

Gene Grossman

TWO PERFECT CRIMES

Suzi B. Mystery #3

By Gene Grossman,
Author of the 15 popular
Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries

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FOREWORD

The Suzi B. Mysteries are a continuation of the 15-book series of ***Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries***, in which Suzi B. is a featured character. If you haven't read any of them it might help you to know a little background information about these characters.

Attorney Peter Sharp's wife Myra threw him out of their home (which she owned before they were married), due to a conflict of their philosophies about legal representation: she was a tough prosecutor with the District Attorney's office, and Peter was a defender of those throngs of poor unfortunate people 'wrongfully' accused of crimes by his wife's gang of mean prosecutors.

For a while Peter stayed in their back yard on a dilapidated old Chris Craft cabin cruiser he was restoring, until Melvin Braunstein, a former law school classmate, arranged for him to rent a slip in Marina del Rey California. Peter had the old boat

trucked there, launched at the boatyard and towed to the slip. He then moved aboard and started making minor court appearances for Melvin, who operated his own small law practice from a houseboat in the Marina on the same dock as Peter's boat.

When Melvin died in a plane crash, Peter inherited his former classmate's modest law practice, along with the office manager that came with it - Melvin's thirteen-year old step-daughter Suzi, a Chinese computer genius - and her huge St. Bernard.

Pursuant to a request in Melvin's Will, the court appointed Peter as Suzi's legal guardian, and through a series of misfortunes that miraculously worked out, they wound up living on a beautiful 50-foot Grand Banks trawler-yacht.



The *Suzi B.*

Sooner or later, in each of his legal cases, Peter usually wound up butting heads with his ex-wife, who Suzi adores and is constantly scheming to get back into the Sharp household. There's also Stuart Schwartzman, Peter's old friend and frequent client, who is the most entrepreneurial person in Southern California – and Jack Bibberman, the best private investigator that Peter ever met.

When Peter wasn't having expensive Patrón Margaritas at one of the marina's local watering holes, he was usually involved in some losing legal case that little Suzi inevitably solved, leaving Peter with the impression that he was really as good as he thought he was. Suzi started to resent Peter always getting the credit, and these Suzi B. Mysteries chronicle what happens when she decides to go out on her own and solve some crimes.

The same cast of characters is still around from the original series, and they inevitably get 'drafted' to help Suzi out... but make no mistakes who is really solving the cases – as she so successfully did in her first adventure, **...Sorry Wrong Number** – in

which a brave member of the LAPD Bomb Squad had to pull her out of danger.

All of the Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries are summarized at the end of this book, and if you're curious about them, more details are at www.LegalMystery.com, so sit back, relax, and read Suzi B.'s 3rd mystery, as told by Suzi's legal guardian, attorney Peter Sharp.

It should also be noted that in several places, laws may be mentioned. Please keep in mind that this book is a **work of fiction** and not intended to be a suggestion for legal advice or necessarily accurate interpretation of any laws this book's characters cite or discuss.

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Chapter I – True Confessions

Being a moderately successful and well-known attorney is nice, but there are two main reasons why it's not enough to ever give me a chance to be President of the United States:

First: as seen in the past couple of decades, you have to be a graduate of either Yale or Harvard;

Second: as seen in most civil service work application forms, you have to be a high school graduate.

Yeah, that's right. This is the first time I've ever disclosed this embarrassing fact, and I hope that the kid never finds out I never finished high school.

It's not that I didn't want to, but being a typically smart-ass teenager, I talked some classmates of mine into participating in a

stupid prank... an act of minor vandalism, that targeted our high school's vice principal's office and I got caught. As a result, I was invited to leave the school for good.

This all occurred late into the last half of my fourth year and caused me to miss participating in the graduation ceremonies and not receive a high school diploma.

Because my departure took place late in the final semester, my transcripts had already been sent to the local junior college where I intended to further my futile attempts at education so when the fall semester started there, I simply walked in and enrolled – and when being accepted into the student body, learned that my hopes were not in vain: they *did* receive my transcripts, but never were notified that I did not graduate.

Yeah, I know. You're probably asking how the heck a guy who got thrown out of high school ever got to be a lawyer. Well, the answer is: it wasn't easy.

To avoid bringing my lack of completing high school into the spotlight, I purposely finished junior college one course short of

the required units for graduation, and then enrolled in another college for night classes.

Ultimately, I wound up accumulating the same number of credits as anyone else attending college, but avoided participating in any graduation ceremony in a further attempt to keep my dark secret private.

A couple of years later, while working at a car-leasing company in Beverly Hills, I saw a newspaper ad for an non-accredited (no ivy growing up the walls) evening law school, and called up to see what the admission requirements and costs were.

The dean answered the phone himself, and after I told him I'm considering going to law school, the conversation was short:

Dean: "Are you over twenty one?"

Me: "Yes."

Dean: "Do you have 60 units of college credit?"

Me: "Yes."

Dean: "Can you afford to write a check for tuition and books?"

Me: "Yes."

Dean: "Congratulations. You're now a member of the Student Body of the University of San Fernando Valley's College

of Law. Come to my office tonight to enroll. The new semester starts in three weeks.”

That was it. I was a law student. At that point in time, to the best of my knowledge, California was the only state in the union that allowed students to become qualified to take the Bar Examination by correspondence course, private tutoring by a judge or attorney, or by non-accredited evening courses.

For years I'd been a big fan of books about fictional lawyers like **Perry Mason** and **Matlock**, and also of *real* attorneys who wrote legal thriller pocketbooks, so I couldn't wait to get started in law school.

When I got to the school's address the next day, I learned that it was four rooms on the top floor of a two-story office building on Ventura Boulevard – with no ivy growing up outside on the walls.

Three of the rooms were used for classes in the three first-year law student subjects of Contracts, Torts (civil wrongs) and Criminal Law, being taught on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings.

Those same three rooms were going to be used for the second-year students' classes on three alternate evenings – but that wasn't a problem yet, because the school had only been open for one semester.

Within a year or so, the school became so popular that they outgrew the three rooms in that building and built their own building on Sepulveda Boulevard just north of Roscoe Boulevard, and conveniently around the corner from Galpin Ford's coffee shop.

The school only conducted graduation ceremonies in June, but I was a 'February' mid-term start, so when I concluded my four years of night school, I was certified to take the next Bar exam, which was given twice a year: in March and in August.

After miraculously passing the Bar Exam, I decided to continue my perfect record of never graduating from anything, and therefore still have no idea what it's like to wear a cap and gown.

I also won't hang any type of certification on my office wall, for fear someone might notice the absence of my high school diploma.

If I ever stop practicing law I'll have to completely retire, because I've been told that you can't even get a job greeting people at Wal-Mart without a high school diploma.

Chapter II

The Law They Don't Teach You

Sorry to bother you with my regrets about being precluded from participating in our presidential electoral process, but I felt it was important to get that dark

secret of being ‘graduationally challenged’ off of my mind.

I do believe however, that whether you got your legal education from Harvard, Yale, ‘Jiffy Law,’ as most of us refer to Jerry Falwell’s Regency law school where Michelle Bachman got her degree, or the Valley school that I attended that picked up the nickname of ‘Betty Crocker College of Law’ because of the many housewives attending, there is one law that none of them seem to cover: the law of unintended consequences.

Here are two examples of that law:

Sutter's Mill was a [saw-mill](#) located in [Coloma, California](#) owned by [John Sutter](#) and his partner [James Marshall](#).

On January 24, 1848, Marshall found several flakes of gold at the Mill that resulted in the famous California Gold Rush, and the transformation of California from a sleepy west-coast location to a bustling center of commerce.

About 5 years after Marshall's discovery, a gentleman came to the Mill's area and

opened up a dry-goods store, selling supplies to the miners.

Some gold prospectors made a decent amount of money with their claims, but it's doubtful that anyone wound up as successful as that gentleman with the dry-goods store, because his name was Levi Strauss, and at one time in your life, you have probably worn one of his products: a pair of Levi's.

Another example is what occurred as a result of my setting up a law office on a boat here in the marina. At one time or

another, every boat owner winds up buying something in the local Ships Store, which is also a popular meeting place for boaters with too much time on their hands.

One afternoon after successfully completing a high-profile criminal case with a surprise ending in court, I happened to be in the Ships Store to get a new pair of sun glasses. A couple of people in the store recognized me and started discussing my court victory, having seen the televised trial. Another customer overheard their conversation and asked if they would introduce him to me.

To my surprise, I learned that he was one of the authors whose books I had read years earlier. He wrote legal thrillers, and was interested in chronicling some of my court cases.

At first I was flattered, but that feeling waned when I finally figured out that it was Suzi who really interested him.

We wound up signing an agreement with him, and with our input (mostly from Suzi) he wrote fifteen books entitled the ***Peter***

Sharp Legal Mysteries, all prominently featuring Suzi.

The books became quite popular, especially with California readers, because of all the ‘mentions’ of actual local places where the cases took place. This notoriety mostly had its upsides, because it drove new clients to our law practice; but it also had its downsides in that some actual names were mentioned and one of them was an attorney we went up against several times who was described by the author as being ‘on the verge’ of legal ethics.

His name was Morris Arthur, and in addition to teaching some classes at local law schools, he managed to get involved representing clients with unsavory business practices.

This in no way means to imply that unsavory clients aren't entitled to have fair representation just like any other citizen, but whenever some person looked upon by society as a real 'scum-bag' of a business operator gets into trouble, there's a good chance that he'll be vigorously defended in court by attorney Morris Arthur, who not only does a decent job of providing a

defense, but also comes off as being a fanboy of the client, making it look like he very unprofessionally personally justifies every lowbrow act that his clients are charged with committing.

And it is this feeling of 'bad blood' that apparently exists for us in Morris Arthur's mind that brings the current case to our attention, because notwithstanding his obnoxious personality, he managed to attract the affections of a wealthy young widow he was representing, and they became married.

I know that love is supposed to be blind, but a couple of years after the honeymoon, the bride's eyesight apparently improved to a point where she realized spending the rest of her life with Morris Arthur just couldn't ever be an option – so she decided to file for divorce.

And now we come to the next example of unintended consequences:

As the current District Attorney of this county will agree, I am no expert when it comes to maintaining a happy marriage – and she ought to know, because she's my

ex-wife, and I believe is honestly on a constant quest to find something to arrest me for.

I'm also not the best guy to retain if you want to get divorced, because I've got next to zero experience handling domestic relations matters like that, so it was quite a surprise when my cell phone indicated that a call was coming in from my ex-wife's private office line at the Criminal Courts Building.

“Hello my dear. Am I in danger of imminent arrest, or are you looking for someone to buy you dinner tonight?”

“Neither one Peter; the reason I’m calling is to find out what could possibly have been going through that thick skull of yours when you made that decision.”

“Myra, if you mean my decision to leave our happy household and take up residency on an old Chris Craft in the back yard of our home, I’d like to remind you of the fact that it was *your* decision to downsize the

household, and getting rid of a defense attorney was the first order of business.”

“Oh Peter, please stop whining about that. You know very well what decision I’m talking about.”

I see that Suzi is now standing in front of me with one of those devious grins on her face. As usual, Myra keeps talking.

“I’m talking about the news report my staff just told me about: the one announcing that the law offices of attorney Peter Sharp are taking over representation of the divorce

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proceedings of prominent attorney Morris
Arthur's estranged wife Irene.”
