

## Anthology's plots play out in local settings

Recently released "Festival of Crime" features mysteries written by Minnesota authors and set at state festivals.

By ANNA PRATT  
Special to the Star Tribune

Jeanne Shields found a creative way to weave the Columbia Heights Jamboree into her murder mystery "The Wheelman." The story starts with the discovery of a body, that of a worker on the festival's Ferris wheel.

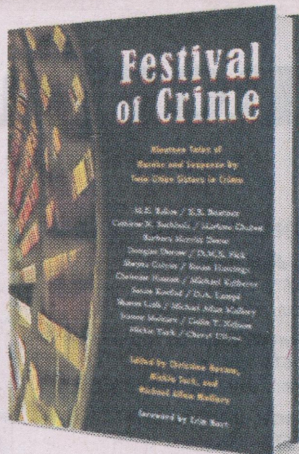
Shields, an alumna of Columbia Heights High School, wrote the story for "Festival of Crime" — an anthology of 19 stories in which Minnesota festivals figure into the plot. The stories involve everything from the Coon Rapids carp festival to a Duluth dog sled race. The writers, too, come from across the state.

The Minneapolis-based Nodin Press released the 162-page volume this month. It features works from members of the Twin Cities Sisters in Crime, the local chapter of a national group that promotes women mystery writers. A reading including a number of the authors is scheduled for Oct. 14 at 7 p.m. at Barnes and Noble at the Har Mar Mall in Roseville.

In Shields' story, a deputy police officer named Gilbert Peltier tries to get to the bottom of the crime. Peltier is also the main character in her in-progress novel.

In coming up with the story line, Shields contemplated crimes that could be solved in 24 hours or less.

In college, she had a friend  
See **CRIME** on AA5 ▶



### FESTIVAL OF CRIME

Subtitle: Nineteen Tales of Murder and Suspense by Twin Cities Sisters in Crime

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◀ **CRIME** from AA1  
whose parents discovered a body had washed up on their property's shoreline just before people came over for a party. "That's the germ of the story," she said.

This is the first time she's been published. Now that her three children are grown, she's determined to break into the writing business. "In some ways, it's the hardest thing to do, but also there are avenues now that weren't there before," Shields said.

### 'Festival's origin

A couple of years ago, Nodin Press publisher Norton Stillman approached Christine Husom, a member of the Twin Cities Sisters in Crime, about putting together an anthology of mystery writing.

Mickie Turk, an Edina resident who is a vice president of the 75-member group, got involved with the project as an editor. Still fresh in her mind was a failed mystery anthology themed around the State Fair. It was called "Murder-on-a-Stick." Too many of the submissions took place in the same spots, and the project was scrapped, Turk said.

She wanted to revive it. She talked with other writers, and eventually the idea to look at festivals across the state came up.

People have "their own big deals in whatever part of Minnesota they live in," Turk said.

So, the anthology naturally evolved into a festival of crime, she said. That also led to better writing, as people reflected on events that they knew well, Turk said.

Turk, Husom and Michael Allan Mallory jointly edited the book, which took a couple of years to pull together.

The festival angle is unique. "Whatever part of Minnesota you live in, you'll see your location. You'll feel something," Turk said.

Some writers had to get permission to use the festival's name. As a filmmaker, Turk is very familiar with the St. Anthony Main Theater in Minneapolis, the flagship site each year for the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Film Festival. She got approval to use it in her story, "Best of the Fest," as long as "I didn't trash anyone involved," she said. "It felt so authentic, writing about something I knew so well. Setting up the crime, I didn't have to research anything," said Turk, who writes psychological suspense novels.

In her books, the protagonist often struggles with his or her identity. Someone is thrown a challenge "that's so awful, it makes you wonder, are you the same person? Are you better or worse? What happens to your identity?" she said. As much as the crime needs to get solved, her characters "have to come to terms with who they're becoming."

That's the case in "Best of the Fest," which is a revenge story. "It's a story of how the past is never the past. If something happens to you in childhood, a traumatic event, if you see something or become a victim, you live with that," Turk said. What are the consequences to one's personality? So often, "You don't know until you're faced with the same situation again, maybe 40 years later."

Michael Allan Mallory, who lives in St. Louis Park, wrote a tale titled "Sawbill Checkpoint," which is set at a dog sled race. He drew from the John Bearsease Sled Dog Marathon in Duluth.

He knew from the get-go that he wanted to use that as the backdrop, "but not what I was going to do with it." Likewise, he wasn't sure about the ending until he was halfway through the writing. "It burned a lot of creative brain cells until I hit upon the ending, which makes the reader reinterpret what happened before," Mallory said.

Similarly, the anthology itself "shows how every small town, big city, open prairie or deep forest can be a place of curiosity and intrigue," he said.

For more about the book, "Festival of Crime," go to <http://www.nodinpress.com>.

Anna Pratt is a Minneapolis freelance writer. She can be reached at [anaprattjournalist@gmail.com](mailto:anaprattjournalist@gmail.com).