

Love of antiques makes its way to murder mysteries

There's an age-old adage of "Write what you know." In my case, some of that knowledge relates to writing about antiques. In fact, as a freelance writer and editor since 2003, one of the first publications I wrote for was *AntiqueWeek*, and my inaugural article was titled "Collecting Antique Clocks: No Bodgers Allowed," which had been prompted by my husband's collection of antique clocks.

That article was followed by dozens of other features for *AntiqueWeek* over the next seven years, covering everything from paperweights to pottery, but my absolute favorite was one about the Boston & Sandwich Glass Co.

The idea for the feature, which included interviews with curators from the Corning Museum of Glass and Sandwich Glass Museum, as well as members of the National American Glass Club, was inspired by a catalog from the 2002 Skinner, Inc. auction of the Frank E. Jedlicka Collection of Sandwich Glass. I was particularly mesmerized by a pair of cobalt blue pressed glass dolphin candlesticks, circa 1845-70, which had sold for \$9,988 excluding premium.

Fast forward to 2012, when I decided to try my hand at writing a murder mystery. Now under the "write what you know" mantra, I didn't know anything about murder or police procedures, but I'd been reading mysteries since my mother introduced me to Nancy Drew and Trixie Belden, and I'd been a devoted reader of the genre ever since.

My first step was to create a town. At the time I was living in the small community of Holland Landing, approximately 90 minutes north of Toronto. One of the first things I

INSIGHTS

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

spotted in "the Landing" was a commemorative plaque to Samuel Lount, a 19th century politician who was hanged for treason.

"Why not Lount's Landing?" I thought, and proceeded to create my setting, right down to a historic Main Street, home to The Hanged Man's Noose, a local pub owned by a history buff, and the Glass Dolphin, a charming antiques shop with a somewhat irascible owner, Arabella Carpenter, who had named the shop after her first antiques find — you guessed it: a pair of cobalt blue Boston & Sandwich dolphin candlesticks. The result was *The Hanged Man's Noose: A Glass Dolphin Mystery #1*.

Arabella's motto is "authenticity matters" and that applies to the people in her life, as well as the inventory she sells. When she meets Emily Garland, a journalist who has moved to Lount's Landing to dig up dirt on a developer with plans to build a mega-box store on the town's Main Street, she quickly observes Emily's fake Coach purse, notable by the way the "C's" in Coach don't line up properly. It's not long before Arabella's explaining the differences between real, reproductions, and deliberate fakes, using maps as real life examples.

The success of *Noose* led to *A Hole In One*, book two in the Glass Dolphin mystery series, released March 2018. This time, the Glass Dolphin is sponsoring a hole in one contest in hopes it will bring attention to the shop. It does, though unfortunately the attention comes in the way of a dead

Left: This historical marker for Samuel Lount helped the author create a town.



Above: Four matching Sandwich pressed dolphin double-step cobalt blue candlesticks sold for \$4,600 in January 2015 at Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates. Courtesy Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates. The candlesticks inspired the author's first murder mystery.

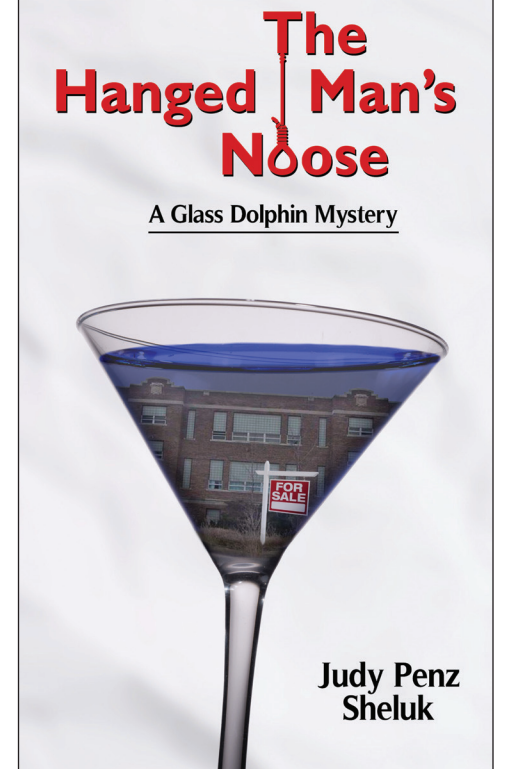
Right: Leaning heavily more than a decade of covering the antiques industry, the author used that knowledge in her murder mystery series.

body, discovered by Arabella in the wooded area behind the third hole.

Most writers will tell you that they have a favorite character. Arabella Carpenter is mine. She's feisty, smart, and loyal, and she definitely does not suffer fools gladly. So, when I started writing my Marketville Mystery series, I knew I'd have to include Arabella, if only in a minor role.

The protagonist in the Marketville series is Calamity (Callie) Barnstable. You might be wondering where I came up with the name of Calamity, and once again, I can attribute the inspiration to an auction: A cabinet photo of Martha "Calamity Jane" Canary, which sold for \$26,290 at Heritage Auctions in May 2011.

The premise behind the first book, *Skeletons in the Attic*, is this: After her father dies in an occupational accident, Toronto call center worker Callie inherits a house in Marketville with the proviso that she move into the house for a period of one year and solve the mystery of her mother's disappearance 30 years before, when Callie was six.



Digging through the attic, Callie discovers more than her share of family skeletons, including an Art Deco locket engraved to her mother, with love from a man named Reid. Enter Arabella!

In *Past & Present*, released September 2018, Callie returns, forming Past & Present Investigations. Her first case involves finding out what happened to Anneliese Prei, who immigrated to Toronto in 1952, only to be murdered in 1956. The case comes to her based on a referral by Arabella Carpenter: the client had visited the Glass Dolphin looking for any ephemera related to the T.S.S. Canberra, the ocean liner Anneliese came over on. Thanks to a good friend on the Board of Directors at the Ephemera Society of America, there are plenty of fact-based references to the Canberra and other ocean liner memorabilia.

Which brings us back to "write what you know"—and if you don't know it, start researching. There are far more lucrative professions, but I wouldn't trade it for the world.



COLLECTING CLASSICS

BY JOHN STINGER



"Is the hair original to the comb back?"

AntiqueWeek

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