

Library to host mystery writers' panel

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HOUR STAFF WRITER

NORWALK — The next installment of Norwalk Public Library's Author Speak panel series will be a lunchtime discussion featuring five regional mystery and suspense novelists.

Authors Dorothy Hayes, Mark Rubinstein, Anne-Marie Sutton, Deirdre Verne and Jan Yager will appear in the library's Main Auditorium for the event, titled "Mystery Writers Menace Their Readers at the Mystery Lunch."

Directory of Library Information Services Cynde Lahey, who organized the series, said that she prefers to host regional authors and hopes that the panels will encourage aspiring writers in Norwalk.

"I especially like to tap into authors from Norwalk and neighboring towns," Lahey told *The Hour*. "Our role is to encourage creative people to write, and so I love to introduce new authors to readers."

Rubinstein, a Wilton resident, began writing suspense after a tortuous

career path that includes stints as Army field medic and forensic psychiatrist. His life experience, Rubinstein said, informs his fiction.

"My background as a psychiatrist, as a physician and also as having been a forensic psychiatrist" who has testified in court hundreds of times in the last 25 years; "it all comes into the novel," Rubinstein told *The Hour*. "It all flows in and creates a lot of tension, and a lot of suspense."

This formula seems to be working for Rubinstein,

judging by Amazon reviews of his latest novel.

"What can I tell you, it's got 52 reviews already," Rubinstein said. "It's got a 4.9-star rating. I can't believe it. It's blowing me away."

Rubinstein said "The Lover's Tango," released in June, was characterized by fellow suspense novelists Michael Connelly and Linda Fairstein as "a legal and medical thriller, with a good deal of romance thrown in."

Looking ahead to the panel, Rubinstein said he enjoys fielding questions

from an audience. Additionally, he relishes the chance to elucidate the difference between the thriller and mystery genres.

"Somebody once asked me a few years ago, 'Is this your first mystery?'" Rubinstein said. "I said, 'I've never written a mystery in my life! I've written thrillers, not mysteries.'"

"She looked at me with these unfocused eyes, and I said, 'My god, she doesn't know the difference!'"

To clarify: "A mystery is a puzzle that an author con-

See LIBRARY Page C3

Library to host writers' panel

From Page C1

structs, and it's something that's already happened," Rubinstein said. "Whereas a thriller ... is a fast-paced story in which the protagonist usually comes under threat."

"The Lover's Tango' is a bit of both," Rubinstein added. "Or maybe it's a lot of both."

Hayes, a longtime Wilton resident who now lives in Stamford, released her most recent novel, "Broken Window," in March.

"It's about three recent Wilton High School graduates that board a Number Six train in New York City in the summer of 1984," Hayes told *The Hour*.

"They get separated. Two of them get off at their destination, but the other one doesn't."

Like Hayes's previous novels, "Animal Instinct" and "Murder at the P&Z," "Broken Window" is set against a meticulously-researched period backdrop.

Her decision to use the subway to heighten tension is based in the reality of mid-Eighties New York.

"New York City's in an economic crisis at the time," Hayes said. "There's ten thousand fewer cops on the streets, so there's not enough to ride the subway trains."

"The trains were often breaking down and unreliable, and gangs roamed the cars with gang colors on."

Hayes's novels are usually informed by contemporary issues that have meaning for her. "Animal Instinct" was a "primer for the modern-day history of the animal rights movement," she said.

"The spark (for 'Broken Window') came from an abduction of a Long Island runaway a year or so ... before the story was published," Hayes said. "That, along with human trafficking, where young girls are abducted in some way or another and sold into sex slavery."

"All my stories are issue-based, and they're crimes of the times," Hayes said. "The subject matter is always first, and then my characters come second."

Hayes started her career as a journalist; she began writing mystery novels when she realized they are easiest to market due to the genre's popularity.

"I turned to mysteries when I couldn't get a publisher for a novel," Hayes said. "I found out that if you write a genre — in particular, mysteries — there's more people who read mysteries than any other genre."

"As a writer, I could say whatever I needed to say in a mystery as well as in a regular novel," Hayes added.

"Mystery Writers Menace Their Readers at the Mystery Lunch" takes place Monday, August 3 at noon in Norwalk Public Library's Main Auditorium.