

MOTOROLA AUSTIN ALUMNI CLUB:

THE GENERAL MEETING MINUTES AUGUST 11, 2020

ATTENDEES: We had 28 attendees at our first ZOOM meeting with those who responded to the idea of holding our quarterly general meeting virtually on the ZOOM program. It was great to be able to see the faces of our members including some who have moved out of state.

SPEAKER: Sandra Lawell introduced our speaker Mark Pryor and said she and Ray would use an interview question format and others could also ask Mark questions after telling us about himself. Mr. Pryor is a British mystery writer and Assistant District Attorney for Travis County, Texas. He is best known for his mystery novels featuring Hugo Marston, a former FBI agent from Texas and now head of security at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Mark grew up in Hertfordshire, England and now lives in Austin, TX with his wife and three young children. Over the years, he has been many things: ski instructor, journalist, personal trainer, and a bra folder (he lasted one day: fired for giggling at the ridiculousness of the job. If it is any excuse, he was just nineteen years old.) His first real career was as a newspaper reporter in Colchester, Essex. There, he covered the police and crime beat for almost two years. He also wrote stories on foreign assignments, including accounts from Northern Ireland while with the British Army, and from Romania where he covered the first-anniversary celebrations of that country's revolution. Mark moved to America in 1994, mostly for the weather. He attended journalism school at the University of North Carolina, in Chapel Hill, and then law school at Duke University, graduating with honors and a lot of debt and a wife. He is currently an Assistant District Attorney with the Travis County DA's office. Or as he tells his kids, "I help catch bad guys." Simplistic, yes, but you try explaining the judicial system to six-year-old twins!

Mark travels to Paris yearly for background material for his Hugo Marston series of books. There are 8 books in the series with the ninth book, *The French Widow*, coming out in about a month. His series is in Barnes & Nobel Bookstores. His first book was published in 2012.

Sandra asked Mark if he always wanted to be an author... Mark said he thinks he always did because he had a teacher who introduced him to a newsbook format and when he came back from vacation I wrote a book about his summer vacation.

Ray asked if Mark had ever written a book that got turned down right away... Mark said he had 3 books rejected before the first book in the Hugo Marston series.

Sandra - What is the process you use to write your books... Mark said he has had about 600 rejections over the years. I used to write 2 books a year and sometimes when I write a story, it gets rejected right away.

Ray – How do you come up with ideas for your books? Mark says he carries a notebook and writes down things he sees. Sometimes ideas come to me and I write them down like when I worked on my showerhead and it gave me an idea for a scene in a Hugo Marston book. I sometimes get ideas from cases I have in court. Mainly things in the process used to solve the case, detective work.

Sandra – Any of your characters based on real people? ... Yes, I used people's names and most times their descriptions.

Ray – In one of your books you killed of the main character, why would you do that? ... A lot of times the character gets shot or stabbed in the book, go to the hospital and after a few days they are all right. Sometimes the character doesn't live, and a different character becomes the new main character.

Sandra – How has the Coronavirus affected your writing? ... I have been finishing some projects, but it has stymied me & I need to go on vacation to get the juices flowing again.

Ray – Ever been interested in movies or TV writing? ... Yes, I have been approached by a couple of writers to help collaborate, but the Coronavirus has put things on hold.

Sandra - What kind of books do you like to read? ... I like to read mystery or detective stories I grew up reading Hardy Boys and crime fiction.

Jim Binneboese – How do you keep both jobs going? ... I have 250 cases but the Coronavirus keeps us on hold. I don't work long hours and I only work weekends when I have a jury trial. I use time management mostly.

Sandra thanked Mark for participating and thanked everyone who asked questions.

Scholarships: Jim Binneboese thanked the members of the scholarship committee, Wayne Harned and Bill Pfaff, and Mary Jane Harned who were former teachers for their hard work selecting the recipients of this year's awards. Winners were Nicholas Martin from Cedar Park who is going into Electrical Engineering at TX A&M, Nicholas ranked #49 out of 500 with his GPA and Sara Barlow from Hays Consolidated who will be attending UTSA Medical for General or Emergency Surgery. Sara ranked #11 out of 647 and has family in the medical field. All four candidates submitted their applications and had ZOOM interviews. We ended up with over \$5,00.00 dollars in the fund and will have the leftover money as seed for next years scholarship fund.

The Gary Daniels Motorola Scholarship for Leaders in Electrical Computer Engineering (UT Scholarship) candidate will receive \$1500

sponsored by an anonymous donor and we are waiting on the BIO and a picture.

Picnic: Wayne Harned announced that the annual picnic for this year is cancelled and we will try again next year hoping for the Coronavirus to be over.

Christmas Party: Sandra Lawell said we have until the first of December to cancel the Christmas Lunch and that Maggiano's can either return our down payment or hold it over for next year. We will be waiting to see how the pandemic is going with schools back in session both remotely and in person classes. We will know by Novembers meeting whether we will cancel Christmas lunch.

Treasurer Report: Cal Gooden stated the MAAC Checking account increased from \$949.94 to \$1,084.94 due to some members sending in their dues. MAAC Savings account increased from \$5262.29 to \$5,277.54 due to dues and interest accrued. The total Scholarship fund increased from \$4,635 to \$5,645.52. The "Members Fund" portion is at \$4,445.52 and the Gary Daniels Scholarship Fund portion is at \$1,200.00. We did receive a special donation of \$1,000.00 for the UT Gary Daniels Engineering Scholarship Fund. We also had the \$60 reservation deposit from the Parks and Recreation Department returned due to cancellation of the picnic.

Jim Binneboese thanked Ray Voith and Sandra Lawell for setting up and training some members on ZOOM Meetings and thanked everyone who joined in for todays meeting. Our next meeting will be Nov 10th and may also be on ZOOM.

Sandra mentioned that she still needs names of any Motorolan that may need assistance with rides to doctors or groceries. We also need biographies of the club members. This will help us get to know some of

our newer members and refresh our minds with some of our regular members. It doesn't need to be very long, just some interesting fun facts and maybe even a picture of yourself.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 and each participant signed out.