

Published in The Orange County Register on Sept. 2, 2000

'Irish Eyes' puts a Southern spin on mystery genre

By Steve Burns

The Orange County Register

If you're weary of freeway bumper pool, LA-type police corruption, or two-career romantic stress, you'll feel the pain of Callahan Garrity in "Irish Eyes," the eighth in a series of murder mysteries by Kathy Hogan Trocheck.

Getty is a former Atlanta policewoman turned private detective and operator of a home-based housecleaning business, the House Mouse.

With her usual gaggle of Southern stereotype friends and employees, she again deals with life, love and death in Atlanta, now the site of the Olympics, Super Bowls, World Series and CNN. And, as the book notes, drugs, clogged roads, and school shootings, typical of a megalopolis that is growing too fast for its own good.

This time Garrity is thrown into a situation with some former police colleagues in which it's hard for her to tell who the good guys are.

She and a former police friend, Bucky Deavers, stop by a liquor store after a St. Patrick's Day event attended by several members of the Atlanta force. Deavers suddenly goes down with two gunshots to the head, with Garrity waiting in the car outside. Soon, the only witness to the shooting, the store clerk, disappears with the security-camera videotape.

While Deavers lies critically wounded and comatose in the hospital, the spin through the media tries to paint him as a rogue cop, implicated in a series of ATM robberies.

Garrity, however, isn't buying that about her old partner, and refuses to let the matter drop, despite warnings from her mother and police. Her pursuit leads her into police corruption and several dead bodies, some of which hit close to home.

Meanwhile, Mac, her longtime significant other, is talking about moving to Nashville. Fed up with the urban sprawl, he wants Garrity and her live-in mother, Edna, to come along. One of them is more willing than the other to do so.

Comic relief, as in the other Garrity mysteries, comes from Baby and Sister Easterbrooks, elderly employees of Garrity's cleaning services.

Then there are Neva Jean and Swannelle. Their idea of a big time is to "do" Talladega, Ala., during the NASCAR race.

Neva Jean, in fact, gets thrown in jail after a drunken fracas at a St. Patrick's Day event at a south Atlanta bar.

And how did Neva Jean react to the slammer? "They didn't have no cable or nothin'," she said.

But as Garrity's pursuit of Deavers' assailant gets tougher, Neva Jean proves that a blind hog indeed finds an acorn occasionally.

Garrity is the alter ego of the author, a former Atlanta newspaper reporter. But she is by no means flawless.

When desperate for information on the case, she flouts hospital regulations and regrets it. She has too much to drink, and she gets so involved in digging for information from police one evening that she forgets about Mac.

In fact, Garrity, like everyone else, needs some luck to achieve her objectives.

So if you are up for a big helping of humor and heartbreak, insanity and intrigue, read "Irish Eyes." It follows a trail well, and looks like it's leading to some new ones.
