

May 13, 2020



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

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## *Gangster* Blog

### After the Coronavirus, will Book Events Ever be the Same Again?

Businesses across America are beginning to open up again, but nothing, it appears, will return to 'normal' for some time. That includes book events. The most recently scheduled "Writing a Memoir" workshop at the Independence Public Library on July 7th will offer the choice of **onsite** or **Zoom** mobile meeting application. On-site attendees will follow the protocol put in place by the Center for Disease Control (CDC): social distancing, wearing a mask, and hand washing (hand sanitizer will be made available).

### Gangster in Our Midst — The Sequel

I am averaging 3,000-4,500 words a day, trying to finish up the sequel (Book #4). It's really coming together and very enjoyable for me personally. But then comes the editing, and that is just plain hard work... More to follow in days to come.

### I Only Wish I Knew Their Names

After my parents died in the 1990s, and we siblings were going through boxes of things they kept over the years, I noticed something about the photos.

They kept the photos which were most important to them.

I've come to realize that has also been the case for the people from my hometown of Fairbank—and I've seen a lot of photos, after writing two books about the town.

More than once I found myself staring at a photo taken soon after the Great War (1914-1918) at the Kier-Union cemetery in the southern section of Fairbank Township. Many of the first settlers are buried in this cemetery.

I imagine I can see in their faces relief at surviving a world war—plus, Spanish influenza—which took more lives than the war itself.



'Three Fingers'

**COMING!**

**Sequel to  
Gangster in Our  
Midst:  
Summer 2020!**

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## I Only Wish I Knew Their Names (cont.)

An estimated twenty to forty percent of the U.S. Navy was hit with the flu, while thirty-six percent of the U.S. Army became ill. Worldwide, an estimated 20 million to 50 million victims died.

These soldiers saw a lot of death.

The first case of Spanish influenza was recorded in Haskell County, Kansas in the spring of 1918, when Woodrow Wilson (1913-

1921) was president. The virus—today believed to have migrated from pigs to humans—quickly spread across the world, aided by the soldiers who moved around during the war. The second wave arrived in the fall of 1918 with such a vengeance that victims died within hours or days of developing symptoms, their skin turning blue and their lungs filling with fluid causing them to suffocate.

It's believed President Wilson contracted the flu in the third wave during the peace negotiations in Paris in April 1919. Historical records suggest the virus affected his behavior in helping to define the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, though other world leaders had also become ill. That treaty set the stage for World War II.

**How did Iowa handle the epidemic?** The Cedar Rapids *Gazette* notes: ...all "public gathering places" were ordered to close, including churches, schools and other places of congregation... And Iowans were required to wear face masks when interacting with others in public spaces.

The bustling community of Fairbank had four resident physicians on hand to attend to those stricken with the virus. And the town had a 'hospital' of sorts for a time, according to the obituary of Lucy (Dean) Wiltse, owner of Hotel Wiltse, built in 1877:

*During the World War, she [Lucy] was the directing spirit of the community in kitting for the soldiers. For this work she was recognized by the wife of President Wilson, who sent her a letter of gratitude and a gift handkerchief. Her hotel was an unofficial headquarters for the community workman's work in wartime.*

Between 1918-1919 over **6,000 Iowans died of the Spanish flu**, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health, with almost half of the deaths among those previously healthy: 20-40 years old.

Those who died from the Fairbank area were buried in the Protestant and Catholic cemeteries in the township—more in nearby cemeteries.

I only wish I knew the names of those in the picture, so the town could better remember their sacrifice for our nation.

After a war and influenza, America was ready for some 'fun'—and thus began the decade known as the Roaring '20s, but without benefit of alcohol. Prohibition ushered in the Era of Gangsterism. That's when Chicago gangster **Louie La Cava** showed up on Fairbank's Main Street—and as they say, the rest is history.



Photo: Howard Durham, Fairbank historian

### Author Events

(June--December, 2020)

#### "Writing a Memoir"

##### Workshops:

— **Sat., June 6, 1 pm**, Bremer County Historical Society (location: City Hall, 200 1st St. NE), Waverly, IA, 319-352-1309

— **(new) Tues., July 7, 6:30 pm** (attend on-site or via Zoom), Independence Public Library, 805 1st Street East, Independence, IA, 319-334-2470

— **(pending) Sat., October 24, 8:30-4:30**, WOW 11th Annual Writers' Conference (with author Gloria Van Demmeltraadt), Oak Knoll Lutheran Church, 600 Hopkins Crossroad, Minnetonka, MN, 952-465-2623

##### Author Talks/Book Signings

— **Mon., June 8, noon/5:45 pm**, (Author Talk: Gangster in Our Midst) Rotary Club/Lions Club, Decades, 25 So. Frederick/TBD, Oelwein, IA, 319-504-1464

— **Sat., June 20, 1 pm**, (Book Signing: Gangster in Our Midst) Sweet Reads Books and Candy, LLC 407 North Main St., Austin, MN, 507-396-8660

— **Sat., June 26, 5-9 pm**, (Book Signing: Gangster in Our Midst) Friday Night History Cruz, Paperbacks Plus Bookstore, 2539 7th Ave E, No. St. Paul, MN, (651) 770-0384