

Oct. 6, 2019



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

***“Most of all, you made them laugh!”***

***— WOW Mystery Writers’ Panel, Sept. 28***



Almost 80 women attended the Sept. 28th Women of Words 10th Annual Writers Conference ([link](#)) at Oak Knoll Lutheran Church in Minnetonka.

“The Mystery Writers’ Panel was great,” said Connie Anderson (photo, far right), a WOW founding member and moderator for the panel, which included (second far left to right) Gloria VanDemmeltraadt—cozy mysteries, Midge Bubany—classic detective, Joan H. Young—cozy mysteries, and myself (far left)—historical fiction.

“You answered their questions, offered info new to them, and most of all, you made them laugh!” Connie added.

Largely, we talked about the parts of writing mysteries that participants would want to know, like characters, locations, types of mystery (cozy, police procedural, etc.). When asked: what is the strangest thing you’ve had to research on-line for one of your novels? Gloria’s response brought the biggest applause:

“I had to research the temperature of a Minnesota lake to find out how cold it had to be before a cadaver would float to the top.”



**“Three Fingers”**

### **Bulletin Board**

**Current Projects (2):**  
— 2nd in a series of  
**Gangster in our  
Midst**

— plus, the screen-  
play

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

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## Digging for the story...

I got my inspiration to write *Gangster in our Midst* (2017)—my first book of historical crime fiction—from a story that came out of my small Iowa hometown (Fairbank).

As the story was told to me, in the early 1920s an Italian man showed up in the town after marrying an area girl who had run away from home and went to Chicago to seek her fame and fortune years earlier. His name was Louie La Cava, who allegedly worked for Al Capone. These were the only pieces I had when I began my research in 2016.

At the Women of Words 10th Annual Writers Conference on Sept. 28th, the Mystery Writers' Panel (we) talked about the pieces crime mystery genres have in common: all require a murder or crime to be committed—and sound research.

One of the biggest puzzles facing me as I began my research for *Gangster in our Midst* was determining who would have been part of Capone's inner circle. The Chicago Mafia is believed to have had over 600 mobsters during Prohibition (1920-1932). The problem was finding proof of their gangsterism. Most were opposed to photographs or adding their names to historical records.

A book helping narrow my search was *Al Capone: The Biography of a Self-Made Man* by Fred D. Pasley, a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. He published Capone's biography in 1930.

Al's brothers—Ralph, Frank, John and Bert—were major players in the Chicago Outfit. Frank was killed in a 1924 election skirmish.

Frank 'The Enforcer' Nitti and Jake 'Greasy Thumb' Gusik likely were Capone's old pals from the New York Italian Five Points gang.

Many mobsters floated in and out of Capone's inner circle, like Frankie Yale, whose assassination was ordered by Capone in 1928.

Among the lesser known players in Capone's organization was Barney Barasa, a pal of Al Capone's.

If Capone wanted to know who caused a bombing or killing in Chicago, he'd ask Barney, who would be able to find out in five minutes, Pasley wrote.

Within the first forty pages of Pasley's book, I came across Fairbank's Louie La Cava. Pasley first found La Cava's name in a Chicago police report, where he worked alongside Fred Ries and Pete Penovich at Capone's gambling establishments. The Feds subpoenaed all to testify at Capone's income tax evasion trial in October 1931. La Cava's name was the only other signature on Capone's bank box.

I had to dig to find Louie La Cava in Capone's inner circle, but he was there.



The Chicago Outfit, with Al Capone's sister Mafalda, seated (about 1920)

## Author Events

— **Thurs, Oct. 17, 10:30 (RSVP, please)** — St. Paul Police Historical Society, 389 Hamline Ave. N., St. Paul, MN

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

— **Sat., Nov. 2, 9 am-3 pm**, "Holiday Open House" Barn Happy, 11310 Univ. Ave., Cedar Falls, IA, (319) 266-0888

### Book Clubs

— **Clear Lake Public Library**, Clear Lake, IA

— **Beancounters**, Burlington, IA

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

### Book Festivals-Conferences

— **Oct 11-13** — St. Paul Art Crawl, 308 Prince St, St. Paul, MN, (651) 270-0563

— **Sat., Oct 12** — Twin Cities Book Festival (MIPA table), MN Fairgrounds, St. Paul, MN

— **Sat., Nov. 9, noon-3 pm** — 5th annual Sterling Lord Writers and Readers Festival, Burlington Public Library, 210 Court St., Burlington, IA, (319) 753-1647

— **March 26-29, 2020** — UW Madison Writers' Institute, Madison, WI

— **April 4, 2020, 10 am-2 pm** — North Iowa Book Bash, Diamond Jo Casino, Northwood, IA

— **May 1, 2020, Noon** — Torque Fest, 14569 Old Highway Rd, Dubuque, IA, (563) 588-1406

### Book Readings

Date/Time: **TBD** — The Zephyr Theatre, 601 Main St N, Stillwater, MN, (651) 342-1542

### Pending...

Date/Time: **TBD** — Iowa Odd Fellows & Orphans Home, 1037 19th St SW, Mason City, IA

Date/Time: **TBD** — Waterloo Public Library, 415 Commercial Street, Waterloo, IA

Date/Time: **TBD** — Waverly Public Library, 1500 W Bremer Ave., Waverly, IA, (319) 352-1223

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