and four TV series.

Charles Leslie McFarlane, born in Canada in 1902, wrote twenty of the stories, more than anyone else, and also wrote many books in other series for Stratemeyer. The first four of the *Dana Girls* were his; however the last, **The Phantom Freighter** (1947), was written by his wife, Amy when he was too ill.

McFarlane, like the others in the Stratemeyer stable, wrote for a flat fee. Others in the stable included Edward Stratemeyer, himself, the genius behind the Syndicate. Stratemeyer was born in 1862 and lived to 1930, when daughter Harriet Stratemeyer Adams (1892–1982) took over. Daughter Edna Stratemeyer Squier also created plot outlines for some of the series, as well as doing office work, but ended her working stint in 1942.

Mr. Stratemeyer was one of the first to see the potential market for children's books. His way of working was to create plot outlines for his hired writers. The Syndicate churned out over 40 series with numerous books in each for a total of 1400 books, 100 ghostwriters, and 75 pseudonyms. In 1984, the company was bought by Simon and Schuster.

Greenwald, Marilyn S. **Secret of the Hardy Boys: Leslie Mcfarlane and the Stratemeyer Syndicate**. (Ohio University Press, 2004)

Heffelfinger, Charles **The Bayport Companion** (Midnight Press, 1992)

McFarlane, Charles Leslie. **Ghost of the Hardy Boys** (Methuen 1976). (Autobiography)

[www.stratemeyer.org](http://www.stratemeyer.org)

[www.hardyboys.bobfinnan.com](http://www.hardyboys.bobfinnan.com)

EMERSON, ALICE B. *The Ruth Fielding Stories*.

This early series consisted of 30 volumes, beginning with **Ruth Fielding of the Red Mill** in 1913 and running to 1934, also published by Cupples and

Leon. Authors included W. Bert Forst, Elizabeth Mildred Duffield Ward, and Benson.

The interesting part is that the series is reputed to have influenced the formation of the characters and home life of Nancy Drew, the Dana Girls and Beverly Gray, at the very least.

Ruth, an orphan, attended boarding school as did the Dana Girls; was strong-willed as was Nancy; and a career woman as Beverly would be. Ruth moved in with her uncle, and his housekeeper, had two close friends, and was independent about marriage. Sound familiar?

She said that boyfriend Tom “would utterly spoil the career on which she had now entered so successfully.” (From **Ruth Fielding on the St. Lawrence**). Her career? A moving picture writer, and the owner of the Ruth Fielding Film Company.

However, she does marry him, and interest in the series waned.

[www.series-books.com](http://www.series-books.com)

JUDD, FRANCES K. *The Kay Tracey Mystery Stories*.

Elizabeth Mildred Duffield Ward, Anna Perot Rose Wright, Benson and Edna were the authors. The stories began in 1934 with **The Secret of the Red Scarf**, ran through the '40s, and were reissued twice after that. In the 1960s more titles were added with new cover art, and this cycle was repeated a few more times.

Kay, 16, lived with mother, Kathryn, and Cousin Bill who was a lawyer. As in the Nancy Drew series, Kay had two best friends; and like the Dana girls, she went to school.

KEENE, CAROLYN. *The Nancy Drew Series*.

Harriet Stratemeyer Adams was Carolyn Keene for at least one more book than Mildred Wirt Benson. Harriet did most of the outlines and edited the books, so perhaps more of her work was in Nancy Drew than anyone else's. Sister Edna also did outlines, wrote and edited. Harriet did approximately 1200 outlines and wrote 200 books in the various series. In a touch of irony, her father had the strong belief that women belonged in the home, so that's where Harriet wrote and edited.

The first book, **The Secret of the Old Clock**

(Grosset & Dunlap 1930) was written by Benson. Another of Mr. Stratemeyer's business practices was to put out three of the new series at once to see how they sold. If they did well, then the series was off and running. Nancy went beyond this — she aviated.

Here was a girl, 16 in the first of the series, then 18 (so she could drive her roadster) who was feisty, independent, courageous, agile, smart, sophisticated and glamorous. “Girl Power” before the term was invented.

Nancy went on to solve 350 cases, sold over 200 million books in 14 languages, and inspired video games, movies and TV series.

Billman, Carol. **The Secret of the Stratemeyer Syndicate: Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys and the Million Dollar Fiction Factory** (Ungar, 1986)

Kandel, Susan. **Not a Girl Detective** (fiction; HarperCollins, 2005)

Nash, Ilana and David Farah. **Series Books and the Media: or, This Isn't All!** (SynSine Press, 1996).

Rehak, Melanie. **Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her** (Harcourt, 2005)

[www.nancydrewsleuth.com](http://www.nancydrewsleuth.com)

KEENE, CAROLYN. *The Dana Girls Mystery Stories*.

Ms. Keene not only had multiple personalities, but she also had multiple series. The usual suspects of the Keene persona were McFarlane, Benson and Adams.

First in the series was **A Three-Cornered Mystery** issued in 1934 by Grosset and Dunlap. The series ended with volume 13 in 1944. As with other series, there were reprintings, new titles and reissues.

The stories could be considered the Hardy Boys and Nancy combined, as the series share similarities with those heroes and heroine. Louise and Jean Dana orphans, attended school and had Uncle Edward and Aunt Harriet as guardians. The series was created by Harriet with help from Edna, so they must have had some fun with the names. In the stories Aunt Harriet is often active in solving the mysteries.

MCFARLANE, CHARLES LESLIE. See Dixon, Franklin W.

SUTTON, MARGARET. *The Judy Bolton series*.

Rachel Irene Beebe (1903-2001) married Mr. Sutton then changed her first name to Margaret. The first four volumes were published in 1932 by Grosset and Dunlap, and continued until 1967, consisting of 38 volumes. Each book was “based on something that actually happened” stated the author, and many were also set in real-life sites. More than four million copies were sold. Fortunately, some volumes of the Judy Bolton mystery series are being published again by Applewood Books and Aeonian Press.

The first book, **The Vanishing Shadow** (1932), features Judy, 15, a high school student in north-western Pennsylvania. Her father is a doctor and they eventually move in Farringdon. She graduates, has a job, marries, but still pursues her interest as a detective, somewhat in the Beverly Gray mode.

[www.judybolton.com](http://www.judybolton.com)

**TATHAM, JULIE CAMPBELL.** *The Trixie Belden Series.*

Beginning with **The Secret of the Mansion** in 1948, the series ran to 1986 with volume 39, **The Mystery of the Galloping Ghost**, published by Whitman. Later, Random House began reprinting.

Tatham was born 1908 and died 1999. She began her own literary agency and sent a plot outline for the first Ginny Gordon mystery to a publisher. She was hired to write that series, as well as the Trixie series. Trixie was 13 and ages all the way to 14 in the series. Brothers Brian and Mart and others form a group called the Bob-Whites, and they help her solve mysteries.

She was considered to be at the other end of the spectrum from Nancy Drew — no perfect world for her, as she must do chores around the home, as well as earn her own spending money, and, alas, no roadster.

**WARNER, GERTRUDE CHANDLER.** *The Boxcar Children Mysteries.*

The series began in 1933 with the first book, **The Boxcar Children**. In it, Benny, 6; Violet, 10; Jessie, 12; and Henry, 14, lived in an old red boxcar after their parents died. By the end of the book their wealthy grandfather had taken them to his home — and the boxcar joined them. The series continues.

Warner, born in 1890, lived a long life as did

most of the series authors here — she died in 1979. She said that she taught first grade in the same room for 32 years and retired at 60 so she would have more time to write, which she did.

In tribute to her, Putnam, Connecticut, where she was born, opened the Gertrude Warner Museum in 2004 — in a boxcar donated by the Connecticut Trolley Museum.

Ellsworth, Mary Ellen. **Gertrude Chandler Warner and the Boxcar Children.** (Whitman 1997)

[www.boxcarchildren.com](http://www.boxcarchildren.com)

[www.kidsreads.com](http://www.kidsreads.com)

**WEST, JERRY.** *The Happy Hollisters.*

Heroes and heroines are Pete, 12; Pam, 10; Ricky, 7; Holly, 6; and Sue, 4, who are introduced in the first book, **The Happy Hollisters**. The series ended with book 33, **The Happy Hollisters and the Mystery of the Midnight Trolls**, running from 1953–1970, with illustrations by Helen S. Hamilton.

Jerry West was Andrew Svenson, who contributed to other Stratemeyer series also. Svenson, born in 1910 and died in 1975, based the characters in the Hollisters, in part, on his own family of six children, and their pets.

By 1948, he was a full-timer who provided plot outlines, wrote books and edited right along with Harriet. What is unusual about his association with the Syndicate is that he started other series and was the sole author with his real name on the cover. Even more unusual, he became a partner in the Syndicate in 1961. He thoroughly adopted Stratemeyer's recipe in that the first page of the story must pull the reader into the action and that each chapter should have a 'hook' that made the reader turn the page.

[happy-hollisters.com](http://happy-hollisters.com)

### History Mysteries from other issues

(Middle Reader unless otherwise indicated)  
—*Mysteries South of the Mason-Dixon Line, Part One* (Winter 2002–3)

Buckey, Sara Masters. **The Smuggler's Treasure**  
Jones, Elizabeth McDavid. **The Night Flyers;**  
**Watcher in the Piney Woods**

McDonald, Megan. **Shadows in the Glasshouse;**  
**The Mystery at Peacock Hill**

- Cool Canadian Crime* (Winter 2003–4)  
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- Religious Mysteries Part 1* (Spring 2004)  
Boorman, Linda. **The Giant Trunk Mystery** (YA)  
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Sutton, Margaret. **The Yellow Phantom**
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Konigsburg, E. L. **The Second Mrs. Gioconda** (ages 6–8)  
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- Academic Mysteries 101* (Fall 2006)  
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Hendry, Frances Mary. **Quest for Maid**  
Lowry, Lois. **Number the Stars**  
McSwigan, Marie. **Snow Treasure**  
Reiss, Johanna. **The Upstairs Room**  
Torksvig, Sandy. **Hitler's Canary**

## History of Medicine: Shakespeare's Richard III and the Ellis-Van Creveld Syndrome

by Catherine Aird, Detective Novelist  
and R.A.C. McIntosh, M.B., Ch.B., General Practitioner (retired)

**Both Sir Thomas More** and William Shakespeare, in writing about King Richard III, described a man with signs consistent with the Ellis-Van Creveld Syndrome (chondro-ectodermal dysplasia).

Any evidence that King Richard (1452 — 1485) himself might have suffered from this syndrome is scanty and confusing. The likelihood that More or Shakespeare — or both — look as their model [to]

someone contemporary who suffered from this syndrome is considered to be greater.

In this article, the characteristics of the syndrome are compared with references in Sir Thomas More's history of King Richard III and in William Shakespeare's plays *King Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3* and *The Tragedy of King Richard III*. Attention has been drawn to Shakespeare's accuracy in the observation of disease. The controversial matter of whether Richard III himself was, in fact, deformed in any way has not been considered in relation to the syndrome.

### The Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome

The Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome (chondroectodermal dysplasia) is characterized by ectodermal dysplasia, polydactyly, chondrodysplasia and congenital morbus cordis and was identified by R. W. B. Ellis and S. Van Creveld in 1940 (Ellis and Van Creveld, 1940). Since then some other signs have been noted as sometimes also occurring when the syndrome is present (McKusick et al., 1964). Characteristics of the syndrome include the following.

(1) Ectodermal dysplasia: finger and toe nails are defective, being somewhat rudimentary, dystrophic, and represented by small scales. The hair is sparse and fine. Teeth are hypoplastic, rudimentary, natal (i.e. already erupted at birth), and carious. The sulcus between upper lip and gum is almost obliterated, causing a partial hare-lip. The upper lip is short and bound down, with the absence of the usual groove between it and the mandibular alveolar ridge. The upper lip is also sunken because of the hypoplasia of the anterior maxilla.

(2) Polydactyly: supernumerary digits may appear on the ulnar side of the hands, and sometimes on the feet.

(3) Chondro-dysplasia: This abnormality of the cells of cartilage from which bone is developed results in dwarfism. There is a marked shortening of the legs in contrast to an average or long trunk. The long bones of the extremities from the trunk to the distal phalanges are short and thick, and the femora and humeri are the longest relatively (which is what distinguishes this condition from true achondroplasia). The fibula is the most shortened.

(4) Thoracic abnormalities may occur, with the thorax either being very small, or impressively long and narrow.

(5) Talipes equinovarus (club-foot) is found, as well as bilateral genu valgum (knock knees), which is a defect of the lateral aspect of the proximal part of the tibia.

(6) The hands are large, relative to the arms, and, like the feet, are somewhat stubby. There is partial fusion of the hamate and capitate bones of the wrist, ill-developed terminal phalanges and dysplastic epiphyseal development in several proximal phalanges. The victim cannot make a tight fist because the proximal phalanges are relatively long compared with the other phalanges.

(7) Congenital morbus cordis (heart disease) may be present, as well as systolic murmur compatible with patent inter-ventricular septum. Single atrium or large septal defect has been the most frequent malformation.

(8) There may be arthrogyriposis of interphalangeal joints of all fingers; epispadias or hypospadias also may occur. The sweat glands, skin, and mental capacity are normal. The individual is likely to be muscular and strong.

(9) The condition is congenital, and is a recessive inherited defect without sex linkage caused by an autosomal, recessive, mutant gene. Consanguinity is present in some cases. Both abnormal delivery and prematurity are likely to occur.

The approximate incidence of all forms of mucopolysaccharidoses in this country is 40 births per annum or 0.005% (assuming 800,000 births a year) (Jones and Bodmer, 1974). A high incidence of the Ellis-Van Creveld Syndrome has been noted among the much intermarried present day Old Order Amish people settled in the United States~ mostly in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. (McKusick et al., 1964).

### Sir Thomas More (1488-1535)

The authorship of *The History of King Richard the Thirde* written by Master Thomas More, one of the undersheriffs of London about 1513 has been the subject of much debate among historians and its

authenticity questioned (Chambers, 1928; Pollard, 1933). Sir Thomas More's writings on Richard III are open to charges of being political propaganda on behalf of Richard's enemies. They are thought by some writers to have derived from Cardinal Morton, another Tudor protagonist and a far from impartial observer. Politics were no more kindly then than now and exerted their influence on almost all those who wrote about Richard and his reign. More describes Richard:

Richard the third sonne [of Richard, Duke of York] of whom we now entreate, was in witte and courage egall with either of them, in bodye and prowesse farre under them bothe [Edward IV and George, Duke of Clarence], little of stature, ill fetured of limmes, croke backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard favoured of visage, and such as is in states called warlye [martial], in other menne otherwise, he was malicious, wrathfull, envious, and from afore his birth, ever frowarde. It is for trouthe reported, that the Duches his mother had so muche adoe in her travaile, that shee coulde not bee delivered of hym uncutte: and that hee came into the worlde with feete forwarde, as menne bee borne outwarde, and (as the fame runneth) also not untothed, whither menne of hatred reporte above the trouthe, or elles that nature chaunged her course in hys beginninge, whiche in the course of his lyre many things unnaturallye committed. None evill captaine was hee in the warre, as to whiche his disposition was more metely then for peace. Sundrye victories hade hee, and sommetime overthrowes, but never in defaulte as for his owne parsonne, either of hardinesse or politike order, free was hee called of dyspence, and sommewhat above hys power liberall, with large giftes hee get him unstedfaste frendshippee, for whiche hee was fain to pil and spoyle in other places, and get him stedfast hatred. Hee was close and secrete, a deepe dissimuler, lowlye of counteynaunce, arrogant of heart, outwardlye coumpinable

[companiable] where he inwardely hated, not lettting to kisse whome hee thoughte to kyll: dispitious and cruell, not for evill will alway, but after for ambicion and either for the surety or increase of his position..."

It will be seen that all the physical signs that are included by More do occur within the Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome and, equally importantly, that he records none that do not. The characteristics of note are:

little of stature  
ill-featured of limbs  
crook-backed  
left shoulder much higher than right  
hard favoured of visage  
not untothed  
no mental abnormality  
congenital  
difficult labour  
prematurity

An interesting reference is that to the Duchess of York's confinement: "from afore his birth ever frowarde...". A deformed infant is one of the conditions which give rise to a breech presentation: it might be said therefore to be an unwritten concomitant of the syndrome. 'That she could not be delivered of him uncutte' could well be true of whoever gave birth to a baby with such a syndrome, and presumably refers to an episiotomy — in fact, Richard III was the Duchess of York's eleventh child which makes an episiotomy unlikely in her case, except perhaps for uterine inertia in such a grand multipara.

'As menne bee born outwarde' is something of an enigma. It might mean a face to pubes presentation, again unlikely with this parity and an argument in favour of the confinement so described not being that of the Duchess of York.

The literary progression from Sir Thomas More writing on Richard III to the plays *King Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3* and *The Tragedy of King Richard III* by William Shakespeare is considered to be as follows (Kendall, 1955).

(1) *The Continuation of Hardyng's Chronicle* published in 1543 by Richard Grafton. It leans heavily

on More and Polydore Vergil's *Historiae Anglicae*.

(2) *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* by Edward Hall, published in 1548.

(3) *The Chronicle* of Richard Grafton, published in 1568.

(4) *The Chronicles* of Ralph Holinshed, published in 1578.

### Shakespeare's medicine

Shakespeare is known not only to have been a superlative observer of human nature but also to have been keenly interested in disease, making no fewer than 712 medical references in the plays and poems. Medical knowledge in Shakespeare's England was not extensive though. 'If we except the modern scourge of cancer, the ills the flesh is heir to did not, in Shakespeare's times, differ essentially from those today' (Leaney, 1963). Towards the end of this period science and medicine started to make progress, being by then no longer so clouded by religious controversy though 'the hazards of the new learning to simple piety were considerable' (Copeman, 1960).

### Richard's 'symptoms'

Shakespeare's characterization of an individual with the Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome is reflected in the following lines.

#### *Henry VI, Part 2*

Act V, scene i

157 Hence, heap of wrath, foul indigested lump  
158 As crooked in thy manners as thy shape!  
215 Foul stigmatic

#### *Henry VI, Part 3*

Act I, scene iv

75 And where's that valiant crook-back prodigy  
Act II, scene ii  
96 Ay, crook-back, here I stand to answer thee  
135 But thou art neither like thy sire nor dam  
136 But like a foul misshapen stigmatic  
Act III, scene ii

153 Why, love forswore me in my mother's womb  
154 And, for I should not deal in her soft laws  
155 She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe  
156 To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub

157 To make an envious mountain on my back  
158 Where sits deformity to mock my body  
159 To shape my legs of an unequal size  
160 To disproportion me in every part  
161 Like to a chaos, or an unlick'd bear-whelp  
162 That carries no impression like the dam  
170 Until my misshaped trunk that bears this head  
Act V, scene v

30 Nay, take away this scolding crookback rather.  
35 And thou mis-shapen Dick, I tell ye all  
78 Hard-favour'd Richard? Richard, where art thou?

Act V, scene vi

4 "Good Gloucester" and "good devil" were alike  
5 And both preposterous; therefore, not "good lord"  
49 Thy mother felt more than a mother's pain  
50 And yet brought forth less than a mother's hope  
51 To wit, an indigested and deformed lump  
52 Not like the fruit of such a goodly tree  
53 Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born  
68 I, that have neither pity, love, nor fear  
71 I came into the world with my legs forward  
74 The midwife wonder'd, and the women cried  
75 "O Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!"  
78 Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so  
81 And this word "love", which greybeards call divine

#### *Richard III*

Act I, scene i

14 But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks  
15 Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass  
16 I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty  
17 To strut before a wanton ambling nymph  
18 I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion  
19 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature  
20 Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
21 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up  
22 And that so lamely and unfashionable  
26 Unless to spy my shadow in the sun  
27 And descant on mine own deformity  
28 And therefore since I cannot prove a lover

Act I, scene ii  
57 Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity  
78 Vouchsafe, defused infection of a man  
Act I, scene iii  
246 To help thee curse that poisonous bunch-back'd  
toad  
335 And thus I clothe my naked villainy  
336 With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ  
Act II, scene iv  
27 Marry, they say my uncle grew so fast  
28 That he could gnaw a crust at two hours old  
29 'Twas full two years ere I could get a tooth  
30 Grandam, this would have been a biting jest  
Act III, Scene iv  
63 ...that have prevail'd  
64 Upon my body with their hellish charms  
69 Then be your eyes the witness of this ill:  
70 See how I am bewitch'd; behold, mine arm  
71 Is like a blasted sapling, withered up  
Act III, Scene vii  
136 Your state of fortune and your due of birth  
117 The lineal glory of your royal house  
118 To the Corruption of a blemish'd stock  
Act IV, scene i  
54 O my accursed womb Led of death  
Act IV, scene iv  
47 From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept  
48 A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death  
49 That dog, that had his teeth before his eyes  
54 Thy womb let loose, to chase us to our graves  
81 That bottled spider, that foul bunch-back' d toad!  
138 By strangling thee in her accursed womb

### Analysis

It will be seen that Shakespeare uses all of Sir Thomas More's writing on Richard, amplified and dramatized. Neither More nor Shakespeare makes any mention of heart disease, which in any case they would not have been able to recognize. Shakespeare like More uses nothing that is not within the Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome when writing about Richard's physical characteristics, except possibly the withered arm. He could have been including an Erb's Paralysis or poliomyelitis for good effect; he might have needed something extra that smacked of witch-

craft for the plot. The subject he took with the Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome (if he did) might have had a withered arm from kyphotic scoliosis (pressure on the cervical nerves) from the Ellis-Van Creveld skeletal deformity; or the arm could have appeared withered because of the disproportion of the long bones, the wrist being too near the elbow giving a withered effect.

Neither More nor Shakespeare refers to polydactyly. Sixth fingers were usually removed in very early infancy even before the advent of modern surgery. There is one point in Henry VI Part III, Act V, scene vi when King Henry tantalizingly hints at something worse than neo-natal teeth: could this be polydactyly or worse hypospadias (with its amorous implications)?

As well as using all the description of Richard in Sir Thomas More, Shakespeare importantly also makes very delicate references to a sexual incapacity on Richard's part: 'cannot prove a lover', 'want love's majesty', 'that am not shaped for sportive tricks', etc., suppresses in the plays the fact (which must be known to him) that Richard had had a son and makes Richard's ambition a deliberate substitute for his sexual deficiency,

More does not refer to any of the foregoing. It is not in any case true. Richard himself was married and had a son of the marriage (Edward, Prince of Wales K.G., born 1473, died 1484). There were three known bastards. This is interesting as both epispadias and hypospadias occur in the Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome and the sexual situation inferred by Shakespeare is not inconsistent with these conditions.

The syndrome is carried by a mutant autosomal recessive gene. Sir Thomas More does not make reference to heredity. Shakespeare makes several that could be construed as such, but equally that could have dynastic rather than medical implications:

*Henry VI, Part 3*

Act I, scene i

Such hope have all the line of John of Gaunt

'Twas my inheritance, as the earldom was

*Richard III*

Act III, scene vii

The lineal glory of your royal house  
 To the corruption of a blemish'd stock  
 Act II scene vii  
 Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants

Both Shakespeare and More use the word Crook-back, an old English word for Hump-shoulder. It is interesting to note that lexicographers have linked 'crook-back' with other deformities. The figurative connection of 'crooked' with criminal behaviour goes back to the 13th century (Onions, 1972). Natal teeth have often been considered a bad omen — Titus Livius in 59 B.C. thought they augured disastrous events — and the phenomenon has long been associated with superstition and folklore.

### King Richard III (1452-1485)

Very few kings or reigns have given rise to more persistent speculation than that of Richard III, known as 'Crouchback' (Kendal, 1965). Half a millennium on is not the ideal distance in time from which to be piecing together a medical history, especially — as one commentator engagingly puts it — because the events of King Richards reign are 'out of time and forgot'.

The portraits of Richard 'do not show any deformity...but there is some evidence that one shoulder was slightly higher than the other' (Myers, 1954). After he was killed at Bosworth Field 'stark naked, despoiled and derided, with a felon's halter about the neck, the bloody body was slung contemptuously across the back of a horse...' (Kendall, 1955). It was buried at the Grey Friars on the River Soar until, at the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Grey Friars was plundered, the tomb destroyed and Richard's body thrown into the river. There are, therefore, no remains to be seen.

Ideal conditions for the transmission of autosomal recessive genes existed among his ancestors. Both his parents were great-grandchildren of Edward III through Edmund, Duke of York and John of Gaunt; and his paternal grandmother was also a descendant through another son, Lionel, Duke of Clarence.

There are inconclusive references to signs that could be ascribed to the syndrome among those who

shared family trees with Richard; especially to Edmund, Earl of Lancaster (1245-1296) who was also known as Crouchback, and Anne Boleyn who was said to have had a vestigial sixth finger. It so happens that the dwarfish Duke of Alencon and Anjou ('The Frog') shares with Richard, Edmund and Anne at least two lines of inheritance from the marriage of Raymond Berenger V, Count of Provence, to Beatrice de Savoie. The much-deformed Jeanne of France (1464–1503) is also a descendant of this marriage. This may be no more than mere coincidence during a period when intermarriage for dynastic reasons was very much part of the political pattern of the times.

### Discussion

It is not impossible that William Shakespeare took as his model for the monster whom he wished to portray as Richard III a contemporary victim of the Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome. Alternatively, he may have been led to this solely by Sir Thomas More's belated description of the King. That More's description, and more particularly Shakespeare's dramatic expansion of More's writings (if they were actually More's), should have fitted as well as they do into the pattern of the syndrome would seem to be more than mere coincidence. It would, however, appear highly unlikely that King Richard himself suffered anything more than the mildest degree of deformity in spite of the degree of intermarriage among his ancestors.

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This subject has been recently explored elsewhere (*British Medical Journal*. 1977: 2, 1650; 1978: 1, 234).

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Catherine Aird is the author of more than twenty crime novels and story collections, most of which feature Detective Chief Inspector C. D. Sloan.

