

May 22, 2019



Gangster In Our Midst—available at local bookstores, [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) & Barnes & Noble
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Gangster Blog

The Good Die Young

Leo Beierschmitt, 87, and Bob Maricle, 95, died a day apart. Leo passed first on May 4th.

Both were residents at MercyOne Senior Care in Oelwein, Iowa; both had been long-time residents of Fairbank, the town that inspired *Gangster in our Midst* (2017).

My understanding is the two had a standing bet: The first one to die owed the other guy a buck.

My last visit to MercyOne to visit these ‘youngsters’ was in the fall of 2018 (I tried to check in on them whenever in the area).

I had never met Leo before that day in 2016 when I made my initial phone call to him (he was still living on his farm west of Fairbank). I introduced myself, saying I was conducting research for a book about the town, and a mutual friend said to call him to get stories about what it was like attending Immaculate Conception Catholic school. Ultimately, I would base much of the fictional character ‘Walter’ on Leo.

Bob, on the other hand, had been among those I interviewed for book #2, *We Are Eight, A Memoir* (2015). Then, he volunteered to be one of five Fairbank historians to participate in my new book-writing project (GIOM), helping out right up to the end.

Thank you, Leo and Bob! for opening your hearts to share personal stories of the town and its people from so very long ago.



Leo Beierschmitt
1931-2019



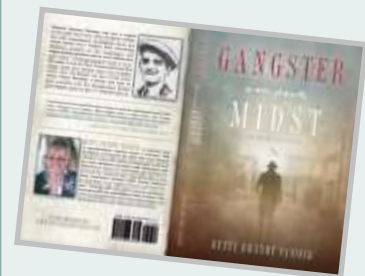
Bob Maricle
1923-2019



“Three Fingers”

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*Dedicated to the brave
and courageous people
worldwide who live,
work and raise families
amidst criminal
elements and war.*



Those Who Raise families Amidst War...

Gangster violence in Chicago (and other U.S. cities) became prolific during Prohibition. Mostly gangsters killed other gangsters, like Deon O'Banion, who ruled the North Side and the Gold Coast, the wealthy area of Chicago situated on the northern lake-front. It's believed Frankie Yale, a New York gangster, assassinated O'Banion at his flower shop on North State Street.

But Chicagoans knew at any time they could find themselves in the midst of a torrent of machine gun bullets coming from some car speeding by. It didn't take long before myriad families relocated to safer neighborhoods.

In 1923, Al Capone moved his headquarters to Cicero, a town of about 68,000 adjoining Chicago on the west. There, the war with the rival O'Donnell gang escalated, resulting in over 200 deaths.

Capone also set his sights on taking over the government; the 1924 Cicero town council elections would become known as one of the most crooked elections in the Chicago area's long history, with voters threatened at polling stations by thugs. His hand-picked Chicago mayoral candidate, William Emmett Dever, won by a huge margin. When Dever quickly announced he was going to kick Capone out of Chicago, Capone paid him a personal visit and knocked him down the steps of the town hall. In '27 Dever would lose to "Big Bill" Thompson, Capone's next mayoral pick.

It was a time of overt lawlessness, when the strict line of demarcation which should exist between officialdom and gangdom became blurred.

But gangsters hung out in small towns, too.

Louie La Cava first showed up on Fairbank, Iowa's Main Street in the early '20s, driving a big black Lincoln, wearing flashy clothes, smoking a thick Cuban cigar and reeking of danger.

Marshal Sweeney Delaney (aka Bill Haun, s 1916-1949) did what most small town cops did back in the day: He kept his friends close, his enemies closer. He did things like take La Cava fishing on the Wapsie, hoping to learn some snippet of criminality that he might be up to.

I realized early on in the writing of *Gangster in our Midst* that brave and courageous people worldwide have always had to live, work and raise families amidst criminal elements and war.

Author Events

— **Fri., Jun 21**, Jul 12, Aug. 2, Sept 13 (5-9 pm) — Friday Night History Cruz, Paperbacks Plus Bookstore, 2539 7th Ave E, North St. Paul, MN, (651) 770-0384

— **Sun., Jun 23, 1-2:30 pm** — "Iowa's Oakdale Sanatorium—A Ray of Hope," Johnson Co. Historical Society, 860 Quarry Rd, Coralville, IA, (319) 351-5738

— **Sun., July 21, 1-6 pm (new)** — Books & Beer Pop-up Bookstore, Jackson Street Beer, 607 5th St, Sioux City, Iowa, (712) 574-8403

— **Fri., Aug. 9th, 10-11:30 am** — "Meet & Greet," Lake Country Booksellers, 766 Washington Square, "White Bear Lake, MN, 651-426-0918

— **Tues., Sept. 24, 6:30 pm** — "Iowa's Oakdale Sanatorium—A Ray of Hope," Clear Lake Public Library, 200 N. 4th St., Clear Lake, IA 641-357-6133

— **Sun., Oct 20, 7 pm** "Wiltse Family of Strawberry Point," Wilder Foundation, 123 W. Mission St., Strawberry Point, IA, (563) 933-4615

— **(pending)** — "Wiltse Family of Strawberry Point," Clayton County Historical/Genealogy Society, 119 N. Main St., Elkader, IA, 563-245-1065

Book Clubs

— **Last Monday of the month**, St. Paul, MN.

— **Beancounters**, Burlington, IA

— **Cicero Public Library**, 5225 West Cermak Rd., Cicero, Ill, (708) 652-8084

Book Festivals-Conferences

— **June 15**, 11:00 to 3:00 **(new)**, Author Fest/Beagle and Wolf Books & Bindery, American Legion, 900 East 1st Street (Hwy 34), Park Rapids, MN, (218) 237-2665

— **Sat., Sept. 9**, 9 am–5 pm — WOW Writers Conference, Oak Knoll Lutheran Church, 600 Hopkins Crossroad, Minnetonka, MN

— **Sept 20-Oct 6**, Iowa City Book Festival, 123 S Linn St., Iowa City, IA, 319.356.5245

— **Sat., Nov. 17**, 10 am-2 pm — Sterling Lord Writers and Readers Festival, Burlington Public Library, (319) 753-1647

Pending...

— **Date/Time: TBD (new)** — "Gangsters Hid in Small Towns, too", Roseville Public Library, 2180 Hamline Ave., Roseville, MN, (651) 724-6001

— **Date/Time: TBD (new)** — "Autism at the turn of the Twentieth Century, TPT Twin Cities PBS

— **Date/Time: TBD (new)** — Musser Public, 408 East 2nd St., Muscatine, IA, 563-263-3065

— **Date/Time: TBD** — Lake Elmo Public Library, 3537 Lake Elmo Avenue N., Lake Elmo, MN, (651) 773-4926

— **Date/Time: TBD** — Sawyer Co. Historical Society & Museum, County Highway B, Hayward, WI, (715) 634-8053

— **Date/Time: TBD** — James Kennedy Public Library, 320 1st Ave E, Dyersville, IA, (563) 875-8912

— **Date/Time: TBD** — Harrison County Welcome Ctr, 2931 Monroe Ave., Missouri Valley, Iowa, (712) 642-2114

— **Date/time: TBD** — Big Foot Inn, 11508 N US Highway 14, Harvard, IL, (815) 943-4740

— **Date/time: TBD** — Wapello County Historical Society, 210 W Main St., Ottumwa, IA, (641) 682-8676

— **Date/time: TBD** — Davenport Public Library, 321 N Main St., Davenport, IA, (563) 326-7832

— **Date/time: TBD** — Ottumwa Public Library, 102 W 4th St, Ottumwa, IA, (641) 682-7563

— **Date/time: TBD** — Iowa City Public Library, 123 S Linn St, Iowa City, IA, (319) 356-5200

— **Date/time: TBD** — Landmark Commons Retirement Community, 1400 Maxhelen Blvd., Waterloo, IA, (319) 296-7100