

An evening with New Mexico's Michael McGarrity

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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From criminal justice to bestselling author

Zollinger Library at UNM-Gallup campus hosted an evening with national bestselling author and former New Mexico criminal justice professional Michael McGarrity March 28.

McGarrity, who lives in Santa Fe, incorporates a touch of the rich culture and history of New Mexico into his ideas about police paperwork. McGarrity was in law enforcement in Santa Fe County for about 25 years. His criminal justice career included being an investigator, deputy sheriff, and working in state law enforcement and for the public defender. He began his writing career in the 1980s.

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McGarrity jokes that after writing for a mere 14 years, he became an overnight sensation. After penning his first book, and despite its failure to find an audience, he was hooked. In 1996, when "*Tularosa*" was published, he became a full-time writer. He has authored 12 crime novels and says he doesn't like to categorize them as mystery novels. Copies of McGarrity's latest book, *Residue*, were given away at the event, along with a Q & A, and book signing.

The event was sponsored by the Zollinger Library with generous support from UNM Gallup's Fall 2018 Mini-Grant. "We try to have each semester one either local author or somebody that has written something about the local," library Director Cecilia Stafford said. that the students can come in and ask questions about the writing process, and things like that."

This semester, Stafford says the \$2,000 mini-grant was well spent. "I think it was great," she said. "It was more than what we normally get."

From the get-go this New Mexico writer held his audience in his hands with his wit and the timeline of his writing path. Beginning with his tale of finishing up his service in White Sands, he spoke of being a UNM Lobo, and how the area enriches his writing.

He also talked about his collaboration with another famous writer, Tony Hillerman.

More than 50 people attended the event. The audience was quite intrigued with McGarrity's talk.

Attendee Verilynn McCray of Gallup was lucky enough to win a free book, and was excited to see and hear McGarrity speak.

"What got my attention was that he was from New Mexico and I wanted to see what his writings were about," she said. "It was really interesting and the humor that he put into his talk."

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Public Services Librarian Jim Fisk said this was a big event for the library and was very happy about the whole event.

“We were excited to have this happen and when we thought about it initially, it was like well, he's a major author. Can we get him here? My attitude was, well, we can ask and it worked out and we were thrilled,” he said.

McGarrity was pleased with the event and said where we live is so beautiful in many ways. The cultural significance and the people give him so much to write about.

“The one thing about New Mexico is the fact that we are multi-cultural and that Anglos don't make up the majority,” he said. “Really what New Mexico reflects is what's going to happen in the world, and what's going to happen in our country. Which is really scaring a lot of old white guys (laughing); is that they can't stand the idea that this country, that they believe is their Manifest Destiny, isn't going to be – if you will, ruled by one class of people, one race of people. We're very unique in that way.”

McGarrity said he enjoyed the event and thought the turn-out was great.

“To have that many people come out, I think was an exceptional crowd. They looked interested and seemed to like what I do as a writer,” he said.

For more information on Michael McGarrity visit www.michaelmcgarrity.com . For more library events and information about the Mini-Grant application process contact UNM library at (505) 863-7500.

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