



## “Bob’s Notes”



By Crime Writers of Canada Associate Bob Harris  
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**\*An excerpt containing a profile and interview with Craig H. Bowsby**

**Bob Harris is a Vancouver writer, book promoter, publicist, and event producer.**

*"I am so fortunate to reside in Vancouver's West End and so close to gorgeous English Bay. Such an amazing environment to pursue artistic creativity, relaxation and book reading and writing."*



I'm Looking forward to the 2025 Major League Baseball season. This photo was taken at Vancouver's Library Square Public House while I was watching the baseball pitch tracking & analyzer technology invented by Michael Harris (in the 1980s) that was used in the 2024 World Series between the New York Yankees and Los Angeles Dodgers. (Graphic is from 1994 marketing.)



**Sunset at English Bay.**



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# GUEST AUTHOR - Craig H. Bowlsby



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## Vancouver's Craig H. Bowlsby wins Best Mystery novel in The Historical Fiction Company's Best Book of the Year contest for 2024!

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, The Historical Fiction Company, based in Macon, Georgia, announced the winners of their annual contest, which included Craig H. Bowlsby, in the category called Christie Mystery Suspense. There are twelve history novel categories, and many hundreds of entries each year, for both published and unpublished combined. Craig's unpublished novel is called ***Requiem for a Lotus***.

### Synopsis of *Requiem for a Lotus*

In 1917, Inspector Harmon Fletcher of the Shanghai International police must solve the murder of a Chinese sing-song girl he'd failed to protect. Combining his Canadian prairie hunting experience with modern forensic technique, Fletcher scours Shanghai's dangerous jig-saw underworld of English, French, and Chinese zones. As the pressure mounts, amid threats, betrayal, and a surprising romance, he brings one killer to justice, but another escapes, and Fletcher must sacrifice more than he expected before he's done.

- ***Requiem for a Lotus*** also won the **Crime Writers of Canada Award** of Excellence in the Unpublished category for 2024.
- As well, an earlier draft of this novel made the finals (top 10) in the 2023 **Killer Nashville Claymore Awards** for unpublished mystery novels and was longlisted for the Chanticleer Clue Book Awards in 2023, and the Plaza Literary Prize in 2024.



Another unpublished historical mystery novel written by Craig, entitled ***The Cyrano Solution***, was shortlisted (top 10) in the 2024 First Chapters Competition of the Historical Novel Society, (England) for the category of Historical Crime/Mystery. It was also a finalist in the Mystery and Mayhem category of CIBA (USA) in 2024. *The Cyrano Solution* takes place in 1652, and follows Cyrano De Bergerac as he travels to England, and is forced to help Oliver Cromwell solve a murder mystery within 24 hours.

**Craig is currently working on a sequel to *Requiem for a Lotus*.**

In non-fiction, Craig has written much sports history, having published articles in the *Vancouver Province*, the *Vancouver Courier*, the *Hockey News* (Canadian edition) and the *Seattle Times*.

His two books, ***Empire of Ice*** and ***1913, The Year They Invented the Future of Hockey*** won him the 2014 Brian McFarlane award for excellence in hockey history writing by the Society for International Hockey Research. (*These books received many positive reviews, including the Vancouver Sun recommendation for Empire of Ice as one of the top ten sports books for Christmas.*)

**Craig H. Bowlsby** lives in Vancouver, B.C. He earned a BFA in Creative Writing at UBC and later studied under William Deverell, the veteran crime writer, for several years. Craig has published many short stories, including *The Girl Who Was Only Three Quarters Dead*, which won the 2023 Crime Writers of Canada Award for best short story, previously published in *Mystery Magazine*.

In his varied experience, he won the Western Canadian Foil Championships five times and worked for Statistics Canada on the Crime Survey. Craig has also worked as an insurance investigator, and an heir locator.

# The Interview

*"Bob's interviews make you examine yourself and your work in ways you haven't done in a long time, or ever. That makes it revealing for everyone. And that I think is part of what makes Bob shine—the illumination he brings out from his subjects. Thanks, Bob!" - Craig H. Bowsby*

## **My conversation with Craig:**

**Your career background as an heir locator intrigues me. Please enlighten me on the role of an heir locator and the process involved to resolution. What led you to the profession?**

I had been working as an "urban archeologist" researching historical material and that often involved using old city directories and other reference books or documents.

Then I found out that the government was acquiring dormant bank accounts of people and businesses and creating large databases for anyone who might have a claim to those accounts, but didn't know it.

After two or three years in those accounts the money would go to the government permanently, so there was some urgency, and the government didn't try to find anyone themselves.

I had to figure out the right business or person that should get the money, and make a good claim, and then I had to find them, and put them together with the right department. All of those things weren't always possible or easy. But when they received the money, I would get a percentage. If you had a good case the government would usually comply quickly.

I was good at it, but it was hard. I helped a lot of people recover their money, though, and I felt good about that.

## **As a writer, who and what are your influences and why? And mentors?**

My influences are varied. Arthur Conan Doyle, C.S. Forester, Raymond Chandler, Ross McDonald, Frank Herbert, Chester Himes, Louis L'Amour, C.C. Humphreys, Bernard Cornwell, Ursula K. LeGuin, and Harper Lee.

More recently, William Deverell and Robyn Harding. But why them? I'm not sure. One thing they have in common is people trying to solve very hard problems, and in most cases, they are doing this alone, or at least they are personally responsible for success.

Of course, in Harper Lee's novel, Scout is not alone, but she doesn't understand much of what's going on and I identified with her struggle and sense of injustice, along with a lot of other stuff. Also, Scout's troubles aside, most of these authors usually present logical approaches and solutions.

As for mentors, my most recent mentor was William Deverell, from whom I learned a lot about technique, and streamlined and active writing. Also, as he says, there's no substitute for "brain power!" Which in my case means if something isn't really

working well, or it's weak, I'll go into my "isolation chamber" until I find something that works better.

**What inspired you to write *Requiem for a Lotus*?**

I love historical adventure. Also, my character is a fish out of water—a Canadian police officer trying to solve a murder in Shanghai. That makes it unusual. I hope.

**Please give me a short overview of the research involved in developing the story.**

I guess I spent about two years in initial research and gathering of research before starting to write this story.

I acquired books, photos, documents, and artifacts. Period books like city directories, as well as more recently published histories. I started reading it all, and compiling it. As I did so, I noted things I wanted to include, regardless of the plot, so when I finally finished working on the plot and the characters, I had a lot of colour and detail to use wherever it seemed best.

Some characters developed from accounts in books, like my character Johnny Black-Cat, who was a "termite."

**Describe the setting, lifestyle, ethnic and personality profile of your main character Inspector Harmon Fletcher.**

Fletcher was a very young North West Mounted Police Officer in Battleford, Saskatchewan when he failed to prevent a woman's murder through inaction. Remorseful, he answered an ad for police officers in Shanghai and joined the Shanghai International Police force as a kind of exile. He's smart in the sense that he notices irregularities in evidence (unlike me, who couldn't see a moose hanging from a ceiling) and he has a huge antipathy for murder.

Unfortunately, in Shanghai, his superiors make him move on to another murder if he can't solve his recent cases and that causes friction. His hobby is saving young women kidnapped for prostitution which is technically legal in Shanghai at the time.

**How long did it take to complete *Requiem for a Lotus* from concept to final manuscript readiness for submissions?**

Perhaps five years.

**You have a knack for winning impressive short story and novel awards. What are your top tips for success in submitting fiction to writing competitions?**

Revise, revise, revise.

Get other people to read your work and give you feedback. You don't have to do what they say, but their perspective is super important.

I recently got feedback from another writer, on a fresh story, who told me why and how an important character was weak. It suddenly came to me that she was right, and I immediately launched a probe to fix the problem—something that affected the whole story.

**How has your Associate Membership in Crime Writers of Canada benefitted your career as an author?**

The CWC is great! Everyone is so supportive and it's given me a lot more confidence to go ahead with my projects.

**Thanks for making time for me, Craig. To wrap up our chat, kindly give me your flash answers to:**

**Your favourite beverage.**

Unsweetened cocoa.

**Your most creative time of day.**

8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. But I'm writing in my head even while I'm driving. Not good!

**Your most memorable experience as a writer.**

Getting the news that I'd won the CWC award. It kind of transports your brain into a different dimension.

**A bucket list goal.**

Win any big literary contest!

**Next to hockey, what sport appeals to you?**

It used to be fencing a long time ago. But that's a tough profession.

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Writing professionally as Robert H. Harris and working as a consultant to writers, Bob accepts email inquiries at: [harrisbobh@hotmail.com](mailto:harrisbobh@hotmail.com) (Profile and publicity photos available on request).