

Defense lawyer, writer visits mystery fiction class

by Tina McFarland
Staff Writer

It was a dark and stormy night. Thunder rattled the windows as lightning bolts illuminated the figure behind the podium. Speaking above the pelting rain, she introduced him, summed up his life in a few brief paragraphs.

"Phillip Margolin graduated from American University, then was in the Peace Corps for two years. He attended New York University's School of Law.

"Ninety percent of his work is at the level of criminal defense trials. He has been involved in over 30 murder cases. He has argued at the United States Supreme Court and has been frequently involved at the State Supreme Court," she said.

Thunder crackled as she told the audience about the books he had written.

"I have asked Phillip to discuss his writing process and publishing history with us. I am certainly curious to find out when he has the time to write. But I'm also interested in, for example, how much of the story he has in his mind before he starts writing." Then she introduced him.

The room quieted as he took his place behind the podium and began to speak.

Margolin, criminal defense attorney and author of three mystery novels, visited Susan Kobos' mystery fiction writing class Thursday.

Margolin started his law career in 1970 as a law clerk for the chief judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals. From 1973 to the present, he has been a private practicing attorney. In his spare time, Margolin writes mystery novels.

Margolin has always been interested in writing. In elementary school, he subscribed to *Ellery Queen* magazines. In the



Photo by Tina McFarland

Phillip Margolin, a criminal defense lawyer and mystery novel writer, visited Susan Kobos' mystery fiction writing class, Thursday.

and sixth grades, he even wrote stories and sent them in to publishers. However, he was 30 when his first story was published.

"I thought you had to be Einstein and Shakespeare combined," he said. That is why he never actively pursued having one of his pieces published before then.

Margolin wrote what he called his "African Novel," but it was never published because he said, "it had no plot."

"People won't line up around the corner to pay \$20 for your life story," he laughed.

Margolin first had a story published in 1974 in a mystery magazine. He said he had to sit down and analyze why this story was published and the others weren't. He decided it was because this story had a plot, which is one of his rules for writing a novel.

"Novels should have a very circuitous plot. I love to make the readers think they absolutely know what's going to happen then

zing them. Once you've got them the first time, knocked them off their feet, you've got them for the rest of the book," he said.

"Heartline," Margolin's first mystery novel was published in 1978, after he spent two years in the writing process. It was nominated for an Edgar Award.

Margolin's second novel, "The Last Innocent Man," was published in 1981, and later made into an HBO movie which was filmed in Portland. His third book, which will be released this October, is titled "Gone, But Not Forgotten" and is DoubleDay's lead book for this fall. It has already been sold to the Literary Guild, and could be a candidate for the best-seller list.

Margolin's inspiration to write his novel was that he'd never written anything more than 25 pages long, and he wanted to see if he could do it.

"I didn't see how anyone could write a two or three hundred page book," he said.

"I sit down and work until I

get tired. Sometimes I'll sit all day and get one sentence. Sometimes I'll get 20 pages. It (writing) is not a natural skill. Some people have a natural skill, but it's not natural, it's a learned skill, like learning to play tennis.

"Writing is really hard work. The most important part of your anatomy is this (your butt) when you're going to be a writer, because writers sit down on their butts and write," he said.

Margolin writes "catch as catch can," meaning that he writes whenever he has free time. He writes for pleasure, but says he will never be real serious about it because he has a full-time job.

According to Margolin, \$5,000 is the average yearly salary for a writer. He said a writer may get \$2,500 for his first book, but he may have spent two years writing it. He recommends that everyone who decides to be a writer have a full-time job as well.

As a writer, Margolin has developed a list of rules to fol-

low as he is writing his books. He suggests that writers need to write about what they know. When he needs to describe a courtroom or a jail cell, he simply closes his eyes and envisions the last courtroom or cell he was in. He said that writers don't need to give too much physical description because "readers use their imagination to fill in the gaps."

For emotional description, however, Margolin translates his own feelings into his characters. He feels that the characters must be believable, and in order to make the characters believable, they must have histories.

"They (the characters) have got to act like real people. Develop the character so the reader thinks 'Gee, this guy is a little like me,'" he said.

Another of Margolin's rules for writing a novel is to have an ending before you start writing. "You don't have to keep the ending, because as the plot develops, the characters and plot take on lives of their own, but you have to know where you are going," he said.

One of the difficult parts of being a writer is dealing with rejection. "You have to learn to live with rejection. No one is rejected more than a writer. 'Gone With the Wind' was rejected I think 14 times before it was sold," Margolin explained.

While Margolin feels writing is hard work, he seemingly enjoys his talent and being a well-known author. However, he said, "I never believed I could do it."

The rain had slowed to a drizzle, the thunder and lightning had dissipated. He graciously thanked her and the audience as he gathered his umbrella to go.

"Thanks again for coming," she said. "Have a nice evening." And she waved as he walked down the hall.

Group travels to Central Oregon

by Nicole Turley
Staff Writer

Geology Instructor Ellen Cameron and Nan Hage, assistant director of projects at the John Inskeep Environmental Learning Center, took eight individuals on this year's Central Oregon Spring Tour, May 14 through 16.

"We thoroughly enjoyed it," said Hage when asked about the tour.

During the three days, the small group of 10 visited and learned the history of several sites in central Oregon.

"Basically, we studied the natural history of central Oregon," Hage said, "but geology was the main emphasis."

First, they stopped at the Warm Springs Indian Museum. "I recommend people go visit it if they haven't already," Hage said. After that they had lunch by the Deschutes River.

The group visited the internationally-known Smith Rock. Hage and another member of the group climbed Misery Ridge, which Hage said was "very aptly

named" because it was 3,300-feet high and almost straight up and down. Hage said the rigorous climb to the top was worth it though, because the view was wonderful. "It was awesome," Hage said.

They topped off the experience with some Smith Rock huckleberry ice cream. "It's a tradition, when you go to Smith Rock, you have huckleberry ice cream," Hage said.

At Sunriver, Hage said "the weather was ideal." The group saw the lava cast forests, the Newberry National monument and the Sunriver Nature Center. In a meadow just past the Newberry National monument, the group witnessed quite an array of wildlife.

"We saw two gold eagles, one bald eagle, one red tailed hawk and two coyotes, all in the span of 15 minutes," Hage said.

Overall, Hage said this year's Central Oregon Spring Tour was very exciting. "We got to see a lot, and everybody had a real good time," Hage concluded.

May proclaimed National Wetlands Month

by Daphne Hartt
Staff Writer

The Wetlands Conservancy and its Urban Streams Council recently joined Governor Barbara Roberts to proclaim May 1993 as National Wetlands Month.

The proclamation states that wetland management is a concern to Oregon and therefore, promotes protection and conservation of wetlands statewide.

In recognition of National Wetlands Month, TWC offered two tours of wetlands nearby. Wildlife biologist Clyde Scott and TWC's Bryan Boyce led a group on the volunteer-built trails of Pascuzzi Pond on May 8. Another tour, in which Steward Mart Hughes guided a group around the Minthorn Springs Wetlands, was held on May 15.

TWC, which was founded in 1981 by Jack Broome, is an Oregon land trust. In February of 1992, the non-profit organization opened up its main headquarters in Tualatin. It presently owns 60

acres in various locations in the state, and relies on memberships, donations and volunteers to accomplish its goals.

Tony Laska, a Harvard graduate, is the executive director of TWC. He earned his M.S. in biological sciences in 1970, and followed up with a Ph.D. in biological sciences at Tulane University in New Orleans, La. He has worked as an environment/energy planner in New Orleans, and has had several other jobs dealing with the environment. Laska took his current position in February of 1992.

Broome, a conservancy founder and former president, assists Laska in the management of conservancy properties. Although Broome is supposedly retired, he volunteers his leadership and time. Federal, state, and local levels have given Broome his much-deserved recognition for his past eight years of full-time volunteer leadership.

In addition to preserving wet-

lands, educating schools, working with Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs and helping Cub Scouts, TWC produces a publication to inform its members of progress and future agenda.

Since TWC has a full-time staff of only four, its volunteer program is of great importance. TWC has more than 150 volunteers, who consist of biologists, landscape architects, geologists, attorneys and students. Their tasks range from clearing non-native, invasive vegetation to handling legal aspects of land to landscaping a natural-looking habitat.

At the present, TWC is creating a Wetland Plant List for North Willamette and Tualatin Valleys. The list will include habitat preferences, wetland indicator status and the problem status of particular plants.

TWC's most recent acquisition is a land trust in Waldport, Ore. Broome has been in contact with the city about wetland preservation.