



Photo by Bonnie Cardone

Carolyn Hart's novel, *Letter From Home*, received the Agatha Award for Best Novel

Malice Domestic Tribute

A Celestial Press Conference

Malice Domestic XIX Tribute to Lifetime Achievement Honoree Carolyn Hart by Nancy Pickard

Agatha Christie held a press conference in Heaven the other day.

This was surprising—because who knew there were any reporters in Heaven?

Dame Agatha's purpose was to crown her heir apparent: Carolyn G. Hart.

"There were other suspects," Dame Agatha acknowledged, "but all the evidence points to Carolyn, to wit:

"Her plotting is classic perfection, and I should know, if I do say so myself. All of her plots tumble together in the most satisfying way, like shuffling cards and then laying down four aces. . . flip, flip, flip, flip. . . a feat which astonishes one and all, and which few players will ever match.

"Her writing," Dame Agatha continued, "is crisp as. . . crisps. (I do miss them! With vinegar. You'd think we could get some up here, wouldn't you? And a decent Scotch egg, for God's sake, so to speak. Sometimes the service up here is so. . . French.) We visualize her characters and settings so clearly, because she conjures them with a spare elegance that reminds readers of the writing of. . . ahem. . . me.

"Though she never preaches, her heroines' values are impeccable: trustworthy, decent, always on the side of goodness, kindness, and fair play."

Dame Agatha then astonished the heavenly hosts by saying, "Carolyn G. Hart has polished and improved my tradition,



Longtime friends Nancy Pickard and Carolyn Hart enjoyed breakfast in Madison, WI with friends. From L to R: Margaret Maron, Nancy Pickard, Kate Flora, C, Suzie Doore from Hodder Stoughton, Gillian Roberts.

adding more humor and suspense, lively romance, and important modern accoutrement such as believably contemporary language. Her Annie Darling and Henrie O are accomplished, straightforward, vigorous women, and I confess I envy and admire them! My own poor Jane had to be so manipulative to get her own way, don't you know, because of the era in which she and I lived. Carolyn has freed the female amateur sleuth from those unfortunate Victorian restraints, and I say, you go girl!



Photo by Bonnie Cardone.

Carolyn Hart and Nancy Pickard
at the Sisters in Crime anniversary party
during Bouchercon.

"For all of these contributions, I bless her, because even beloved forms of literature must evolve in order to thrive."

Then the Grande Dame drew herself up to formidable height and pronounced: *Carolyn Gimpel Hart, author of 39 marvelous novels, author of the Pulitzer Prize nominated Letter From Home, upholder of the Malice Domestic faith, champion of the amateur sleuth, devoted Sister in Crime, mailing list compiler extraordinaire, winner of more awards than anybody ever gave me, wife to dear Philip, mother to sweet Sarah and Philip Jr., grandmother to adorable Trent and Adrienne, I crown you my official heir designate. Long may you reign, preferably at the top of the bestseller lists!*"

And then Mrs. Christie whispered in an aside to Carolyn, who stood beaming beside her, "My dear, if you need help with that wonderful new series of ghost mysteries you're writing, do call on me!"

Hallelujahs were sung all 'round!

Nancy Pickard

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The Virgin of Small Plains
Agatha Winner ~ Edgar nominee