

Meeting Notes

December 9, 2016



The Red Circle presents an Evening with James Grady

reported by Carla Coupe

The weather outside was blustery and cold, but both seasoned and novice Red Circle attendees found the Hyatt Regency warm and welcoming, as well as easier to navigate as the hotel moves forward with their renovations. After a convivial hour of chat and scion lapel pin comparisons—and by the way, don't forget to purchase your Red Circle pin from Tom Fahres so you too can join in the fun (did you know that the colors in the lapel pin exactly match the colors in the US flag?)—we sat down to a tasty buffet dinner.

After dinner, Peter introduced Jim Grady, former investigative reporter and noted author of *Six Days of the Condor*, as well as many other wonderful books.



Grady began with a nod to *The Agent*, associating Arthur Conan Doyle with the growth in popularity of espionage literature in the late 19th century, and reflecting that he was probably the first fiction author to give the reader the experience of being a spy. Readers try to follow Sherlock Holmes's cloaked thoughts, engaging in their own form of spying and espionage.

Historically, the field of espionage stories in western fiction was dominated by the British, from Shakespeare to Dickens (whose novels hovered in that gray space between spy stories and thrillers), through Empire defender Rudyard Kipling, and on to Ian Fleming, Graham Greene, and David Cornwell, aka John le Carré.

By contrast, American authors generally wrote stories of sweet and charming spies until the parallel rises of Communism and J. Edgar Hoover. The emergence of espionage literature in the US began to burgeon after 1960. Grady noted that at the time, the CIA wasn't named in American literature. His opinion? "Weird."

When he was in his early 20s, Grady wanted to write a spy novel but didn't know a James Bond, whose life on the printed page was alien to Grady's experiences in Missoula, Montana. He decided to write about an ordinary man in the CIA who is placed in an untenable situation by circumstances outside his control (shades of Alfred Hitchcock, another Brit!).

In the truth-is-stranger-than-fiction department, while Grady was doing research for *Six Days of the Condor*, he discovered only four non-fiction books about the CIA, so he decided to make up some of the structure and procedures he needed for the story. He invented a division of the CIA that the KGB believed was real, and they created a parallel division in Moscow! Pete Earley and Jeff Stein of the *Washington Post* broke this story about 6 years ago.

Grady also worked as an investigative journalist with the legendary Jack Anderson and regaled the audience with an anecdote about former Speaker of the House Carl Albert during the Koreagate scandal. He was proud that in his day, journalists followed a higher degree of accountability and generally had to have two sources. And he loved being called a muckraker.

But it was *Six Days of the Condor* that made him a household name. Grady was 24 when he received a call from his publisher with the news that they had sold his book to the movies for \$100,000, and that it would star Robert Redford and Faye Dunaway. He would love everyone to have that experience!



At one point during filming *Three Days of the Condor* (gotta compress that timeline even more for cinema), he and Robert Redford were on location, talking outside when Grady noticed fans watching them. He asked Redford, “How do you handle that?”

“I just keep talking to you,” replied Redford.

Good advice from one master storyteller to another!



Thanks to Jim Grady from all of us at the Red Circle for a very enjoyable evening. The Red Circle will convene again on Friday, March 10, 2017.