Before she became a mystery writer, Winona Yahn Sullivan was a fashion model and a spy. The New York native earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Manhattanville College and a master’s degree in education from New York University. She did some modeling in Manhattan and studied Russian at the University of Leningrad, then decided to launch a career in espionage. In 1965, Sullivan wrote a letter to the Central Intelligence Agency, asking to become a government spy. Impressed with her language skills, the Agency hired her as a Russian intelligence analyst. She spent the next two years tracking suspected Russian agents and interpreting intelligence. Sullivan later mastered the balancing act of raising seven children and writing cozy mystery novels. She penned half a dozen books, including the popular Sister Cecile series about a nun who moonlights as a private investigator. The first book in the series, “A Sudden Death at the Norfolk Cafe,” won the 1991 Best First Private Eye Novel Contest, sponsored by the Private Eye Writers of America and St. Martin’s Press. In recent years, she also taught at the University of Miami and Florida International University.

Sullivan died on June 24 of lung cancer. She was 61.
Was friend from college days, very sorry to hear of her death albeit several years late...she sent me some of her books since we both wrote books and both had seven kids. Hope all her kids are doing well.

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Winona Sullivan (1943-2004) was a native of New York. Mrs. Sullivan was awarded a BA in political science from Manhattan College and a MA in Education from New York University. She worked as a fashion model then studied Russian at the University of Leningrad before writing a letter to the CIA, asking if she could join them. She spent two years with the CIA, working as a Russian intelligence analyst. In 1993, the Sullivans moved to Miami, where Mrs. Sullivan taught creative writing at the University of Miami. Mrs. Sullivan also taught English at Florida International University and City College, and Archbishop Carroll High School.

Book List

- Saving Death (2000)
- Death’s a Beach (1998)
- Dead South (1996)
- A Sudden Death at the Norfolk Cafe (1993)

See Winona Sullivan books with a Florida setting.
See also It Takes Place in Florida: Mystery.

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Sister Cecile (Buddenbrooks) is a nun like no other. She is a rich heiress whose father (who had been "a professional atheist") had tied up her legacy in such a way that it could not be used for religious purposes. But, by the agreement of her order, she can access it through her credit card for non-religious purposes, such as her detective work expenses. All her profits can then go to her order. She has become a licenced private investigator, and keeps the certificate "hung between a copy of the Sistine Madonna and a gold-framed photograph of her mother". She says, "I offer discreet services. I do investigative work". When pressed she would go on to explain, "Nuns do very unusual things these days".

She is "pretty. but not too pretty; in her thirties, curly auburn hair ... Her speech was Connecticut prep school .... Men always looked twice at the face, an unusual face that some thought quite attractive". She is the Provincial Head of her order of Our Lady of Good Counsel, an order which had been "originally formed to counsel the daughters of the rich and aid them in spiritual and material difficulties like unplanned pregnancies, but today members of the order did many things. God's will was everywhere, their founder had said in 1859, and with this mandate, the sister's work had grown to cover unusual roles." This mandate "had led Cecile in the direction of being a private detective. It was a serious profession and filled much of her time when practical: nuns had to make money these days."

The order was of French origin and "the cook was the daughter of a five-star French chef". So they subsisted on meals like "coq au vin, simmered gently with unconsecrated altar wine and shallots from the herb garden". Cecile reckoned it "might be the only order in America to have a stockbroker. Sister Raphael played stocks like horses and usually came ahead".

Cecile "loved physical work, especially when she had a problem to work out". She"spoke French like a native, made passable hash of Italian and German, and could mumble in several other tongues. A school in Switzerland had done that for her, her education had been the chief factor in her position in the order, and she made good use of it." She is a thoroughly entertaining character.

Winona Sullivan (1943-2004) was born in New York and was awarded a BA in political science from Mahattan College then a MA in Education from New York University. She did some work as a fashion model then studied Russian at the University of Leningrad before writing a letter to the CIA, asking if she could join them. She spent two years with them during the 1960s as a Russian intelligence analyst, but even her son knows little about her activities as an agent.
She went on to bring up seven children, and wrote a large number of short stories and poetry in addition to the Sister Cecile Mysteries and a book on how to be a mother. She taught at several colleges, but was also very enthusiastic about teaching high school students and teaching English as a second language to immigrants. She was very faithful to her religion and volunteered as a religious education teacher for most of her life. Although she was a non-smoker, she died of lung cancer in 2004. For more information, see the guest book entry from her son.

A Sudden Death At the Norfolk Cafe (1993)

*A Sudden Death At the Norfolk Cafe* is described as "A Sister Cecile Mystery" but it is not really a mystery at all - nor is much detection involved. It's an entertaining romp of an action adventure involving hoodlums, nuns (whom the hoodlums learn the hard way to treat with great care), blackmail, drug-dealers and a pregnant teenager. As the book blurb says, "At the center of things is Sister Cecile .... who does God's work in strange and wonderful ways. She heads a cast that includes lawyer Paul Dorys, who loves her ('he still proposes now and then'); Martin Moon, a blueblood who loves nobody ; Sister Raphael, who loves everybody; and Lyuba McVey whose heart belongs equally to booze and her murdered son".

There's a lot of comedy, as during a meal at the convent when the surrounding nuns tried to eavesdrop what Jane, the pregnant teenager, is telling Sister Cecile, but "Jane was speaking too quietly for the curious nuns to hear much ... Across the table, Sister Helen strained her ears, her mouth full; she only heard about the carrots." But when Jane explained she had made off with a book listing people who were being blackmailed that was "full of pictures of sex, .... all seven sisters looked".

Cecile is nothing if not resourceful. When she finds it necessary to spirit Jane off to Paris by 'plane, they do not hesitate to "don identical yellow waistcoats and blond wigs. Red lipstick and heavy mascara made them look like women on their way to a good time". Then "after the flight levelled off, a flight attendant came along with complimentary cocktails, and Cecile stayed in character. 'Straight Scotch, honey, and a seltzer for my little friend.' " When they get to Paris, Jane is given a job at a convent that had been transformed into a fine hotel with 5 star food, but is still run by Mother Sulpicia, the head of the order, with other sisters in important roles. "Postulants spent several hours each day with a variety of tasks". Just what you'd expect from this order? And, of course, while they were in Paris together, Sister Cecile and Jane had "dined out, seen two shows (to acclimatise Jane to Parisian culture, Cecile had explained), and climbed the Eiffel Tower", as well as visiting the Louvre.

It's one of those books in which you know the main characters are going to survive, so you don't get too worried when Cecile's old friend Paul is attacked by Tom Dempsey, a particularly unattractive hoodlum with a gun. Paul was carrying a container of hot spaghetti and meatballs. He "dropped his briefcase onto Tom's foot. 'Pardon me,' Paul apologised and flipped the open carton into Tom Dempsey's face. 'You slime,' Paul said, too softly. Tom was covered with tomatoes, meatballs rolled down his chest. Then Tom's gun went off. A bullet ripped through Paul's jacket cuff. Tom began roaring, 'Fuckin' asshole,' dropping his gun as he wiped frantically to clear his eyes of sauce .... " But Paul, of course, emerges unhurt.
And it all leads up to a genuinely exciting climax, after which Sister Cecile realised that “there was nothing left for her to do. She could go back to the convent now, have Sister Germaine's poached chicken for dinner and actually be on time for vespers”. You can't but agree with Mother Sulpicia that "God does choose the strangest people for his work", and with Lyuba McVey that Cecile "don't act like no nun I ever knew". Recommended for its sheer fun and invention.

**Dead South** (1996)

*Dead South* is quite different from the first book in the series. It's more of a hard-hitting mystery that, despite a rather unlikely plot, takes itself much more seriously. It's all about the kidnapping of Bradley Locke, a CIA agent in Miami, for whom a ransom of a million dollars is eventually asked. Sister Cecile is engaged by the CIA to investigate. As the author had worked for the CIA herself, it is to be supposed that she knew what she was talking about. Anyway, Cecile hurles over the nastier parts of Miami in her red Ferrari (rented for her by her long-time admirer Paul Dorys, after she'd told him she'd prefer a more modest car than the Porsches he usually found for her).

The really nasty characters include Dirty Bobby, who is involved in cock-fighting and voodoo, and enjoyed killing people. His "blade was cutting a razor thin line on Cecile's left arm, the blood was coming out like a red drawing, almost black in the night. Nun blood. Dirty Bobby was sitting on her, grinning. He was going very slowly. It was going to take a very long time, but she was going to die." Then there's a prolonged and very unpleasant description of Dirty Bobby's own death. This is a long way from the happy entertainment of the earlier book.

Sister Cecile no longer seems in control of everything - and indeed has her life saved three times by Leonie, a twelve-year-old schoolgirl with chicken pox, whom she is meant to be looking after. Accompanying her is old Sister Raphael, also a dab hand at driving the Ferrari, although she has her problems when a tire is shot away under her. "Miraculously, Raphael stopped the car and sat, her old heart rapping against her chest, her face flushed with the thrill. Well, it was a thrill, she told herself."

Yet Sister Cecile is still quite a character. "I am a nun and Private Investigator," she claims. "Nuns need to work these days. Living expenses are high. Nuns need to eat. We pray better on beans and chicken than on bread and water, no matter what you may hear." When she is questioned by FBI agents (the unfriendly rivals of the CIA), she was pleased that "these men obviously thought nuns were stupid and ineffectual. Good. Her cover was in place,"

Sister Raphael had been commissioned to find suitable premises for a retirement home for old members of the order. She finds a hotel that will do very well. Cecile comments, "I think we're going to be here for a while. Someone's got to supervise the new retirement community. I think it's us. I think Miami is our future." Well, if they are going to stay there, let's hope the author can recapture more of her old sense of fun.

**Death's a Beach** (1998)

*Death's a Beach* sees Sister Cecile, who has been in Miami for four months now, combining running the nuns' retirement home with working as a private investigator so as to earn funds to keep the whole thing going.
It starts with the attempted rape on a beach at night of twelve-year-old Leonie (of whom Cecile is the guardian) in the course of which her assailant, Elliot Barclay, gets shot dead. (There is no "brutal slaying" as the blurb wrongly claims.) Barclay's business associates hire Cecile to find his murderer. Cecile, not knowing that Leonie is involved, rejoices that "a case meant money for the convent ... and this might be the very case to intrigue Leonie. Something to take the child away from her problems. Just the thing. A local murder! " But this puts Leonie in a very awkward position as she did not want to tell anyone what had happened to her. But more violence follows. And it turns out that Elliot had had AIDS.

There are some singularly unpleasant characters, such as the old policeman Sgt Reggie Peele and his unscrupulous daughter (who had set her sights on Elliot), although their extreme behavior does not always carry conviction. But it leads to some exciting action when both Cecile and Leonie become murder targets, with Cecile herself being pursued by the police.

The most extraordinary character of all is the apparently villainous and very rich Gustavo who starts off by fancying Cecile (he offers her 20,000 dollars to spend the night with him, and she can't help thinking what her order could do with the money!) and ends up by providing her with a whole set of free new toilets for her retirement complex - and asking if his old mother could come and live there.

Gustavo had previously sent his man, Jasper, to kidnap Cecile and force her to come to his house for the night. But "her knee went up with a sharp movement. She caught him (Jasper), dead center in the groin. Chop. Her left hand moved like a knife and whacked him just below the chin. A little more power and she could have broken his neck. Chomp. Her foot smashed down on his instep. Mush. Right in the stomach with her thumb aimed out. He was down and groaning before he knew what hit him."

With the help of Police Detective Jim Cypress (who happens to be the "only Miccosukee cop on South Beach"), and disguised when necessary in smart clothes ("She had even applied a fifteen-dollar lipstick"), she gets to work. One of the men she had arranged to interview, Barcus Dumplig, sees her approaching in her blue jogging pants and matching top. "Real pretty," he drawled. "How 'bout we meet later tonight? I got me some business first with a nun. May sound odd, but it's the damn truth. A honest to God nun."

"You have business first with me," Sister Cecile said and put out her hand. "I'm the nun. Nice to meet you, Mr Dumplig."

But it's Leonie and the old nun Raphael who finally put two and two together, and it is Leonie who uses her camcorder to video the villain's confession, obtained by Cecile with the aid of the foul evil smelling contents of the Sanitary Disposal Unit van that had been lent to her by Gustavo. As Gustavo told her, "You are without doubt the most woman I've ever seen .... for a nun."

**Saving Death (2000)**

In *Saving Death* Sister Cecile is hired to investigate a murder that took place 20 years before. Juan Caldo, the man imprisoned for the crime, had escaped at that time and not been seen since. When she sets off to track
him down, she finds that a deadly professional hit man, Jeffrey Cloud, has been commissioned to murder her.

It all leads to a lot of really exciting action with Cecile's life constantly in danger. She starts wearing a bullet-proof vest, as well as her usual disguise of a blond wig, dungarees and a T-shirt, and at one stage has to pretend to have died. It is not exactly a likely story, and the way that hit-man Cloud constantly keeps tracking her down, no matter where she travels, is quite amazing. As she tells her friend Paul, "People always try to kill me ... It's the nature of my job". And she often seems in real danger. Although "God is on my side is a nice thought .... he seems to have left us to our own devices on this one".

It's a strong story, what with the Mafia, bombs, exploding cigars and shoot-outs. There are interesting characters too, like runaway Juan Caldo who starts by saving the life of a newly born calf then turns out to have a gift for rearing new breeds. And we even get a glimpse of Cecile, when she was 13, negotiating with her mother so that she can go to a dance with the boy she prefers: "I don't like this dress, but I'll wear it if I can go with Paul". This was Paul Dorys who is still (unsuccessfully) trying to court her all these years later. And there's always twelve-year-old Leonie whom Cecile is meant to be looking after, and who is intent on risking her life to help her. (Cecile had recklessly allowed her to sit in the background while a new client was being interviewed, so long as she kept quiet.)

Cecile still attends what services she can: "They didn't often miss sext here, just sex. That was Sister Louise's joke. Nuns, Cecile thought with a sigh, will be nuns. This week it was Cecile's turn to do a short spiritual reading before the meal. She was reading from The Complete Works of St. Teresa. Teresa of Avula exemplified the ideal nun to Sister Cecile: serious, but with a sense of humor and a wonderful reliance on the Lord." But it's not for religious understanding that you'd read this book: more for its invention, excitement and the gentle humor. Recommended for those who, like me, enjoy this sort of thing.

There is very little about the author on the web.

Please sign my GUEST BOOK. All comments, contributions (or corrections) welcomed!

Return to CONTENTS LIST
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(978) 282-3347
(508) 866-5910

Also Known As
Winona Y Sullivan

Relatives
Edmund Sullivan
Joseph Sullivan
John Sullivan
Christian Sullivan
Michael Sullivan
Judith Sullivan
Kathleen Sullivan
Matthew Sullivan
Mary Sullivan
Cornelius Sullivan

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- Case type, court name, court type, disposition, filing date, and more

Interactive Relationship Map
Visually explore anyone's network. Click any node to begin!

Addresses
Owner Information
Owner: Sullivan Cornelius
Est. Market Value: $183,294
Tax Amount: $761
Tax Year: 2017

Property Details
Acres: 1.140
Bedrooms: -
Bathrooms: -
Year Built: 2001
Land Sq. Ft.: 49,658
Living Sq. Ft.: 1,521

Available utility records show service in this person's name for at least one address in this profile, but not for any landline phone numbers. It's possible that service is in someone else's name.

Find out more about this person's background. Search criminal records in 43 states that may include when available:
- Felonies, misdemeanors, sex offenses, traffic violations, and other criminal offenses
- Case type, court name, court type, disposition, filing date, and more

Add to Profile
Profile for Cornelius Edmund Sullivan

Age: 76 (Born Aug 21, 1942)

Contact Information

Phone
(239) 331-3694  current  mobile
(978) 282-3347
(508) 866-8910
(305) 255-1240
(781) 393-0890
(781) 643-8976

Email
chrisgt1236@aol.com

Also Known As

Edmund Matthew Sullivan
Cornel Sullivan

Relatives

Rachel Sullivan
Joseph Sullivan
John Sullivan
Christian Sullivan
Michael Sullivan
Judith Sullivan
Kathleen Dremann
Mary Sullivan
Matthew Sullivan
Winona Sullivan

Employment

Senior Firmware Engineer
Gemstar
Dec 2004

Senior Software Engineer
Juniper Networks Inc
Dec 2001

Teaching Assistant
Harvard Companies, Inc.
Dec 1998

Education

Owner Information

Owner  Sullivan Cornelius
Est. Market Value  $183,294
Tax Amount  $761
Tax Year  2017

Property Details

Acres  1.140
Bedrooms  -
Bathrooms  -
Year Built  2001
Land Sq. Ft.  49,658
Living Sq. Ft.  1,521

Addresses

Show All Addresses

View Profile

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Interactive Relationship Map

Name: Cornelius Sullivan
Age: 76 years old
Aliases:
  - Edmund Sullivan
  - Cornel Sullivan
Phones:
  - (239) 331-3694
Emails:
  - chrisgt1236@aol.com

Has Lived At:
  - 2440 31st AVE NE
    Naples, FL
  - 55 Mansfield ST
    Gloucester, MA
  - 131 Circuit RD

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B.S.
Marian High School
Primary/secondary School
1956 - 1960

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1 phone number and 2 addresses current as of 11/11/2018.
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- Case type, court name, court type, disposition, filing date, and more

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2440 31st AVE NE current
Naples, FL 34120
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200 Riverside BLVD #APT 18E current
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1133 Innovation WAY current
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6 S Meadow RD
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125 Central AVE #APT A9
Rye, NY 10580

17922 SW 88th PL #PALMETTO
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357 Commercial ST #APT 823
Boston, MA 02109

69 Kenwood ST #APT 1
Brookline, MA 02446

9 Sleepy Hollow RD
Gloucester, MA 01930

1016 Massachusetts AVE #5
Arlington, MA 02476
(781) 393-0890

170 Amsterdam AVE #APT 20E
New York, NY 10023

1595 Massachusetts AVE
Cambridge, MA 02138

8 Marlborough ST
Boston, MA 02116

282 Hillside ST
Boston, MA 02120

Local Census Data
Total households 9,991
Families 61%
Male / Female 47% / 53%

Income
Avg. Household $151,723
Less $10K 5%
$10k to $14,999 3%
$15k to $24,999 9%
$25k to $34,999 8%
$35k to $49,999 10%
$50k to $74,999 14%
$75k to $99,999 11%
$100k to $149,999 14%
$150k to $199,999 7%
$200k or more 19%

Education
High School Degree 20%
College Degree 29%
Graduate Degree 20%