

Gene Grossman

# *HE's the GUY*

*Suzi B. Mystery #4*

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*Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries*

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## FOREWORD

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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 attempting to restore, 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 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 little 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 the **Suzi B**, 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 prosecutor ex-wife Myra, 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 solo 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](http://www.LegalMystery.com), so please sit back, relax, and read Suzi B.'s 4<sup>th</sup> 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 legal advice or an accurate interpretation of any laws this book's characters cite or discuss.

If you're interested, more details about the laws used in this book are discussed in the Appendix – at the end of the book.

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## Chapter I

# Making Waves

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I like boats: it's just that I'm not that fond of actually *boating*.

This feeling of mine confuses a lot of people when they hear it, but what it really means is that like many of the seven thousand boat-owners here in Marina del Rey, I enjoy spending time on the boat while it's sitting still - right here in the slip... but not that excited about actually going out past the breakwater into the Pacific Ocean.

Quite often, when I'm talking to a person who knows that I live on a boat, the most common remark they make to me is about their admiration of my lifestyle, and their dream of someday sailing off into the sunset. Yeah, great idea.

What they really dream of doing is sailing away from their bills, their job, their boss, their in-laws, and all their responsibilities...

but what they're *not* dreaming about is *no* hot water, *no* showers, *no* fancy meals, *no* television, *no* internet, being on a boat that's constantly moving up and down and tilted over on a fifteen-degree slant, and no room to do any kind of exercise for the couple of weeks it takes to sail from the mainland to Hawaii – the most popular dreamed-of boat destination.

The problem is that whether you're sailing on a yacht to Honolulu or driving your car to the supermarket, it doesn't make any difference, because distance doesn't count: your problems stay with you... but today is one of those days that I don't really look forward to.

Suzi wants to take our Boston Whaler dinghy out for a spin and I've been invited to join.

On our boat, the word 'invited' is actually a nice way of saying 'commanded,' because when the kid wants me along on one of her excursions, whether it be on land or on sea, it usually means that if I don't join in with the 'program,' I'll wind up paying for it one way or another.





Our dinghy with Bernie's bow cushion

Today's informal boat parade is to show support for one of the marina charities that Suzi and a lot of other boaters support that does something nice for underprivileged kids.

I don't know how she did it, but the kid got my ex-wife Myra, who's now the District Attorney of the county, to come along for the ride.

Myra has become quite the political animal, so maybe she decided to join us after being told that some news cameras might also be covering the event. I'm sure this is also an attempt by the kid, in her never-ending

mission to get us back together again – which I’m sure Myra would agree is an act of futility.

Because our law firm is apparently a large contributor, we will make an appearance by using our little speedboat to zip in between the other boaters, waving and smiling, with some sort of supportive banner attached to the side of our boat. Bernie will be sitting up in his favorite spot – on the cushion up at the front end of the boat – which I’m told should be referred to as the *bow*.

Everyone thinks I’m a really great guy who taught this young girl how to drive a boat, but the truth is that *she’s* the experienced boat driver who someday wants to teach *me* how to drive the big boat we both live on.

She’s tried several times in the past, but learned that it would be easier to teach her Saint Bernard how to drive a boat than it is to teach me.

I don’t even know how to start the engines on our big boat, and have no ambition to drive it. My yellow Hummer is the biggest mechanical thing I ever intend to operate.

When it comes to big-boat handling, some people have it, and most don't... and I'm in the *don't* column.

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At least the weather is beautiful today, so it's not too much of a strain being out here about a half mile past the breakwater.

The wind kicked up a little last night, so the water's a little choppy, but my sea-sick pills have kicked in and I'm almost starting to enjoy myself – except for some jerk in a fast sport cruiser that's coming at us a little too fast.

As he zips past us, his wake sprays us good so we're all now sitting in the boat soaking wet - and to make matters even worse, Suzi's dog, which had been relaxing on his large cushion, has decided to shake himself dry, giving all of us downwind of him another saltwater shower.

When the driver of that fast boat sped by us, I could swear he had a smirk on his face, like he was enjoying himself. What a jerk.

Other boaters see this yahoo and toot their horns at him; many yell at him to slow down, but he ignores them all and just keeps going.

From what I hear from Suzi's ship-to-shore radio conversation with one or two of the other boats in our parade, the guy's name is John Harris, and other than the fact that he can handle his boat well enough to back it in to one of those difficult sea-wall slips, his reputation is less than stellar: everyone wishes he'd move to another marina or just give up boating completely.



He and his partner own some sort of company, and for business purposes, they keep that fast cabin cruiser and an

apartment near to it, down at the end of B Basin.

\* \* \* \* \*

I consider our part in the parade a success: everyone saw us and we saw everyone else. I didn't get seasick, our boat didn't sink and we made it safely back to the slip, where I'm now sitting in the main cabin of our yacht calling my friend Stuart.

He left a voicemail for me about some new business he's starting up, so I'm returning his call to make an appointment to meet up with him.

The usual procedure is for him to meet me for lunch at the ChartHouse, a dockside restaurant a walking distance from our boat, where we'll have a drink or two while he explains his new venture.



View from my favorite booth at the ChartHouse

All I'm getting is his voicemail, so I leave a message to let him know that I didn't forget to get back to him.

He's the most entrepreneurial guy I know. His inventions and business ideas have made him extremely successful, and I look forward to getting an advance heads-up for each of his new business plans.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back at the boat I hear Suzi on the phone, trying to find out as much as she can about John Harris, the rude boat driver.

I feel sorry for him if he attracts Suzi as an enemy, because she's relentless about any person who even comes close to causing harm to her and/or her dog. I wish there was some way for me to be included in that small circle of protected life forms.

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