

# The Crime Cafe with Bill Brier

Presented By:

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**Debbi** [00:00:13]: *Hi, everyone. This is the Crime Cafe, your podcasting source of great crime, suspense and thriller writing. I'm your host, Debbi Mack. Before I bring on my guest, I'll just remind you that the Crime Cafe has two e-books for sale; the nine-book box set and the short story anthology. You can find the buy links for both on my website, [www.debbimack.com](http://www.debbimack.com) under the "Crime Cafe" link. You can also get a free copy of either book if you become a Patreon supporter. You'll get that and much more if you support the podcast on Patreon, along with our eternal gratitude for doing so.*

**Debbi** [00:01:02]: Hi, everyone. Today, we have a crime fiction author who has a most interesting background. Before he began writing books, he worked in the film industry in different capacities. He also drives race cars. Now, he writes mysteries and thrillers. I'm pleased to have with me today, the award-winning author, Bill Brier. Hi, Bill, how you doing today?

**Bill Brier** [00:01:28]: Hi, fine. How are you doing, Debbi?

**Debbi** [00:01:30]: Okay. Um, where are you coming from today?

**Bill** [00:01:38]: Thousand Oaks, California. I live in California.

**Debbi** [00:01:41]: Ah, very nice. So, let's talk about your books. I'm in the midst of reading *The Devil Orders Take-out*, a standalone thriller. Was that your first novel?

**Bill** [00:01:55]: Yes, uh-huh, it was.

**Debbi** [00:01:57]: Okay. And what prompted you to write that particular story?

**Bill** [00:02:02]: Well, that story started with—I was actually going to do a story about a talking dog, and I wrote maybe 50 pages of a young teenaged golfer who had this dog that would retrieve golf balls. And after about 50 pages, I realized this was working very well, so I scrapped it and started all over again. And I kept the character, the young boy, he was actually a teenager and eliminated the dog and the story went from there.

**Debbi** [00:02:44]: Hmm, interesting. And can you tell us a little bit about the story?

**Bill** [00:02:49]: Sure. It has to do with a mob boss and a first-rate tax lawyer who get into battles; life-and-death battles. The lawyer had a son murdered and, in trying to seek revenge, he sought out this crime boss. Now, prior to this, the crime boss had come up and approached the attorney asking him to settle an IRS case because he was being audited and he knew that this lawyer was the best there is. The lawyer refused to take the case and the crime boss was very upset with him. Later, the lawyer's son and wife get killed through circumstances and there was a person who was responsible for this death, and the lawyer wanted retribution. Well, he bought a gun but he lost his nerve, so he remembered the crime boss. He approached the crime boss and said, "Okay, I will do your taxes, you take care of rubbing out this person." And what happens is that the crime boss does do that, but now the man is indebted to the crime boss and a lot of mystery and other things happen. And the son of the lawyer turns out to be a gifted golfer and the crime boss threatens to kill the kid—he was only maybe eight years old at this time—because he was mad at

the lawyer. So, they are in the office, the crime boss' office, and he says, "You're gonna get it hard, Bolt. You're not gonna like it, but I'm going to kill your son." And the lawyer looks on the wall behind the crime boss and sees a picture of him playing golf with Lee Trevino, a professional golfer at the time, so he catches on that he likes golf. So, he says, "If you kill me, you'll miss out on making millions of dollars." "Oh yeah, you tell me how that's gonna happen", the crime boss says. Well, thinking quickly, he says "my son is a gifted golfer" and he's gonna win what would be the Masters.

**Debbi** [00:05:58]: By the way, you don't have to give away all the spoilers here [laughs].

**Bill** [00:06:01]: Right. Well, the story goes on. So, anyhow, the story goes on with that [laughs].

**Debbi** [00:06:15]: Well, I mean actually, it's a very suspenseful book. But you also have a series called "The Killer Who" series.

**Bill** [00:06:23]: Right.

**Debbi** [00:06:24]: Now, I know it involves a buried car but can you give me a bit more? Who is the protagonist and how do you see this person developing over the series?

**Bill** [00:06:33]: Okay. Well, let me just start this way. In 2007, Tulsa, OK, they dug up a car that had been buried for 50 years and it was buried because Tulsa was celebrating their 50th year of statehood and the car was to be dug up in 50 years. 50 years came in 2007 and no one knew whether it would be a rust bucket or whether it would be a pristine car. They dug it up, they lifted off the top and sure enough there was a rust bucket. And I looked at that because it was on a news clip in 2007, when they unearthed the car, and I looked and I said, you know, there's a story in that trunk. So, that prompted me to write this book. And it starts out in the prologue with one of our main characters, Mary Beth, who's a teenage mother, unmarried running through the brush with her father chasing her and she's carrying a baby, and she jumps inside a hollow oak tree with the baby. And he wants to take the baby, she says, "No, you'll take my baby", and the prologue ends with him reaching in to grab the baby. So, what happens now is where'd the baby go because the reader doesn't know what happened with the baby and the story goes from there.

**Debbi** [00:08:21]: Mm-hmm. And who is the protagonist? Who is the sleuth?

**Bill** [00:08:25]: Well, Bucky. He's a 20-year-old who came to Oklahoma, the town is called Defiance, OK. And he came because he wanted to be a businessman, so he ends up selling cars and he has a girlfriend and they get involved in looking for the baby. And the whole story is them looking for the baby with lots of subplots.

**Debbi** [00:08:58]: Hmm, I see. Very interesting. How would you describe your writing style to a reader who has never read your work before?

**Bill** [00:09:11]: Well, one of the things that I like in stories—and I write my stories with this in mind—is happy endings. I want to finish a book and feel good about it.

So, my endings turn out to be happy endings, and I think that's a significant characteristic of my writing. I write in first person and I've also written in omniscient person but in third person. So, it depends on the story on how I write it, the style.

**Debbi** [00:09:55]: Does it tend to be more amateur sleuth, cozy type? Humorous?

**Bill** [00:10:01]: It's more cozy than hard, but I wouldn't say it's cozy; it's leaning that way.

**Debbi** [00:10:09]: Mm-hmm, yeah, kind of that in between.

**Bill** [00:10:13]: This isn't sweet enough to be to be cozy. And the crime boss in the other movie is a pretty vicious person and there's some vicious scenes in it.

**Debbi** [00:10:25]: Gotcha. Okay. On the subject of your previous career, I was very intrigued to see that you worked as a cameraman and editor in the film industry, the business as they say. I guess they call it that. Do your experiences in film ever inform your writing?

**Bill** [00:10:53]: Probably, but in ways that are more unconscious. I would say the highlight of my motion picture career was when I started out in the Air Force when I was 18 years old. And I photographed President Kennedy the day before he was assassinated. And I was a combat cameraman. I flew in fighter jets and during the Cuban Missile Crisis. And so, I had a very interesting and exciting start as an 18-year-old going to the Air Force motion picture camera school and going from there. And then when I got out of the Air Force, I went to Hollywood, where I grew up and got into the motion picture business there, worked on a lot of movies; *The Exorcist* and *Titanic*, a lot of movies with special effects.

**Debbi** [00:11:44]: Yeah. I was impressed with the movies that you've worked on. I was also impressed with the fact that you were on *The Dating Game* and you got to go on a date with Fannie Flagg?

**Bill** [00:11:56]: Yes, that's right. I was Bachelor Number One and she picked me. The show is on my website, by the way.

**Debbi** [00:12:05]: That's how I found out. That must have been fun.

**Bill** [00:12:11]: That was fun. Yeah, a lot of fun.

**Debbi** [00:12:14]: I can just imagine. Do you have a favorite movie that you worked on?

**Bill** [00:12:21]: No, because I worked on so many. And doing the visual effects, you don't work on the whole movie, you just get certain shots to work on. So, it's a very isolated kind of work. Like for instance with *Titanic* they had a big tank and we had miniatures in the tank, so we would shoot those scenes, set them up and shoot them. But we don't really do the whole broad scope of the movie, we don't see the whole thing until everybody else does.

**Debbi** [00:12:56]: Yes, yes, yeah, I can see what you're talking about. With all of your cinema experience, did you ever consider becoming a producer?

**Bill** [00:13:09]: No, a director perhaps, but a producer is a little different job description. I'm more a hands-on like, for instance, the trailers that are on my website for the books, I wrote and directed and acted in some of those, and that was a lot of fun. And when I was in the service, we used to shoot training movies and sometimes I would help with the scripts on those.

**Debbi** [00:13:40]: Mm-hmm. I have to say your trailers are clever, I was checking them out. What authors do you find most inspiring?

**Bill** [00:13:51]: Well, I'm rereading John Grisham, I love John Grisham. A lot of people say, "Well, he's not really deep," but he tells a good story. He's a wonderful writer. And I'm rereading one of his books right now, so I like him. Stephen King, of course. A lot of my reading, honestly, is nonfiction. I'm more of a nonfiction reader than a reader. I never even read a mystery book until I wrote my own [laughs].

**Debbi** [00:14:23]: That's interesting.

**Bill** [00:14:27]: I read a lot, I read every day.

**Debbi** [00:14:30]: I'm curious as to why you chose mystery as a genre if you never read it?

**Bill** [00:14:35]: Because, well, it was the buried car and I said there's a story in there and I just decided to write it. My wife gets a kick out of me because I get on these kicks, you know, like I said "I'm gonna buy a race car" and I bought a race car. And there were other things I can't even remember right now that I said, that all of a sudden, I say I'm gonna do this and I do it. Oh, I was an artist for a while. My wife is an artist, she goes to art classes. I said, "Oh, I'll do that," so I went to art classes, too. And then once I started writing, I gave up the art and started writing and I've been doing that now for, I don't know, 17 years or so, so I haven't given up on that yet.

**Debbi** [00:15:23]: Hmm, wow. Well, that's cool. What made you decide to write books? I mean, in other words, change for your cinema career to writing books.

**Bill** [00:15:36]: Well, I retired from cinema, that was pretty much it. Yeah, so it gave me something to do.

**Debbi** [00:15:44]: So, it wasn't a matter of changing careers, it was a matter of you retired and decided to start writing?

**Bill** [00:15:49]: Yeah, I wasn't tired, I was bored [laughs]. I do a lot of traveling, and my wife and I love to travel. We're getting ready to go up the Columbia River for a couple weeks, and to Oregon and Washington in another month, we're looking forward to that. We've been to foreign countries, so we do a lot of that.

**Debbi** [00:16:16]: Well, I can tell you the northwest is beautiful country.

**Bill** [00:16:20]: Mm-hmm.

**Debbi** [00:16:21]: And let's see, apart from "The Killer Who" books, do you have any other projects that you're working on?

**Bill** [00:16:28]: No, just another one of “The Killer Who” books. *The Killer Who Had No Choice* is the one that I'm writing right now. So, I've got *The Killer Who Hated Soup*, *The Killer Who Wasn't There*, and now *The Killer Who Had No Choice*. And they often have a theme of some sort, and this theme takes place in the Mormon community.

**Debbi** [00:16:55]: Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to add before we finish up?

**Bill** [00:17:02]: No, but I appreciate you having me on your show and I've been looking forward to this. And I love writing and I encourage other people to write. I had a woman [who] talked to me on my website and asked me how I got involved and how she might get involved, and I gave her a list of books. I've got a whole book case there. And I'll tell you right now, this is a wonderful set, this is a set it's put out by *Elements of Fiction Writing*, and there's a whole series, and I got so much. Here's *Descriptions*, *Dialog*, *Scene and Structure*, *Characters and Viewpoint*, and there's probably six or seven other books in there. And these were very good books, I've learned a lot and I read probably 50 books before I launched in or as I was launching in.

**Debbi** [00:18:11]: And what was the name of the series again?

**Bill** [00:18:14]: The series is *Elements of Fiction*.

**Debbi** [00:18:17]: Just *Elements of Fiction*?

**Bill** [00:18:20]: Right. And as I said, they have different titles and they're by different authors. This is Orson Scott Card, well-known author. And this is Jack Beckham. And this is Lewis Turco. But it's *Elements of Fiction Writing*, they're pretty concise, excellent starter kit.

**Debbi** [00:18:45]: Well, that's good. Along with reading in the genre that you want to write in, I'd say that's good advice; read up on the craft.

**Bill** [00:18:56]: Sure.

**Debbi** [00:18:57]: Well, thank you very much for being here, Bill. I appreciate your talking with us.

**Bill** [00:19:01]: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Debbi. It's been a real pleasure.

**Debbi** [00:19:05]: And I'll just remind everyone to please leave a review on iTunes, Stitcher or wherever you listen. And a quick heads-up, I'm getting ready to unveil a cool surprise for anyone who supports the Crime Cafe podcast on Patreon at the \$5 level. It just so happens that I'm reissuing my fourth Sam McRae novel next month. *Deep Six* is the name, and the surprise is connected to the release of the book. So, on that note, I'll just say check out the Patreon page to learn more. And it's on my website [www.debbimack.com](http://www.debbimack.com). So, our guest next time will be Tony Knighton and until then, thanks so much for listening and happy reading.