

## KNOCKING 'EM DEAD IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

Florida: it's murder this time of year.

Actually, according to many authors, Florida is murder ANYtime of the year. In fact, if you can believe the scribes of the Sunshine State, there are probably more fresh corpses than people in Florida. Tim Dorsey writes that for every ten cars you pass on a Florida road, four of them are going someplace to get rid of evidence of some crime, often a body.

Whether you choose to believe this, or plan to take the kiddies to Disney World or the wife to the Keys next summer as originally planned, there is little doubt that "Florida Fiction" has become a hot subject in popular reading over the last dozen or so years. Whether it is a classic mystery, a suspenseful thriller, or a comic caper, crime is flourishing in Florida and readers are prospering from the mayhem.

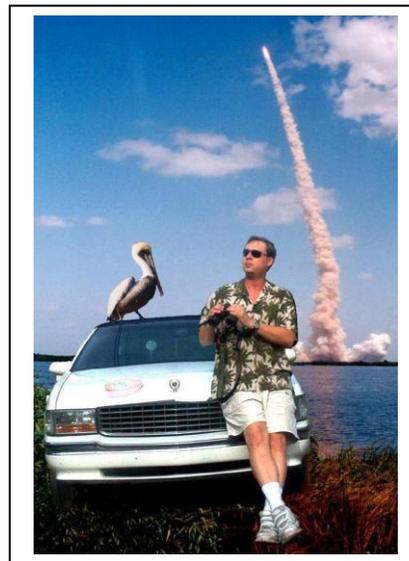
### **Tim Dorsey**

Dorsey was born in Indiana but moved to Florida when he was a year old (with his family). He worked for the *Tampa Tribune* from 1987 until 1999, when he quit to write novels full time.

Dorsey presents perhaps the wildest, funniest and deadliest view of Florida in the entire cadre of writers mentioned here. His crowning creations are loveable serial killer Serge A. Storms and his perpetually stoned companion, Coleman. Storms is a walking encyclopedia of Florida history and loves to share his knowledge. He has a very highly developed sense of right and wrong and reacts violently only when someone breaks the rigid rules he has set up in his mind (which usually involve preying on the helpless, environmental plunder and bad driving habits). Coleman – and sometimes the equally substance-abusive Lenny – is mostly concerned with scoring some mind-altering chemical (he isn't very picky).

Dorsey presents us with a depth of accurate Floridian history and geography. Many fans use his books as travel guides to out-of-the-way places, such as Burt Reynolds' childhood home or the bar where Lynyrd Skynyrd was inspired to write the song *Gimme Three Steps*. These books do not need to be read in order (they are not strictly chronological) but I would recommend it, nonetheless.

*Florida Roadkill* (1999)  
*Hammerhead Ranch Motel* (2000)  
*Orange Crush* (2001)  
*Triggerfish Twist* (2002)  
*The Stingray Shuffle* (2003)  
*Cadillac Beach* (2004)  
*Torpedo Juice* (2005)  
*The Big Bamboo* (2006)  
*Hurricane Punch* (2007)  
*Atomic Lobster* (2008)



*Nuclear Jellyfish* (2009)  
*Gator A-Go-Go* (2010)  
*Electric Barracuda* (2011)  
*When Elves Attack* (2011)  
*Pineapple Grenade* (2012)

Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://timdorsey.com.html>

Where Serge Reinvents Himself

<http://thefloridakeys.com/index.html>

Home of the Hemingway Lookalikes

<http://www.sloppyjoes.com/>

Real History

<http://www.museumoffloridahistory.com/>

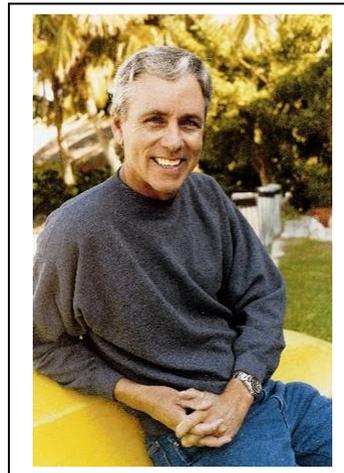
Join Serge in one of his favorite hobbies

<http://oldfloridapostcards.com/>

## **Carl Hiaasen**

Before Dorsey stole his crown, Hiaasen ruled as the king of comic mayhem in the land of sunshine. Like Dorsey, he cut his teeth as a reporter, only for the *Miami Herald*. Like many reporters, he was introduced to the ugly underbelly of society through his work; unlike many reporters, he turned the experience into high comedy. He has spent more of his time writing books for young adults (he is the author of the acclaimed *Hoot*), since there is probably more money in it. Unlike Dorsey, each of his novels features a different cast (although the crazy ex-governor living in the Everglades occurs in several of them). One of his best novels, *Strip Tease*, was turned into a very bad movie.

*Tourist Season* (1986)  
*Double Whammy* (1987)  
*Skin Tight* (1989)  
*Native Tongue* (1991)  
*Strip Tease* (1993)  
*Stormy Weather* (1995)  
*Lucky You* (1997)  
*Sick Puppy* (2000)  
*Basket Case* (2002)  
*Skinny Dip* (2004)  
*Nature Girl* (2006)  
*Star Island* (2010)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.carlhiaasen.com/index.shtml>

60 Minutes Interview

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=1680212n>

Read Carl's Column

<http://www.miamiherald.com/>

## **Dave Barry**

Undoubtedly the dean of Florida crazies, Barry is best known for his wild newspaper columns, full of hyperbole and non sequiturs. Unlike his aforementioned counterparts, Barry is not from Florida and began his journalism career in New York and Pennsylvania. He took the job of the *Miami Herald's* humor columnist in 1983, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 (pending recount). He is an accomplished musician and plays in the band Rock Bottom Remainers with fellow writers Stephen King, Amy Tan, Ridley Pearson, Mitch Albom and others who, though not musically skilled, are "extremely loud."

He has not written many novels, but you are invited to read his collections of nonfiction, which are even more unbelievable. Like Hiaasen, he has discovered the artistic (yeah, sure!) attraction of writing for younger readers.

*Naked Came the Manatee* (1998)

*Big Trouble* (1999)

*Tricky Business* (2002)

*Lunatics* (2012)

Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.davebarry.com/>

Dave's Band

<http://www.rockbottomremainders.com/>

Dave's Colonoscopy

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AaaO5aYBAI>

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2009/02/11/427603/dave-barry-a-journey-into-my-colon.html>

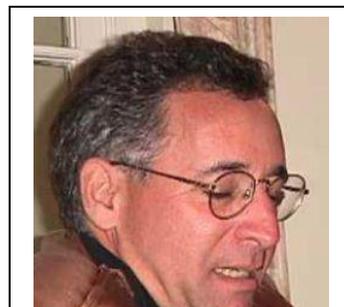


## **Laurence Shames**

Shames, a former crime reporter from New Jersey, made the move to Florida in the 1990s and created a series of funny novels set in Key West. They all feature a retired mobster, "Bert the Shirt" and his dead wife's Chihuahua, Don Giovanni. Lately, he has been writing novels based on the TV series *Lost* under a pseudonym.

*Florida Straits* (1992)

*Scavenger Reef* (1995)



*Sunburn* (1995)  
*Tropical Depression* (1996)  
*Virgin Heat* (1997)  
*Mangrove Squeeze* (1998)  
*Welcome to Paradise* (1999)  
*The Naked Detective* (2000)

Web Sites of Interest:

A Fan Site

[http://hubpages.com/hub/Discover\\_Laurence\\_Shames](http://hubpages.com/hub/Discover_Laurence_Shames)

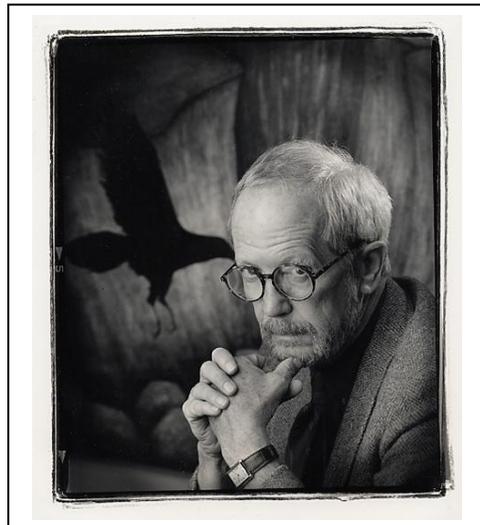
Just for Fun

<http://www.conchrepublic.com/>

### **Elmore Leonard**

Elmore “Dutch” Leonard is one of the country’s leading and most prolific writing talents. In addition to crime novels, he has written historical and westerns, including the award-winning *Hombre*. Leonard, now in his 80s, does not write as much, but he has left us quite a legacy of wry, erudite crime fiction. Leonard has spent most of his adult life between Detroit and Florida, and most of his fiction centers around these two areas, often moving between the two places in the same novel. Here are some of the Florida-centered gems:

*Split Images* (1981)  
*The Cat Chaser* (1982)  
*Stick* (1983)  
*Labrava* (1983)  
*Glitz* (1985)  
*Get Shorty* (1991)  
*Maximum Bob* (1991)  
*Rum Punch* (1992)  
*Pronto* (1993)  
*Riding the Rap* (1995)  
*Out of Sight* (1996)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.elmoreleonard.com/index.php?/novels/>

Interview and Article from NPR

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124736822>

Dutch’s Filmography

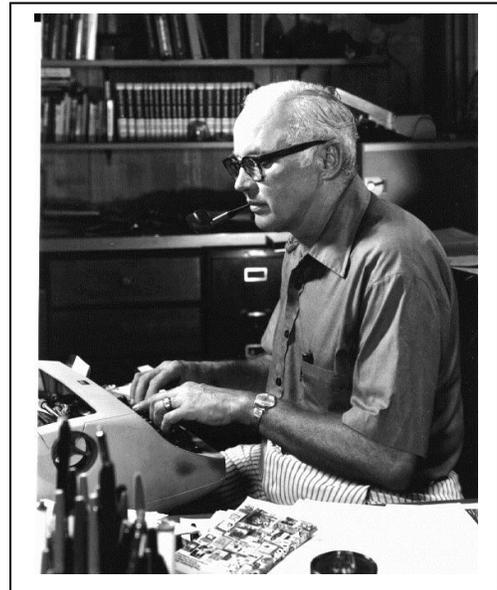
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124736822>

### **John D. MacDonald**

MacDonald is considered the most important influence among today's Florida writers, and his influence extends well beyond the southernmost state. The author of 77 novels, his most famous creation is Travis McGee. McGee is a "Salvage consultant," another name for a righter of wrongs working outside of the law (think, *The Equalizer*). Living on his 52-foot houseboat the *Busted Flush*, McGee takes on victims' problems at his own discretion, working within his own rigid code of ethics (Serge A. Storms without the mental problems). Macdonald's 1957 novel *The Executioners* was filmed as the noir thriller *Cape Fear*.

In addition to the 21 McGee stories, several of his others works take place in Florida.

*The Deep Blue Good-by* (1964)  
*Nightmare in Pink* (1964)  
*A Purple Place for Dying* (1964)  
*The Quick Red Fox* (1964)  
*A Deadly Shade of Gold* (1965)  
*Bright Orange for the Shroud* (1965)  
*Darker than Amber* (1966)  
*One Fearful Yellow Eye* (1966)  
*Pale Gray for Guilt* (1968)  
*The Girl in the Plain Brown Wrapper* (1968)  
*Dress Her in Indigo* (1969)  
*The Long Lavender Look* (1970)  
*A Tan and Sandy Silence* (1972)  
*The Scarlet Ruse* (1973)  
*The Turquoise Lament* (1973)  
*The Dreadful Lemon Sky* (1975)  
*The Empty Copper Sea* (1978)  
*The Green Ripper* (1979)  
*Free Fall in Crimson* (1981)  
*Cinnamon Skin* (1982)  
*The Lonely Silver Rain* (1985)



Web Sites of Interest:

An Extensive site by Macdonald historian Cal Branche

<http://www.jdmhomepage.org/jdmhomepage.org/index.html>

Tie your boat up at slip F-18

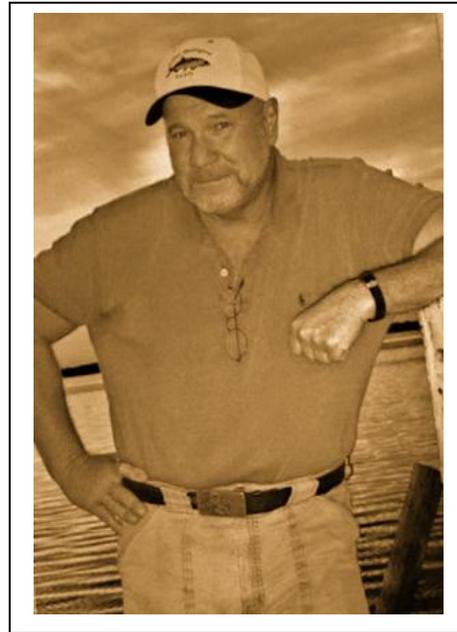
<http://www.bahiamarhotel.com/marina>

### **Randy Wayne White**

If ever there was a true successor to Travis McGee, it has to be Marion "Doc" Ford. This marine biologist by day lives in a Florida marina (sound familiar?) As a former government agent, he has some knowledge of the seamy side of life in Florida and invariably gets drawn into some serious problem or another. Like Dorsey's Serge Storms, Ford also has a friend with a somewhat questionable lifestyle, a spiritual, substance

positive hippie named Tomlinson. White began writing his series in 1990, after a career as a Sanibel Island fishing guide. While there is humor, there is also darkness and some in depth character study of the main protagonists. As a result, Ford – like McGee – is more human than the cartoonish Storms. Many consider White to be the best thriller/suspense writer working today.

*Sanibel Flats* (1990)  
*The Heat Islands* (1992)  
*The Man Who Invented Florida* (1993)  
*Captiva* (1996)  
*North of Havana* (1997)  
*The Mangrove Coast* (1998)  
*Ten Thousand Islands* (2000)  
*Shark River* (2001)  
*Twelve Mile Limit* (2002)  
*Everglades* (2003)  
*Tampa Burn* (2004)  
*Dead of Night* (2005)  
*Dark Light* (2006)  
*Hunter's Moon* (2007)  
*Black Widow* (2008)  
*Dead Silence* (2009)  
*Deep Shadow* (2010)  
*Night Vision* (2011)  
*Chasing Midnight* (2012)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.randywaynewhite.com>

Hang out with Doc and Tomlinson

<http://www.docfordssanibel.com/>

Learn about Florida's marine biology

<http://www.flseagrant.org/>

### **Edna Buchanan**

Yet another reporter, Edna worked the crime beat in Miami during the 1970s. She turned to book writing in the early 1980s, turning out eleven novels featuring protagonist Brit Montero. Montero is – surprise – a crime reporter who ends up doing more than just reporting. Edna has also written several standalone crime novels as well as nonfiction “true crime.”

*Nobody Lives Forever* (1990)  
*Contents under Pressure* (1992)  
*Miami, It's Murder* (1994)



*Suitable for Framing* (1995)  
*Act of Betrayal* (1996)  
*Margin of Error* (1997)  
*Pulse* (1998)  
*Garden of Evil* (1999)  
*You Only Die Twice* (2001)  
*The Ice Maiden*, (2002)  
*Cold Case Squad* (2004)  
*Shadows* (2005)  
*Love Kills* (2007)  
*Legally Dead* (2008)

Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.ednabuchanan.com/>

Walk with Brit on her beat

<http://www.visitsouthbeachonline.com/>

<http://www.palmbeachfl.com/>

<http://www.discoverbiscaynebay.org/>

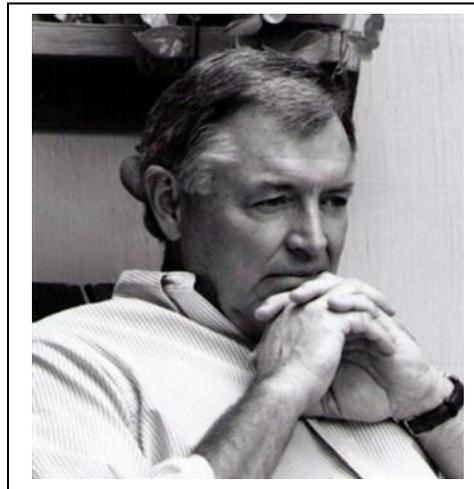
## **Les Standiford**

Standiford is probably the most educated of Florida fiction writers, holding degrees from the Air Force Academy, Columbia University and the University of Utah. He has a PHD in English and is professor of creative writing at Florida International University.

Standiford's Florida novels feature John Deal, the aptly named Miami real estate builder, who seems to find trouble everywhere (it is Florida, after all). Deal is usually accompanied by a retired police pal, Vern Driscoll.

Standiford has written other, non-Florida novels as well as a growing opus of nonfiction, much of it dealing with Florida. His acclaimed *Last Train to Paradise* (2003) is a history of the Miami to Key West railroad built by Standard Oil co-founder Henry Flagler.

*Done Deal* (1993)  
*Raw Deal* (1994)  
*Deal to Die For* (1995)  
*Deal on Ice* (1997)  
*Presidential Deal* (1998)  
*Deal with the Dead* (2001)  
*Book Deal* (2002)  
*Bone Key* (2002)  
*Havana Run* (2003)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.les-standiford.com>

Florida Overseas Railroad

<http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi1886.htm>

[http://www.rinbad.free-online.co.uk/us\\_key\\_w.htm](http://www.rinbad.free-online.co.uk/us_key_w.htm)

## **James W. Hall**

Like Standiford, Hall is a professor at Florida International University. Like Standiford, he has a PHD from the University of Utah. Like Standiford, he writes Florida crime novels. Could they be the same person? Hmmm. No, I guess not.

Hall's main protagonist is Thorn, a Keys fisherman making his living tying flies.

Described as a "Travis McGee without social skills," Thorn (lacking a first name until 2008) is often in a position to foil drug smugglers and other criminal types using the Keys for a base.

Hall has won the prestigious Edgar Award for mystery fiction and is also a writer of poetry, having several collections published.

### "Thorn" Novels

*Under Cover of Daylight* (1987)

*Tropical Freeze* (1989)

*Mean High Tide* (1994)

*Gone Wild* (1995)

*Buzz Cut* (1996)

*Red Sky at Night* (1997)

*Blackwater Sound* (2002)

*Off the Chart* (2003)

*Magic City* (2006)

*Hell's Bay* (2008)

*Silencer* (2010)

*Dead Last* (2011)

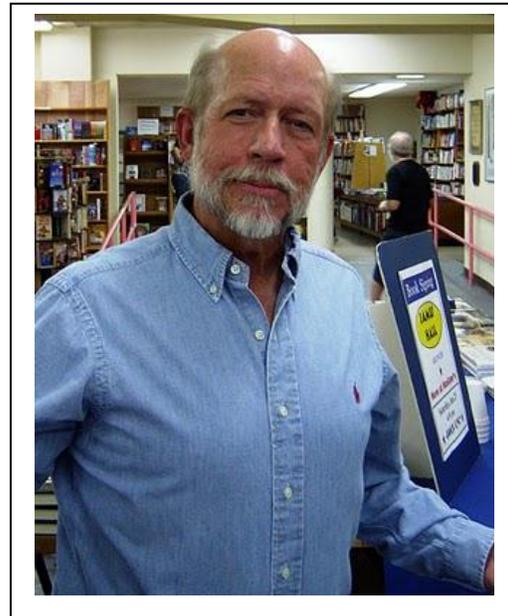
### Other Florida Novels

*Bones of Coral* 1991)

*Hard Aground* (1993)

*Body Language* (1998)

*Rough Draft* (2000)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.jameswhall.com/index.html>

Hall's Blog

<http://jameswhall.blogspot.com/>

Fishing the Florida Keys

<http://www.fla-keys.com/fishing/>

## **Lawrence Sanders**

Sanders (1920-1998) was a prolific and sometimes brilliant crime writer whose McNally PI series takes place in Florida.

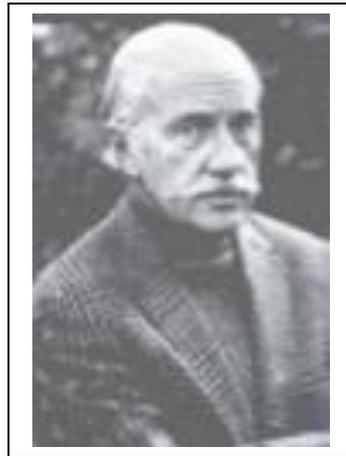
Sanders, born in Brooklyn, received a bachelor's degree from Wabash College in Indiana and spent the next thirty years as an editor of men's adventure magazines and old standbys such as *Popular Mechanix*. In 1970 he published his first novel, *The Anderson Tapes*, to great acclaim, winning the Edgar Award for best first novel. The McNally series came late in his forty book career, after he had "retired" to Pompano Beach. Archy McNally is a playboy private detective from Palm Beach, working for his attorney father, who has some rather odd clients. Described as a suntanned Bertie Wooster, McNally was Sanders' most humorous creation.

His "franchise" of McNally books has been taken over by Vincent Lardo.

*McNally's Secret* (1992)  
*McNally's Luck* (1992)  
*McNally's Risk* (1993)  
*McNally's Caper* (1994)  
*Private Pleasures* (1994)  
*McNally's Trial* (1995)  
*McNally's Puzzle* (1996)  
*McNally's Gamble* (1997)

McNally Books by Vince Lardo:

*McNally's Dilemma* (1999)  
*McNally's Folly* (2000)  
*McNally's Chance* (2001)  
*McNally's Alibi* (2002)  
*McNally's Dare* (2003)  
*McNally's Bluff* (2004)



Web Sites of Interest:

Vince Lardo's Official Site

<http://www.vincentlardo.com/index.html>

West Palm Beach

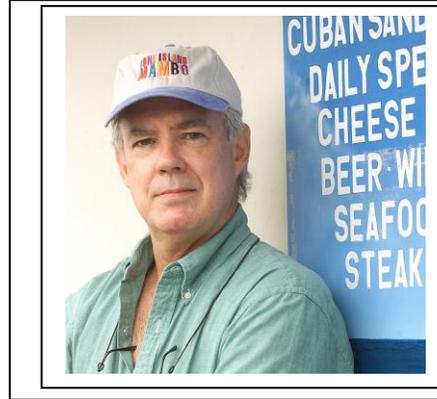
<http://westpalmbeach.com/>

## Tom Corcoran

Tom is probably the most eclectic, if not the busiest, person in this select group. In his former life he has been a bartender (haven't we all), disc jockey, AAA travel Counselor, Navy officer, screenwriter, freelance photographer, auto magazine editor, computer graphics artist and journalist. No wonder he got into writing – to relax! As a photographer, his work has appeared on seven Jimmy Buffett album covers as well as the dust jackets of novels of some of the authors mentioned here.

In the tradition of writing what you know, Corcoran's protagonist Alex Rutledge is a Key West freelance photographer who sees and hears more than he should in pursuit of his vocation.

*The Mango Opera* (1998)  
*Gumbo Limbo* (1999)  
*Bone Island Mambo* (2001)  
*Octopus Alibi* (2003)  
*Air Dance Iguana* (2006)  
*Hawk Channel Chase* (2009)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.tomcorcoran.net/index.html>

Florida Wildlife Photography

<http://www.wildflorida.net/>

## Joy Fielding

Now here's something you think you would see more of: a Canadian who becomes an actress in Hollywood and then quits, changes her last name to that of a famous author and returns to Toronto to write full time and then moves part-time to Palm Beach, where she gets even more ideas for books. Well, there is at least one instance on record, and that is Joy Fielding. According to her bio, she acted in an episode of *Gunsmoke*, a few movies and (obvious highlight of career) got to kiss Elvis.

*Missing Pieces* (1997)  
*Whispers and Lies* (2002)  
*Puppet* (2005)  
*Mad River Road* (2006)  
*Heartstopper* (2007)  
*Charley's Web* (2008)  
*The Wild Zone* (2010)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.joyfielding.com/index.htm>

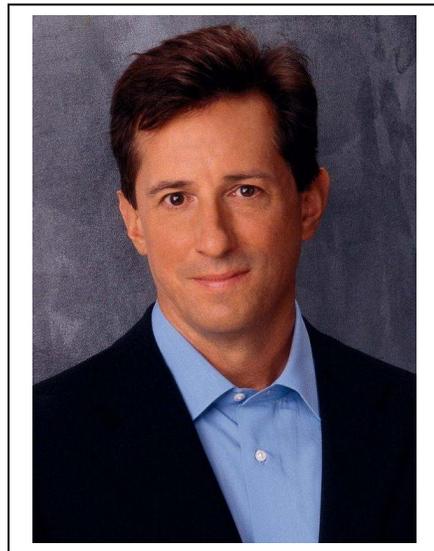
Joy's Hollywood Career

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0276150/>

## **James Grippando**

Grippando is one of those now-common beasts – a trial lawyer turned legal thriller author. Originally from Illinois, he received his law degree from the University of Florida and resides in the Miami area. He spent several years as an attorney for the Eleventh Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, arguing death penalty cases. His proudest moment as a lawyer however, came in private practice when he successfully represented a group of small chicken farmers who sued Cargill, the largest agribusiness in the world. Grippando's protagonist is Jack Swyteck, criminal defense attorney and son of a former governor.

*The Pardon* (1994)  
*The Informant* (1996)  
*A King's Ransom* (2001)  
*Beyond Suspicion* (2002)  
*Last to Die* (2003)  
*Hear No Evil* (2004)  
*Got the Look* (2006)  
*When Darkness Falls* (2007)  
*Last Call* (2008)  
*Born to Run* (2008)  
*Intent to Kill* (2009)  
*Money to Burn* (2010)  
*Afraid of the Dark* (2011)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.jamesgrippando.com/>

See where he worked when he had a job

<http://www.ca11.uscourts.gov/>

## **Thomas B. Cavanagh**

Cavanagh is not only a relative newcomer to the Florida fiction game, he is a rare commodity amongst this tradition-bound group of typewriter pounders: he is a certified techno geek. Tom has a PhD in something called Texts and Technology (his dissertation is entitled *Kiosk Culture: Reconciling the Performance Support Paradox in the Post-Modern Age of Machine*) and is in charge of the online learning program at the University of Central Florida.



*Murderland* (2005)  
*Head Games* (2007)  
*Prodigal Son* (2008)

Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://bellsouthpwp2.net/t/b/tbcavana/index.html>

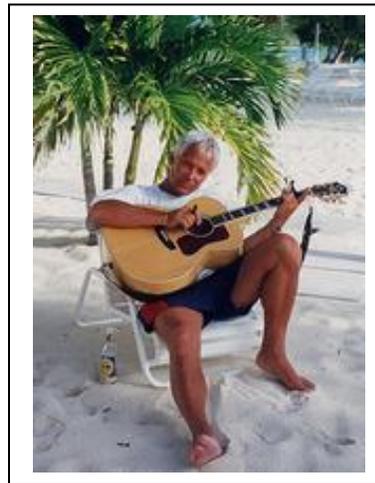
What the Heck is Texts and Technology?

<http://english.cah.ucf.edu/graduate/tandt.php>

### **Don Bruns**

Bruns is a musician from Lima, Ohio who once paid money at a charity auction for the right to have Sue Grafton lambast his attempt at a novel. Luckily, his next attempt, *Jamaica Blue*, was a hit and this former session musician was off and running. He has two series going; one involves a musician (surprise!) and the other a pair of down and out types dreaming of hitting the big time.

*Jamaica Blue* (2002)  
*Barbados Heat* (2003)  
*South Beach Shakedown* (2006)  
*Stuff to Die For* (2007)  
*St. Barts Breakdown* (2008)  
*Stuff Dreams Are Made Of* (2008)  
*Bahama Burnout* (2009)  
*Stuff to Spy For* (2009)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

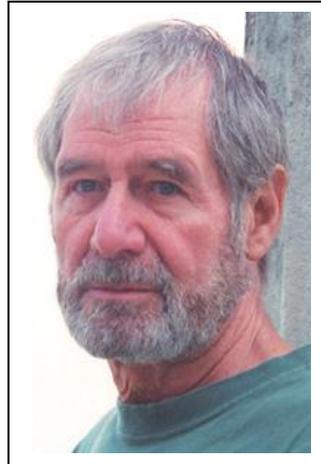
<http://www.donbrunsbooks.com/index.php>

### **Ed McBain**

When you think of native New Yorker Ed McBain (or any of his other numerous *noms de plume*) you immediately think of the 87<sup>th</sup> precinct. This long running series (which was the basis of films and a television series) pretty much made McBain a household word when it came to police procedurals. Riding the precinct's coattails was Matthew Hope, a lawyer from Calusa, Florida. Under the name Evan Hunter (his birth name was Salvatore

Lombino), he gained fame for his novel *The Blackboard Jungle*, the film version of which introduced us to the talents of Sidney Poitier. Lambino/Hunter/McBain died in 2005.

*Goldilocks* (1978)  
*Rumpelstiltskin* (1981)  
*Beauty and the Beast* (1982)  
*Jack and the Beanstalk* (1984)  
*Snow White and Rose Red* (1985)  
*Cinderella* (1986)  
*Puss in Boots* (1987)  
*The House that Jack Built* (1988)  
*Three Blind Mice* (1990)  
*Mary, Mary* (1993)  
*There was a Little Girl* (1994)  
*Gladly the Cross-Eyed Bear* (1996)  
*The Last Best Hope* (1998)



Web Sites of Interest:

Official Site

<http://www.edmcbain.com/>

A tribute to the late author

<http://januarmagazine.com/features/mcbainintro.html>

All about the 87<sup>th</sup> Precinct (TV series)

<http://www.tvrage.com/shows/id-149>

And a Matthew Hope movie

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0288254/>

### **Barbara Parker**

Lawyers and reporters seem to run neck-and-neck in the Florida writers' race. Barbara Parker graduated from the University of Miami Law School and joined the State Attorney's Office as a prosecutor. Most of her novels center of Miami attorneys Gail Conner and Anthony Quintera. She was starting a new series featuring C.J. Dunn when she died of cancer in 2009.

*Suspicion of Innocence* (1994)  
*Suspicion of Guilt* (1995)  
*Blood Relations* (1996)  
*Criminal Justice* (1997)  
*Suspicion of Betrayal* (1999)  
*Suspicion of Malice* (2000)  
*Suspicion of Madness* (2003)



*Suspicion of Rage* (2005)  
*The Perfect Fake* (2007)  
*The Dark of Day* (2008)

Web Sites of interest

Official site

<http://www.barbaraparker.com/>

### **E.C. Ayres**

Once, when a mystery writer used initials, it often indicated a woman attempting to break into what was perceived as a masculine profession. Now, however, we just don't know. In Ayres' case, he is a he, Gene (Eugene) by name. Originally from New Jersey, he moved to Florida to write mystery novels, the result being the Tony Lowell private eye series. After the first four books, he took a hiatus traveling and teaching in China. In 2009, he published the fifth Tony Lowell mystery.

*Hour of the Manatee* (1994)  
*Eye of the Gator* (1995)  
*Night of the Panther* (1997)  
*Lair of the Lizard* (1998)  
*Cry of the Heron* (2009)



Web Sites of interest:

Official site

<http://www.geneayres.org/index.html>

His blog site

<http://geneayresblog.blogspot.com/>

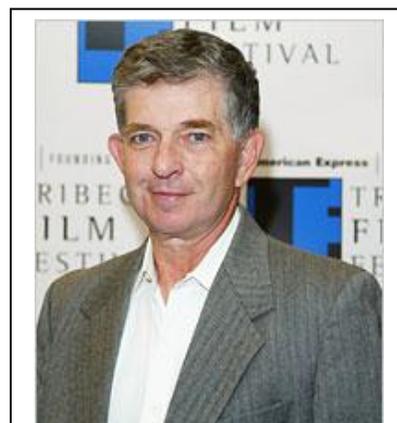
### **Stuart M. Kaminsky**

The indefatigable Kaminsky was a Grand Master of the Mystery Writers of America and the author of over 70 books. He had several series going, including a Russian police procedural, Toby Peters, a 1940s detective with movie stars for clients and Lou Fonesca, a process server in Sarasota.

Kaminsky, who died in 2009 while awaiting a liver transplant, was a professor of English at Northwestern and Florida State Universities.

Lou Fonesca Mysteries

*Vengeance* (1999)  
*Retribution* (2001)  
*Midnight Pass* (2003)



*Denial* (2005)  
*Always Say Goodbye* (2006)  
*Bright Futures* (2009)