



North Texas Romance Writers of America

HEART TO HEART

FOUNDED MARCH 1983

CHAPTER 33, REGION 5

JULY 2011

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Synopsis

With

Victoria Chancellor

**RISING STAR
Awards
Most Pages Written**

**Barb Han
156 pages**

**Candy Havens
128 pages**

**Ron Campbell
76 pages**

**SPUR
Awards
Most Pages
Edited**

**Candy Havens
693 pages**

**Chrissy Szarek
344 pages**

**Dawn Alexander
278 pages**



Tips on writing and polishing your synopsis

July 16

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CORNER**

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER - MARSHA WEST

As I write this, the NT members who are attending the RWA convention in NYC are going into overdrive to finish getting ready for the trip. The first conference I attended was in Dallas a few years ago when I hadn't even joined NT yet. The second was last year in Orlando. I encourage you to save up to attend a national conference. Not certain when the next time we'll meet in Dallas is, but if you don't make it to one before then, certainly Dallas is an achievable goal.

Thanks to Kim Campbell, our President Elect, for helping keep everyone connected for this trip. Thanks to Barb Han and Wendy Watson for coming up with the great NT "basket"—a purse in the shape of a saddle including having its own stirrups. Very clever! And thanks to everyone who contributed GC's, money and cool stuff to "stuff" the purse. I'm sure it will help raise lots of funds for literacy.



On to my writing journey, which has been rocky over the past year. I believe, I'm finally climbing out of the pit. Not a nice place to have been. The good thing is I used the past tense in that phrase. Because of lots of soul searching, several very good on line classes, a conference or two, and some blogs I've read, I do believe I'm going to come out on top.

Let me share something I wish I'd known in the early days of writing. (I've completed five novels and have a 6th marinating.) I believe I queried way too early. We pretty much have to do contests and get the stuffing knocked out of us. Even with good CPs, you can send pages before they're ready and get the stuffing knocked out of you. I'm not bashing contests. I think they're a necessary evil - sometimes being wonderfully helpful and other times. . .not so much.

But before you push send to query an agent, I think you have to have gone through every last helpful self-editing checklist you've got. (I didn't even know those when I first queried.) I rewrote my third book because I really liked the story line and the characters and because in the meantime I'd learned a heck of a lot more about the craft. I wish I hadn't sent that book the first times I did. It grew into a much improved book. But now, it could be even better because of the class I just took: Linda Style's "Infusing your Novel with Emotion." I learned a ton from her during the course. (Not that others hadn't tried to tell me, but you have to be ready to hear.) I'm looking forward to making sure #5 uses all of her strategies. Thanks to my CPs Jerrie and Jeannie for being willing to hang in there one more time on this book. Keep on writing.

Marsha

Persistent people begin their success where others end in failure. Edward Eggleston

JUNE MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, June 18, 2011 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The president and secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:40 A.M. The May minutes were approved as they were printed in the June newsletter.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Marsha West reported:

Go to the NTRWA website or look in RWR magazine to get a proxy for voting. The proxies need to be sent to Kim Campbell by Sunday, June 19, 2010. The July board meeting will be held at The Snooty Pig located at 4010 William D Tate Avenue in Grapevine, TX. Roni Griffin was given a gift since she now has a book cover.

Treasurer: Ron Campbell reported:

The treasurer's report will be filed for audit.

Program Director: Kim Campbell reported for Nikki Duncan

The schedule for NTRWA 2011 calendar was reviewed as follows:

July – Synopsis Review by Victoria Chancellor
August – Discuss e-publishing with Misa Ramirez
September – Finding A Place in the Market with Tracey Wolf
October – Discuss Dialog
November – Members retreat
December – Christmas Party

Membership: Jamie Webb reported:

There was one visitor:

Heather Witkowski (young adult)

There are eighty members of NTRWA.

MINUTES

Communications Director: Marsha West reported for Jean Marie Brown

Articles are due to Jean-Marie Brown by Sunday, June 26th.

Website: Jen FitzGerald reported:

Articles for the NTRWA website should be sent to Jen FitzGerald.

Ron Campbell will send Treasurer's Reports to Jen FitzGerald.

Send links to articles about writing to Jen FitzGerald.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PRO Liaison: Clover Autrey reported:

New PRO member Chrissy Szarek received her pin.

Hospitality Chair: Bab Han reported:

A hospitality basket will be sent to Nationals.

Raffle tickets to win prizes are available for purchase at the NTRWA monthly meetings.

Audio Librarian: Michelle Welch reported:

CDs from nationals can be checked out.

A list is online of what CDs are available.

Great Expectations Chair: Angi Platt/ Wendy Watson reported: No report given by Chairs.

Spotlight Chair: Dawn Alexander reported for Carolyn Williamson:

Dawn moderated a spotlight on Candi Havens.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on July 16th at La Hacienda. The business meeting was adjourned at: 11:10 p.m.

Submitted electronically by Sheniqua Waters

Date Approved: _____

Date Corrected: _____

SPOTLIGHT ON ROSEMARY CLEMENT MOORE

BY CAROLYN WILLIAMSON

Like many of us, Rosemary thought about writing a book for a while before doing it. Then like the successful writer that she is, she slogged on and finished it, then went to RWA to learn what to do next. The rest is history.

1. How has your acting experience helped your writing? From a 'headspace' perspective, they're not that different. It's all about getting into character. With acting, you have to get into your 'character head' and not your 'actor head'. An actor does something because it's in the script, but whether she's on the stage or the page, a character does something because she NEEDS to do it to accomplish her goal. So my acting experience helps me live the story through my character, so that the reader will be able to do the same thing.



2. How do you keep in touch with young adult experiences and phrases? Writing YA isn't so much about keeping up with trends as being in touch with your own inner teen. While it's true that I'm very plugged in to the Internet, Twitter, technology, comic books, blockbuster movies and Disney Channel shows, none of this is as important as the love I have for the type of story where a young person has to discover her power (superpower, inner strength, whatever) and proving their place in the adult world, whether it's Buffy staking vampires or Jo March discovering her literary voice. Let's face it. I AM my own inner teenager. Heck, I think I'm more in touch with my inner teen now than I was at 16, when I was way too serious and worried about what people would think of me. Now I can let my freak flag fly. Because really, trends, fads and slag will be outdated before your book ever sees print. You have to find the mindset within yourself. The sensation of being a young adult needing to prove yourself, slay the dragon and rescue the princes never goes out of style.

3. What circumstances led to your first sale? I had quit my job the year before in order to take care of my dad while he was sick. After he passed away, I found myself with a perfect opportunity to put up or shut up about writing a book--which I'd been

**SPOTLIGHT ON
ROSEMARY CLEMENT MOORE**

BY CAROLYN WILLIAMSON

saying for ages that I was going to do, but hadn't actually managed. I mean, I'd STARTED a LOT of books. But never finished anything. So I gave myself the summer, wrote the book, and went to RWA to learn all I could about What To Do Next. Granted, I had the luxury of having no commitments but writing for those three months. But then I came home from RWA nationals with a whole battle plan, revised the manuscript, sent out queries to my top pick of agents. Fortunately one of the top three really loved my manuscript, took me on, and we'd sold *Prom Dates From Hell* and its sequel by Thanksgiving.

4. How did it feel to receive the RITA award for Best Young Adult

Book? This is such a cliché, but when they called my name, I had to look at my seat mate (who was, unfortunately, one of my fellow nominees, but fortunately, a marvelous and gracious friend who was so excited for me) for confirmation. From then on, my thoughts went like this: Don't trip, don't trip, don't trip, don't knock down the presenter, don't drop the statue, don't stare at yourself on the Jumbotron — Oh my GAWD my teeth are HUGE — don't forget to thank your editor, don't forget to thank your husband, don't make the crying face, don't talk to long, don't trip, don't trip, don't trip.

I did notice that my walk off music was the theme from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which was so very perfect for Hell Week. That was my favorite part of the whole thing.

5. Is it true that when your first book debuted, Meg Cabot had a book with a similar title and was coming out at the same time as yours?

Yes, I discovered that Meg Cabot was headlining an anthology called "*Prom Dates From Hell*" (which also included stories from some little known authors like, oh, *Stephanie Meyer*). Shoot. Me. Now. Both books had been in the works for ages. There was no way for one to know about the other. There was talk of changing the title of my book, which broke my heart a bit, because "*Prom Dates From Hell*" was the very first thing I typed on the blank page. In the end, Random House decided to stick with the original title, and the other book was changed to *Prom NIGHTS from Hell*, but it doesn't really matter because people always get them confused anyway.

I met Meg Cabot at last year's Rita ceremony and we had a laugh over it. I mean, what else can you do? Okay, well, maybe I did whine about it for a few weeks. Or

**SPOTLIGHT ON
ROSEMARY CLEMENT MOORE**

BY CAROLYN WILLIAMSON

years. But this was an early, important lesson in how little control we have over things in the publishing world. All we can really control is the content and quality of our books.

6. What advice would you give to NTRWA members who want to write for the young adult market? I alluded to this in an earlier answer. The thing about writing YA is that it has to come naturally from the type of story you want to tell, and the type of characters you want to follow around. Authenticity can only come from getting so completely into character that you can BE your teenage self while you are writing. If you write what you THINK teens are like, then it will come off as trying too hard, or inauthentic, or worse, condescending. Writing a young heroine is no different than writing any other -- you have to get into character and let everything flow from that.

7. What do you wish you'd learned or done sooner? I wish I'd picked a shorter pen name. Rosemary Clement-Moore takes too long to sign with the lines get really long, and they always have to make it smaller to fit on the front of the book. It's also too long for a Twitter handle and doesn't fit on a business card template.

I also wish I'd installed a giant whiteboard on my office wall sooner. I LOVE to plot on that thing!

8. What's the name of your next book coming out, and where can we buy it? Texas Gothic comes out on July 12th from Random House Teen and it will be available in hardcover and e-book from all major retailers. It's about the only "normal" girl in a family of witches and psychics who's calm summer of ranch sitting turns out to be anything but relaxing when a mass grave turns up on the neighbor's property, a ghost appears in her room, and a cranky young cowboy keeps getting in her way while she tries to solve both mysteries. It's Practical Magic meets Nancy Drew, and lots of fun.



<http://readrosemary.blogspot.com/>

SOMETIMES DIVORCE IS OUR FRIEND...

BY NIKKI DUNCAN



From our words, ideas and stories, that is.

So very often we call our stories our babies. We open ourselves up to vulnerability by putting them out there for someone else to read, such as a critique partner, or a contest judge, or an editor or agent. With agents and editors we're likely to only get vague feedback at best. Contest judges are generally pretty good at offering feedback on overall points, while the small details and hopefully larger ones are picked apart by critique partners.

Here's the tricky part. We spend large amounts of our time putting our words on the page, and we value each one. The characters and stories become real to us, a part of us. Still, at some point, we have to figure out when the best thing for our story is to listen to a suggestion that could mean some large changes. Figuring that out could mean we need to divorce ourselves from our words, our plots, our characters' quirks.

There is, of course, the 2 out of 3 rule we could listen to. If 2 out of 3 readers/critiques suggest you change something or they have the same reaction to a character that's not what you intended for your readers it's worth considering.

Other times, we don't have that many people offering feedback, so we want to consider from whom the advice is coming and maybe even what their justifications are for the suggested changes.

Granted, some changes can alter the entire point or meaning of our stories. There are times though we're so married to our ideas we become defensive when we don't need to be. We see a harmless question for clarification or a comment about how a story aspect could potentially become an issue if it's not properly motivated as an assault on our story. Or worse, on us personally.

It's these times when we take such offense we're in danger of being too married to an idea. Not always, but sometimes.

So, how do we know if we need to listen to that advice that says we haven't motivated our characters and their setup strongly enough?

(continued on the next page)

SOMETIMES DIVORCE IS OUR FRIEND... (CON'T FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Ask yourself honestly if they've really been effectively motivated. In the words of Bulls Eye from **Daredevil** (and Tracy Wolff during a recent workshop) "bring on the pain."

The goal is to identify the biggest source of pain for our characters, and know how we can use the plot to pick at that pain to make it worse. This point of pain should definitely be used at the opening of the book, maybe as the inciting incident, the thing that sets your story in motion and your character in a new direction. This point should also be built bigger and bigger throughout the story in every scene and chapter.

Do you have an element you're not sure you want to change? Are you digging in your heels in refusal to admit there could possibly be something wrong with your story, characters, conflict or setup?

Maybe you're right and it's perfect, but isn't it worth playing the questioning game?

What if the advice is right? What if another approach that would land your character into the pain faster is a better approach? What if a more direct or less direct setup could be better? Do you and any aspect of your story need a divorce?

It's tough to look at our work objectively when we're not objective, but if we want to succeed it's necessary.

Nikki Duncan plots murder and mayhem over breakfast, scandalous exposes at lunch and the sensual turn of phrase after dinner. It is the pleasurable excitement and anticipation of unraveling her character's motivation—whether they be in her romantic suspense line or a straight contemporary—that drives her to write long past the witching hour. The only anxiety and apprehension haunting Nikki comes from pondering the mysterious outcome of her latest twist.

Learn more about Nikki and her books at her website at www.NikkiDuncan.com.

A BOUNTIFUL BASKET

Hey Guys,

I just wanted to take a minute to thank everyone for the awesome donations for this years conference basket.

Here's a run down of all the fab things in the NT basket:

Vintage Leather Saddle Purse~Donated by Barb Han

2 "Happy Tales" T-shirts~Donated by NT

\$25 Barnes & Noble gift card~Donated by Wendy Watson

\$20 Visa~Donated by Marsha West

\$25 Mastercard~Donated by Marsha West

\$25 Barnes and Noble Card~Donated by Nikki Duncan

\$15 Starbucks Gift Card~Donated by Chrissy Szarek

Flask, Stirrup Keychain, Texas Bottle Opener, Western Magnets~Donated by Marty Tidwell

\$25 Cash~Donated by Jerri Alexander

\$25 Cash~Donated by Angi Morgan

These cash donations became a \$50 Amazon gift card

\$20 Cash~Donated by Candy Havens

\$15 Check~Donated by Jen Fitzgerald

\$40 Cash~Donated by Ron and Kim Campbell

These cash donations became a \$75 Amazon gift card

\$15 Starbucks gift card~Donated by Nancy Connally

In case you weren't counting that equals a Kindle, folks! How exciting is that?!

Thanks for making our RWA Conference basket a success once again.

See y'all in July.

Kim Campbell, President-Elect

LEARN HOW TO CONQUER THE SYNOPSIS

BY NIKKI DUNCAN

Writing a synopsis may be the most difficult writing you'll ever do, but it can also be one of the most important documents you'll ever create. Whether you love writing a synopsis, as I do, or dread them with a passion, as many of you profess, they are a necessary part of the query and contest world in which we live. A synopsis must tell the story of your characters, fulfill the reader's expectations (whether that reader is an agent, editor or judge) and reflect the tone and style of your story. It must also conform to the expectations of your target audience in length, line spacing, margins, grammar and composition. Wow, that is a lot to put into two to ten pages!



In this workshop, award-winning "synopsis queen" author Victoria Chancellor will explain the fundamentals of the synopsis so you can prepare your latest submission. If you were asked for a partial at the RWA conference and are feeling overwhelmed, make sure you attend for some calm perspective on this seemingly impossible task. If you are entering a contest and have had remarks in the past about unmotivated characters, fuzzy plot lines or insufficient resolutions, please come to get some pointers. Victoria is the author of 21 historical, paranormal and contemporary romances for Harper-Collins, Kensington, Dorchester and most recently, Harlequin. Her July American Romance, *THE TEXAN AND THE COWGIRL*, earned four and a half stars and was a Top Pick from Romantic Times magazine. Please visit her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VictoriaChancellor for more information and to view her "Notes" on various writing topics.

2011 NTRWA Schedule

August 20 **The Writer's Guide to ePublishing with Misa Ramirez:** Presentation on ePublishing ins and outs, as well as some numbers.

September 17 **Finding Your Place in the Market with Tracy Wolff**

October 15 **Dialogue: It's More Than What You Say** with **Julia Quinn:** We'll follow Julia's talk with a book signing. Non-members will be charged \$5 for this month's workshop.

November **Retreat TBA**

December 17 **Christmas Party**



newsletter@ntrwa.org

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

**NTRWA MONTHLY MEETING
THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH
DOORS OPEN @ 10 A.M.
LA HACIENDA RANCH
5250 HIGHWAY 121 SOUTH
COLLEYVILLE, TX**

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President@ntrwa.org

President-Elect, Kim Campbell
PresidentElect@ntrwa.org

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Programs@ntrwa.org

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Secretary@ntrwa.org

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Treasurer@ntrwa.org

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Membership@ntrwa.org

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Newsletter@ntrwa.org

Web Site Director, Jen Fitzgerald
Website@ntrwa.org

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Hospitality, Barb Han
Hospitality@ntrwa.org

Great Expectations 2011,
Wendy Watson
GECordinator@ntrwa.org

PAN Liaison, Karen Whiddon
PANLiaison@ntrwa.org

PRO Liaison, Clover Autrey
PROLiaison@ntrwa.org

Spotlights, Carolyn Williamson

Audio Librarian, Michelle Welsh
Librarian@ntrwa.org

Newsletter Editor, Jean Marie Brown
Newsletter@ntrwa.org

Writing Incentives (BABS), Roni Griffin
Incentives@ntrwa.org