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Heart to Heart

North Texas Romance Writers of America



JULY'S MEETING: SPEED PITCHING

You've heard of Speed Dating where you sit at a table and try to make a date with a total stranger, and when the timer dings you get up and move to the next stranger at the next table.

In Speed Pitching, you will move from table to table pitching your manuscript to a small group of friendly, fellow NT members. They will ask questions and give feedback and when the timer dings you will move to the next table, until you've made your way around the room. This is a great chance to find out what works and what doesn't in a safe, supportive atmosphere.

Everyone will have a chance to pitch and also a chance to listen and react. This is great practice for the next conference you attend and for some of you, that means Nationals. If you don't have anything to pitch right now, please join us and play the part of agent or editor. We expect to have a lot of fun, and we might even learn something while we're at it.

We will be meeting in the front room at La Hacienda for July, so we hope to see you there! The doors open at 10 am and the program starts at 10:30.‡

Next Meeting July 11, 2009



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. Keep Writing. Distractions. Recognition. And the next step – Write some more.

What do you do after you receive harsh comments (bad comments from a contest judge or negative feedback from an agent or editor)?? Write. Yes, write and write and write . . .

After harsh criticism, doubt creeps into every word you put on the page. Maybe that judge is right? Maybe I should make changes? What if I . . .

Don’t let doubt keep you from putting one sentence after the other onto the page. Write your story. Then write some more. Keep moving forward in the plot. Listen to objective criticism, but don’t let it stop you.

Ideally, I believe that writers should finish a story and set it aside for a while before submitting. Wow, did I really state that for everyone to read? Yes, I did. I’ve had better success looking at stories I finished a year ago. When I step away from the “giddiness” of a finished project, the first thing I want to do is submit it to an editor. I’m finding that I have a more objective eye to catch possible flaws in the story if I set it aside and read it six weeks later. And of course, revise.

I’ve tried story-boarding, but find it a better tool for me to analyze chapters after I’ve written them. It helps me to see what’s missing. So find what works for you, knowing that your way doesn’t have to work for everyone else. ‡



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JUNE MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on June 20, 2009, at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The president and secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:46 a.m.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President, Angi Platt reported: Since there were no corrections to the May minutes, they stand approved as printed in the June newsletter. The board held a meeting on May 30th. Some of the highlights were:

- Since DARA is choosing to offer their April mini-conference in odd years, NT will be offering a mini-workshop in even years beginning in 2010. Marty Tidwell will chair that event.
- The board will ask for members' input regarding the November Writers Workshop, whether it should be a chapter retreat or a mini-conference in odd years.
- Since Mary Duncanson had to resign as contest chair and it's late in the year to train someone, Angi Platt was confirmed as the 2010 contest chair. Wendy Watson has agreed to co-chair.

The Members Only section of the website is almost ready. It was confirmed by the board that the newsletter will remain as a membership perk. A volunteer is needed to scan old newsletters to store on the site.

Membership Director, Shelley Kaehr reported: We now have 65 members. Our visitor was Jim Ferguson, who assisted speaker Sandra Ferguson.

Treasurer, Chris Keniston reported: The treasurer's report was presented and filed for audit. The 2008 audit is complete, passing within limits and filed for audit.

Program Director, Marty Tidwell reported: The program for July will be speed pitching. The first thirty registrants for the November Workshop with Margie Lawson will have the first page of their manuscripts presented to both agents. The early-bird price of \$65.00 for NTRWA members is good through July 1, 2009.

Communications Director, Alley Huldren reported: Alley needs articles and news sent to her.

PAN Liaison, Shelley Bradley reported: Deidre Knight, RWA President Diane Pershing, and others are exchanging

information on blog sites regarding RWA's treatment of E-Publishers and E-published members. Members wishing to read the communications will be sent the link on NT's YahooGroups.

PRO Liaison, Clover Autrey reported: The PRO Beta-read Retreat will be August 8, 2009, and Regina Richards is chairing the event. Regina announced that PRO members may bring 2 or 3 hard copies of a manuscript to be read for the "big picture" analysis to the meeting on July 11th. PRO members must complete a registration form. The retreat is free.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

Hospitality Chair, Marsha West reported: Wendy Watson donated the hat and hatbox for the Pro Literacy Readers for Life basket. We still need money or gift cards. Angi will deliver the basket to the conference.

Spotlight Chair, Shelley Kaehr reported: Next month's Spotlight will be on Jerrie Alexander.

The business meeting was adjourned at: 11:12 a.m. ‡



**JOIN US IN NOVEMBER FOR OUR
ANNUAL WRITERS ROUNDUP
FEATURING AUTHOR
MARGIE LAWSON.**

**Also: Agent Melissa Jeglinski
of the Knight Agency
& Cori Deyoe of 3 Seas Literary Agency**

For more details visit our [Writers Roundup page](#).



JULY SPOTLIGHT: JERRIE ALEXANDER

From Shelley Kaehr writing as Leah Leonard

When did you first start writing?

I've written off and on for years. In the beginning, I thought I wanted to be a journalist but discovered my heart was in writing novels, so I enrolled in night classes and studied creative writing. I still have the work sheets, my first attempt at writing a book, and a few short stories. But life happens and between a husband, two children, eleven horses and a blossoming career in logistics, I put my writing aside. I wouldn't change a thing except I'd love to go back and relive that time with my children . . . you wouldn't believe the good times and adventures we had. About a year and a half ago I decided it was now or never. I joined NTRWA and got serious.

Share a little about your background. Where did you grow up? How long in Texas? What experiences did you have early on that shaped who you've become?

I'm a born and bred Texan. Fort Worth is home. After the kids were grown, I took a couple of promotions and we moved around the U.S. a bit. My job allowed me to travel to places I'd never seen. We loved it, but knew sooner or later we'd return to Texas. The sooner came in the form of my granddaughter Alexa . . . I can tell you for sure, career or not, when your baby has a baby you have to be there.

As a young mother, I learned as I went. I think my kids taught me a lot more than I ever taught them. Being married to the last remaining John Wayne and having him tell me I could do anything I set my mind to do didn't hurt.

What kind of books do you write?

I've completed two romance novels. My first book finished third in the 2008 Beacon contest. It was a huge thrill. I have two new romance stories working, but a set of identical twins kept talking to me in my head. They wouldn't leave me alone, so I put the two partials on hold and started a romantic mystery. I'm basically a panster, but this mystery has forced me to plot out the story line. It's turned out to be way more difficult to write than the romance stories.

Where does your inspiration come from? How do you get ideas?

I honestly don't know where my inspiration comes from. I



think I'm inspired to keep trying by other writers. I hear or read how hard they've worked, how they faced multiple rejections, but kept they writing and submitting. It gives me the courage to keep hitting that send button.

It was hard not to give a flippant answer and say I get my ideas after ripping patches of hair from my head. Cause that's kind of true. I go a little nuts before an idea takes shape, absolutely convinced I'll never come up with another original idea. (Ask my critique partners, they've seen the insanity) I keep throwing scenarios at myself, but it usually doesn't gel until a character takes over and tells me where to go with the story.

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

I wish I knew! I'd be happy to share that information. I think it has to be a little of all three.

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

I don't but would love to have one. From what I've read and heard from published authors, the right agent is invaluable.

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

I think in this third book I've become more comfortable with my voice. The first book was inconsistent, the second sounding more like me. I think this third story is in my voice. I have to write like I talk, plain spoken, a little nuts, a little off color, and a lot country!

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

(Spotlight continued on page 5)



(Spotlight continued from page 4)

They're awesome. My granddaughter has started writing, and we have long discussions about our work. My husband's used to me muttering to myself and stopping in the middle of a conversation so I can write down a thought. Plus, I have the support of awesome critique partners who don't hesitate to kick my backside when I need it.

But my ace in the hole is my daughter, Jackie. She's my biggest fan, an avid reader, an eternal romantic at heart, and I value her opinion above anyone else. Plus, she's like having my own personal editor, and she's hell on my punctuation!

Tell us about the latest book you're working on...

It's an FBI romantic mystery. New partners Alexis Turner and Dalton Murphy hunt for a vigilante killer who's cutting the throats of the most despicable criminals who've managed to escape justice. Their trail takes a twisted turn when the killer appears to be a dead ringer for one of the partners.

If you could choose any publisher for your work, who would it be? Why?

Any publishing company with a good support system for first time authors.

Please list your websites, contact info and anything else . . .

No site yet, I'm on Facebook and would love for everyone to friend me . . . I can also be reached at jalexahughes.net.

HERE THERE BE...

by Kate McKeever

The following article first appeared in the June 2009 issue of *Smoke Signals* newsletter for the *Smoky Mountain Romance Writers*.



Ever wonder at the popularity of the paranormal novel? From **Green Darkness**, through **The Wizard of Oz** and **Dracula**, there's been a fascination with things not easily understood by the human mind for years. And now, the paranormal romance has taken off and continues to be as popular as ever. With the advent of summer, I've also indulged in movies, including the newest *Star Trek* adventure.

When reading, or better yet, writing the paranormal romance, you have to be aware of the pitfalls in the books. And in the business of writing. Has your book gotten off to a slow start? Maybe you haven't planned it enough. Same goes for your writing career. Whether you're a punster or a plotter, having an idea of where you want your writing career to go in the future is as essential as knowing who the ghostie behind the door is and how to cast it out of your hero's world.

Does the book have a hero and heroine that are unlikable? Or in terms of your career, is your writing schedule abysmal? If you don't plant it and write, your work won't get down on paper and that hefty contract or printed or ebook with your name on it won't show up, no matter how much magic is in your imagination. Believe me, I understand the hazards of procrastination. I'm the queen. But if I want another book under my belt and on my bookshelf, I need to get moving.

Does your book have a sagging middle? Or are you in crisis after having some success? Several of us in the chapter have had some publishing success, only to be met with the sagging economy and personal obstacles. We have to do the same thing we'd do to our book's middle. Kill off the doubt. Sit down and write more. Another contract will come. If you were good enough to sell once, you can sell again.

Finally, is there a satisfying ending to the book? Does the elf king and his new queen reign happily? Are you planning a book launch or a new project? This career is a marathon, as we all know and marathons are won one step at a time. So, crank up the air conditioning, put on the soundtrack to your favorite FFP movie or read your fave book then start writing again!

**RISING STAR AWARDS
MOST PAGES WRITTEN**

Shelley Kaehr — 346 pages
 Shelley Bradley — 306 pages
 Kim Matthews — 137 pages
 Beth Shriver — 125 pages
 Jerrie Alexander — 120 pages

**SPUR AWARDS
MOST PAGES EDITED**

Shelley Kaehr — 848 pages
 Carolyn Williamson — 741 pages
 Shelley Bradley — 407 pages
 Kim Matthews — 315 pages
 Clover Autrey — 300 pages






HOW TO USE WINDOWS MOVIE MAKER

by **Clover Autrey**

Book trailers can do for books what music videos did for CD sales—get your books out there and noticed by potential readers. Windows Movie Maker is an affordable and fun way to make book trailers on your own. Chances are that if you have Windows on your computer you have WMM as an accessory. I found out I did when I asked my husband how much he thought the program would be. He gave me that did-you-really-just-ask-that-dumb-question look and explained how to click on START on the bottom left of the computer, then PROGRAMS, next ACCESSORIES and Oh, look! There's Windows Movie Maker in the pop-up list. I had it all along. Neat. Now how do I work the thing?

Advance Work

You have to do a little preparation. Mainly finding the music and images. Don't use any old thing you find on the Internet. Images and music are copyrighted and belong to other people. As writers we can certainly understand how we would feel if somebody used our books without our consent. However, there are several free or inexpensive sites that you can download pictures and snippets of music from. My favorite picture site is www.dreamstime.com, but I've heard good things about www.istockphoto.com and www.pdphoto.org and www.stockmusic.net, as well. Or, you can always go out and take your own pictures. Make sure you save all the images to a file as jpegs. Once you've saved your music and pictures you're ready to go to WINDOWS MOVIE MAKER and begin.

Import Pictures

Beneath the I. CAPTURE VIDEO menu on the left, click on IMPORT PICTURES. An Import File screen will pop up and you can direct it to look in your "my pictures" file or wherever you stored the images on your computer. Click on IMPORT and you'll see the picture move to the COLLECTION: MOVIE box in the center of the WMM screen.

Now you're ready to start putting it all together. Using the mouse, click on the picture you want to use first and drag it down to the gray "Storyboard" and onto the video bar. Repeat this step until you have all your pictures in order and on the bar.



Import Music

Click on IMPORT AUDIO OR MUSIC. This takes you to another import screen where

you can download the royalty free music you picked out. Once it is in the collection box, drag the music box down to the "audio/music" bar on the Storyboard.



Keep it Short

Most people won't sit around to watch a 15 minute video, even 3 to 5 minutes is too long. Keep your book trailer as short as possible. The viewing time for each individual picture is set at 5 seconds by default. That is too long. The viewing time for each individual picture clip is set at 5 seconds by default. That should be shortened. I prefer 3 to 4 seconds with a bit longer for clips with text. You can also vary the image lengths to fit the music. In my trailer for UPON EAGLE'S LIGHT <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYpwilKlcBI> the music tempo picked up with the action. Toward the end I had the pictures flashing at 1 second intervals.

Trim or lengthen an image by clicking on the edge of a picture on the Storyboard and dragging the blue bar forward or back. A little pop-up box will count the length of time as you move it. You can also play the video at any time during the process to see how the images line up with the music. Simply click the PLAY button to the video player at the right of the screen.

Add Text

Click on MAKE TITLES OR CREDITS. A menu pops up asking where you want to add text.

- Add at the beginning of the movie?
- Before the selected clip?
- On the selected clip?
- Credits at the end?

Make your selection and then type your text into the box.

Change the Text Animation

The text can fade, scroll, fly, split, drip like paint and many others. When you click on any of these it will instantly change and show you an example. You can also change the color and the font here. Click DONE.

(Movie Maker continued on page 7)



(Movie Maker continued from page 6)

Transitions

Click on view VIDEO TRANSITIONS beneath the 2. EDIT MOVIE menu. Choose the transitions between pictures that you prefer. Dissolve, fade, cut out into diamonds or hearts, fan away It can be different for each transition if you like.

Video Effects

Click on VIDEO EFFECTS and have fun playing with all the things you can do. For my time-travel THE SWEETHEART

TREE <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNxGYipXaos> I used the black and white Film Age effect on the picture clips where my heroine went back in time to the civil war.

Finish

Click on SAVE TO MY COMPUTER beneath the 3. FINISH MOVIE menu. A drop down menu will prompt you to name and save it in a file on your computer. You're done. Or are you? In order to get this to a place on the Internet where potential readers can view it, you'll need to upload it to a web hosting provider like YouTube. Hmmm, next lesson? How to YouTube? ‡

THE TWEET ON TWITTER: WHY AM I NOT BEING FOLLOWED?

by Kathy Kulig

This article first appeared in the July issue of Bouquet of Romance, Pocono Lehigh Romance Writer's Newsletter, Easton, PA.

What is it about Twitter that's so addicting? I think partly because it's a fun and easy way to network and socialize. For someone like me who 's usually three steps behind the masses when it comes to a new social network, computer program, or gadget, Twitter didn't take long for me to learn.

I'm certainly far from an expert, and I'm still learning more and more while I mostly fumble around, lurk some, tweet a little and feel my way through twitterverse. Recently, I decided to do some research about "following". Why do some tweeples have tons of followers and others don't? I found numerous posts and blogs on this topic. I'll share what I found and include my own thoughts. Here are a few tips:

If you're wondering why people are NOT following you on Twitter, maybe you're using it wrong.

***Is your Profile incomplete?** Easy fix. Post a picture of something, even if it's not your face. What do you do? If you're a writer, what do you write? Where do you live? (Not your exact street address) and do you have a website or blog URL posted?

***Are you ALWAYS talking about yourself?** People aren't interested in you unless you're VERY famous. They want to know things that relate to them. They don't care if you cooked dinner unless you give a link to a fabulous recipe. Twitter is a social network so you will talk about yourself. but the mundane, day-to-day stuff about your life can get boring.

***Then the other extreme: Are you presenting yourself as a business, not as a person?** No one likes to be spammed. We like to talk to people. Entertain, inform, and be social while sometimes promoting your business.

***Are you on a following frenzy?** People look at the "following" to "followers" ratio. If you're following 1500 people, but only 50 people are following you, you may be guilty of this. This is a red flag that someone is looking to spam. Start a conversation, be social and people will follow you.

***Are your tweets negative and whiny?** Whining and complaining turn people off "no brainer here" and can spiral into arguments.

***Always lurking, never Tweeting.** Well . . . get out there and tweet. Reply to someone's tweet. RT (Re-tweet) someone's tweet that you found interesting. Brag about some else's accomplishments.

Give Twitter a try if you haven't already. You can follow me at <http://twitter.com/kathykulig> ‡

~ Kathy Kulig writes paranormal, contemporary and erotic romance for Ellora's Cave. Her latest release is **Desert of the Damned**. Checkout her article about Twitter and how authors and publishers are using it to reach readers in the August issue of Romantic Times Magazine. Visit www.kathykulig.com





THE HIGH CONCEPT PITCH: THE TEN-ITEMS-OR-LESS LINE TO SUCCESS

by **Gina Ardito**

The following article first appeared in the July 2009 issue of *Footnotes*, newsletter of *Dunes & Dreams Romance Writers of Eastern Long Island*, Chapter 215.

"It's *Survivor* meets *The Newlywed Game*.with handcuffs."

That was my high concept pitch for my first romantic comedy, **The Bonds of Matri-money**. I still use it to describe the storyline when a prospective buyer steps up to me at a book-signing and asks what the story's about.

I sincerely believe I lucked out when I came up with that one. I'd guess that, short of an isolated tribe on a remote desert island, almost everyone can instantly connect with my plot--based on those few words. Unfortunately, the high concept pitch doesn't always come so easily.

With conference season in full swing, you'll want to hone your own high concept (aka elevator) pitch. Do you know how? Have you figured yours out yet? Not sure you've got a winner? Sharpen your #2 pencils. We've got work to do!

Let's start with the definition of "high concept." Basically, a high concept is the premise of your story told in a way that instantly connects with your target and creates the opportunity for mass appeal. The catch? It must be brief and intriguing. "Pride & Prejudice and Zombies" isn't just a great title; it's a great high concept, too. Unfortunately, the title isn't always enough to convey a high concept. Which means, despite whatever witty or self-explanatory title we've assigned to our masterpiece, most of us still struggle to dream up a clever tag line to go with it. Here are a few tips I hope will get you that perfect line to hook your ideal agent or editor.

Be concise. Draft a short blurb. And then shorten it. Then shorten it again. Keep honing the story down to the most basic plot point. Can you describe your story in ten words or less? Keep honing until you can.

Consider your viewing preferences. The old saying, "There's nothing new under the sun" is a cliché because it's true. Chances are very good if you take the time to compare your story to your own likes and dislikes among television shows, movies, or even songs, you'll discover your plotline resembles some other media product that resonated with you. Use that similarity!

Remember your particular audience. Your high concept pitch should capture the tone of your work. If your story is a romantic suspense, your high concept would be darker than that

of an author pitching a paranormal comedy or inspirational romance. A YA novel shouldn't be pitched with the line, "A sexy *Silence of the Lambs*." Nor would an erotic work fit the blurb, "*Cocoon* meets *The Ten Commandments*." (But if you can turn that into a story, I'd love to read it!)



Practice, practice, practice. Share your high concept pitch with family, friends, your butcher, your mail carrier. See what kind of reaction your description receives. If you don't get the arched brows and widened eyes reflecting some semblance of interest, go back to the drawing board. Revisit the first three steps until you see that look of intrigue in the faces of those around you. Once you've got the ideal line, say it in front of a mirror, while you're stuck in traffic, in the shower, before you go to bed at night. Keep practicing your pitch until it flows off your tongue as naturally as the names of your children.

Don't forget the passion. Be proud of your one-liner. And be excited about your work. The more enthusiasm you show, the more infectious that enthusiasm will be.

Stay the course. Let's say your pitch is so successful, your target immediately wants to hear more. Congratulations! Now's not the time to sweat and stammer. Be ready to continue drawing the comparison between your work and the high concept, but also highlight what makes your story unique.

Best of luck to you. I hope you'll find the perfect pitch for the perfect target at the perfect time. Just remember: a perfect high concept pitch might gain you the interest of an editor or agent, but you've still got to deliver a quality product to win the publishing game! ‡

~ Gina Ardito is the co-founder and president of *Dunes & Dreams*, the Eastern Long Island chapter of RWA. Her latest romantic comedy, **A Run for the Money** (One couple's scavenger hunt around Long Island for hidden treasure), will be available from Avalon Books on August 24, 2009. For more information and other articles, visit Gina's website at www.ginaardito.com



THE TIME CAPSULE: AUGUST 1990

One interesting thing about reviewing old newsletters for Time Capsule tidbits is discovering helpful information that is just as true today as it was twenty years ago.

The following article originally appeared in the September 1986 issue of NTRWA's Heart to Heart newsletter.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES by Candace Schuler.

Have you ever received a rejection letter from an editor and wondered just exactly what it meant -- aside from the fact that your manuscript was being rejected again? Silhouette editor Lucia Macro (now senior editor at AVON) offered a few hints at a Minneapolis workshop entitled "Taking the Punches."

First, if an editor returns your ms with the words, "I'd be interested in seeing something else from you" . . . Believe it! She's not saying it just to be nice or to soften the blow of the rejection. She really would like to see more of your work; send it to her.

Some other 'STOCK' phrases:

"YOUR CHARACTER(S) NEED TO BE STRONGER." The hero and/ or heroine need to be developed more fully as real

people with weaknesses as well as strengths.

"THE PLOT NEEDS TIGHTENING AND STRENGTHENING." You may be relying on coincidence to move your story forward. Don't. Everything that happens should happen in a logical sequence and for a good reason.

"WEAK PLOT CONFLICT." Your conflict isn't strong enough or serious enough to carry a whole book. A misunderstanding between the hero and heroine won't do it.

"CONFLICT NOT REALISTIC." In your heart you know what this means. But just as an example, say your heroine hates anything to do with computers and your hero's only flaw is that he's a computer programmer. Now seriously, is that really enough to keep them apart?

"NOT ENOUGH EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE HERO AND HEROINE." Either there are no sparks (i.e. sexual tension) or the relationship develops in an unbelievable way.

"YOUR WRITING ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH." This usually means that you lack basic writing skills. Take a class in grammar or composition and try again. ‡

HEROSCOPES: THE CANCER HEROINE

by Bonnie Staring

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

Once you win her over, she's all yours. So be careful.

Born between June 22 and July 21, the Cancer heroine is the mother hen of the Zodiac. Of course, some days she's more like Mommie Dearest than Mother Teresa. This gal is a nurturer at heart. Leave a stray cat or wounded, tortured hero on her doorstep, and she'll take them in - as long as they don't mess up the furniture.

Dependable, caring, and inclined to reject others before they have a chance to reject her, the Cancer heroine is complicated, sensitive and often compared to a mother bear when you hurt someone she loves. Speaking of love, if you can get past her outer shell, you'll find a woman with a heart the size of the Pacific. And, like the waves, her moods ebb and flow in a somewhat predictable manner.

When wooing a Cancer heroine, be honest and don't force her to make any quick decisions. She'll appreciate that more than your fancy sports car, ability to bend spoons, or tales of owning a winery in Nice. Her intuitive nature makes her a fun companion and fun should be a key element for any date. Ideal options include hot-air ballooning, yard-sale hopping, and dancing until your feet hurt (don't worry: she'll give you a foot massage). Famous Cancer heroines include Imelda Marcos, Princess Diana, Gilda Radner and Dear Abby.

Next month: the Leo 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





PROCESS EXAMINATION #7: THE FINAL ASSESSMENT

by Kellie Hazell

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

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

Last month, I examined the revision process. This month, I conclude this series by suggesting a way to examine your process throughout future projects and how to apply this concept to submitting your novel.

By now you've the concept of process examination from the general concept of a novel idea through to final revisions of the novel itself. You've accumulated a good amount of data on how you write in all stages of the creative process. Now it's time to assimilate that into a plan of attack moving forward. If you haven't done so already, now is the time to look back over all of that data and look for trends. Be as scientific or as anecdotal as you wish, but pull out that journal and write down any patterns you find. Think about the entirety of the process for this novel and consider if you enjoyed how you wrote this or if you want to try another method for writing for the next novel. Give yourself clear goals in this regard. Also, as you attend chapter meetings and events, read books on writing, and listen to other writers outline their process, jot

down in your journal the methods that seem likely to work for you. When you get stuck on a novel using the process this series developed for you, try incorporating these new techniques and measure the results.



Process examination can also apply to the non-writing parts of writing. Establish a method for how you want to proceed with submitting your novel, decide on the milestones such a method has, and give yourself a schedule for meeting those milestones. Track how you handle each step of your process and how that method worked for you in the end.

Regardless of how you write or handle the business of writing, the concept of process examination can be applied to your methods. The key is to clearly outline the process you are using, regularly monitor your output and reaction to that process, and use the data that monitoring provides to assess a method's level of success. ‡

~ 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.

EVOKING EMOTION IN FICTION

by Dr. Lin Stepp

The following article first appeared in the June 2009 issue of Smoke Signals newsletter of the Smoky Mountain Romance Writers.

Emotion is a critical element of romantic fiction. Romance stories without emotion are flat and stale. It is emotion and feeling that grab us, that capture our attention, and pull us wholeheartedly into a novel. What makes emotion so powerful is that it is a response of the whole organism.

For example: imagine that you're walking through a dark parking lot and you think you hear footsteps behind you. Your heart begins to pound, your pace quickens, your breathing escalates, and you begin to sweat. You feel nervous, anxious, and fearful all at once. There is a full body response to the building emotion. Emotion involves many factors. The dictionary defines emotion as "agitation of the passions or sensibilities

often involving physiological changes."

Your job, as a writer, is to draw your readers into the subtle and obvious emotions of the characters in your story. You have to make the reader feel what your character feels. This engages the reader in the action of the story. This makes the characters vibrant and vital. Emotion makes the writing sing.

Despite all the diversity within cultures throughout the world—basic emotions are universal to all. Even with language barriers, a smile, a laugh, a frown, or an angry face are universally recognized. Researchers have actually isolated about twelve basic emotions common to all humankind—love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, interest-excitement, fear, guilt, disgust, shame, contempt, and pride.

What makes emotions fascinating is how differently every-

(Evoking Emotion Continued on page 11)



(Evoking Emotion continued from page 10)

one expresses them. What enrages one person may only mildly annoy another. What delights and captivates one individual may bore and disinterest another. We are all unique. Each person has their own individual aspects of temperament and personality—in the same way that they have distinctly different appearances. Just as each individual has a one-of-a-kind fingerprint, they have a one-of-a-kind emotional makeup.

The writer's job in good romantic fiction is to make the reader "see" and "feel" the characters in the book—and to see and feel the scene. Past painting a physical portrait of the person and setting, this means painting an emotional portrait. As readers "watch" characters act and respond to their world within the novel, the portrait of their emotional type is revealed. Readers come to know—and often to identify with—a book's characters in this way.

As a creative writer, you are the artist who must paint the mood, atmosphere, actions, and emotions of your story. What makes great books live on, according to Lee Wyndham—who wrote over 50 successful books and hundreds of short stories and articles—is a book's appeal to vital human emotions and its genuine portrayal of people and their feelings. According to Wyndham, "any book or story that leaves the reader unmoved is not likely to be a success."

So, how can you dramatize and reveal emotion? How can you craft your romantic fiction to show rich emotional feeling? Here are some ideas:

- (1) Watch and observe emotion in others. Train yourself to observe how others express emotion—how they look, what they do, what they say.
- (2) Remember your own past experiences. Draw on

emotional feelings you have experienced from situations you have personally been involved in.

(3) Read and notice how other skillful authors reveal emotion. Note how they create scenes and involve their readers wholly into the feeling of their story.

(4) Strive for empathetic writing —so the reader can enter into the emotions of your characters and feel as they feel. You want them involved, not just observing.

(5) Plan and craft your characters in advance so you know their emotional traits and know how you want the reader to feel about them. Be consistent in how your characters respond emotionally throughout your story.

(6) Demonstrate the emotions of your characters artfully through effective dialog, thoughts, and descriptive action and reaction.

Often the freshness of emotion is lost with over-analysis. Write freely as you enter into your scenes; let spontaneity take over. Free your imagination and ideas.

Enter into your characters and dramas. The emotion will flow into your work as you create. The time to critique and edit come later—in retrospect. Often you will be amazed at what emerges from your work when you simply release yourself - and your characters—to perform. In a sense, every writer is a dramatist, and the goal of the dramatist is to grab the attention of the audience, involve and immerse them in the drama, and keep their heart and attention until the story is told. Creating and evoking good emotion throughout the drama draws the reader to live in the romantic novel you create—and to hate to say goodbye when it ends. ‡

~ Dr. Lin Stepp's first book, *The Foster Girls*, is now available.



HOSPITALITY BASKET

By Marsha West, Hospitality Chair

Hat Basket for National: Those of you at our meeting last month got to see the great hat and super hat box Wendy found for us. We still need gift cards to include in the hat. Remember these need to be to national chains that RWA members from anywhere could use. If you won't be at the next meeting and would like to help, please send the cards or a check to me:

July 11th, our meeting, will be the last time to get those to me.

Marsha R. West
7012 Allen Place Drive
Fort Worth, TX



**Gina Lee Nelson's
Play It Loud**

coming August 19th from
The Wild Rose Press!



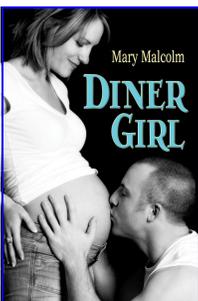
newsletter@ntrwa.org

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Suite 114-1081
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NTRWA Monthly Meeting
Doors Open 10:00 am
La Hacienda Ranch
5250 Highway 121 South
Colleyville, TX
Visitors Welcome!

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

MEMBER NEWS



Mary Malcom's **Diner Girl** is coming out on August 28th!



Audio Library

For a one-time \$10 donation to NT, you have access to the audio library. The library consists of workshops from previous conferences. You check out the CDs that pertain to your current goals at one meeting, listen to them over and over, and bring them back to the next meeting. Repeat the process. Email me at nikki@nikkiduncan.com if you are interested in checking something out. ‡

Marty Tidwell took first place in the Single Title Category of the Spring into Romance Contest. An editor from Grand Central Publishing has asked to see 100 pages of her entry, **Diamonds Aren't Forever**.

Shelley Kaehr has sold several Books and a short story. Writing as Leah Leonard, she sold **Man of the Year**. Using the pen name, Annette Shelley, she sold a short story titled, "The Toy Store." As Annette Shelley, she also sold **Beyond 2012**, a three book science fiction series. The 3 books are: **Beyond 2012: Return to Love**, **Beyond 2012: Return of the Reptilians**, and **Beyond 2012: Rise of the Queen**

BABS ~ Bead a Book into Submission

As writers, the best way to get a story written is to write it. Seems like a simple concept, but most of us work and have families. Life easily intrudes into our writing time, minimizing the importance of getting those stories written. The BABS program is an incentive program. For every 5K new words written and every 10K words edited, you get 1 bead. Beads are accumulated to make whatever you want with them. Some suggestions include jewelry or book thongs. Email me at nikki@nikkiduncan.com if you're interested in more information about the BABS program! ‡

