



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Chapter Mates,

Another month has come and gone. Today is the first day of school, and two of my three kiddos are out of the house and out of my hair. Whew. The TV will probably start missing my son soon, as I think it and the X-Box were never turned off for more than six hours straight on any given day.

As we slide into fall and the end of the year, I'm looking forward to a lot of things. First, our business is moving into a new home and out of mine. This opens up a whole roomful of possibilities. Second, new windows will perk up the look of my vintage home and decrease the size of my electric bill (well, that, and the moving of the business). Third, Sharon Mignerey coming as October's speaker. I can sure use some help with my characters. Fourth, the Writers Roundup in November. As much fun as last year's Roundup was, this year will be a whole 'nother ballgame. Fifth, passing the presidential torch to Angi Platt.

Speaking of passing the torch, NT elections are right around the corner. Our Nomination/Election Committee Chair is Regina Richards. If you are interested in running for a board position, please let her know.

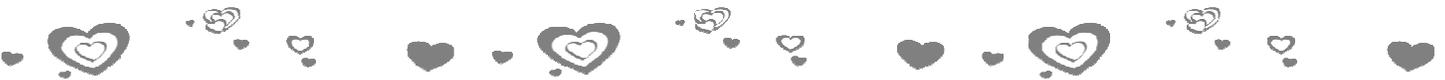
I want to thank our own Ron Campbell for his taxes talk this past meeting. And Von Jocks/Evelyn Vaughn will be speaking to us this month. Hope to see you there.

Also a hearty welcome to all our new members. I think we have averaged a new member or two for the past several months. In August, we had three. Wow. Great job, everyone, for making our chapter such a warm and welcoming group.

Well, that's it for me. See you in September.

Sincerely,

Jen FitzGerald



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AUGUST MEETING MINUTES

General Meeting Minutes of the regular meeting of the North Texas Romance Writers of America Saturday, August 16, 2008 La Hacienda Restaurant, Colleyville, TX

I. Called to Order: by President Jen Fitzgerald at 12:29 pm

II. Previous Minutes: Chris Keniston (not present) — Members approved the July Minutes as published in the Newsletter

III. Officer Reports:

A. President: Jennie Fitzgerald—August Board meeting highlights:

1. the Board voted to spend \$45 to reactivate the Name2Host account (NTRWA.com) in order to get a forwarding page to our current website;
2. Ted Weems volunteered and was approved as the liaison for monthly book donations;
3. the Board approved Regina Richards as the Elections Chairperson, she will work with Angi Platt on developing the appropriate election procedures needed for the new bylaws.

B. Program Director: Gina Nelson

1. September – Von Jocks speaking on Characterization
2. October -- Sharon Mignery presenting an interactive workshop on Putting Your Characters in the Driver Seat
3. November – The Writers' Roundup will be a retreat at Deer Lake. The cost is \$135 per person (total due at August meeting), travel and food is up to individuals. If anyone would like to attend, we can still make arrangements.

C. Treasurer: Angi Platt

1. An updated yearly budget was presented to the membership which was accepted and filed.
2. The August Treasurer's Report was presented and filed for audit.

D. Membership Director: Wendy Watson—we have 78 members new members:

E. Secretary: Chris Keniston—Not present. Angi Platt recorded the minutes.

F. Newsletter Editor: Alley Hauldren—Not present. Announced a call for submissions for the September Newsletter by the 25th of each month. Sandra Ferguson explained the benefits of writing articles for the newsletter that can potentially be shared with other newsletters around the country. This also provides you a publication history. Articles can be published on the NTRWA.ORG website if requested by the

author. Just contact Marty Tidwell.

G. Website Director: Marty Tidwell—Updates to the website are available at any time, submit directly to Marty. The Board approved the redesign of the website to include a members only section.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Elections Chair: Regina Richards—Don't be afraid to ask about positions available for 2009.

B. Ways & Means Committee: Marsha West—Basket donations and critiques are needed. No books are needed at this time. Ted Weems reported that the Readers For Life literacy basket was one of the highest bids at the national conference.

C. Book Donations: Ted Weems—The Book Donation program details will be forthcoming.

D. Audio Library: Nikki Duncan—There is a \$10 participation fee for the audio library. A list of the tapes and CDs is on the NTRWA Yahoo group. Notify her which ones you wish to check out and she'll bring them to the next meeting. The national conference CDs have been ordered and Nikki will let everyone know when they are available to check out.

E. BABS Coordinator 2008: Nikki Duncan—Our current writers' incentive program is called Bead a Book into Submission (BABS). Please let Nikki Duncan know if you'd like to participate. An author gets a bead for:

- Each 5,000 words
- Finishing the novel
- Submitting the manuscript
- Comes with a pendant and neck ring

F. GE Committee: Marty Tidwell—Category coordinators and editors are being contacted. The dates for the GE will be approximately the same as last year.

G. PRO Liaison: Sandra Ferguson—Commented on how articles will help you get published credit.)

H. PAN Liaison: Candy Havens—Not present

VI. Adjourned: With no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 1:01 pm. ‡

Send your newsletter entries — articles, events, booksignings, announcements, publications— to Alley at editorNTRWA@gmail.com



SPOTLIGHT ON KATHRYN MILLER



Kathryn is one of our newest members. Here's a chance to get to know her, and her humor, better.

Hi, Kathryn. Where are you from?

I adopted Ohio as my home, but I've lived all around the country. I've also lived in Aus-

tria for two semesters in college.

When did you decide you wanted to be a writer?

When I wrote my first piece of fan fiction. It was a cross-over between *The Bobbsey Twins* and *The Dukes of Hazzard*. I still have that mostly-illegible childish scribble someplace.

What do you write?

Urban fantasy and contemporary romance with paranormal elements.

Are you published? Is anything you wrote due for publication this year?

Not yet. (See? I'm optimistic!)

Are you working on anything now?

I have a lot of ideas, and while I like each one, I'm not able to get more than a few pages down. I could force it, but I've

found that if I find an idea I love, it'll basically write itself. So right now, I'm looking for the spark of attraction.

Is there any genre you haven't written but would like to try?

Time travel romance.

Is there any particular part of the writing process you find difficult? If so, do you have any helpful hints about how to overcome it?

Editing, and specifically adding more to an existing work, is the hardest part for me. I don't have any ideas on how to overcome it. What I'm trying is a work-around — I'll make my next manuscript super-long so that I can edit it down to size.

Most writers are readers. Do you have any favorite authors?

My current favorite writer is Lynn Kurland. I love her time travel romances.

If you could turn any book you've read into a movie, which one would it be?

I'm not generally a fan of books-into-movies. I "watch" the book unfold with a mental movie as it is, so for me, the big screen adaptation always pales in comparison.

Who would you cast as a hero?

Hugh Jackman.

Are you a member of any other writing organizations?

DFW Writer's Workshop. ‡

THIS THING CALLED RWA

By Juliet Burns

I wrote this article for the RWR in '06 when RWA seemed to be dividing into separate factions. Although I write erotic romance, I felt strongly—and still do—that RWA should not pull apart, but rather pull together. And although I believe things are better now, the beliefs expressed here still apply today.

So, please bear with me, I'll get off the soap box in just a sec...

There've been a lot of shake-ups lately in the industry. Publishing houses have closed lines and opened new ones, many agencies no longer accept submissions from new authors, and the largest writing group in the world is going through some growing pains.

RWA is over 9000 members strong now. That's a lot of people to please. A huge responsibility. And an unprecedented

source of support, information and solidarity for romance writers.

Solidarity. A word that's usually associated with Polish factory workers. But perhaps a good word to apply to RWA.

Someone new to RWA asked me recently if she should continue as a member since she just discovered she doesn't write romance, but women's fiction. I gave it some thought for a few seconds. But, honestly, where else could she go to learn the craft of writing among so many friendly, knowledgeable, and supportive people?

In the recent TV mini-series, *SPARTACUS*, the hunky Goran Visnjic asks a fellow ex-slave to break a stick. The man easily snaps it in two. Then Spartacus hands him a dozen sticks

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(This Thing Continued from page 4)

bundled together. The man cannot break them.

No matter how we ultimately decide to define romance or what decisions are made about graphical standards, we, the members of RWA, are uniquely situated to be a major force in the publishing industry. We have a voice, and it is 9000 members strong. Whether we write women's fiction, chick lit, suspense, fantasy, erotic romance, or inspirational, we all have at least one thing in common: we love to write about relationships and love.

We all have people living in our heads that talk to us; we all sit at our computers – or with our notepads – day in and day out -- or all night -- and struggle for that perfect verb or just the right name for our hero. Whether we're pre-published or multi-published, we all submit that query and wait with

chewed fingernails for that rejection or The Call. It never gets any easier. There are no guarantees. Editors move or leave. We get a lousy cover, or a bad review, or our hundredth rejection. And where do we go for solace and someone to make us smile through the tears? To our RWA chapter meeting. To the critique partner we met through RWA. To an RWA online loop.

What if we didn't have that resource? What if I'd never met the critique partners that have become like family to me? Where would I have gone for information about publishers or passive verbs without RWA?

There will always be shake-ups in the publishing business. There will always be differences of opinion about romance definitions, and there will always be rumors flying through our cyber world. But if we can give each other the benefit of the doubt, remain level-headed until all information is disseminated, and not

allow ourselves to be divided into factions, we can continue to be the largest, strongest, and most supportive writers group in the world.

Romance is about hope. Hope that we have it in us to be stronger, live happier, and work together for a positive future.

I am hopeful. ‡

Essentially and most simply put, plot is what the characters do to deal with the situation they are in.

It is a logical sequence of events that grow from an initial incident that alters the status quo of the characters.

~ Elizabeth George

AGENTS AND EDITORS SPEAK UP: VOICE, WEBSITES, AND MARKETING PLANS OH MY!

By Nikki Duncan

Lucienne Diver, Holly Root, Nathan Bransford, Caren Johnson, Kim Whalen, Jim McCarthy, Heather Osborn, Chris Keeslar, and Deb Werksman were some of the industry professionals on hand at RWA Nationals in San Francisco.

RWA Nationals is always a prime opportunity to learn more about the business of publishing, including things you didn't know you didn't know. In pursuit of knowledge and understanding, I scheduled a round of interviews with agents and editors. During our appointments, we discussed a range of topics from publicity, how many books an author should expect to write a year, the definition of voice, and what authors should do for themselves prior to publication. I'll tackle a few of the answers in this article. More will come in articles over the coming months.

When asked what defines "fresh new

voice," how authors can know they have it, and if it's taken into consideration before an offer for representation or a sale is made, there were answers like "it's something you know when you see it." Some didn't stop there.

Deb Werksman with Sourcebooks says that for her it isn't so much a matter of voice as it is having a story with a relatable heroine, a hero she can fall in love with, a completely and well built world (even if it isn't paranormal), and a great hook (those 2-3 sentences that sell your story).

Holly Root says voice is the number one attraction. It gives the reader an instant sense of knowing the people in the story and their world. Holly's caution to writers is to be careful not to lose that something special in the fine-tuning and polishing of the story.

Nathan Bransford, Heather Osborn, and Caren Johnson had similar viewpoints on voice. For them, voice is the telling



of a story in a way that it hasn't been told before, or in a way that no one else can tell it. Caren said voice is
(Agents and Editors Continued on page 6)



(Agents and Editors Continued from page 5)

“something that makes you sit up and say ‘that’s how it should have been done, they finally got it right.’”

Chris Keeslar followed it up with the advice that authors play to their strengths, doing what no one else does and that you do it well.

Another current ‘hot topic’ on chat loops seems to revolve around websites. Should a pre-published author have one? Do agents and editors use them? What should go on one? Most everyone I spoke with was of the same mind. Websites are not necessary. However, if there is a website, and an industry professional goes to check it out, they want to see contest finals or wins and small excerpts from your story, and by small they seemed to think in lines of less than a chapter. Websites are also a good place to chronicle your journey to publication, track your work, and list contests you’re entering. If you’re going to do one, keep it professional.

Kim Whalen says that prior to publication, in regards to her decision making process, websites make no difference. They can be built after a book is sold.

So, unless you have a remarkable platform that pertains to what you’re writing, or maintaining a website is easy for you, feel free to focus your pre-publication efforts on your writing, which leads me to the question that had my interviewees really thinking.

What is one question you don’t get asked that you wish you did?

First up to swing at this question was Nathan Bransford, and he hardly hesitated before answering. “What can people do to learn more about the business?” Now, I couldn’t let him hand me that question without asking him to answer it. His answer was to hit the internet, check out blogging agents and editors, Publishers Marketplace, the Association of Author’s Representatives, AgentQuery.com, Absolute Write, Writers Beware, and utilize RWA tools.

Nathan’s answer is simple in concept, though time consuming if not managed carefully. He suggests using Google Reader to make managing the blogs easier, but his advice was given with a caveat: Don’t lose sight of why you’re writing and don’t lose the focus on telling a great story.

Chris Keeslar gave similar advice in regards to staying focused on the writing. He says too many writers don’t consider what they should focus on as an author. In expansion, he suggests that authors spend more time working out who they are and what they’re writing for.

One potential way of defining what you’re writing toward is to face the debate of whether or not you should have a marketing plan, or a career plan, before selling. This was another question that everyone seemed to agree on.

Marketing plans are generally worked out with an editor once a book is sold, as editors and agents are truly the people who know the shifting market, but don’t discount the importance of considering a plan. Career plans are a little different as they focus on your career rather than a specific book, so they are definitely worth considering.

~ “An early [marketing] plan shows that an author has put thought into their audience and their hook.” Lucienne Diver

~ “A career plan is better as it can show goals, ideas, and possible strategies on how and where you want to go.” Holly Root

~ “Marketing plans can be overwhelming when authors should be thinking about their book and writing a great story.” Jim McCarthy

~ “A career plan. Things to consider in a career plan are how many books a year you can write without suffering quality, what genre/sub-genre, how fast you can work, and what lifestyle do you want to have from your writing.” Deb Werksman

~ “For fiction, it can reveal an author’s excitement and willingness to promote themselves and their books.” Nathan Bransford

Talking with these industry professionals gave me an insight into the publishing business, but more importantly it gave me an insight into agents and editors as people. They are in this business with the goal of finding fantastic stories that demand they sit up and notice. Do yourself the favor of holding out for an agent or editor who is passionate about your story. They will be your first, and most important, fans.

-Chris Keeslar is executive editor with Dorchester www.dorchesterpub.com

-Deb Werksman is an editor with Sourcebooks www.sourcebooks.com

-Heather Osborn is an editor with TOR www.tor-forge.com

-Caren Johnson is an agent with the Caren Johnson Literary Agency www.carenjohnson.com

-Holly Root is an agent with The Waxman Agency www.waxmanagency.com

-Jim McCarthy is an agent with Dystel and Goderich Literary Management www.dystel.com

-Kim Whalen is an agent with Trident Media Group www.tridentmediagroup.com

-Lucienne Diver is an agent with The Knight Agency www.knightagency.net

-Nathan Bransford is an agent with Curtis Brown Ltd. www.nathanbransford.blogspot.com

~ Nikki’s a member of RWA, North Texas RWA, Dallas Area Romance Authors, and is a RWA PRO. She is currently working on her fifth manuscript. Nikki’s a contributor to the RWA PROspects Newsletter and her articles have been published in thirty RWA Chapter newsletters and list serves. While seeking publication, Nikki continues creating the stories living vividly in her imagination and studying the publishing industry. More on Nikki can be found by visiting www.nikkiduncan.com ‡



HEROSCOPES: THE VIRGO HEROINE

By Bonnie Staring

The following article first appeared in the September 2008 issue of *romANTICS*, newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Paula Watkinson, editor.

What's really on her mind? You may never know.

Born between August 23 and September 22, the Virgo heroine is one of the great mysteries of the Zodiac. People often perceive these fabulous women as cold or distant, but it's simply a matter of them being stuck in their analytical heads. Don't try to force her feelings to the surface—she'll see it coming from a mile away and she'll refuse to take your calls.

While those around her find her mystifying, underneath it all she prefers to be the one in control. The Virgo heroine,

once she opens herself up enough, falls in love deeply and completely.

She's a forever type of girl. Check under her bed and you'll find a shoebox filled with cards, dried-up corsages and completed Sudoku puzzles. Don't say we didn't warn you about how determined she is.

Virgo heroines were made for courtship, so feel free to pull out all the romantic stops—from coffee to cuddling to openly coveting—while taking things slowly. This gal can teach everyone a thing or two about playing hard to get. Ideal dates for her include classic outings like a gourmet meal, a night of jazz or even a rip-roaring game of trivia, euchre or dominoes. Famous Virgo heroines include Agatha Christie, Mother Teresa, Ingrid Bergman and Joan Jett.



Next month: The Libra Heroine

~ Bonnie Staring is a comedic triple threat (writer, performer, coupon user). Her articles regularly appear in women's magazines and she conducts workshops on creativity and discovering your inner superhero. See what else Bonnie's been up to at www.bonniestaring.com

PAINKILLERS OF THE 1800S

by Kate Bridges

The following article first appeared in the September 2008 issue of *romANTICS*, newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Paula Watkinson, editor. It may be reused by RWA chapters with appropriate credit to the author and chapter.

"Give me somethin' for the pain, oc..." How many times have you heard this in a Western movie?

If you were to rate the knowledge about painkillers in the 1800s in North America, you would say:

- A. Doctors knew very little. Most of the time, they just gave whisky.
- B. They knew enough to help some people. Mostly with unknown herbs.
- C. They used the major painkiller that is still the major painkiller we use in hospitals today.
- D. The answer is the last one. C

MORPHINE. Morphine was discovered in 1803. It was named after Morpheus, the Greek God of Dreams. At first it was given orally, but when hypodermic needles were invented (1853) morphine was injected. It worked faster. It became popular for treating injured soldiers during the 1860s Civil War. Morphine was also used during childbirth, to suppress coughing, even to relieve diarrhea and dysentery. Side effects can include drowsiness, nausea, vomiting and constipation (that's why it was effective with dysentery).

Morphine is still the most potent painkiller known to mankind. It has ten times the potency of Demerol (a synthetic painkiller invented 1930s). In hospitals today, morphine is often the medication prescribed for severe pain.

NARCOTICS. Opiate is the broad term that covers any drug made from opium (the poppy plant). These drugs are also called narcotics. Morphine falls into this group. So does Codeine (not discovered till 1930s). Extracts from poppy



plants have been used for medicinal purposes since 4,000 B.C..

OPIUM DENS. These sprang up across America during the last half of the 19th century. They began with the arrival of
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Chinese immigrants in San Francisco shortly after 1850, who imported opium. Customers smoked it through special pipes and lamps and got high. Laws banning drug use started in the late 1870s, but weren't enforced until the early 1900s, when doctors realized these things were addictive and detrimental.

HEROIN. Did you know if you boiled morphine, you'd get heroin? They discovered that in the late 1870s. Heroin is several times more potent than morphine. Heroin is no longer used in hospitals because it's addictive after just one dose. The body craves it and goes through withdrawal after just a single injection.

CANNABIS. Hemp, or medicinal cannabis (also called marijuana) has been used for centuries. An Irish doctor, an herb specialist at a medical college in Calcutta 1830, is credited with training his Western colleagues in the benefits for relief of muscle spasm and pain. It was also used to treat migraines and insomnia, and as a primary pain reliever until the invention of aspirin. It became controversial in 1937 when the U.S. banned it.

ASPIRIN. (Acetylsalicylic acid or ASA) Aspirin ingredients originally came from extracts of willow bark. Indian tribes knew its value, and chewed on pieces of bark for pain relief. Even Hippocrates in 400 BC recommended it to his patients. Scientists began to study willow bark in the 1850s to see if they could isolate the analgesic ingredient. Voila...1899, aspirin.

COCAINE. Derived from the coca plant in South America. Indigenous people chewed on the leaves to give them 'strength and energy.' Medicine men used it to wrap broken bones, reduce swelling, and treat festering wounds. The plant didn't grow in Europe and spoiled easily during travel, so it wasn't until 1855 in Germany that the main ingredients were isolated. By 1885, cocaine was sold in corner stores in America in various forms – cigarettes, powder, even injection by needle

(heroin was also widely available). In medicine, cocaine was commonly used as a local anesthetic. Sigmund Freud prescribed it for his patients to induce euphoria for those depressed. It wasn't until many years later they discovered its addictive nature.

LAUDANUM. Laudanum, or tincture of opium, was a very common painkiller because it was cheap and available to working class people. It came as a liquid, the main ingredients being morphine mixed with alcohol. There were different versions, with different ratios of opium (morphine). It was widely prescribed for many uses such as colds, pain relief, insomnia and heart ailments. Many writers and poets of the time were known to use it—Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

WHISKY. Alcohol is a depressant on the central nervous system and a mood modifier. It was used not as an analgesic in itself, but because it made the person groggy and intoxicated, so he or she wouldn't notice the pain as much. As a local anaesthetic (numbing agent) they used it for toothaches (ex. packing the hole in the gums left by a tooth extraction with gauze soaked in cognac). Doctors today do not recommend alcohol as a painkiller.

HOME REMEDIES FOR PAIN RELIEF. These included warm or cold compresses, poultices wrapped on the aching part of the body, herbal remedies (such as chamomile tea for stomach aches), liniments for muscle aches, electrical stimulation with batteries (Benjamin Franklin experimented with this in the 1750s, although the ancient Greeks discovered that using electrical eels in foot baths relieved pain), and untold others.

If you're a writer, things to watch for in your story:

Because we're modern readers aware of harmful drugs, if the doctor in your novel pulled out a vial of cocaine, or cannabis etc., some explaining would be necessary for how this fit into society. Otherwise the reader may get confused. You might not want to mention these

addictive painkillers, depending on what you're trying to accomplish in the scene. Sticking with morphine tablet or injection, laudanum, extract of willow bark, home remedies and yes, a good ol' bottle of whisky would be just as accurate. If you're unsure of a doctor's drug choice, you might give the point of view to a person in the scene who doesn't know anything about medicine.

A lot depends on where the story is taking place. City doctors had more access to drugs. Supplies (as well as medical texts) would have been limited on the open range. Fictional doctors may be written as smart or as helpless as needed for the story. If there was no doctor around, who might a character go to for advice? Maybe...a ranch hand who works with animals, midwife, ship's captain, or someone who's fought fires.

This article is intended for entertainment purposes, and research for historical fiction writers. A list of reference sources can be found on Kate's website www.katebridges.com.

~ Award-winning author Kate Bridges writes sexy historicals set in the Canadian and American West. *KLONDIKE FEVER* is an April 2008 Harlequin Historical release. Coming in February 2009 is *WANTED IN ALASKA*. Before becoming a full time writer, Kate was a pediatric intensive care nurse. Her novels often include medical situations. She's a regular blogger on petticoatsandpistols and member of the Toronto Romance Writers. katebridges.com ‡

That's very nice if they want to publish you, but don't pay too much attention to it. It will toss you away. Just continue to write.

~ Natalie Goldberg



FROM PASSIVE TO PASSIONATE - A VOICE ADJUSTMENT

By Jo Anne Banker

The following article was first printed in the July 2008 issue of In Print!, newsletter for Houston Bay Area RWA.

Nothing can catapult a story out of the flatlands of the ordinary and into the realm of the stars quicker than a passionate voice. And nothing can sink that same story deep in a quagmire pit of boredom faster than a passive voice.

I'm not talking about classic passive voice, where the subject is acted on by the verb, rather than doing the acting itself - although that's a killer, too. And even though I do get a bit fussy when the passive voice police accuse every "was" written of shame, that's yet a different thing. That's another story, another article, for another day.

No, what I'm talking about, which many times does include the poor forsaken "was," is writing that lays flat on the page. The words slog around, one leading the other into a tedious string of sentences. No life, no personality - no passion.

Passion. Ardor. Fervor. Emotions that excite and beg the reader to immerse themselves in one's characters and stories.

A few weeks ago, I attended an intimate fundraiser where world-renowned pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet performed. This former child prodigy learned to play at 5, made his first public appearance at 7, first played with an orchestra at 11 and at 12, he graduated with the gold medal from the conservatory in Lyon.

He went on to study with the world masters. Between the ages of 15 and 20, he won every major competition in his field, the Prix du Conservatoire (France), the Viotti International Competition (Italy), the First International Piano Competition (Japan), the Young Concert Artists International Auditions (New York) and more.

Mr. Thibaudet has more than 45 recordings to his name including forays into jazz. More recently, he corroborated with Dario Marianelli on the scores for the 2005 Oscar winning *Pride and Prejudice* and again for last year's *Atonement*.

Normally one experiences this virtuoso in grand concert with thousands in audience. Our group numbered 100 and I sat eight feet from the gentleman, totally fascinated as his fingers tiptoed, titillated, raced, pounded - then again - little more than tempted the keys.

During a particular allegro movement, the man's hands galloped, like a many-legged arachnid, along the ivory. His entire body heaved and swayed and rocked. Sometimes a mischievous smile teased, sometimes his angst and pain tortured. And when he played a romantic phrase, the tenderness, the depth of his intimacy made me feel as if I were intruding upon him and his lover.

When I met him after the performance, I told him that I knew if I could write my stories with only half of the emotion with which he played, I'd be a NYT bestseller in no time. The man exuded charisma. Even his laugh was earthy and passionate.

From that moment, I knew I would use his performance as an example, to permeate my characters with that same energy and depth. To plunge them into situations fraught with emotion. To infuse that passion into my every word.

Recently NPR interviewed Dmitri Hvorostovsky, a Russian baritone known for his role here in America as Eugene Onegin, the gentleman who broke the lovely Tatiana's young heart. When Dmitri was trained, he learned not to make one sound - not to sing one single note - that didn't contain emotional impact. He learned to equate and combine sound, emotion, heart, and brains - until they are one.



Our goal: to write every word in the same way.

Once, I wrote a character in angst. Something had gone wrong in her life that foreshadowed worse problems in her future. But outside her window, I had the sun shining and birds twittering and the glory of spring blooming. A wise critique partner suggested a horrific spring storm instead, one that reflected my character's tumultuous emotions.

Well, duh. Why hadn't I thought of that? Because it takes experience to make the connection in our young writer's minds.

I'm older and have immersed myself fully into life. But as the years pass, one becomes tired and passions dwindle. I'm one of the lucky few who has rediscovered passion through my stories.

We must get deep into our character's POV, use tone and description that fit the emotion of the scene. We must not only keep those verbs active, but also fill each and every word with passion: the kind of passion we felt when we were frustrated teens whose parents didn't understand us, or when we bedded our first lover.

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(Passion Continued from page 10)

People relate to emotions. No matter what social, economic or educational background one has, everyone can relate to love and hate, to joy and sadness, to exuberance and exhaustion, to the warmth of intimacy and the coldness of being alone.

This is the universal language of passion. One that everyone understands.

Grab the reader by their passion and keep them right there with you.

And use your own personal passions to do it.

~ Jo Anne Banker, as yet unpublished, has been blessed with much passion in her life. . Jo Anne's work has finished in many contests, including a prestigious Maggie win last year. She has two manuscripts under consideration now with *Superromance* and hopes to someday share her life passions with like-hearted readers. ‡

TELL A STORY

by **Bonnie Staring**

The following article first appeared in the May 2008 issue of *romANTICS*, newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Paula Watkinson, editor.

If there's one thing I've learned about writing, it's that the more you learn the harder it gets. In Grade 1, the way we learned about writing went along the lines of this:

Tell a story.

So we did. We wrote beautiful passages like:

Example 1: Timmy has a dog.

Example 2: Rachel rode her bike.

Then, as we moved into the next grade, the teacher asked us to do something else to write well:

Add descriptions to tell us more. So we did.

Example 1: Timmy, the boy next door, has a dog named Fig. It's brown with white spots.

Example 2: Rachel rode her bike to school. It has a banana seat. I like banana seats.

By the time we entered middle and high school, all of those hormones running through our systems had to come out somehow. So our frightened teachers gave us another great writing tip:

Use emotions. So we did.

Example 1: Timmy, the cute boy next door who never gave me the time of

day, has a dog named Fig. Well, he used to, but Fig passed away. That was very sad. I offered Timmy a hug but he hugged Marta instead. I hate her. Heck, I hate Timmy too.

Example 2: Rachel rode her bike to school until her parents gave her a car. Now that Rachel has a car, she's ignoring all of her old friends and hanging out with the cool kids. I hate her.

And, as we soon discovered, emotions can only take you so far. What really drives any story is GMC: goals, motivation and conflict. If you haven't read Debra Dixon's masterpiece yet, please spend the \$20 to get your own copy. It'll show you things that our English teachers tried to tell us but we were too busy with peer pressure, school dances and trying to get Timmy's attention.

Any story worth telling needs goals, motivation and conflict (both internal and external) to keep things interesting. And readers interested. So, to write even "more good," we have to:

Add GMC.

And that's when things get difficult, fall off the rails or simply make you shake your fist at the sky. Allow me to demonstrate:

Example 1: Though Timmy put on a brave face, he was crumbling inside.

Witnessing his dog's demise made Timmy realize how short life really was. Each day was a gift, yet he was surrounded by takers. Marta had seemed so kind at first, but now all he could hear was resentment in her voice whenever he suggested they do volunteer

work at the local animal shelter. He had to dump her—and fast.

Example 2: Rachel felt like she owned the world when she turned the key in the ignition. Every time the engine in her cherry-red Mustang roared to life, so did a long-forgotten part of her. This was the Rachel that stayed hidden while her father beat the crap out of her and her sister. This was the Rachel nobody messed with because she was finally the one in control. Now if only she could get out of the driveway without popping the clutch.

Unless GMC makes sense for your characters, a reader won't believe their actions. That's what makes GMC a tricky thing to master, and it's almost impossible to master on your own. Like with a vocal coach, you need someone else to help guide you and let you know if you're singing in the right key...or at least kind of close to it.

And it's almost impossible to be objective about your own words—especially when you love them one day and then hate them the next. Don't even get me started on that one.

But good writing all boils down to the first thing we ever learned about it:

Tell a story.

~ Bonnie Staring is a comedic triple threat (writer, performer, coupon user). Her articles regularly appear in women's magazines and her novel, *Megan Delaney, Psychic Misfit*, placed second in the 2008 NTRWA's Great Expectations Contest. See what else Bonnie's been up to at www.bonniestaring.com ‡



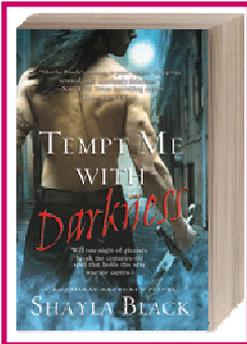
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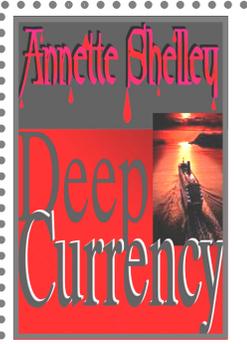
We're on the web!
www.ntrwa.org

MEMBER NEWS



Shelley Bradley's new paranormal romance, **TEMPT ME WITH DARKNESS**, is out! It's the first in her Domsday Brethren series for Pocket
doomsdaybrethren.com/books/tempt-me/

Congratulations to **Gina Lee Nelson** for her manuscript **NEW GIRL IN TOWN** for finaling in the Contemporary category of the 2008 Lone Star Writing Competition sponsored by the Northwest Houston Chapter of RWA.



Shelley Kaehr's Mario Martinez detective novel **DEEP CURRENCY** sold to Red Rose Publishing.
www.annetshelley.com/

EVENTS

Oct. 3—5, 2008, Friday—Sunday
FENCON V
science fiction & fantasy literary & film convention at the Crown Plaza North Dallas in Addison, TX featuring Gregory Benford, Jay Lake, & Harold Waldrop
www.fencon.org

Oct. 11, 2008, Saturday
Readers 'n 'ritas Conference
from 09:00 AM - 11:55 pm at the Radisson Hotel Dallas North in Richardson, TX, featuring Sherrilyn Kenyon & Dianna Love.
readers-n-ritas.org

Oct. 12, 2008, Sunday
Buns & Roses Tea for Literacy
from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel in Richardson, TX.
bunsandrosestea.org