

June 11, 2019



Gangster In Our Midst—available at local bookstores, [Amazon](#) & [Walmart](#)

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Gangster Blog

Lillie News

Thank you to Solomon Gustavo for the interview and excellent articles in my local *Lillie News* (Lake Elmo-Oakdale, Southwestern Review, Maplewood News, North St. Paul News, and Ramsey County News): **“Oakdale author’s knack for history unearths gangster hideout story”**, May 29, 2019 ([link](#)).

My Growing Community of Authors

Nourishing me as a writer is this group of local authors: **WOW (Women of Words)**,

started in 1997 by Twin Cities authors Connie Anderson, Meg Corrigan and Gloria Van Demmeltraadt, with meetings in Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Lake Elmo and Oakdale.

I’m reminded of F. Scott Fitzgerald, a St. Paul native, who had quite the inner circle of authors.

Perhaps the most famous American author was Ernest Hemmingway, who criticized Fitzgerald for selling his scripts to Hollywood studios.

T.S Eliot wrote in his letter to Fitzgerald upon the 1925 publication of *The Great Gatsby*: “It seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James.”

Fitzgerald’s first novel was a detective book; it proved to be a great success when finally published after three revisions as *This Side of Paradise* (we actually have several things in common).



Photo: May 10th WOW (Women of Words) East meeting at Sergeant Pepper’s in Oakdale



“Three Fingers”

“After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.” – Philip Pullman

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Victor would likely have been institutionalized

I have an adult autistic grandson. We first met when he was about five years old.

Around age sixteen he began driving; graduated high school at eighteen; and holds a full-time job in Texas.

He's the reason I chose to tell Victor's saga in *Gangster in our Midst*. Victor, a fictional character, is the eight year old son of Ed and Noritta Schumer, a farming family who lives outside the community of Oxbow (similar to Fairbank, Iowa, my hometown).

The reader first learns about Victor's infirmity on page 13:

The outbreaks of anger, screaming and thrashing started when Victor was about three. He'd been back and forth to doctors even taken him to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. She believed her son wanted to communicate and got frustrated he couldn't speak. She read to him, treated him as she would have treated any other child. He was learning, she was certain.

The original theory behind such behavior was cold frigid mothers and bad parenting; the diagnosis: schizophrenic—labeled “idiot”.

In 1938, Hans Asperger, a pediatrician at the University of Vienna, described numerous children he observed as autistic. He noted their spoken language limitations and emotional or social issues; also, that many exhibited a combination of skills and strengths of superior cognition—similar to his own childhood experience.

Today, this behavior is referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Daughter-in-law, Adela Maurer, who will graduate in August with a PhD in Special Education, noted: “In the 1920s, a local physician would have reported a child presenting with ASD to the State of Iowa, and he or she would have been immediately institutionalized.”

The reader gets a sense of Noritta's tenacity, in the fact that her son has remained at home, even attends the I.C. School, though his days are largely spent seated at an orphaned desk in the rear of the room, where he rocks in his seat.

Stimming is another symptom of ASD, which usually refers to specific behaviors that include hand-flapping, rocking, spinning, or repetition of words and phrases.



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—www.smithsonian.org

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** — “Meet & Greet,” Jackson Street Brewery, 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
- Fall 2019 **(new)** — The Center, Corner of 8th and Kingwood Streets, Brainerd, MN, 218-829-9345
- 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, 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)** — Manchester Public Library, 304 N Franklin St, Manchester, IA, (563) 927-3719
- Date/Time: **TBD (new)** — Jefferson Public Library, 200 W Lincoln Way, Jefferson, IA, (515) 386-2835
- Date/Time: **TBD (new)** — “Gangsters Hid in Small Towns, too”, Roseville Public Library-Shoreview, 4560 Victoria St. N., Shoreview, MN, 651-724-6090
- Date/Time: **TBD (new)** — “Autism at the turn of the Twentieth Century”, Mary Hanson Show, TPT Twin Cities PBS
- Date/Time: **TBD** — 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