




LIBRARIES SELF-PUBLISHING JOBZONE

SUBSCRIBE: PRINT + DIGITAL LOGOUT E-NEWSLETTERS

Search Publishers Weekly  

[Home](#) | [NEWS](#) | [REVIEWS](#) | [BESTSELLERS](#) | [CHILDREN'S](#) | [AUTHORS](#) | [ANNOUNCEMENTS](#) | [DIGITAL](#) | [INTERNATIONAL](#) | [OPINION](#)  
[Profiles](#) | [Interviews](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Why I Write](#) | [PW Select](#)

Home > Authors > Interviews

QUICKLINKS

Chalice Press is seeking a **MARKETING AND SALES DIRECTOR**. [NEXT JOB ▶](#)

## Murder Will Out: PW Talks With Mark I. Pinsky

By Lenny Picker | Sep 20, 2013

[Like](#) 0 [Send](#) [Tweet](#) 1 [Comments](#)



Journalist Pinsky travels deep into the mountains of western North Carolina to investigate a 40-year-old murder mystery in *Met Her on the Mountain: A Forty-Year Quest to Solve the Appalachian Cold-Case Murder of Nancy Morgan*.

What about the case did you find so compelling?

I felt a visceral, emotional, and political connection when I read about the murder, the day after VISTA worker

Nancy Dean Morgan's body was found. The college yearbook picture I saw in the new paper looked like many of my friends. One of my best friends was in another VISTA project, and my girlfriend at the time was, like Nancy, a military kid. There was also the timing: just six weeks after the Kent State and Jackson State killings, following the Cambodia invasion. It was as if a member of our generational cohort had fallen.

What was hardest about the project?

Getting local people to speak honestly about a painful subject after so many years. They would have been suspicious of any outsider, and I was almost a caricature, a Jew from the Jersey suburbs. In light of all the disparaging things outsiders had written and said about them by outsiders, it would be understandable if they were suspicious of me. And there were many examples of what some refer to as "cultural strip-mining."

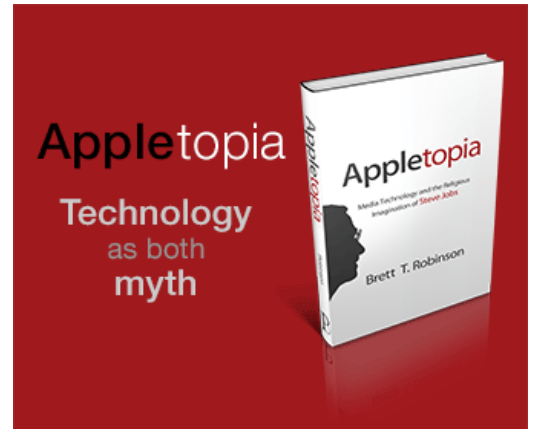
What's that?

Madison County has had a sad history of outsiders coming in and taking their music—the thing they are best known for—and repackaging and recording it, with little or no compensation. In effect, taking advantage of their good, generous nature, and, in essence, plundering their patrimony.

What else was hard for you?

Once people did open up to me, knowing when to stop reporting and researching—and when to start writing. Journalists often have this problem. I also encountered setbacks, as when local and state law enforcement officials in North Carolina became interested in my research, but then doubted my conclusion, this was extremely discouraging.

Did something unexpected happen during your writing?



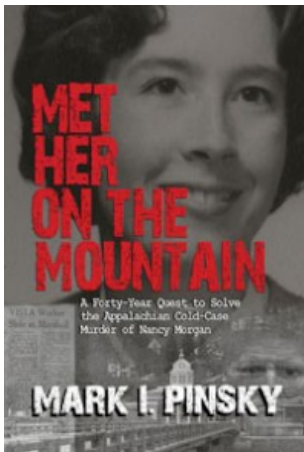
### BLOGS

**PWxyz Blog**  
 Jessamine Chan  
**Women to Watch: A Report from the Rona Jaffe Awards Reception**  
 The Rona Jaffe Foundation's 19th annual Writers' Awards.

**Beyond Her Book**  
 Barbara Vey  
**Serial Novels: What's Old is New Again**  
 Coreene Callahan's fan get a treat with her serial novel, *Warrior's Revenge*.

**ShelfTalker**  
 Elizabeth Bluemle  
**If You Give a Bookseller a Cookie....**  
 The bookseller's typical work day unfolds suspiciously like a noted children's book....

### FEATURED REVIEWS



#### RELATED STORIES:

- Met Her on the Mountain: A Forty-Year Quest to Solve the Appalachian Cold-Case Murder of Nancy Morgan
- PW issue Contents
- More in Authors -> Interviews
- More in articles by Leonard Picker

#### FREE E-NEWSLETTERS

Enter e-mail address

- PW Daily  Tip Sheet

**SUBSCRIBE** More Newsletters

#### ALSO ON PW



'The Battle of \$9.99,' a PW Original E-book



PW Picks: Week of Sept. 16 more...



Summer Reads, 2013



PW's Program for Self-Published Authors

Yes, despite my own cultural baggage and their years of bad experiences with outsiders, the people of Madison County did seem to accept me. Although in mountain culture you can never be sure of such things. They invited me into their homes, sometimes multiple times, gave me hours of their best recollections of what was clearly a painful event.

How did you feel about identifying the real killer, and that the authorities did not pursue your findings?

I had no problem identifying one of the people I believe to be responsible for Nancy Morgan's death. He confessed to me three times, once before several witnesses and once while I taped it. He is serving a lengthy prison sentence for poisoning his young daughter, and has a lengthy record of violent crimes.

What broader lessons can be drawn from the case?

Some local people were offended when I wrote in an article that at the time of the Morgan murder, Madison County was "an isolated, impoverished, and corrupt corner of the southern Appalachian mountains." That was and is my feeling, but I hasten to add that while there are still economic hard times, those days are long gone. Today, Madison County is a great place to live, and it doesn't surprise me academics from Duke and the University of North Carolina are building homes there. But mainly, there is nothing wrong with coming to Madison County and similar places in the southern mountains with an altruistic impulse. There is still much to bring, as Nancy Morgan tried to, like literacy and nutrition, and especially economic development. But the key is to also come with respect for the people, their faith and their culture.



#### COME BACK, MOON

David Kherdian, *illus. by Nonny Hogrogian*. S&S/Beach Lane, \$16.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-4424-5887-1

[◀ PREVIOUS](#)

[NEXT ▶](#)

### MOST POPULAR

- PW Best Books Summer Reads 2013
- What Ever Happened to Book Editors?
- Book Deals: Week of September 23, 2013
- The 7 Weirdest Sex Stories of the Ancient World
- 10 Best Romance Novels, Picked by Bella Andre
- The Most Debated Bible Passage
- Jim Carrey Rolls Out His First Children's Book
- Bouchercon 2013: Some Folks Like To Get Away With It
- Nelson Lifts Sales, Earnings at HC in Fiscal 2013
- Reinventing Book Printing Toward a Hybrid Market
- SIBA 2013: A Lively and Intimate Affair in New Orleans

### BESTSELLERS

View by genre:

Top 10 Overall

[more](#)

- 1 W Is for Wasted**  
Sue Grafton, Author
- 2 Si-Cology 1: Tales and Wisdom from Duck Dynasty's Favorite Uncle**  
Si Robertson, Author, Mark Schlabach, With
- 3 The Racketeer**  
John Grisham, Author
- 4 Never Go Back: A Jack Reacher Novel**  
Lee Child, Author
- 5 The Bone Bed**  
Patricia D. Cornwell, Author



Add a comment...

Post to Facebook

Posting as Trisina Dickerson ([Change](#))

**Comment**

Facebook social plugin