

Sisters in crime

Two local authors go sleuthing, one here,

one in Hollywood

Bookends



Chris Watson

THIS WEEK, two quick profiles of local female novelists beginning to make a killing in the publishing industry:

Author: Denise Osborne

Book: "Murder Offscreen," a Queenie Davilov Mystery (Henry Holt)

Home: Capitola for the past two years

Background: Grew up in Marin, went to high school in Japan, graduated from University of Oklahoma with a degree in journalism with an emphasis in motion picture production. Started making films and writing scripts around 1969. Won some awards.

"Five years after I graduated, I was on the road to Hollywood," Osborne recalls.

"My scripts are always character driven. By writing a novel, I've learned how to write better plots."

Plot: Osborne's first novel concerns the competitive Hollywood she knows so well. A wealth of dead and missing characters revolve around the death of a producer of horror movies.

Osborne's plot was a catharsis of the frustration she felt over endlessly knocking on Hollywood doors.

"I decided to kill myself a producer. And do it in a spectacular, Hollywood way. It was the only way to get any attention."

Sleuth: Queenie Davilov is a scriptwriter and P.I. on the side. She chews tobacco and, like her creator, hails from Oklahoma.

"She's a hell of a lot smarter,



Local mystery writers Denise Osborne and Laura Crum.

more persevering and more independent than me. I'd like to be like her." **Next Book:** Just finished a second Queenie Davilov book called "Cut to Murder," set in Barcelona.

She's now working on a new one: "Erotomania," about obsessing on celebrity.

Advice: For mystery writer wannabes, Osborne's advice is simple.

"Read mysteries, read all of

them. Then write one. And rewrite and rewrite and rewrite and rewrite ad infinitum."

Author: Laura Crum

Book: "Cutter," a mystery introducing female veterinarian Gail McCarthy, (St. Martin's Press)

Home: Aptos

Background: Born in Santa Cruz County, Crum is the great granddaughter of James Brown,

who bought the land in Capitola that was once Brown Bulb Ranch and is now the Capitola Mall.

Crum graduated from Cal Poly with a degree in English but also took all the courses they had on horse management. "I grew up riding at the ranch in Capitola. My uncle Todd Brown was a team rop-er for over 30 years and he taught me how to break colts.

"Working with horse trainers in the Central Valley and running a cattle ranch in Burney for several years taught me a lot about horses too."

Plot: Crum's first novel takes place in the Watsonville and Salinas world of cutting horses. Local vet Gail McCarthy investigates when an old hand dies under mys-

Preview

- **WHAT:** A booksigning by Denise Osborne, author of 'Murder Offscreen,' and Laura Crum, author of 'Cutter'
- **WHERE:** Capitola Book-Cafe, 1475 41st Ave., Capitola.
- **WHEN:** 7:30 p.m. Wednesday
- **COST:** Free
- **INFORMATION:** 462-4415

terious circumstances.

Crum was inspired to try her hand at writing after she finished reading all of Dick Francis' books.

"I thought I could probably do the same thing using cowhorses for my background instead of steeplechasers like Francis does. And since I like mysteries and I was interested in cutting horses, I wrote 'Cutter.'"

Sleuth: Veterinarian Gail McCarthy is more at home in faded denims and boots than a dress and pumps. She lives off Old San Jose Road and has an old dog named Blue.

Next Book: "Cutter" will soon be out in paper. The second Gail McCarthy mystery — called "Hoof

Prints" — is already scheduled for publication. The new novel, however, concerns the world of reined horses, horses under tight control of their rider.

Advice: "I suppose the thing that makes the most difference is when you finally learn to write in your own voice and not to imitate or sound like another writer, even those you admire."