



SARA PARETSKY
BEST-SELLING MYSTERY WRITER / SOCIAL ACTIVIST

Sara Paretsky revolutionized the mystery world when she introduced her private detective, V.I. Warshawski, in her 1982 novel *Indemnity Only*. By creating a strong female investigator who uses her wits as well as her fists, Paretsky challenged the conventions of a genre in which women traditionally were either vamps or victims. Twelve other Warshawski novels followed, all national bestsellers, including her most recent, *Body Work*. *The Los Angeles Times* says, “Paretsky is unique among the women writing about women,” while *Publishers Weekly* claims, “Among today’s P.I.’s nobody comes close to Warshawski.” In addition to her Warshawski novels, Paretsky has written *Ghost Country*, which blends comedy, magic, and gritty realism in Chicago’s mean streets. She has also edited three collections of short stories and her books are published in 24 languages.

Paretsky’s deep-rooted concern for social justice, the hallmark of her novels, has carried her voice beyond the world of crime fiction. In her powerful book *Writing in an Age of Silence*, she explores the traditions of political and literary dissent that have informed her life and work against the unparalleled repression of free speech and thought in the US today. As a frequent contributor to *The New York Times*’ op-ed page, and a speaker at the Library of Congress, Oxford University, and the University of Chicago, she is an impassioned advocate for those on society’s margins.

Not only has Paretsky broken barriers with her work, she has also helped open doors for other women writers in the field. Her role in founding Sisters in Crime, an organization that supports women mystery writers, caused *Ms.* magazine to name her Woman of the Year in 1988. In 2002, the British Crime Writers Association awarded her the Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement. Sara Paretsky has been a visiting scholar at Oxford University and a visiting professor at Northwestern University. Her work is celebrated in the documentary *Women of Mystery* and she has been the recipient of three honorary doctorates. To give back to the community, Paretsky has established scholarships at the University of Kansas, including a special prize for students doing creative work in the arts or sciences. In 2001, she established the Sara and Two C-Dogs Foundation, which primarily supports girls and women in the arts, letters, and sciences. She has also mentored students in Chicago’s inner city schools.

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Paretsky grew up in eastern Kansas. She and her four brothers attended a two-room country school, where Paretsky began her lifelong love of baseball and underdogs, playing third base for a school team that always finished at the bottom of its rural league. Her first published writing, which appeared in *The American Girl* magazine when she was eleven, told a tale of surviving a tornado with her schoolmates. While at the University of Kansas, Paretsky went to Chicago to do community service under the direction of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She received both a doctorate in history and an MBA from the University of Chicago.

TOPICS:

- Trailing After Dickens: Why I Write the Books I Do
- My Quest for Heroes: Creating a Writer's Voice
- Women, Speech & Silence
- Truth, Lies & Duct Tape: Writing in an Age of Silence