

Author Lida Sideris brings another murder mystery to life in her new book 'Murderous Means'

Former Bar Association executive director's sixth novel with heroine Corrie Locke comes out Dec. 5

By Pamela Dozois
Contributing Writer

Local author Lida Sideris has just finished the sixth book in her Southern California Mysteries series, titled "Murderous Means," which will be released on Dec. 5. Sideris will be holding a book signing from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, at The Book Loft in Solvang.

"So far, I've concocted seven murders — on the page, of course," Sideris said. "That includes six novels and one short story, all with homicides or possible homicides that need to be solved.

"Fortunately, the criminal is always caught by my heroine, Corrie Locke, a young lawyer whose desk job regularly takes a backseat to her penchant for crime-solving. After all, she knows a thing or two about investigations, thanks to her P.I. dad."

Sideris said she has always been a fan of famed literary teen detective Nancy Drew. She loved how she never sat on the sidelines.

"She was a multi-talented, young woman of action and a snazzy dresser, to boot," Sideris said. "Who doesn't love a heroine who takes control of her life and does things? Case solved, and she's on to the next one."

It was those Nancy Drew novels that eventually inspired Lideris to create a character and stories of her own.

"I'd been wanting to write mystery novels since I first read Nancy Drew as a child, but I never thought that I could," she said. "It wasn't until after my younger son started college that I came into my own and my first novel was created. I didn't let my full-time job stop me either."

Sideris worked for the Santa Barbara County Bar Association for 13 years as its executive director and retired on June 1, 2022.

Like Nancy Drew, Sideris' heroine is brave, determined and mostly smart, but she's having a little more trouble than usual in finding the culprit in 'Murderous Means,' mostly because she's not sure there is a culprit, and secondly because she's suddenly without one of her



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much-needed skills, thanks to a slight mishap.

When a wealthy matriarch of the dysfunctional Means family dies in her sleep, the family is convinced her death was anything but peaceful. They hire Locke to prove it, but the only evidence she and her sidekicks, Veera and Michael, have to go on is a psychic's half-baked vision that it was murder. To put the matter to rest, Locke sets her sights on proving the psychic is a fraud. After all, everyone knows psychics are crack-pots, don't they?

But what should be a simple investigation morphs into something deadly. The deeper Locke digs, the more bizarre clues are revealed, and a possible witness is found dead. As tempers rise, it's up to Locke to catch a killer ... who's about to strike again.

"This time my setting is a little different," explained Sideris. "Fictional places are common in my series, sometimes inspired by real ones,

and 'Murderous Means' is no different, except that a whole town is fictional. The main events take place in the tiny town of Los Ranchos (population 1,200). It's kind of like a Mayberry sandwiched between two Southern California powerhouses: the cities of Calabasas and Malibu. That is, if Mayberry looked like a movie set from an old Hollywood western."

The book's plotline was spurred by articles Lideris read concerning psychics.

"After reading articles about psychics and the tools they use to make 'high probability generalizations' that encourage people to become believers, I had to ask what would happen if my heroine met a psychic head-on?" Sideris continued. "Then I heard about the unexpected death of a wealthy matriarch of a family; her passing was deemed to be of natural causes. A seemingly peaceful death ... until Corrie again stepped into my head, asking 'what if it wasn't

all that peaceful? We have to find out what happened.' And that's exactly what we did, on the page, of course, in 'Murderous Means.'"

Preceding "Murderous Means," Sideris' mystery novels include "Murder and Other Natural Disasters," "Murder Gone Missing," "Murder Double or Nothing," "Slightly Murderous Intent," and "Gambling with Murder," all of which will be available locally at the Book Loft, the library, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, and most book stores after Dec. 5.

Sideris is a recipient of the Helen McCloy Mystery Writers of America Scholarship Award and a Killer Nashville Silver Falchion Award finalist.

Mystery book lovers can meet up with Sideris on Saturday, Dec. 16, at The Book Loft, located on 1680 Mission Drive in Solvang.

For more information, visit www.lidasideris.com or lida@lidasideris.com.