



## March Meeting

By Shannon Canard

“Chick Lit: Hot off the Runway or in the Bargain Bin?”

A workshop by author Shanna Swendson, March 18

After bursting onto the scene around the turn of the century, the chick lit genre has boomed, evolved and now seems to be settling into the growing pains of a maturing genre. It may be more challenging than ever to break into this market, but it also may be the chance for authors to really explore their creativity and express their inner voice.

Chick lit author Shanna Swendson will discuss the state of the chick lit market, the

trends that may be played out, and the core elements that make for a winning chick lit novel in any market.

Shanna Swendson has written both romance (under the pen name Samantha Carter) and chick lit and currently is best known for the critically acclaimed chick lit fantasy series that began with *Enchanted, Inc.* in 2005 and continues with *Once Upon Stilettos* in 2006. She also contributed an essay on Jane Austen as chick lit author to the book *Flirting With Pride and Prejudice*. For more information, visit [www.shannaswendson.com](http://www.shannaswendson.com).

My most important piece of advice to all you would-be writers:  
when you write, try to leave out all the parts readers skip.

Elmore Leonard

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## President's Corner

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February gave us every kind of weather imaginable, but ended on a beautiful warm spring day, which means . . . Spring is almost here! I, for one, was happy to see the sun break through the clouds. I hope you all had a chance to bask in the near-eighty degree weather while it lasted.

Thanks to all who braved the icy, rainy weather and ventured forth to the February meeting. Lori Wilde gave a great power-point workshop on what makes a premise a high concept. She also graciously donated several of her books to those who attended. Big thanks, Lori! I have a few handouts left over. If anyone is interested, please contact me.

Thanks also to volunteers Patricia Vermiere, Andrea Geist and Ron Campbell who conducted the annual audit of the chapter's financial books. NT's accounts are in good standing and we have a healthy bottom line to conduct chapter business. If anyone is interested in the report, please contact me.

Thanks should also go to our Web mistress, Angi Platt. Our website is professional, informative and inviting. Check out the new pages: PROlific and Scrapbook. Also, Shelley Bradley has agreed to do a monthly column, Dear Shelley, a beyond the myths and rumors look at the writing industry.

Congratulations to every one who wrote and edited pages, completed or submitted a manuscript. Getting down the words is what it's all about but, that said, don't forget to goof off. Take your own Spring Break and fill up the well of creativity with some well-deserved down time. Reconnect with the writer who started out with their head in the clouds, dreaming up stories about what if . . .

Happy Writing,  
Sherry

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### 2006 Board Meetings

**To be held after the general meetings in March, May, August, and October.**

**All general members are welcome and encouraged to attend.**

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## 2006 NTRWA Board Members & Liaisons

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carolynwilliamson@charter.net

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◆ Recording Secretary  
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◆ PAN Liaison  
Juliet Burns  
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◆ Treasurer  
Tara Waldie  
waldie@flash.net

◆ Publicity Director  
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angiplatt@aol.com

◆ PRO Liaison  
Sandra Ferguson  
sandraferguson@sbcglobal.net

# The Novelist's Secret Weapon

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By Gail Dayton

Once upon a time, the primary caution given to beginning writers was: Keep To The Point. You should keep things moving, don't wander from the action to stroll through the characters' inner landscape. However, after judging many, many contest entries, I'm beginning to wonder if it might be time for that pendulum to swing back the other way a little, teensy bit...

Yes, info dumps are still bad things, and no, we don't want to listen to a character wallow in self-indulgent, self-pitying navel gazing for pages and pages, or spend endless page-long paragraphs with description of the passing scenery. However, we need to find a happy medium.

I blame television. Or the movies. Either one.

Because these are the predominant media these days—and yes, I know we all love books and reading, but face it, TV and movies are everywhere—I think they've become the predominant influence on the way new writers work, much more than

old high school or college English classes. In example after example of newer writers' work, I find decent writing, but it's all character actions and dialog. Yes, action and dialog make up Scenes, the basic building blocks of short stories and novels, but you need more. People seem to be writing television or movie scripts in prose format. They have forgotten the Novelist's Secret Weapon.

Novels aren't movies on paper. Novels suffer from the handicap of not having actors to act out what's happening in the story. Actors can imbue the dialog and action with emotion using body language and facial expressions, and face it—human beings have been reading expressions for millennia longer than we've been reading words. We're much better at faces. So we novelists **need** our Secret Weapon.

What is this Secret Weapon? Simple.

We can show what's going on inside our characters' heads.

Our only tool is words, but we can use those words to express what our characters are thinking and what they

are feeling, even if it is diametrically opposite to what they are saying and doing. We can show their internal reactions to what other people say and do, even if they don't open their mouths. We can show who our characters are and how they regard themselves and we don't have to pussy-foot around with mannerisms or dress. We can just come right out and say it. And far too many new writers just don't.

Again, I don't mean that you should stop the action to spend pages in thought and introspection. A sentence here, a paragraph there will go a long, long way. For instance, in *Sorceress of Faith* by Robin D. Owens, (Luna, Feb. '06) she sets up her heroine Marian's primary conflict in a discussion with her mother. This is the reaction to something her mother says: "Fury veiled Marian's vision in a red haze. Good thing that the phone was industrial strength; otherwise it would have crumbled under her own grip. How Candace could think of her own son that way..." Three sentences.

*Continued on page 10...*

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## Administration

**PAN** (Published Authors Network) is the name given to the discussion group intended to meet the needs of writers published or contracted to publish works in the romance genre.

**Heart to Heart** is published monthly by NTRWA, a non-profit organization founded in March of 1983 by aspiring and published writers of romance fiction.

**Heart to Heart** welcomes articles for publication in its monthly issues. Articles should contain fewer than 1000 words and pertain to matters of interest to romance writers.

**Heart to Heart** reserves the right to edit according to space or clarity, and to refuse articles that its editorial staff deems inappropriate for its readership. Deadline for publication is the 25th of each month.

**SISTER CHAPTERS:** Feel free to reprint articles from our newsletter as long as proper credit is provided for the chapter and the individual author.

**Non-RWA organizations** please contact the editor regarding reprints.

# Meeting Minutes

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By Paula Wachter

President Sherry Davis called the meeting to order.

Shannon Canard, Vice President/ Programs Director was absent. Sherry introduced our guest speaker, Lori Wilde. After Lori's presentation, we had a short break to order lunch.

Sherry announced that the open board meeting for February has been moved to the month of March. The board meeting will occur after the general meeting and all general members are encouraged to attend.

Sherry reminded everyone that registration for the RWA National Conference is now open and space is limited to 2000 RWA Members. The conference will take place from July 26 – 29 at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis. Additional details are available in the monthly RWR.

Carolyn Williamson, Membership

Secretary, reported that the current membership count for NTRWA is 35 members. This reflects the known number of members with dues paid in full as of the date of the February meeting. Carolyn reminded everyone to get their dues in since we will be reporting the final member count to RWA National on March 1, 2006. Members may pay online through Pay Pal. She reminded members to contact Juliet Burns for access to the NTRWA Loop. Juliet can be reached at [julietburns@comcast.net](mailto:julietburns@comcast.net).

Carolyn made a motion to accept the minutes from the January meeting as reported in the newsletter. Ron Campbell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Tara Waldie, Treasurer, was absent. Angi Platt, Publicity Director, stated that the audit committee met, the books were reviewed, and suggestions were made and approved. The treasurer's report for the month of February will be presented at the

March meeting.

Angi reported that NTRWA is now listed with other writer groups on various websites which will generate more publicity for the organization.

Sherry announced that raffle tickets for the RWA National Conference fee are now being sold. Members should contact the Ways & Means Committee chairs, Michella Chappell and Mindy Obenhaus.

Angi reported that almost all the contest results are in. NTRWA Members Andrea Geist and Diana Lofton have both finaled. Andrea finaled in the Mainstream with Romantic Elements category and the Steamy Hot category. Diana had two submissions final in the Steamy Hot category.

Andrea made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Sandra seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

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## Visiting NTRWA

Anyone interested in the romance genre is invited to attend NTRWA meetings and workshops.

Visitors may attend three times before NTRWA requires they become members. All members of NTRWA must be members in good standing of Romance Writers of America (RWA).

Romance Writers of America  
16000 Stuebner Airline Drive  
Suite 140  
Spring, Texas 77379

**[www.rwanational.com](http://www.rwanational.com)**

Phone: 831-717-5200

FAX: 831-717-5201

[info@rwanational.com](mailto:info@rwanational.com)

# “Got High Concept?”

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**Presented by Lori Wilde, February 2006**

Recap Written by Ron Campbell

\*\* Unlocking the Mystery: “High Concept” is the most important buzz phrase in publishing. It means that the premise of your story is so compelling it can be captured in a single, intriguing sentence. However, Lori cautioned that you should not get bogged down by putting too many different compelling issues in the same novel.

\*\* The elements of “High Concept”

- Involves a definite profession or situation for the hero.
- The hero has a flaw that is related to the profession or situation.
- An inciting incident that forces a choice between his main flaw and some opportunity.
- The idea is fresh.
- There is a strong sense of irony at play.

\*\* Another approach:

- A fascinating subject.
- An inciting incident
- An intriguing hook.

\*\* Making a Good Concept Great:

Lori gave the example of the concept that she developed for her new book:

- There must be emotional conflict: Bride on her wedding day.
- Explore human condition that is specific and universal: Getting Married.
- Show the world as a larger, more magical, more complex place than is commonly believed.
- Derived from classic drama, echoes timeless themes.

\*\* Tips on Writing High Concept:

- Read a lot of high concept books - books on the best seller list
- Juxtapose genres: Regency - Vampirism
- Transpose and update settings: National Treasure
- Push your idea all the way, transcend the obvious.
- Write from love and passion.

Ron Campbell has been writing around his day job for 10 years. He currently has three completed manuscripts and is actively seeking representation and publication.

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**Tex-Critiquers Coordinator Gina Nelson says...**

**Howdy! If you would like one of our NTRWA Pan or Pro members to critique some of your writing, join the Tex Critiquers loop and she'll fix you up. If you are a PRO or PAN member who would be available to critique one submission of 5-10 pages let her know and she'll coordinate. This is a great opportunity to help new writers and new members gain some valuable feedback. For more information contact Gina at [ginan@usrisk.com](mailto:ginan@usrisk.com)**

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## Many Happy Returns...

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Happy Birthday to...

Delores Shaffer, February 18

Victoria Chancellor, February 21

Jackye Plummer, February 22

Mindy Obenhaus, February 24

Juliet Burns, February 27



# Turn PRO Active

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By Sandra Ferguson

Are you writing, submitting and have the rejection letter or acceptance contract to prove it? Then you're ready for the PRO step.

Here's how:

1) Complete a PRO application (go to [www.rwanational.org](http://www.rwanational.org) and download the application from the PRO link, or you may contact your chapter PRO liaison for a current application).

2) Enclose an editor or agent reply that shows you have queried or submitted your manuscript to them. Examples of this type of editor/agent reply may include: a rejection letter, a request for partial or full manuscript, or a revise and resubmit letter.

3) Enclose a floppy disk or CD-R that contains your completed manuscript. Make sure the document is saved in .rtf or .doc format. If you entered the Golden Heart contest, then you do not need to resubmit the entire manuscript.

4) Mail the entire package to:

RWA  
Attn: RWA PRO  
16000 Stuebner Airline Rd  
Suite 140  
Spring, TX 77379

What if you've already received a contract offer, but are not published yet. Can you still apply for PRO?

Yes and no. If you have received a contracted offer from a non-RWA recognized publisher, then you're eligible for PRO. If you have received a contracted offer from a RWA recognized publisher, then you're already eligible for PAN. Go [www.rwanational.org](http://www.rwanational.org) and follow the links to PAN.

So, if you're contracted with a non-RWA recognized publisher, here's what to do:

1) Complete a PRO application (go to [www.rwanational.org](http://www.rwanational.org) and download the application from the PRO link or you may contact your PRO liaison for a current application).

2) Enclose a copy of the signature page of a contract from a non-RWA recognized publisher.

3) Mail the entire package to:

RWA  
Attn: RWA PRO  
16000 Stuebner Airline Rd  
Suite 140  
Spring, TX 77379

Can the chapter Pro Liaison assist you?

Absolutely.

1) Take your completed application form, and

\* a copy of the reply letter from an editor/agent  
\* a paper copy of your entire manuscript  
\* or a saved to disk copy (please save in .rtf format) of your entire manuscript. Make sure to note your name and manuscript name on the disk label.

This application form will be verified by two chapter officers, then returned to you.

2) Mail or fax this verified application form to:

RWA  
Attn: RWA PRO  
16000 Stuebner Airline Rd  
Suite 140  
Spring, TX 77379  
FAX: 832-717-5201

OR

1) Take your completed application form, and

\* a copy of the published work, and  
\* a copy of the signature page of a contract from a non-RWA recognized publisher.

The application form will be verified by two chapter officers, then returned to you.

2) Mail or fax this verified application form to:

RWA  
Attn: RWA PRO  
16000 Stuebner Airline Rd  
Suite 140  
Spring, TX 77379  
FAX: 832-717-5201

Pro Pins are mailed within six weeks, and may be sent directly to the applying member or to the chapter president.

PRO benefits include several PRO loops, brochures designed to assist any writer in the pursuit of her/his career, a PRO newsletter, and the added bonus of early signing for Agent/Editor appointment at National conference. Also, consider that you may include your PRO status in your query letters. Agent and Editors want to deal with writers who are in serious pursuit of a writing career. Obtaining the PRO status is another way to show your determination to succeed in this competitive market.

Is PRO right for you? That's a personal decision for each writer. PRO is designed for those individuals committed to the current goal of a writing career. PRO is one more tool to increase a writer's marketability and savvy of the publishing industry.

Sandra Ferguson, a free-lance writer, calls Texas home. Her love of family and the Lone Star state influence her writing of romantic suspense, non-fiction articles and fillers, and anything else she can pen to paper that will pay the bills.

# Spotlight On... Maryanne Romano aka Maya Reynolds

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By Gina Lee Nelson

*Well, Maryanne, it was nice to meet you face to face at the last NTRWA meeting. Tell us a little bit about yourself.*

Gina, I have been a bit of a gypsy in both my personal and professional life. I was born in New York, grew up in New Jersey and Florida and moved to Texas as an adult.

Finished my first novel--a fantasy adventure based on myth--two years ago. Was astounded when the first publisher I sent it to didn't snap it up. After receiving six more rejections, decided I might need to learn more about the publishing industry. Joined RWA and NTRWA during the spring two years ago. Joined Sisters-in-Crime at about the same time. Both have been invaluable in teaching me about writing in general and the publishing industry specifically.

I'm on my fourth career. Started out planning to be a high school teacher and took my undergraduate degree in secondary education. During a summer break, worked at a stock brokerage house and fell in love with it. When I was forty, I burned out and took a year off. Tried my hand at writing and sold my first piece to "True Confessions." Found it a fun, easy way to earn extra money. Also volunteered in the Psychiatric ER at Parkland. Ended up going back to school and earning my MS degree in Social Work. Planned and developed the first psychiatric mobile crisis team for kids in Texas, the CAMPS team (Dallas

County Child & Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Stabilization team). It won a state-wide award its first year of operation. Was the VP of Mental Health for Dallas County MHMR.

Two and a half years ago, I decided to try my hand at full-time writing. That's what I've been doing ever since.

Wow, what have I been doing with my time?

*So, how does your experience in social work come into play?*

My experiences working in the Psych ER at Parkland and on two mobile crisis teams brought me into contact with a wide variety of situations and people. Those experiences help to enrich my writing, particularly in doing realistic characterizations and plotting.

*What are you working on right now and what do you struggle with as a writer?*

Jacky is marketing two manuscripts for me: a paranormal and a contemporary erotic romance. I am working on a sequel to the paranormal and a companion piece to the erotic romance.

I am a serious "pantser." I've never been able to chart out an entire novel before I sit down to write. I usually start with an idea for a "hook" and then let my characters direct the action. Sometimes this can backfire.

Sometimes the level of information coming at new writers, like me, is overwhelming and even contradictory. What

advice would you give?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. NTRWA is a very safe and welcoming group of people. Also, do what you're doing; get involved. It increases your opportunities to network. Last May I joined a group of writers who wanted to talk about erotic romance. When we decided to form a new RWA chapter I volunteered to be membership chair. Less than a year later, I'm the membership chair of Passionate Ink with over 300 members.

*What accomplishment are you most proud of?*

Of being a good and loyal friend who has good and loyal friends.

*Where do you see yourself in 5 years?*

I'd like to be doing exactly what I am doing right now. Paul Bishop said, "Writers are the only adults who get to spend all day in their pajamas playing with imaginary friends."

*Have you had any inspiration about the quote I wanted from one of your manuscripts?*

*Continued on page 11...*



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**Newsletters are now available in electronic format.**

**If you are interested in receiving your newsletter via email,  
please contact Jen FitzGerald at [jen@stormsedge.com](mailto:jen@stormsedge.com) or 817-457-6414.**

## Member News

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It's "Ask the Author" Day at the Lewisville Barnes & Noble - 2PM Saturday, March 4th. Join *New York Times* bestselling Author Jodi Thomas, *USA Today* bestseller Jennifer Archer, Barnes & Noble bestseller Candace Havens and Lone Star Scribe Award winning author Britta Coleman for a day of talking books, writing, the publishing industry and more.

Karen Kelley was offered a three book contract by Kate Duffy —all Brava Single Titles.

Romantic Times gave Shelley Bradley's Bound and Determined a Top Pick.

Gail Dayton's The Barbed Rose will be in bookstores in March 2006.

Gail Dayton's The Compass Rose was nominated for a Reviewer's Choice Award from RT Bookclub magazine for Best Fantasy Novel.

Karen Whiddon's December Intimate Moments Secrets of the Wolf has been nominated for a Romantic Times Reviewers Choice Award for Best Silhouette Intimate Moments.

Beyond the Dark written by Linda Winstead Jones, and NT's own Evelyn Vaughn and Karen Whiddon was nominated for a PEARL award for best anthology!

Britta Coleman's debut novel from Time Warner - Potter Springs - was chosen by the Pulpwood Queens Book Club as a bonus selection!

Carolyn Williams has a request from Hilary Sayres to see her time travel set on Mackinac Island, Michigan.

Rosemary C. Moore completed Hell Week, a Young Adult Fantasy, and she submitted it to Krista Marino at Delacorte.

Ron Campbell submitted his 100,000 word ms, Love Eternal, to Steven Axelrod.

Well, not as many as last month, but at least you're writing! Kudos to all of you who wrote and edited and proudly listed your totals, but due to space considerations, only the top five producers will be listed...

### NEW PAGES ~ Top 5

Rosemary C. Moore, 100  
Ron Campbell, 51  
Kumar Muthukumar, 45  
Sherry Davis, 38  
Paula Wachter, 35

### EDITED PAGES ~ Top 5

Carolyn Williamson, 462  
Rosemary C. Moore, 330  
Paula Wachter, 125  
Ron Campbell, 61  
Laura Martello, 50

Way to go everyone. Keep those fannies in the chair and the fingers on the keyboard!



## Tape Reviews: RW8-001 Page Turning Pacing

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By Juliet Burns

Jackie Stephens says your goal is to pen a story that will keep readers avidly turning the pages. You do this with pacing. Pacing, she says, is a tenuous balancing act between fast-paced conflict packed with action and dialogue, and thoughtful summaries that give deeper insights to your hero and heroine.

Jackie compares pacing to a 4-pack box of play-doh. Blue is the hero, with his back-story, goal, motivation and conflict. And Red is Miss Heroine with her back-story, goal, motivation and conflict. Yellow is your plot. What's going to happen. The beginning, middle and end of your story. And lastly, Green is the details of your story: the secondary characters, secondary plot, the setting the tone the mood and the emotions. These are the basics. Your job is to take just the right amount of play-doh from each color and weave them into a masterpiece

of smooth pacing by revealing the right piece of information at the right time and keeping the action always moving forward.

She says the building blocks of pacing are Scenes and Sequels. Scenes and Sequels are the hills and valleys of your story. Scenes should be fast-paced. They are the hills your character must climb, and should include excitement and conflict, action, and dialogue. And each new hill should be higher, steeper. The classic structure of a scene is goal, conflict, disaster. Scene questions: How is the character going to react to this? And what is the character going to do to resolve this conflict?

Sequels are the slower paced moments in your story, the valleys where you can have thoughtful insights into your characters. A good example of Sequel is Scarlet standing on the hill with her fist raised saying, "As God is my wit-

ness I'll never go hungry again." Sequels are where your characters will make decisions. The classic structure for a sequel is Emotion, Thought, Decision, Action. Conflict and tension, a sense of urgency, and unanswered questions are what is going to make your reader keep turning the pages. Sequel questions are: What has the character learned? And how has it made he or she grow and change? And what decision has been made?

As God is my witness... This is the decision and we want to see how she's going to make that happen. There must be some kind of change at the end of each scene.

Jackie quotes Rita Gallagher: "A good story begins in the middle, retrieves the past, and continues to the end."

This tape really helped me understand pacing.

## Book Club News & Reviews

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Join the NTRWA Book Club monthly at the Barnes & Noble in North Richland Hills. The group usually meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM. All members of NTRWA are welcome to join the discussion.

In February, the book club read Her Scoundrel by GERALYN DAWSON JENNIFER MALONE says, "The story was interesting and the characters well developed - you root for them the moment you meet them. GERALYN'S dialogue and banter between characters is wonderful."

April: Something Wicked by Evelyn Vaughn

May: Possibly Don't Look Down by Jennifer Crusie and Bob Mayer

## Great Expectations Contest

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Congratulations to NT members

Andrea Geist who finaled in the Mainstream w/Romantic Elements category and the Steamy Hot category and Diana Loftin who was a double finalist in the Steamy Hot category.

**Way to go, ladies! Best of luck.**

Complete finalist listing can be found on the web site.

# The Novelist's Secret Weapon

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*Continued from page 3...*

Or here, from my book, The Barbed Rose (Luna, March '06): "With everything that was in her, she listened for more. And she heard nothing. No hum from the mountains. No whisper from the sun. No joyous song of magic. She wanted to scream with frustration. Once, she had destroyed a demon with the magic she wielded. Today, she could not destroy a gnat." One sentence of direct emotion—the screaming with emotion—and two of thought that explain the emotion.

It's not easy to do. It takes practice, and sometimes a lot of playing psychiatrist. Ask: "Why?—why is he/she doing that?" or "How does she feel about that?", "What does he think about that?" And then answer the questions.

Some writers go back in after their first draft to deal with those questions in a second, or third go-through. But this internal mental and emotional content—especially the emotional—is what editors, and readers, are looking for. We want a story to grab us by the throat, give us

a gut reaction—and without that emotion, which as novelists we convey through our Secret Weapon, it's not going to happen.

Remember, we're writing novels, not movies or television. And we have a Secret Weapon.

Go forth and wield it well.

Gail Dayton's The Barbed Rose will be in bookstores in March 2006.

## PAN: In the Loop

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NT is delighted to present a monthly online session with our authors entitled IN THE LOOP!!

On the first full week of each month one of our authors will present a daily article on writing. Anyone who is subscribed to the NT Yahoo loop will automatically receive this free monthly post presented by NT PAN members.

March 6th - 10th

Gail Dayton  
Presents

Techniques to Tweak your Prose

April 3rd - 7th

Juliet Burns  
Presents

GMC - Conflict, Conflict, Conflict

## Jen's Journal

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Man, writing is harder than it looks. "Well, duh!" all of you serious writers will say. But it seemed at some point, the writing was easy. Back when you were a novice writer. You had a story to tell, so you picked up a pen or opened your word processing program and began. And typed "The End" in a relatively short amount of time.

But you knew that there were problems with what you wrote, and I'm not talking spelling and punctuation. So you read books on how to write. And then the

writing got harder.

What?? My hero needs goals, motivation, and conflict? Each scene needs a sequel... Is my heroine a waif or a librarian? Yikes. Talk about an info dump.

How about a first draft in a week? Talk about pressure. Although the proponents of the BIAW say that first draft can be awful since no one's going to see it but you. It's really just a road map. And it's okay if your characters kidnap you and take the story hostage once you

really get to writing.

But do you write for the pure joy of writing anymore? Do you have young children or maybe even grandchildren? Have you ever written a short story to make them laugh? What about that friend who adores a certain TV show but hated the way the writers ended a show or, even worse, the series itself? Did you dash off a couple of pages of fan fiction to brighten her day just for the fun of it?

*Don't forget the joy.*

# The Truth About Publishing Myths ~ Myth #1

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By Shelley Bradley

You've heard lots of information, clichés, rumors and advice about the things you need to know once you're published. Published authors often find out this information from hard experience. After being in the publishing business for nearly 8 years, I've picked up a thing or two along the way. In this series of articles, I'll discuss the information I wish I'd known before I sold a book. I'll touch on what it really takes to get that first book bought--as well as the second and beyond, the realities of contract negotiation, royalties, distribution, editor relations and your career. Print publication primarily addressed, but electronic publishing also discussed.

Here's the first of our myths...

*If the editor likes your book, they will buy it.*

Bean counters, along with Sales and Marketing, run the show. This means that even with wonderful manuscripts editors fall in love with, if Marketing tells the publisher or editorial director that there's no market for an erotic comedy about a Elvis reincarnated with two heads (or whatever), that's pretty much it. When I go to conferences or see editors give their presentations at meetings and they say, "we'll buy great books we love," I always grit my teeth. That's only true to a degree. I personally have more than one rejection letter that

says the editor loved the book and marketing said no. (Too sexy/too exotic/too thought-provoking...LOL. I always wondered if that editor thought that romance readers didn't think.)

What this means for you? Always, always write from the heart, since I truly believe it shows when you force yourself to write stuff you don't love. But... do so consciously. If you write away from the market, be prepared for rejection. Be prepared to wait longer for your book to be bought. Be prepared to come thiiiiisss close--maybe more than once.

My best advice? Take a few marketable elements and put them into your plot, then really make it your own. This is how you often get "fresh" twists on "classic themes." Definitely be aware of where the publisher's boundaries are, however. If they say, "Absolutely no books set in Montana!" or whatever, I'd believe them, at least until you're more established and can afford to break a few rules.

Yes, this situation is totally frustrating for writers--and some readers, too. People who love this genre ask all the time why editors don't buy more original books. It's simple. Editors are supposed to find new talent but many are afraid to take chances. If they manage to sweet talk Marketing into letting them try the multi-headed Elvis reincarnation erotic

comedy set in Montana and it flops... well, they fear it will mean the end of their career. So even though they may not be buying the coolest, neatest, most original works out there all the time, they are buying works that will make money and keep them employed. A caveat here: Not all editors are like this. Some will absolutely take chances and fearlessly trust their instincts. But like all businesses, you'll find your fair share of folks who like safety and want to stay the course.

Look for Myth #2 in future editions of Heart to Heart.

The author of sizzling contemporary, erotic and historical romances, Shelley Bradley lives in the southwest with her husband and daughter, juggling the many roles in her life: writer, mother, wife and all around laundress. In her "free" time, she is a reality TV junkie, enjoys reading, obsessively studying all things Harry Potter, doing step aerobics and weightlifting, and listening to an eclectic blend of music.

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## Spotlight On... Maryanne Romano aka Maya Reynolds

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*Continued from page 6...*

How about the start of my latest novel, the unnamed sequel to Witch Vampire? that Jacky Sach is marketing right now, which is pretty typical of the starts of my books--immediate tension and problem:

Abby had no warning. One minute she was alone in her office and the next instant there was a man sitting on the

sofa across the room from her.

Her stomach did a nasty flip and she instinctively reached for the phone.

"Don't." He wore a funny kind of half smile--not a friendly it's going to be okay smile. More like you can't dial faster than I can reach you smile.

*Ooh, creepy. Thanks, Maryanne, for giving us*

*the opportunity to get to know you better.*

New to romance writing, Gina Nelson joined RWA and NTRWA in the fall of 2005. She's working on the final draft of her first manuscript, a short contemporary romance set in New York City, her stomping ground for seven exhilarating years. Gina currently lives in Dallas with her husband, three boys, and a house full of testosterone.



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2100 W. Northwest Hwy  
Suite 114-1081  
Grapevine, TX 76051

## Meeting Information

March 18, 2006

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NTRWA Monthly Meeting

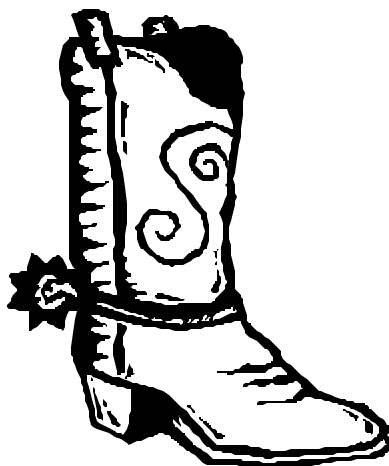
La Hacienda Ranch

5250 Highway 121 South

Colleyville, TX

10:00 ~ 10:30 Meet & Greet  
10:30 ~ 10:45 Welcome & Announcements  
10:45 ~ 11:45 Workshop  
11:45 ~ 12:00 Break/Order Lunch  
12:00 ~ 1:00 Business Meeting

**Visitors Welcome**



Shanna Swendson  
On  
Chick Lit