

January 1999 Meeting

Mystery Writer/Educator to Speak

Robert Lee Hall teaches English at California High School in San Ramon and writes mysteries - nine, so far.

Hold everything! Read this excerpt from our February newsletter -

President's Message
by Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff

Robert Lee Hall suffered a mild heart attack a few days before he was to speak at our January meeting. (After he recovers, he will speak to us.) Our own member and mystery author, Penny Warner, spoke in his place. She credited Hall as her mentor, and used his books to study technique. But she didn't start in the mystery genre. Penny began by using her background as a teacher to write activity books for parents to use with children. (25 books!) "About the time my kids became teenagers, I became interested in murder," she said. She read *Compromising Positions* by Susan Isaacs and decided to try to write her own mystery. But she discovered her main character wasn't unique enough to sell in the crowded market.

With a master's degree in special education, Penny knows that deaf people are often overlooked in society. In fact, they become invisible - a good characteristic for a detective. So Connor Westphal, a sleuth that happens to be deaf, was born. Penny advises mystery writers to find a character that hasn't been done and set your story in a place that hasn't been overused. Connor lives in the [California] gold country town of Flatskunk. (Patterned after Jamestown).

Penny spends half of her work time writing and half of it promoting her books. Her hard work in writing and publicity is paying off. *Dead Body Language* went into a third printing before the publishing date! *Sign of Foul Play* and *Right to Remain Silent* also are doing well. She just finished *A Quiet Undertaking* and will begin her fifth mystery soon.

Penny Warner books on [Amazon.com](#) [BN.com](#)

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