

on the bookshelf

Local Publisher Brings Mystery to Worldwide Market

“Murder in Key West and Other Island Mysteries,” eight authors (Absolutely Amazing eBooks, \$3.99)

Many readers may remember George Murphy’s “The Key West Reader: The Best of Key West’s Writers 1830-1990,” some because it persuaded them to stay here (myself included). A classic of its kind, it stayed in print for years. I now have news for today’s readers — and potential new residents. There’s another classic available and its influence will be as profound.

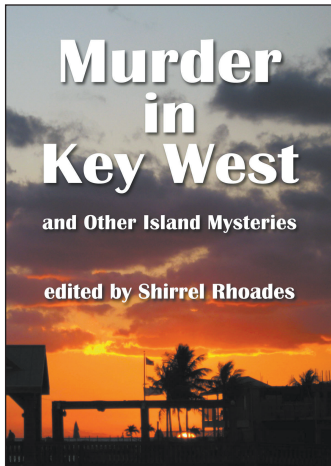
“Murder in Key West” is a marvelous compilation of eight mystery stories. Each of the authors has his or her own voice, from morning bright to crepuscular

noir, but all have the gift of making a reader want to know more about our neck of the sea. The title story is by Michael Haskins; “Lucky Man” is by Jonathan Woods;

“The Itinerary” is by Roberta Islip (writing as Lucy Burdette); “Saving Gloria” is by Jessica Argyle; “Block” is by Mike Dennis; “Ivory Tower”

is by Hal Howland; “Loose Cannons” is by Tom Corcoran and “Four Fingers and the Dead Drag Queen” is by Shirrel Rhoades.

Says legendary local Reef Perkins, “Can’t-put-’em-down stories by Key West’s best mystery writers” and we are compelled to agree.



Lucy Burdette

Publisher-contributor Rhoades points out in his introduction, “The name Key West is based in murder ... murder from the very beginning” (island of bones). And he concurs that all his fellow contributors write about our town “as if it were the hero of the piece.” Truly tempting is his invitation to the reader: “So curl up, lock the door, pull down the shades and enjoy a good murder mystery set in an island paradise.”

Readers of Solares Hill and Paradise will know Shirrel Rhoades as our local movie critic whose weekly Front Row at the Movies column and Top 10 lists keep us transfixed on film. He has enjoyed a long career as a publisher (from Scholastic to Marvel Entertainment) and was a vice president with Reader’s Digest Books and Home Entertainment before coming to Key West with his wife Diane, a former New York Times executive.

In tune with the times, Rhoades now eschews paper for digital and, with local attorney Albert L. Kelley and computer technician Charles A. Newman,

has launched the virtual book publishing company known as Absolutely Amazing eBooks. It exists solely in cyberspace, publishing and distributing ebooks through Kindle, Nook, iPad and other e-reader devices. Readers can buy all its books with a click of the mouse at AbsolutelyAmazingEbooks.com.

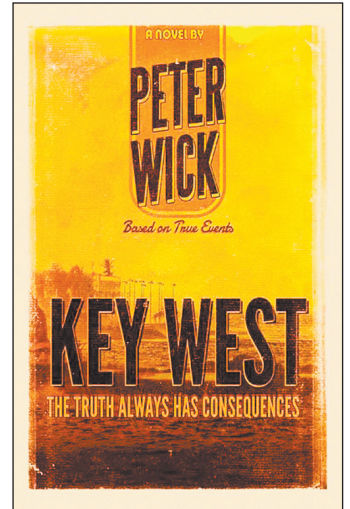
The company plans to publish 200 or more titles a year, ranging from mysteries to romance, science fiction to self-help, travel to young adult, as well as photography collections (a special passion of the publisher’s).

Among the local authors being handled by Absolutely Amazing eBooks are Brewster Chamberlin, Jane Dawkins, Randolph Becker, John L. Guerra, Brooke Babineau, Robert Green, Leah Benner, Elissa Bishop-Becker, Reef Perkins, photographer Richard Watherwax and — we can’t wait — Lura (“Former La Te Da hotelier tells all”) Gorman. “The good news,” says Rhoades, “is that we’re making reading affordable again” (no title is priced more than \$3.99). He adds, irresistibly, this: “I believe we’re embarking on a new golden age of reading.”

— *Reported by M. H.*

“Key West” by Peter Wick, (Wheelman paperback, \$12.99, e-book for \$2.99)

Set in the anything-goes days of the 1950s Keys, “Key West” is based on the historical conflict between longtime Monroe County State Representative Bernie Papy and Miami Herald reporter and columnist



Stephen Trumbull.

Written by award-winning screenwriter Peter Wick, the book combines real-life anecdotes with a suspenseful plot for a great take on the rough-and-tumble Key West of six decades ago.

Papy, in his role as state representative, apparently built a personal power structure allowing him to oversee rampant illegal gambling as well as prostitution and countless other illegal activities in Key West. Trumbull, described as a “hardboiled” reporter from the Herald, took Papy on. He drank too much. He had a mouth on him. He rubbed people the wrong way. All he cared about was reporting the truth. Reporting the truth, in Papy’s Key West of 1950, could get you into a lot of trouble.

Peter Wick is an award-winning independent filmmaker who’s produced, written and directed three independent feature films. In 2011 he won Best Director at the New York International Film Festival for “Rock Paper Scissors.”

“Key West” is his first novel and it’s an engaging, fun read.

— *Recommended by M. H.*

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