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

Merry Christmas & Blessings in the New Year!

Many people are struggling this time of year: Death, divorce, separations from loved ones, financial woes...reminding me of the Christmas after my 15-year marriage had ended. My life has turned out so good. That Christmas now seems so long ago. **I try to keep this in mind with the approach of each New Year.**

AM 600, WMT, Cedar Rapids, Mid Morning Show with Justin Roberts **iHeartRADIO**

Interviews with Justin Roberts are always a lot of fun. He's an Iowa boy...grew up near Oelwein, about 10 miles from my hometown of Fairbank. The 10-minute interview, which aired Dec. 12th & 17th, 10:08 am, was to talk about the 2019 Indie Book Award from Shelf Unbound book review magazine. **Comments, anyone?**

Gangster in Our Midst—the Sequel

I'll answer the question I'm getting a lot about the sequel to *Gangster in Our Midst*:

- **What will the new book be about?**

The historical novel I'm currently researching/writing will again be set in Iowa, but will tell a different angle of the Louie La Cava story, including several new characters. **I welcome your stories again** about Fairbank's gangster, Louie La Cava—or any other Prohibition era gangster who roamed Iowa.



'Three Fingers'

You have to fight through some bad days to earn the best days of your life.
—Unknown

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A Farmer and a Gangster — Christmas 1931

Walter Bierkoff, a main character in *Gangster in Our Midst* (2017), was loosely based on a Fairbank farmer, Leo Beierschmitt.

Though a Fairbank native myself, I only met this sweet, gentle man in 2016 when looking for people to interview who had grown up in Immaculate Conception Church and school during the 1920-'30s.



Leo Beierschmitt



Louie La Cava



Immaculate Conception Church, Org. 1858

He was born and raised on the farm his Catholic ancestors purchased in 1868 a few miles west of town. Eventually, he became the fifth-generation owner of the family farm, and a lifelong church member.

Leo said, “The nuns were tough but sweet underneath. You had to behave yourself!” He got a ruler to his hand a few times, probably for talking back. Father John Halpin baptized him; Father Torpey followed Father Halpin. Leo served as an altar boy for many years, and played baseball on the old diamond south of the quarry next to the church. The priest was the coach.

While he didn’t recall ever meeting Fairbank’s gangster, Louie La Cava— or his wife, Josephine—he was aware the La Cavas were members of I.C. Church. So here was where I took creative license in telling the story of the 60+ years Fairbank had one of Al Capone’s gangsters living in its midst: I placed Walter and his sons and the La Cavas in the same church pew on Christmas Eve in 1931.

The nuns at the Catholic church cared for the shivering arrivals for midnight Mass...shoulder to shoulder sat the parishioners, an ocean of Roman Catholics huddled in candlelit pews in the frosty cathedral-like nave.

“Excuse me,” Josephine La Cava whispered, standing next to Walter in the wide center aisle. “Can you fit two more into this row?”

Walter and the boys stepped out into the aisle while worshipers in the pew bumped together, enough so the La Cavas could be seated. Finally, the three sat back down, with Louie’s shoulder smashed up against Walter’s, the smell of evergreen boughs in the windows now intermingled with Louie’s witch hazel.

Suddenly, everyone rose to their feet...as the procession and entrance song began. Down the center aisle came the censer bearer, followed by the cross bearers, the readers, and deacon who carried the Book of the Gospels, slightly elevated, then the other concelebrants, and finally, the priest celebrant, the new priest: Father Torpey.

The homily from the priest was about the unspeakable joy that comes from belief in God, delivered in its fulfillment at Christmas. And about the response of believers: living lives of gratitude for sending Jesus Christ to reconcile all in the world.

Author Events

I’m writing a sequel to GI OM. Watch for the new book: Spring 2020!

Leo Beierschmitt died May 4, 2019. He was preceded in death by his wife Barbara. A son now runs the family farm.