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heart to heart

North Texas Romance Writers of America



Next Meeting April 18, 2009

CREATING MEMORABLE CHARACTERS

Judi McCoy has been writing romance for over fifteen years. She leads the Romantic Times aspiring authors' course at their yearly convention, and has mentored new writers both online and in person, in private and in group situations. She's also given numerous chapter workshops on a variety of writing topics.

Her first book, *I Dream of You*, won Waldenbook's Best-selling Debut Romance of 2001. Since then, her novels have consistently garnered four stars from Romantic Times Book Club and numerous online review sites. She belongs to RWA, CRW,

NTRW, NJRW, RWI of Tulsa, WRW, MRW, and the Greater Dallas Writers Association. Her May, 2003, release, *Heaven in Your Eyes*, won *Fallen Angel Review's* Best Contemporary.

Along with a writing career, she has twenty-five plus years experience as a women's gymnastics judge. Judi currently resides on Virginia's peaceful eastern shore with her husband and three small dogs, Rudy, Buckley, and Belle. She keeps busy by tending her garden, raising orchids, and writing her next novel. ‡





PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Angi Platt

"So 2009 is my year. It's my time to get that story on the page and finish projects that deserve to be finished. It can be your year too. Let's grab it together and do all we can to help ourselves further along the road to publication." *January President's Corner*

Goals. Encouragement. Take Action. And the next step -- Keep Writing.

I am a writer, so I should write. And write. And write. And write. But I'm also a mom, wife, grandmother, daughter, volunteer, friend, and business owner. Life takes time.



There's a reason I can write more this year. I had two kids graduate in '07 & '08. It was an important part of their lives and I'm glad I experienced the graduation process with them. But I didn't write much and felt guilty.

Spring break for the grandkids was this past week and I passed on having them visit. I was on a roll with revisions and honestly didn't want to stop for an entire day. Wow, I took time for my writing. I had lunch with Cathy Spangler and felt completely guilty. In her wonderful wisdom she said, "If you had a full-time job and they couldn't visit, you wouldn't feel that way."

Very true.

Push through the distractions. Push through whatever may be keeping you from writing everyday. Your subconscious is always working on your story. Take a notepad and sit in the carpool lane. Listen to a writing CD while driving to work or rent an audio book from the library. Find a writing exercise, revise pages, find your characters' faces in a magazine, but stay close to your characters.

Just. Keep. Writing. ‡



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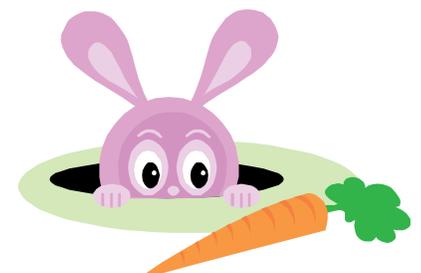
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MARCH MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on March 21, 2009, at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The president and secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:32 A.M.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President, Angi Platt reported: After board approval, Shelley Kaehr will be the Membership Director, Shelley Bradley will be the PAN Liaison, and Clover Autrey will be the PRO Liaison. A card was signed for Wanda Raine, whose husband recently died.

Angi Platt reported for the Membership Director: NTRWA has 63 members. New members this month are Bill Woodrow, Michelle Welsh, Susan Harrison and Sandra Ferguson.

Treasurer, Chris Keniston reported: The board approved changing to Compass Bank and the changeover was complete. NT now earns interest on all funds. PayPal has upgraded NT's status (after our length as a customer) and we can transfer all funds. The Paypal account now has a zero balance. The February Treasurer's report was reported and filed for audit.

Program Director, Marty Tidwell reported: Next month's workshop will be presented by Judi McCoy on characterization. The Annual Critique Round Table will be held in May, and Sandra Ferguson will present the June program. Margie Lawson is presenting the November Writers Roundup workshop along with agents Cori Deyoe (3 Seas Literary) and Melissa Jeglinski (Knight Agency).

Communications Director, Alley Huldren reported: Paper copies of the newsletter were not mailed prior to the meeting. Members can view the newsletter electronically. Please email member news to newsletter@ntrwa.org.

Website Director, Jen FitzGerald reported: Work is proceeding on developing a member's only section.

PAN Liaison, Shelley Bradley reported: Harlequin's sales were up 18% in February. However, Penguin and other publishers reported flat or lower sales. Random House is cutting production because Anderson distributors stopped delivering books to retailers. Barnes & Noble is closing its Miracle Mile store in Chicago and shrinking the number of its overall employees.

Angi Platt reported for the PRO Liaison: One member achieved PRO status, and two more have applied. Nikki

Duncan is being "kicked out" of PRO because (hooray) she sold Sounds To Die By to Samhain, which will be released in October.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

Audio Librarian, Nikki Duncan reported: CDs from the 2008 conference are available for members to request. For \$1.00 a member can take as many cassette tapes as desired as the cassette tape library is being discontinued.

Bead a Book Chair, Nikki Duncan reported: Join the loop where you can report your word and page count.

Great Expectations Chair, Marty Tidwell reported: Winners will be announced on April 2, 2009. She sent congratulation certificates around for members to sign before she presents them to winners.

Hospitality Chairperson, Marsha West reported: Door prizes include critiques by Wendy Watson and Tracy Ward. Name badge holders are on sale for \$10.00, badge holder chains are \$5.00, and pens from the 25th anniversary celebration are \$2.00.

Spotlight Chair, Shelley Kaehr reported: Leanna Ellis couldn't be here, but members can read about her in the March newsletter. Judi McCoy will be featured next month.

Old Business: none

New Business: none

The business meeting was adjourned at: 10:50 a.m. ‡

**RISING STAR AWARDS--
MOST PAGES WRITTEN**

Candy Havens - 285 pages
Misa Ramirez - 75 pages
Traci Bell - 66 pages
Jen FitzGerald -- 60 pages

**SPUR AWARDS--
MOST PAGES EDITED**

Candy Havens - 350 pages
Bill Woodrow - 290 pages
Shelley Bradley - 203 pages
Jeannie Guzman -- 202 pages
Shelley Kaehr -- 196 pages



SPOTLIGHT: JUDI MCCOY

by Shelley Kaehr writing as Leah Leonard

When did you first start writing?

I began writing in 1994 when I lived in NJ. But when I moved to Texas in '95 things got more serious and I really began to work at it.

How did your background/childhood/experiences, etc. prepare you or your muse for your writing?

I was always a big reader, but there were many times when I found myself thinking about the ending of a book and telling myself what I'd do differently if I wrote it. The 'doing things differently' just morphed into writing my own stories

When did you first know this was more than just a hobby?

When I sat down and crafted my first real story, not another author's work. It was then I realized I had enough thoughts to carry a book to the completion stage.

How did you decide to make this your profession?

I was never sure I'd make any money at it, but I didn't care. Once I started writing, I couldn't seem to stop. It was then I knew it was what I had to do to have a happy life.

How did you pick romance as your genre?

Romance novels were all I seemed to read. I loved the idea of a happy ending, the right man with the right woman, forging a life together. I also decided there was too much misery in the world and not enough joy, so I made sharing the joy a goal.

Describe your journey to publication – who did you sell to first, how?

Like most new authors, I had no idea if I had talent. I just knew I wanted to write. When the rejections became positive (yes, there is such a thing as a positive rejection) I knew it was time to find an agent. Once I did that, things started to happen. My agent sold I Dream of You to Kate Duffy at Kensington, and I guess I turned Kate around. She said many times that she'd never buy a paranormal. I was her first, and it convinced her to buy more.

How many rejections did you originally receive before getting a yes? Or did you sell right away?

I got my agent on my fourth book and wrote three more be-

fore she sold me to Kate, who gave me a three book contract.

Describe your philosophy on getting published. Is it skill, luck, timing or a little of all three? Please elaborate.

I've always believed that luck has a lot to do with

getting published. The right manuscript has to cross the right editor's desk at the right time. I like to say it's 25% luck, 25% skill, and 50% determination. New authors need to remember that if they stop writing, they'll never sell. Focus and determination are a very important part of this business.

Do you have an agent? If so, do you think this is necessary?

My agent is Helen Breitwieser of Cornerstone Literary and we've been together eleven years. And talk about luck. I found her when she had just left William Morris in New York and was setting up her own agency in Los Angeles. The timing was right. I'm not so sure I'd have the same good luck today.

If you do, describe the steps you took to get one, and again whether it is just timing, skill, luck or all three.

How did I find her? I went to a book called The Pink Pages, which was a guide to romance editors and agents. I read up on each agent, chose ten that I thought sounded interesting, and sent to each of them. Helen actually phoned me because she didn't even have an office, and that really impressed me. I can't imagine being with anyone else.

Voice – when did you first realize your writer's voice was starting to take hold? After how many books?

It took me six books to find my voice. While I wrote those first five, I knew something was missing, something I wasn't doing that made me true to myself. When it finally hit me that I was trying to be someone else (Anne Stuart or Nora Rob-



(Spotlight c continued on page 5)



(Spotlight continued from page 4)

erts, to name two) I put the words on paper the way I wanted them to sound. I even wrote a completely different type of book, and that's the book that sold to Kate.

How did the Dog Walker Series come about?

The idea of a dog walker heroine had been rolling around in my brain for a few years, but Avon seemed to want another type of story, so I obliged. One day, my agent called and said she thought it was time I did something different, something that no one else had tried before. I discussed Ellie and Rudy, the stars of the books, with her and she realized immediately that was my 'something different'. I wrote the first book in less than six months, while completing my final book for Avon. When I was done with it, I knew there would never be other books. Ellie and Rudy would always be the center of my universe.

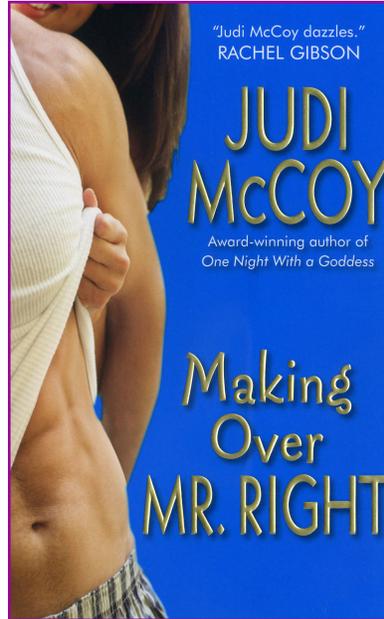
Tell us all about your beneficiary Best Friends.

Best Friends in Kanab, Utah, is the home of the largest no-kill animal shelter in the US. I found them on NatGeo, in a show called Dogtown, which came on right after the Dog Whisperer. The show and the sanctuary touched my heart and I wanted to do something special for them. My husband and I talked it over and decided they needed my support, so I came up with the idea of donating the royalties from the first book. Yes, it's generous, but it's also a way to reach dog lovers, the people I thought would most like the books.

Tell us about your family. How have they supported your writing career?

I have two grown daughters and two young grandsons (4 & 5). Everyone in my family supports what I do, including my husband, and I know that's key. I get frustrated when I hear about writers, male and female, whose husband or wife doesn't like what they do, demands attention when they're trying to write, or gripe about the money they don't make. One of the most important things in a person's life

is to be happy in their career. I could never sell shoes, or teach school. For me, writing is the ultimate career.



Tell us briefly about your two latest published books.

Making Over Mr. Right is the last book in the goddess series and wraps up what happens to Zoe, Chloe, and Kyra. It's also my final book for Avon. It was fun to create because I threw in a couple of interesting characters and a secondary love story that I enjoyed writing.

Hounding the Pavement is, of course, the book of my heart. Even if I never sell another story, this is all I plan to write. I told Helen she could stack up all the rejected books in a corner of her office and use them for doorstops or paper starters for her fireplace. As far as I'm concerned, Ellie, Rudy, and the dogs they walk are my whole world.

What advice would you give to writers who know in their hearts this is what they want to do? Any mistakes you've made you'd like to help others avoid? Any strokes of genius or personal epiphanies you'd like to share?



I probably made a hundred mistakes along the way, but I stayed focused on my goal: a published book. I remember going to bed each night and envisioning my name on the spine of a book right next to Judith McNaught. The book had no title, just my name, but I saw it there clearly, so I guess you could call that the power of positive thinking.

I'd also suggest a critique group for every writer, even after they're published. The members can be invaluable in keeping you straight, making good suggestions, and pointing you in the right direction.

Please list your websites, contact info and anything else.

My website is: www.judimccoy.com, and I can be reached at judi1022@earthlink.net. I promise to answer every e-mail I receive. ‡



PRO LIASON: HOW TO BE A PRO

By Clover Autrey

I stared at Angi. Angi stared at me.

“You want me to what?”

I rearranged my face so she would think I had a clue about what she was talking about. PRO Liaison? Sounds like an escort service.

“Are you a PRO member?” she asked.

That’s where I lost my poker face and she knew I was clueless. Um, well. Okay, the truth is I had no idea. I spent all of ten minutes at the RWA homepage, just long enough to download the general application. My sole intention for joining RWA was to be able to join the North Texas Chapter. I wanted face to face time with other writers, a real actual people via flesh, not computer community. That’s what I got. What did I need to bother with the big RWA for?

Me, PRO Liaison? I don’t know enough about being PRO to do that job.

“That’s what we want.” Angi has an answer for everything, drat her. “We want someone to learn about what PRO has to offer with fresh eyes and pass that on to our new and PRO members.”

That I can do.

First step: Join PRO.

Admittedly, I should have done that when I first joined. The qualifications are fairly easy. All you have had to do is complete at least a 40,000 word romance fiction manuscript and send it to an agent or publisher. As proof that you did this, they want a copy of the manuscript, a “received receipt” postcard or email from an agent or publisher, or a “review of the submitted work” (that’s their nice way of saying Rejection Letter), or if you were accepted by a small press that is not vanity or non PAN-eligible, you can send a copy of the signed contract to qualify.

I sent my application off. There isn’t even another fee to join, and received my acceptance by email about a week later. The pin is taking a while longer. Couldn’t have been easier.

And the benefits? Boy, was I dumb not to have joined sooner. First, there is the PRO-org loop where all the announcements are made and general shuttle-butt. My brain always shifts in gear when announcements or insights about potential agents and publishers come through.

Then, there is the PRO-camp loop where the boot camps are held. The first week I joined had several agents fielding questions about queries. You can respond or hang back and listen, but I gleaned a lot of information from that.

There is also the very informative newsletter, PROspects, the PRO-retreat, and a series of booklets about contracts, promotion, and the business side of a writing career, which can be downloaded right off the RWA site for free. Who knew all these resources were available?

As PRO Liaison, I plan to pass on more about all those things as I learn about them myself. I’d also like to know what topics you’d like to explore. Writing that query? Benefits of having a website now? Which conferences to attend to best showcase your specific genre? We have our own North Texas RWA PRO loop and a lot of savvy members with varying skill-sets. Let’s utilize both together and kick as many PRO members out of the group as we can as you move up into PAN.

Clover Autrey

eaglekinseyrie.com †





PROCESS EXAMINATION #4: STUCK IN THE MIDDLE WITH MUSE

by Kellie Hazell

The following first appeared in the August issue of Romance of the Desert, newsletter of the Saguaro Romance Writers, edited by Kellie Hazell.

This is the fourth unit in a series designed to help writers find or better employ the tools they use to write best.

Last month, I discussed how to engage your process as you begin a draft. This month, I focus on how to keep that momentum going through the middle of the draft.

By now you have developed a system that measures your progress in a manner with which you are comfortable. You've found the easiest answers to what derails your progress and the most obvious successful elements of your process. Now it's time to dig a little deeper. This is where the notes you've taken on your writing sessions will come in handy. For example, in January, at the half-way point of my current novel, I got stuck. Looking at my process notes, I discovered I had a lot of boring talking head scenes and that the point of view pattern I had established locked me into a pattern of antagonist action-protagonist reaction I didn't like. I tried writing from a first-person POV but remained stuck. I toyed with revising, but feared I'd never stop. This went on for over a month. Then I

realized that my draft didn't in any way resemble a functional story and it was hurting me to think of it as such. Instead, I needed to think of the draft as the common language between my right brain (my muse) and my left brain (my scientist). It wasn't just that I needed permission to write crap; I needed to understand that the crap I was writing served a purpose. The scientist wanted structure and detail where the muse couldn't provide it yet, and the draft served as a compromise. Every subsequent problem I treated as a disagreement between the muse and the scientist; I finished the draft last week.

Next month I'll discuss how to make your process work for you as you race to the finish line.

~ Kellie Hazell got sick of feeling like she wasn't writing as much as she could and devoted some time toward figuring out why. Her Process Examination series is the result. ‡



HEROSCOPES: THE ARIES HEROINE

By Bonnie Staring

The following article appeared in the April 2009 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor.

There's always time for a parade in her world.

Born between March 21 and April 19, the Aries heroine is the head cheerleader of the Zodiac. She's the activist in the group; if you need someone to be tied to a tree or camp out on the President's doorstep, she's your gal. Just don't be surprised if this woman loses interest after the third splinter, or when more volunteers show up to finish the job.

The Aries heroine is full of ideas. Whether they work or not doesn't really matter as long as she's having fun. It's not that she's not willing to work hard; it's just that there are some things better left for others to do, such as taking down the streamers and washing out the punch bowls. When everyone else is cleaning up, this fabulous woman is already onto the next big thing.

There's only one way to an Aries woman's heart: the hard way. Spark her interest and then run as fast as you can—she loves a challenge with a worthy hunk of a reward at the end. Great dates for her include getting to know more about her hero, perhaps through a lively debate or during a paintball tournament. Famous Aries heroines include Eudora Alice Welty, Gloria Steinem, Diana Ross and Jane Mansfield.

Next month: the Taurus Heroine

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





2009 GREAT EXPECTATIONS CONTEST WINNERS!

North Texas RWA is proud to announce the winners of the 2009 Great Expectations. Thanks to everyone who participated and made this year such a success! Congratulations to all!!

Thanks-- Marty and Mary, NTRWA.ORG

Contemporary Series

Megan Long ~ Editorial Assistant, Harlequin Books

- 1st: Her Rodeo Clown by Donna Dalton
- 2nd: Made for Marriage by Helen Lacey
- 3rd: Rebel Heart by Yvonne Harris
- 4th: Summer in Austin by Katie Graykowski

Erotic

Raelene Gorlinksy ~ Publisher, Senior Editor, Ellora's Cave

- 1st: Glass by Sarah Marshall, *full requested*
- 2nd: Twin Rewards by Doree Anderson, *full requested*
- 3rd: Apollo Rising by Leuca Stone
- 4th: All My Sins Remembered by Michal Scott

Historical

Esi Sogah ~ Editorial Assistant, Harper Collins

- 1st: The anchoress and the Fifth Knight by Elaine M. Powell
- 2nd: The Sons of Gregor MacLeod: Highland Promise by Alison Pritchard
- 3rd: A Multitude of Vengeance by Amanda L. Mole
- 4th: A Kiss Before Midnight by Tami Cowden

Inspirational

Melissa Endlich ~ Editor, Harlequin Books

- 1st: Lauren's Wish by Wenda Dottridge, *full requested*
- 2nd: Knowing Grace by Debra E. Marvin
- 3rd: Beyond Ever After by Carie Lawyer
- 4th: Frank, Incense and Muriel by Dianne K. Burns

Mainstream with Romantic Elements

Megan McKeever ~ Associate Editor, Pocket Books

- 1st: Kissing My Old Life Au Revoir by Beth Watson
- 2nd: Shadow of Evil by Yvonne Harris
- 3rd: Payment in Blood by Deborah Gross
- 3rd: Starting Over by Sylvia McDaniel



Romantic Suspense

Alex Logan ~ Assistant Editor, Grand Central Publishing

- 1st: See Jane Run by Angela Platt, *synopsis requested*
- 2nd: Wild Encounter by Nicola Beynon
- 3rd: In the Best Interest by Rhonda Hopkins
- 4th: Till Death Do Us Part by Tracy Falenwolfe

Single Title

Talia Platz ~ Editorial Assistant, New American Library

- 1st: Make Me Believe by Reese Mobley, *full requested*
- 2nd: Make it Perfect by Abby Gaines
- 3rd: Prodigal Daughter by Chris Keniston
- 4th: Under Her Spell by Beth Watson

Specialized Category

Chris Keeslar ~ Senior Editor, Dorchester/Leisure

- 1st: Ghost Planet by Sharon Fisher
- 2nd: Truth, Justice, and Chocolate Kisses by Heidi Luchterhand
- 2nd: Witch Ever Way You Can by Deborah Blake
- 3rd: Healer's Destiny by Helen Katsinis

Young Adult

Alvina Ling ~ Editor, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

- 1st: Charm School by Deanna Carlyle, *full requested*
- 1st: Sugar High by Bethany Cunningham Gabbert, *full requested*
- 2nd: Spaz by Liz Eliot
- 3rd: Freaks of Greenfield High by Maree Anderson
- 4th: The Mark of the Shadow: A Hallowich Academy Novel by Leah Hodge ‡



THE TIME CAPSULE: JUNE 1990

By Chris Keniston

Did you know in 1990 NT had a chapter motto? They did. "If you are going to write...write!"

Our second article to reprint on founding member, Sandra Brown, (Yes, THAT Sandra Brown!) reminded me the NT motto is as true today as it was in 1990. Enjoy!

The following originally appeared in the June 1991 issue of the Heart to Heart newsletter, Nancy Cosby editor.

Keeping In Touch by Linda Nichols

One of the fun things about this organization is the chance to visit with people involved in the industry. Recently I heard former NTRWA member Sandra Brown speaking at the DARA general membership meeting. She was as always gracious, warm, down to earth, and very informative.

Sandra was a charter member of RWA and NTRWA and laughingly states that she probably had the worst attendance record of any local member. However, we all remember the arduous writing schedule she adhered to during the first years of her career. When you add in her personal appearances and family commitments, it's a wonder she had time to remember us. But she did.

The day I heard her speak she also had a tea to attend for her daughter, Rachel, who is graduating from high school in June of this year. Rachel will be attending Oklahoma University in the fall.

Sandra is now a best-selling author. Her book, *Mirror Image*, published by Warner, was on the New York Times best seller list for 5 weeks. Due to the tremendous success of the first two of the Doubleday Texas Trilogy, *Texas Lucky*, and *Texas Chase*, her book now under contract to Warner will be a hardcover release.

Recently she has seen the realization of her 11-year-old writing goals.

- 1.) To make the New York Times best seller list;
- 2.) To have a movie option on one of her books; and
- 3.) To be published in hardcover. *Mirror Image* has been optioned as a made-for-TV movie, thus completing the third of her 11-year goals.

When I asked her what her current goals were, she said, "To make the New York Times best seller list again. It's scary to think that the last book might have been a fluke." Sandra says, "In writing you never quite think you're there. The last book was okay, but the next book is going to be the one. If you're complacent, your work will reflect it. It's always healthy to want to do better."

Another new goal is to see the movie actually made. In fact at the time we spoke, she was scheduled to fly to San Diego to meet with the producers on the set of their current film.

When asked if she had a message for the members of NTRWA, she said "It's more important than ever to focus on your work. While the market today is healthy, publishers tend to buy their established authors rather than new ones." When I asked why, she said "The public has demonstrated their tendency to buy authors they know. But the publishers are also looking for the next Janet Daily or Danielle Steel." (I might add the next Sandra Brown.)

Sandra also stressed that RWA had been very important to her. When she sat in that room with 30 or 40 other women and became a charter member, never in her wildest imaginings did she think her career would be what it is today. Her hope for someone just starting out is that they pursue their dreams and not give up along the way. Writing takes a lot of hard work, but the dream can happen. It takes time, effort, and sacrifices, but for Sandra it has been a very rewarding 11 years. ‡





LOVE'S LABORS – LITERALLY SPEAKING

by Tami Hoag

This article first appeared in the June 1989, Midwest Fiction Writers "All The Write Stuff" newsletter and again in the April 2009 issue of Midwest Muse. Jody Vitek, VP-Communications, Midwest Muse.

Writing books has often been compared to having a baby. I have to admit, I've never had a baby, but friends who have are unstoppable fonts of information on the topic, always willing to relate their personal tales of torture unlike anything known to humankind since the days of the inquisition. I have written books, and the comparison, in my opinion, is undeniably valid.

Conception is the fun part. Our muse is a shameless flirt. It teases and tempts, begs and cajoles, until, in a rash moment of emotional irresponsibility, you give in. Thoroughly seduced, you decide to write a book. It can't be that hard, you say. Lots of people do it. In fact, you're certain it will be nothing short of a wonderful, beautiful, fulfilling experience that will richly enhance your life.

The decision made, you plunge headlong into your endeavor. When you're not at your desk, you walk around in a daze thinking up names for the baby (which will undoubtedly be changed when it's delivered). You doodle character names on every available surface. You daydream about your little one growing up to become a New York Times best seller.

In your initial enthusiasm, you clear out entire sections of the public library. Research books litter your home. You want to be a good parent to your baby book, don't you? Then you'd better know everything there is to know about every subject remotely connected to the topic so dear to your besotted heart.

But, alas, the bloom does not remain on the rose forever. Eventually, reality sets in. You struggle through the long months of watching your infant idea grow into a book. You worry, you get sick, and you lose sleep wondering whether or not your baby will be okay. Will it have all the right parts? Will anyone else like it, or will it be a child only a mother could love?

You gain weight because you're eating not only for two, but for an entire cast of characters. To make matters worse, your hero has a sweet tooth, and you, like every other woman who comes into contact with him, can deny him nothing.

During a heated argument with two of your secondary characters you suddenly grasp the concept of the split personality. Other people are inhabiting your being.

You ask yourself what madness ever possessed you to enter into this hellish endeavor. You begin to look at our muse through a jaundiced eye and curse the day you met.

Labor pains intensify as your delivery date draws near. You

contemplate the emotional rewards of going stark-raving mad. You never see your feet because they are always under your desk. You could probably tie your own shoes, but why bother – you never leave the house.

Finally, your baby is delivered and you hold your breath in anticipation of the diagnosis. Ideally, your editor smiles and tells you your brainchild is fine (although it may need bit of circumcision). Relief crashes over you in a tidal wave. Endorphins flood your brain and you promptly forget the hell you've just gone through.

And you turn to your muse with an idiotic, beatific smile on your face and whisper those magic words, "Let's make another."

~ Note from 1989: Tami Hoag is the proud parent of six novels, all of them delivered by the staff at Bantam/Loveswept. "And, oh, yes," she says with a blush, "There's another one on the way." ‡



Congratulations!

☞ **Laura Martello, aka L.A. Mitchell** is a 2009 Golden Heart finalist for Novel With Strong Romantic Elements for her time travel thriller, "Until Midnight"

☞ **Rosemary Clement-Moore** is a 2009 RITA finalist for Young Adult Romance for "Hell Week"



SEVEN TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BOOKSIGNING

By Romney Nesbitt

The following article first appeared in the March 2009 issue of *Inklings*, the newsletter of *Romance Writers Ink* (Tulsa, OK). Deanna Ponder & Sharon Ervin, Co-Editors .

In today's competitive market writers need to think creatively to increase sales. Follow these seven tips to make your next book signing a success.

See your future. Peer into your crystal ball and visualize a successful book signing from start to finish. Imagine an article in the newspaper advertising your event. Like being in the spotlight? How about an interview on a local TV or radio morning show? Looking for sales? See a long line of buyers waiting for an autographed copy of your book. Focus on what you want!

Understand reality. People are busy. Your event is in competition with work schedules, TV, youth sports, errands, chores and weekend travel. For every twelve invitations sent expect to see one or two people at your signing. Generate interest by having a drawing for a free book. Sign books with another author and double the number of potential buyers.

Contact the book store owner or store manager early. Whether you're dealing with a chain book store or local bookshop, signings are scheduled weeks or even months out. Once the date is set, ask what you could do to make your event more successful. Draw attention to your book signing table with a poster-sized image of your book cover, brightly colored tablecloth and a bowl of candy or fresh-baked cookies.

Court the media. Send a copy of your book and a cover letter announcing your signing to local newspapers and

television stations six to eight weeks in advance. Don't stop with a notice to the person in charge of new books. Look at the subplots in your romance to find a hook to the Style or Living sections, women's issues or health. If your main character is working her way through a nasty divorce, coping with her brother's schizophrenia, suddenly raising her sister's children or experiencing paranormal disturbances in her newly purchased home, point this out in your cover letter. Invite the editor to consider using your fictional character's problems as a lead-in to an article on the topic. You might uncover a whole new audience for your book. Don't underestimate your value to a local morning TV or radio show. It's easy to link your book to a national holiday or anniversary. Check out Chases' Calendar of Events in the reference section of the library to find thousands of quirky national holidays listed by date and topic. Under the topic of "Romance", I found nineteen listings. Did you know "Find Your Soul Mate Day" is May 22, "Resurrect Romance Week" begins August 8, and "Pleasure Your Mate Month" happens every September?

Enthusiasm pays. Even if you're an introvert, push yourself to be more engaging and friendly at your book signing. People are interested in interesting people. Make eye contact and speak to bookstore browsers, "Hi, My name is . . . I've written a book. Could I tell you about it?" Be positive, not pushy. Don't chase customers through the racks.

Stimulate sales with bookmarks and postcards. Your postcard or bookmark should feature the book's title, book cover, your photo and contact informa-

tion. Add a sidebar listing interesting facts about the contents of your non-fiction book or



print the introductory paragraph of your novel on your postcard to entice new buyers.

Send a variety of invitations. E-mail invitations are easy but can be easily forgotten once your message rolls off-screen. A hand-addressed postcard with a personal note may seem old-fashioned but will still make a good impression. Add an invitation to your book signing to your phone's voice mail message. Include a bookmark with your bill payments. A potential buyer will open your envelope.

The same creativity you used to bring your characters to life can be used to lure buyers to your book signings and increase sales. Brainstorm your way to a novel event for your novel and enjoy your financial gains.

~ Romney Nesbitt is a Creativity Coach and author of *SECRETS FROM A CREATIVITY COACH*, published by AWOC Books. In her coaching practice she helps writers and artists move past limiting thinking to achieve their goals (www.romneynesbitt.com). Nesbitt teaches a series of classes on creative thinking for Tulsa Community College and writes an advice column for artists in *Art Focus Oklahoma Magazine*. Nesbitt is a member of *Romance Writers Ink* in Tulsa, Oklahoma and is writing her first romance. ‡



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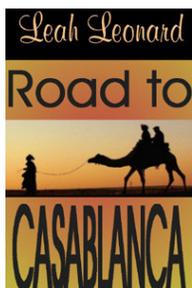
NTRWA
2100 W. NorthWest HWY
Suite 114-1081
Grapevine, TX 76051

NTRWA Monthly Meeting
Doors Open 10:00 am
La Hacienda Ranch
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Visitors Welcome!

We're on the web!
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MEMBER NEWS



Shelley Kaehr's new book, writing as Leah Leonard, called **Road to Casablanca**, now out from Red Rose Publishing, received 4 ½ Blue Ribbons from [Romance Junkies](#)

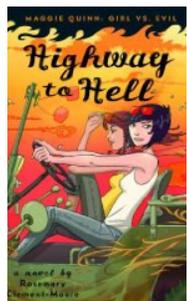
Shelley Bradley's **Bound and Determined**, reprinted by Heat, released March 2009 in trade paperback, made the Barnes & Nobles, Borders, and Bookscan bestseller list.



Jax Cassidy's **Sunswept**, published by Phaze Publishing, will be released in May, 2009



RWA PRO Liaison Sherry Davis's book, **Here Comes the Bribe**, published by The Wild Rose Press, will be out in June, 2009



Rosemary Clement Moore's **Highway to Hell** sold out at her Barnes & Nobles booksigning last Saturday.

Candy Haven's **Dragons Prefer Blondes** from Berkley Trade will be out in July 7, 2009

