

Checking out the bookshelf of local authors

What's going on with some area writers as the New Year begins:

Looking over his shoulder, we see that Elmore "Dutch" Leonard has completed Page 14 of a not-yet-titled thriller, to be published some time next year. When he takes a break at his at-home office in Birmingham, he looks forward to later this month when he'll travel to Florida to work with a film crew from the British Broadcasting Co. that's putting together a documentary on Detroit's best-known crime writer.

His book for 1991, "Maximum Bob," will be brought out in August. Set mainly in Palm Beach County, Fla., the suspense tale, according to Leonard, focuses on a "a judge who's made enemies." Unfortunately for the judge, Leonard adds, "it looks like someone is trying to kill him." Leonard's "Killsnot," published in

1988, has recently been optioned by 20th Century Fox.

Livingston's S.K. Wolf, just returned from a holiday visit with grandchildren in Minnesota, expects to be off soon for the Soviet Union, where she'll soak up atmosphere and conduct research for her thriller-in-progress, "Blowback." (That's an espionage term, by the way. "If you read the book, you'll know what it means," says Wolf.)

Her latest, "MacKinnon's Machine," will make its first appearance on bookshelves in April. A Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and a Reader's Digest Condensed Book, the spy novel centers on a former military official who is hired to train a strike force to assassinate Libya's Moslem Kadafi, only to find that Kadafi is not the intended target after all.

If you're a night-time, cross-



book break
Victoria
Diaz

country skier, and you meet up with a tall, rangy fellow-skier wearing an intense look of concentration and muttering a bit now and then, it may be Thomas Sullivan, working out some story ideas.

"That's when I talk to the universe," says the author of last year's "Born Burning," a horror tale.

The Lathrup Village author has just finished "Drummers on Glass," a novel he calls "a deranged love story." E.P. Dutton will bring out the

book sometime this year, although a specific publication date has not been set yet.

In the meantime, he's started work on a novel about divorce and contemporary relationships, "H.E.R.S. & H.I.M.S."

Incidentally, you could have caught a glimpse of Sullivan in the film, "Presumed Innocent." He had a "walk-on" part as a bartender in a quick scene with star Harrison Ford.

William Kienzle, recovering from recent shoulder surgery, doesn't seem to have been slowed or hindered much by the ordeal. He's just wrapped up work on another Father Koesler mystery, "Chameleon" (publication date: April), and is already into his next, "Body Count."

Ballantine is planning a major promotional campaign later this year for the paperback release of the former priest's "Masquerade," pub-

lished in hardcover last year.

"Chameleon" addressed the problems of today's church," says Kienzle from his West Bloomfield at-home office. "Catholics in the city, the understaffed churches and schools, things like that. And, yes, it's definitely set in Detroit."

Bettie Cannon, another West Bloomfield author-in-residence, is looking forward to the publication of her second young adult novel, "Begin the World Again." Her first was "A Bellsong for Sarah Raines," published in 1987 by Scribner's.

"Begin the World Again" is set both in a Midwestern farm community and a suburban community of the '70s, and is scheduled for a March publication date.

Prolific romance writer, Ruth Ryan Langan, just completed her 27th novel, "Highland Heart," the

fourth in a series of historical romances set in sixteenth-century Scotland. The first in the Harlequin series, "Highland Barbarian," came out last summer; the second, "Highland Heather," is scheduled for a February release. "Highland Fire" will appear in bookstores this summer.

Langan's "Christmas at Bitter Creek" set in the American West, was brought out by Harlequin during the holiday season.

In spare moments, Langan is collaborating on a couple of original screenplays.

"I write six days a week, eight hours a day," says the Farmington Hills novelist.

No doubt.

Victoria Diaz is a Laramie-based book reviewer.

gardener's book nook



Marty
Figley

Books about gardening make long-lasting gifts and are always a welcome addition to a gardener's bookshelf.

Two from Houghton Mifflin (both \$35 hardcover) will be treasured. The first, written by Jim Wilson host of the TV show, Victory Garden, is "Landscaping with Container Plants." As our garden areas seem to be getting smaller, this type of gardening is becoming increasingly popular. The gardens can be small or elaborate in just about any place imaginable.

Wilson writes, "You must pay close attention to the condition of the plants. Everything they need comes from you... it's neat, efficient, and

for me, the greatest boon of all is liberation from weeding."

With this in mind, he discusses how to succeed with container gardening and gives many suggestions about containers themselves (even how to make some), and where to place them for optimum results.

The descriptions of the hundreds of plants that can be used is most informative and the regional plant list will send you to your garden nursery come spring.

THE SECOND, "Beds and Borders, Traditional and Original Garden Designs," Wendy B. Murphy, is a lovely coffee-table type book, with lavish photographs by Joanne and

Jerry Pavia, waiting to be picked up and enjoyed for a few minutes or hours.

Practical information abounds about planning beds and borders, a garden style that is again becoming popular.

All of the photos are of North American gardens with examples of formal and informal gardens of every description in all parts of the country.

Sixty herbaceous flowering perennials and bulbs are described. The author encourages the reader to explore other gardens and to not be afraid to experiment.

Many of you, I am sure, remember Isabel Zucker, a respected gardener

and garden writer from this area.

Her original book, "Flowering Shrubs," first published in 1966, has been revised and updated by Derek Fell, renamed "Flowering Shrubs and Trees," and published by Grove Weidenfeld (\$40, hardcover).

The proper location, soil, and the care of these flowering shrubs has been thoroughly researched and it shows. Identification of overgrown shrubs, pest problems, stinging are included.

The encyclopedic description of many shrubs and small trees will help in decision making. The chart, which indicates flowering time, bloom color and fruit, is quite helpful. In addition, the photographs by

Fell add the perfect touch to the book that is filled with ideas.

"HERBS AND the Earth," Henry Beston (\$19.95, hardcover, David Godine) is more than a book about herbs. It is about nature and Beston's philosophy of life.

Poetic and as inspiring as when it was first written in 1935, it has been printed directly from the type and blocks of the first edition, using the woodcuts and drawings of J. H. Benson.

Even if you have never grown or never wish to grow an herb, this book will still be enjoyable reading, one the reader will turn to again and again.

The author advises the beginner to

learn to know the herbs he grows before trying others, and gives practical advice as well as history and legends.

He writes, "A garden of herbs is a garden of things loved for themselves in their wholeness and integrity — sometimes very lovely flowers and always more than flowers." Treat yourself to this gem.

A DARLING little book by Elizabeth Harbour, "Gardener's Alphabet," \$7.95. Viking contains watercolors of the alphabet in a unique way and would be a cherished addition to lovers of gardening and art.

Marty Figley is a Farmington-based garden writer.

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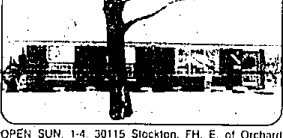
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