



North Texas Romance Writers of America

HEART TO HEART

FOUNDED MARCH 1983 CHAPTER 33, REGION 5 NOVEMBER 2010 VOLUME 29, ISSUE 10

WRITTEN WORDS

RISING STAR AWARDS MOST PAGES WRITTEN

Candy Havens
345 pages

Heather Long
278 pages

Rosemary Clement
Moore
275 pages

Carolyn Williamson
67 pages

Michelle Welsh
65 pages

STAR AWARDS MOST PAGES EDITED

Candy Havens
630 pages

Nikki Duncan
425 pages

Rosemary Clement Moore
420 pages

Beth Shriver
200 pages

Heather Long
175 pages

**DON'T FORGET!
A SECOND
NEWSLETTER
WILL BE SENT LATER
THIS MONTH
WITH ELECTION
INFORMATION**

**THE
PRESIDENTS
CORNER
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

"Even if something *is left undone, everyone must take time to sit still and watch the leaves turn.*"
~ Elizabeth Lawrence

Light the fires and uncork the wine, pour the tea and unpack your laptops! It's time for our annual retreat!

If you are one of the lucky members attending our retreat weekend . . . congratulations. Not only have you invested in yourself and your writing, but you've proposed to step out of the hustle bustle and into a time of peaceful reflection. Now that you've committed yourself, I challenge each of you to set a goal for the weekend, *before* you arrive at your cabins. Maybe your only goal is to relax. Hopefully, it's to relax and move forward with your writing. I have to laugh. Each year I challenge myself to write more and talk less. *Write more, talk less. Write more, talk less.* That's my mantra. Of course, *you* may want to write less and talk more: talk about your story, unravel that gnarly plot, conquer that dreaded synopsis, ramp up your story conflict, or dissect and discuss the most recent critique you received from your critique partners or that contest you entered.



To those of you about to retreat into the wilderness to write, plot and critique. . . Happy Productive Writers Roundup! To our published authors promoting their books that same weekend at the Readers 'n' Ritas conference: Good luck, and may you sell, sell, sell and gather many new fans!

Remember, there will be no regular chapter meeting in November. **Watch** your email for the special election edition of our newsletter, and **vote** online for the 2011 Board of Directors in late November/early December. To celebrate the holidays, we'll have our annual festivities at La Hacienda on the **second Saturday** of the month, December 11th.

As we prepare for this season of thanksgiving, may we all be thankful for our writer friends and critique partners, for positive and constructive comments, for books written and books sold, and for the power of the written word to change our lives and those of our readers for the better.

Gina Nelson, President

"Autumn is the eternal corrective. It is ripeness and color and a time of maturity; but it is also breadth, and depth, and distance. What man can stand with autumn on a hilltop and fail to see the span of his world and the meaning of the rolling hills that reach to the far horizon?"
~ Hal Borland

OCTOBER MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on October 16, 2010 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The president was absent, and the secretary was present. The meeting was called to order at 10:35 A.M. by President-elect Marsha West. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as posted in the September Newsletter.

Record Board Absences: Jeanie Guzman and Gina Nelson

OFFICER REPORTS:

President-Elect: Marsha West presided in Gina's absence.

Treasurer Ron Campbell reported: A large sum was transferred from the money market account to meet coming expenses for the Great Expectations contest. The checking account balance was reported and will be filed for audit.

Program Director Kym Roberts reported: The Writer's Roundup retreat will be held on November 12 and 13, where Joe White, an FBI Special Agent in Charge, will demonstrate his quick draw prowess; but he will be shooting blanks. If interested in a last minute registration, e-mail Kym.

The December meeting will be a Christmas party on Saturday, December 11. We will meet in the large room, next to the freeway, at La Hacienda Ranch.

Membership: Michelle Welsh stood in for Jeannie. As of today, we have 83 members. In attendance we had 4 visitors, Jason Bryant, a college student, Rita Alexander, who writes fantasy romantic suspense (all in the same book), Joy Donovan, who writes anything she'll get paid for, and Bob Murray, who supports his wife, member Maria Murray, by bringing her to meetings.

Newsletter Editor Jean Marie Brown reported: Please contribute articles and send them by the Friday after the meeting.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

Bead a Book Nikki Duncan reported: She announced the top five authors for pages written and pages revised.

Audio Librarian Nikki Duncan reported: She has CDs to lend to members. E-mail her if you want her to copy something from the last RWA conference.

Great Expectations Chair: Marsha West reported for Angi Platt, who was absent.

If you send your payment for the contest by December 11, you get a discount. The member price will be \$20. After December 11, it will be \$25, but checks will not be cashed until after January 1st.

A special thanks goes to Christine Keniston for recruiting judges for the Great Expectations Contest. They are:

Contemporary, Victoria Curran, Editor Harlequin Books,
Erotic, Katherine Pelz, Ed. Asst. Berkley Heat,
Historical, Megan Records, Associate Editor, Kensington (for time travel she likes American West),
Inspirational, Natalie Hanemann, Sr. Ed. Thomas Nelson,
Mainstream with Romantic Elements, Danielle Poiesz, Ed. Pocket Books,
Romantic Suspense, Elizabeth Bistrow, with NAL,
Single Title, Holly Blanck, Asst. Ed. St. Martin's Press,
Specialized, Talia Platz, Ed. Asst. NAL,
Young Adult, Meredith Giordan with Berkley.

If you wish to judge entries for the Great Expectations contest, please e-mail Angi.

NEW BUSINESS:

Yellow Rose Award: Marsha asked members to please e-mail nominations to her with a sentence or two about why the member should be the recipient.

A drawing was held for the entry fee for the Golden Heart Contest: Jerrie Alexander won. A second drawing was held for the entry fee for the Rita: Abby Gaines won. The winning entries were drawn by our speaker, Reade Quinton.

As chairman of the nominating committee, Marsha thanked the other members of the committee: Tracy Ward, Roni Griffin and Nikki Duncan, who made the report for the committee. After each nomination was read, Marsha asked for nominations from the floor. None were made for any position. The slate is as follows:

President-elect: Kim Campbell
Secretary: Sheniqua Waters
Treasurer: Ron Campbell
Program Director: Roni Griffin
Membership Director: Jamie Webb
Web Site Director: Jen FitzGerald
Communications Director: Jean Marie Brown

(continued on the next page)

The election will be held online in November.

Chairpersons appointed (to be confirmed by the board later) were:

Newsletter Editor: Jean Marie Brown
Hospitality Chair: Linda Graves
Great Expectations Contest: Wendy Watson (with Angi Platt assisting)
Bylaws Chair: Angi Platt
Pan Liaison: Karen Whiddon
Pro Liaison: Clover Autrey
Spotlight Chair: Carolyn Williamson
Audio Librarian: Michelle Welsh
BABS (Writing Incentives) Chair: Nikki Duncan
Texas Two Step Conference Chairs: Tracy Ward and Nikki Duncan

The business meeting was adjourned at: 11:03 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Carolyn Williamson

THERE IS NO MEETING IN NOVEMBER.

Next meeting is December 11th
*This year's Christmas Party will have a
White Elephant twist!*

Join us December 11th for our annual holiday meeting. Note that that's the second Saturday, not the third. There will be no official program, however, we'll celebrate our writing progress with awards for the most prolific writers and revisers. We'll also be bestowing the Yellow Rose Award to the NT member who's gone above and beyond the call of duty this year. And we'll be announcing election results. On top of all that, we'll just be visiting with our fellow chapter mates.

We're also having a White Elephant gift exchange. No need to worry about adding another gift/expense to your shopping list. This exchange is all about regifting! No matter if it's a ream of paper, large box of Post-It notes, or that gift that just wasn't you. Wrap it up and let someone else take it home!

Hope to see you there!

SPOTLIGHT ON JEAN MARIE BROWN

BY KIM QUINTON

Jean Marie Brown is a wife, mother, daughter and former newspaper editor. She's been involved with RWA and NTRWA for just over a year. She has become involved with the board, regularly attends the meetings and edits the monthly newsletter.

Where were you born and raised. Gary, Ind.

When did you decide you wanted to be a writer? I've always written. I'm a recovering journalist, I worked for newspapers for 20+ years as a reporter and editor.

Do you write full-time or do you have a day-job also? I do consulting as a writing coach and diversity expert to help pay the bills.

What do you write? Contemporary romance with a twist of suspense.

Are you working on anything now? Yes. It's set in the D.C. Metro area and is centered around the career meltdown of a Congressional aide.

Is there any genre you haven't written that you want to try? Historical western.

Most writers are readers first. What do you read for pleasure? Do you have any favorite authors? I used to read mysteries, then I discovered romance. I read romance now, but mostly to dissect the stories and plotlines. I enjoy Lucy Monroe, Jodi Thomas, and J.A. Jance.

Do you remember the first romance you read or perhaps ones that encouraged you to write? I read *Every Breathe You Take* by Judith McNaught. I didn't realize it was a romance until I walked in the bookstore and asked where I could find more of her books. I like the character-driven aspect of romance.

What advice would you give to new writers joining the group?

Join in and have fun, this a great group.

What is something that no one knows about you and might be surprised to learn? Hobbies, skills, guilty pleasures J

I'm the youngest of six and I have five older brothers.

As editor of the NTRWA newsletter, The Heart to Heart, what would you like for members to submit articles on? Is there anything you are looking for for upcoming newsletters? I'm open to anything that someone wants to write.

Please list your websites and contact information. You can find me on Facebook.

MEMBER NEWS

Jerrie Alexander won first place in the Golden Pen for her romantic suspense, *The Green-eyed Doll*.

Roni Griffin Loren won 2nd place in the "Show Me the Spark Contest."

Rosemary Clement-Moore sold two books to Random House. Her book, *Texas Gothic* comes out in April.

The following article first appeared in the Promotion Posse column in the October 2010 issue of Heart of the Bay, the San Francisco RWA newsletter.

SELF-PUBLISHED AUTHORS FIND SUCCESS ON THE KINDLE

BY BETH BARANY

More and more romance authors are independently publishing on the Kindle. I sat down with two women from the San Francisco Romance Writers of America chapter to uncover more about this phenomenon and discover their promotional secrets.

Many authors think they need a traditional publisher to succeed as an author, but actually all you need is drive, vision and a hungry audience. Then you can start now on your career as a successful published author. Discover four tips on what it takes to succeed on the Kindle and in the digital publishing market from two authors who've done it: one at the start of her career and another in the middle of it.

Tip #1: The Cover is Everything

"I was thoroughly ignored by agents and editors alike, while my critique partners and beta readers kept telling me my writing was ready to be published," says Tina Folsom, www.tinawritesromance.com, bestselling author of paranormal and erotic romance (*Amaury's Hellion*, 2010). "So, when Amazon.com started their self-publishing platform and I got a Kindle for myself, I figured I had nothing to lose."

She published her first books in Spring 2009. But they had "boring" covers, she said, and she only sold a few copies.

"I still had an old copy of Adobe Photoshop on my computer and taught myself how to use it so I could design decent covers. And boy, did that pay off! As soon as I changed my book covers for the older novels I had out there, plus designed really sexy covers for the two new books (*Scanguards Vampires*), my sales took off," says Folsom.

Folsom designs her own covers and only paid a few dollars to purchase the photos from www.bigstockphoto.com. Folsom highly recommends spending your time and effort on your book cover. "People will click on the book if the cover looks enticing," she adds.

Bestselling, multi-published author, Bella Andre, www.bellaandre.com, chose to publish a sequel with the Kindle while she was between book contracts with no contract clauses to worry about. She had kept getting requests for a follow up to *Take Me*, published by Pocket Books in 2005, and decided to "get the book to the readers who wanted it." In July 2010, Andre published *Love Me* via the Kindle and SmashWords.com. Andre said she was picky about the cover and took care to brand her Kindle books to express "the more erotic side of Bella Andre."

Andre was also inspired to publish directly to the Kindle due to J.A. Konrath's reports of his self-publishing success with the Kindle. (<http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/>) Inspired by his reported good sales results, Andre thought she'd "probably sell" if she put up her sequel. Andre hasn't released her sales results yet, but has reported that they are "very good."

Tip #2: Know Your Reader Expectations

Bella Andre knows that digitally publishing your own novels isn't for everyone. Since she's written over ten books and has been in the traditionally published marketplace for over five years, she knows what she's doing and what readers want. And what they want are well-written sexy stories. She admits that she's in that sweet spot: She knew that erotic romance readers tend to be early adopters of the e-book medium, and she has readers looking for her.

Readers want more than a sexy cover, though. They also want a good story. Tina Folsom made sure her blurb had a great hook. After the cover, "that's definitely the next thing people look at," says Folsom.

Next comes the excerpt. Folsom adds, "It goes without saying that your first few chapters have to pull the reader in, particularly since Kindle allows a free sample of about 10% of your book. So you've got to hook the reader right then if you want to make a sale."

Then comes price and accessibility. Readers want to be able to read books in the way they want. Andre wants to make her books accessible for her readers, so she prices them to sell, offering her books for \$9.99

for the print version, and \$4.99 on the Kindle. "It's not so much about price point, but about convenience," she says.

Price played a factor for Folsom, too. When Folsom released her second book, Amaury's Hellion in July 2010, she offered the book for \$0.99 for the first month, and noted in the blurb that this was an introductory price (and the full price would be \$5.99 after that.) That month she sold over 400 copies of her new release, and at the same time, her sales for her first book in the series, Samson's Lovely Mortal, and all her other backlist titles increased in sales as well.

"The introductory low price of \$0.99 definitely worked. It got people's attention and brought me up in the sales rankings, improving my visibility. With Amaury's Hellion, I got as high at #628 in the Kindle Store, and for a short time was even on #1 and #2 in Gothic Romances," Folsom reports. Both authors offer print and digital versions of their digitally published books, including distribution via the Kindle and via Smashwords.com which allows for digital distribution to the iPad, Sony Reader, Kobo, and Barnes & Noble online.

Tip #3: Market to Your Specific Niche

Both Andre and Folsom have done targeted marketing using Facebook, Twitter, their blogs, and by requesting reviews.

When Andre's book was first released, she spent a few weeks using Facebook Ads and sent out reviewer requests and the PDF of her books to romance reviewers, even if they said they don't review self-published books. "The world is changing. [Reviewers] have to start reviewing ebooks," Andre says.

All told, Andre said she probably spent \$50 on the Facebook ads. In contrast, when Take Me came out five years ago, she spent \$10,000 on marketing and advertising. "Never again" she says will she spend that kind of money to market a book, and takes a level-headed approach to an individual book's success. "It's going to do how it does," she adds.

For Folsom, in the beginning, the only thing she did was solicit reviews. "It's very important to get a few good reviews posted on Amazon," she adds. Folsom asked fellow RWA members for reviews, and then contacted dozens of blogs. Since her two books are vampire romances, she contacted all kinds of vampire blogs who did book reviews.

Folsom adds, "The reviews helped." Not only did they make her books look more desirable on Amazon.com, she also got some exposure on different blogs, and her sales increased.

What I found interesting about their promotions is that neither author did any pre-publication marketing.

Tip #4: The More Things Change the More They Stay the Same

I asked both Andre and Folsom for advice to authors considering whether or not to independently publish their fiction.

"Worry about the words," Andre says. "Get [your book] copy edited and proof read. Pay attention to that part. A cover is important but just get it up there; you can always change it later."

In addition to good editing, Folsom adds:

- * Get a great cover. I need to repeat this: the cover is what will get people's attention. Invest in it. If you can only spend money on one area, do it here.
- * Write a kick-ass blurb. Think movies. Get your story across in one sentence. Hook them.
- * Get reviews. Ask your fellow writers, other blog[g]ers, anyone, but get those reviews posted on Amazon. It will improve your sales.
- * Once your first book is up, start working on the next one. The more books you have up on Amazon, the more you will sell, because searches will more easily pick up your books.

Conclusion: Fiction Authors Are Finding Success as Self-Published Authors

For Andre, part of self-publishing was a "great way to get stuff up there, but ultimately, it's about being in control of process." She adds, "My success on kindle feeds into a broader success, like getting into Walmart because my agent can point to my Kindle results and say to them `just think what she could do.'"

For Folsom, she is already writing book #3 in the series. Self-publishing provides her with a regular income. She sells approximately 45 to 50 books per day on Amazon alone with her 10 titles. "The short stories are cheap and cost mostly \$0.99 and therefore I only get 35% in royalties, but on anything that sells for \$2.99 or above I make 70% in royalties. It starts to add up."

Up until just a few weeks ago, I thought that self-publishing as a fiction author wasn't a savvy business move. And then in the space of one morning at our local RWA meeting, I heard two reports of author success, one from a well-known and published author, the other from a persistent new author. What they both have in common besides the skills to write a good story is that they're both publishing in erotic romance, and they both understand what it takes to succeed in this brave new world of digital publishing.

I encourage all authors considering this route to weigh the pros and cons of self-publishing. Can you and do you want to handle all the details of editing, proofing, cover design, and marketing, all on your own?

You get to decide!

If you give the readers what they want, make it easy for them to find you and get some good reviews, you just may be able to succeed as an independently published fiction writer. Good luck!

You can find author, coach and columnist, Beth Barany, raving about books, authors, and the ever-changing publishing and book marketing world at www.writersfunzone.com/blog.

THE ANNUAL NTRWA RETREAT IS SET.

WANTED: North Texas Romance Writers CAPTURED!

Y'all git ready for the North Texas Round Up November 12-14, at the Country Woods Inn in Glen Rose, Texas!

Cabins were made available
at ranch hand prices with free grit come Saturday and Sunday mornin'.

The peace and quiet of the farm will git disrupted as Billie the Kid and Pat Garrett face off down behind the chapel in the woods.

Will Billie make it to the Sante Fe Railroad on the hill or will Pat send him to meet his maker?

Then join Special Agent in Charge Joe White for a quick-draw and wild west shootin' demo.

Supper will be served at Hollywood and Vine on Friday and Storiebook Cafe on Saturday.

Plenty o' time away from the big city to write to yer heart's content and visit wit writin' folk who will be a hoot n' a hollar away!



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NTRWA MONTHLY MEETING
THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH
DOORS OPEN @ 10 A.M.
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