

ARMCHAIR ENTERTAINMENT

Three Baker County writers have new books on the shelves

By Debby Schoeningh

As the new year unfolds, and winter weather keeps you inside, you can unravel modern mysteries, visit the action-packed West when vigilante justice thrived or relive the life of a schoolmarm in a lawless town—all without leaving your favorite armchair.

Mystery, history and romance are just pages away, as three Baker County authors wield their pens and unleash their imaginations.

“Coyote Staircase” by C.F. (Clair) Button

Tom Kreuger isn't a caped crusader, but he probably could identify bat guano a mile away.

He's not a rough-and-tough, pistol-packing justice seeker. And you couldn't really call him romantic, unless throwing sticks at a woman's tent to stop her from snoring qualifies.

Nevertheless, the plucky crime-solving Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wildlife biologist grows on you.

Easygoing, quick-witted Kreuger and his trusty dog, Scrub, are on the trail again in Baker City author Clair (C.F.) Button's third book, “Coyote Staircase.”

Blending history, nature, hu-

mor and mystery together in a compelling plot, Button takes readers on a journey crisscrossing the rocky ridges of Joseph Canyon.

On a management assignment from the Baker City BLM office, Kreuger dips his feet in the cold, running waters of Joseph Creek and explores the ancient Nez Perce grounds on the valley floor below.

Randy, a range conservationist, is Kreuger's bear-wary sidekick, who adds a little comic relief.

A bear does wind its way through the plot, much to Randy's dismay.

And there are remnants of ancient culture, including Gwendolyn Wapato, who is a mysterious American Indian elder who lives in the shadows of her ancestors. She deals with situations in unconventional and, at times, unnerving ways.

Nancy, a chatty BLM archaeologist intent on protecting the tribe's interests, provides a female's perspective and a wealth of information—sometimes more information than Kreuger needs or wants to know.



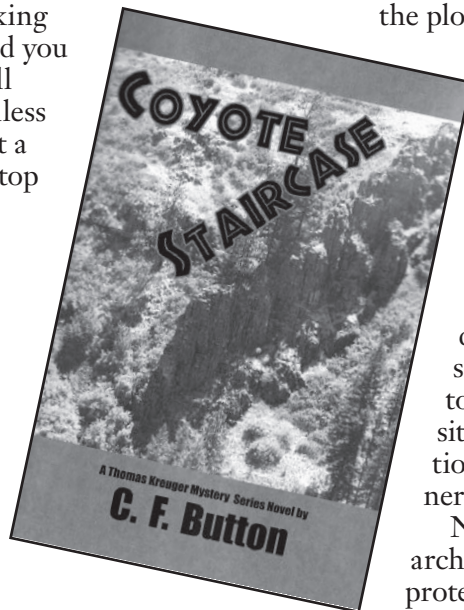
Clair Button



Chuck Buchanan



Roberta Marlow



Miners at odds with each other, and modern day mining equipment—apparently stolen and being pursued by an Aryan Nations militant through the canyon—give Kreuger cause for concern.

Then there are the mysterious patches of disturbed habitat along the canyon walls that test his skills as a biologist.

Throw in a few rattlesnakes, a good fistfight and, of course, a dead body, and you have a true Kreuger mystery.

Previous books in the series of Kreuger mysteries, include “Cow Cookies” and “Quicksand Plot.”

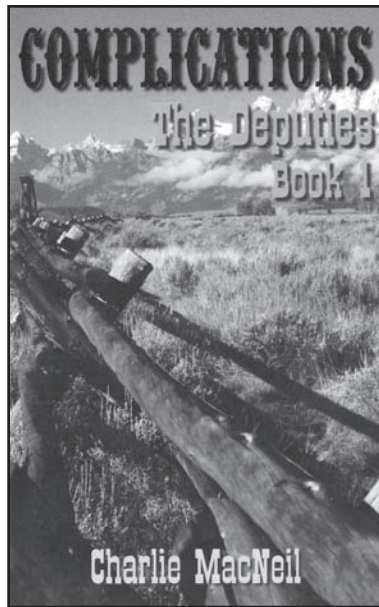
Button's newest release is engaging and fun, and is a refreshing change of pace from the traditional whodunit mystery.

Button is a retired BLM botanist and wildlife biologist. For more information, visit his Web site at www.snakeweedpress.com.

“Complications: The Deputies Book 1” by Charlie McNeil

The late 1800s were the height of America's untamed West.

Saloon fights were common, stagecoaches rarely made it to their destinations without being robbed



and vigilante justice thrived.

At least that's how history plays out in Charlie MacNeil's new book, "Complications: The Deputies Book 1," which takes readers back to the Old West on the edge of a saddle.

Chuck Buchanan of Durkee, who uses the pen name Charlie MacNeil, doesn't pull any punches—and neither do his characters, Harvey Palmer and Jesse Thompson.

Harvey, who has spent his life avoiding complications, and Jesse, a special deputy for Judge Randolph Martin, become unlikely companions when their paths cross with a deranged outlaw, Howdy Baxter.

A few good saloon brawls, some fancy shooting and a near-death experience should keep readers engaged in this action-packed, shoot 'em up.

Things get personal when Baxter kidnaps the protagonists' women.

Harvey is determined to gun down anyone who gets in his way. Jesse is bent on putting Baxter in jail. And Shanghai Noonan, a tracker who is part Irish, Apache and Chinese, has a grudge of his own to settle against one of Baxter's men.

With tempers flaring—driven by justice, revenge and love—these men find out just how far they are willing to go.

The good and the bad meet head on, and it gets ugly.

"Complications" twists and turns down a winding road fraught with danger, excitement and just a touch of romance.

Buchanan covered all the basics of Western novel writing, including man's best friend, appropriately named Dog.

Buchanan is a rancher and cowboy action shooter, a style of marksmanship. For more information visit his Web site at www.sisleycreek.com.

"The Copperfield Affair" by Roberta Marlow

Murder, mayhem and romance abound in Baker County in Roberta Marlow's book "The Copperfield Affair."

Set in the early 1900s, Marlow tells the true story of Copperfield's declaration of martial law, which she calls a "fictitious account of the unvarnished truth."

Miss Ellen Delaney leaves city life in Philadelphia and travels to Copperfield, at the upper end of Hells Canyon on the banks of the Snake River, to begin life as the area's newest schoolmarm.

Miss Delaney finds a robust town with mining and building companies, and is thrown into a world of saloons, gamblers, prostitutes, arsonists and would-be murderers living among God-fearing farm folks.

Cord Williams, a handsome cowboy running from the law, captures Miss Delaney's heart, much to the dismay of Clara Hoffsetter, who is the overzealous general store keeper's wife Miss Delaney lives with.

Clara makes it her mission to keep Miss Delaney's morals and reputation intact to ensure the

newcomer behaves as a proper schoolmarm should.

Meanwhile, townsfolk witness an arson fire to put a saloon owner out of business, as well the selling of liquor to young men, including a 15-year-old student who nearly dies from alcohol poisoning.

The streets of Copperfield are "overrun with loud-mouthed, drunkard braggarts, who have their mind set on doing bodily harm to anyone who dares to interfere."

The town becomes so lawless that many refer to it as "Gomorrhah on the Snake."

Miss Delaney, caught up in the lives of those who live and work in this corrupt Northeastern Oregon town, tells much of the story through letters written to her cousin Miss Fern Hobbs, the Oregon governor's personal secretary who

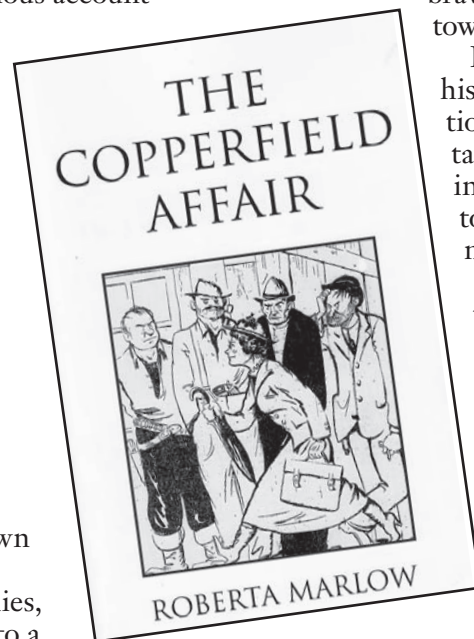
bravely takes on the town's corrupt officials.

Roberta intertwines historical fact and fiction into a convincing tale, with plenty of intriguing characters to keep the story moving.

The romance and the adventure will keep your interest, and the refining of a corrupt town with "unseemly sin" will give you a good perspective of how the once unruly Copperfield really was tamed.

Marlow lives in

Haines and is a 25-year veteran of school classrooms and libraries. For more information, visit her Web site at www.geocities.com/copperfieldaffair. ■



"Coyote Staircase," "Complications" and "The Copperfield Affair" are available at Betty's Books, 1813 Main Street in Baker City, direct from the authors or from Internet book sites. For more books by Eastern Oregon writers, visit the Writer's Guild of Eastern Oregon at www.wgeo.org.