In our April 2022 issue of The Broad Side, I adapted some of my prior research into a short article on West Virginia's serial literary detectives. My discoveries up to that point were limited to only three fictional detectives who ply their crimebusting trade in West Virginia and recur in multiple narratives. I'm happy to say that number has expanded to five.

The roster from my prior article, The Case of the Missing Detectives, consisted of Melville Davisson Post's Uncle Ahner (written in the 1910s), John F. Suter's duo of Aaran Boley and Sheriff Warren McKee (1980s-1990s), and contemporary author Julia Keller's Bell Elkins (2010s-present). Our new additions are also fairly contemporary, stretching from the 1980s to the present.

In the 1980s, Mercer County journalist and magistrate Dave Pedneau wrote six novels about Whit Pynchon, a surly old enforcer who takes nothing from nobody and just wants to retire from his years on the job as the district attorney's top investigator for fictional Raven County, West Virginia, and move to the beach. All six books are named after police slang acronyms (A.P.B., D.O.A., N.F.D., etc.). These gory, thrillery thrillers share more DNA with the slasher genre than the patient clue-seeing of Melville Davisson Post.

Pedneau's untimely death in 1990 cut short the bestselling success of Whit Pynchon, though two of the books were published posthumously. None other than former Council executive director Ken Sullivan brought the series to my attention after the April article's release, and readers will be the first to know when I complete all six novels on my nightstand.

Traipsing through more alleys of small-town West Virginia corruption and murder is contemporary author John Billheimer, who doubles as a film historian who has worked on numerous projects since the 1960s. Like many great literary sleuths, Allinson isn't actually a professional detective—he's a federal transportation investigator and risk analyst, perhaps reminiscent of radio gumshoe "Johnny Dollar" from the 1950s, the insurance investigator with the "action-packed expense account."
A LECTURE FOR ALL SEASONS

(Continued from front)

but we watched as multimillion dollar events like the Oscars and the Grammys sputtered and came up short without an audience in the room. No matter what form our return to McCricket was ultimately going to take, the Council did feel strongly about one thing: The humanities as a discipline are all about being “in the room.”

This doesn’t always mean a room in the physical sense. But humanities programming, at its most essential, must capture a feeling of common existence. The humanities must congregate, not alienate, even when we’re analyzing the things that make us different. By grappling with what it means to be individuals and groups within overlapping spheres of cultural experience, the humanities invite us to explore—together, in a spirit of mutual respect and consent—ourselves and each other. That takes a certain degree of intimacy. Of trust. And it takes showing up.

James and Deborah Fallows (below) will speak about their bestselling book and its companion HBO documentary, Our Towns, at the University of Charleston at 7:30pm on October 20, 2022, at the University of Charleston. The McCricket Lecture is free of charge and open to the public.

WE’RE LISTENING!

We’ve been enjoying your responses to The Broad Side readers’ poll, and would like to hear from even more of you. Since your answers have been so informative, we’re going to open the poll by form open through the next two issues—October and November—to give more readers a chance to respond.

We want to know what you think! We’ve prepared a 10-question reader’s poll so you can tell us more about what you’d like to see in future issues of The Broad Side. Type the link below into your browser and share your opinion before December 31, 2022!

We’ll share the results of the poll in our first issue of 2023.


THE SIGN OF THE FIVE

(Continued from front)

While a long break followed the fifth novel, Stonewall Jackson’s Elbow, released in 2006, Owen Allison returned in 2019’s Primary Target. If you’re familiar with John Billheimer’s work, you may wish to visit him at the upcoming West Virginia Book Festival on October 21-22, for which he’ll be returning to his native soil.

A more full-featured article will explore these worthy West Virginia detectives in the near future.

EVENTS

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2022

| Oct 1 | Brooke Smith - History Alive! Kanawha County Public Library, Charleston. 1pm |
| Oct 4 | Election Integrity in the Mountain State - Seminar and discussion. Glenville State - Molino Campus Community Center ballroom, Glenville. 6-8pm |
| Oct 5-12 | American Blood Feud - Hatfields & McCoys traveling exhibit. Lasty Joe Harless Community Center, Gilbert. 7am-9pm M-F, 12pm-9pm Sa-Su |
| Oct 6 | Harriet Tubman - History Alive! Gilmer County High School, Glionville. 1pm |
| Oct 7 | Mark Twain - History Alive! Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library. Harpers Ferry 6pm |
| Oct 8 | Charles Schulz - History Alive! Pendleton County Library, Franklin. 2pm |
| Oct 13 | Liberation and Homeward Bound - Readings from Bataan Death March POW diaries and other works. Brooke County Library, Wellsburg. 1pm |
| Oct 20 | Our Towns: A 100,000 Mile Journey into the Heart of America - 2022 McCricket Lecture in the Humanities by authors James and Deborah Fallows. University of Charleston. 7:30pm |
| Oct 21-22 | WV Book Festival - Coliseum & Convention Center, Charleston. 10am-7pm Fri, 9am-4pm Sat |
| Oct 22 | My Life as an American - Readings from Bataan Death March POW diaries and other works. Brooke County Library, Wellsburg. 1pm |
| Oct 24 | American Blood Feud - Hatfields & McCoys traveling exhibit. Cray-Patton House - Charleston. 10am-12pm and 1pm-4pm Mon-Fri |

Nov 1 | Hat: Why We Should Resist It With Free Speech, Not Censorship - Amicus Curiae Lecture by Nadine Strossen. Brad D. Smith Foundation Hall, Marshall University. Huntington. 7pm |

Nov 7 | Charles Schulz - History Alive! Robert F. Kidd Library, Glenville State University. 1pm |

Nov 14 | Indigenous Appalachia - Exhibit launch event with Joe Stahlman (Seneca-Iroquois National Museum) and graphic designer Maryann Zalie. WVU Downtown Library, Morgantown. 7pm |

Nov 21 | Col. Ruby Bradley - History Alive! Women’s Club of Shinnston, Harrison County. 1pm |

Always check with the venue or hosting organization of an event before attending. Schedules may change without the knowledge of the Council.