



# North Texas Romance Writers of America

## HEART TO HEART

FOUNDED MARCH 1983

CHAPTER 33, REGION 5

AUGUST 2011

VOLUME 30, ISSUE 8

**RISING STAR  
Awards  
Most Pages Written**

**Jeannie Guzman  
168 pages**

**Candy Havens  
145 pages**

**Ron Campbell  
115 pages**

**SPUR  
Awards  
Most Pages  
Edited**

**Barb Han  
535 pages**

**Jeannie Guzman  
470 pages**

**Dawn Alexander  
398 pages**

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS  
OUR PANEL MIGHT HAVE THE  
ANSWERS!**

**JOIN US**

**AUG. 20**

**FOR A PANEL DISCUSSION WITH**

**JACI BURTON,  
SHAYLA BLACK,  
SOPHIE OAKS,  
AND  
KAREN WHIDDON**

**PLEASE SEE PAGE 7**



**THE  
PRESIDENT'S  
CORNER**

**PAGE 2**

### INSIDE THIS EDITION

**MINUTES PAGE 3**

**SPOTLIGHT BARBARA HAN PAGE 5**

**DOES SPELLING COUNT? PAGE 8**

**A WRITER'S JOB PAGE 10**

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER - MARSHA WEST

*Every day in every way, I'm getting better and better.* My mother got that quote from some "guru." I forget which one. She used it faithfully and encouraged me to. I haven't thought of it in years, but as I sat down to pen this article—actually, I guess that's "tap" this article—the words popped into my head. Now, I know some of you are doing the math; that's right; I'm getting on up there in years. You're asking, if she's been doing that, why isn't she perfect yet? We've discussed this before, and we all know I'm not. Nor do I think that's the direction for the quote.



Think about your first piece of romance writing. From a craft standpoint, how good was it? Some of you may have had beautiful words flow from your fingertips the first time out, but most of us didn't. In the sense of our writing, *we've all been getting better and better.* None of us is perfect at this job, but again, I don't think that's the focus of the statement. It's the journey. The journey to discover who we are as persons and as writers. (Some will refer to that as voice.)

Who among us hasn't started a diet or vowed to workout regularly? That's a journey to improve ourselves. I hear you arguing: "Yeah, Marsha, but I gained the weight back; I stopped exercising; I've gone back to smoking fifteen times; I'm still not published; My publisher turned down my last proposal." All of that may be true, but each time we make the effort to improve in whatever area—we take a risk—I believe we gain. The next time we attempt to climb whatever the mountain is, we're armed with valuable knowledge about ourselves and about the challenge. Knowledge we gained from those earlier experiences.

As writers, our goal is to get better and better. We do that by participating in RWA, our NT chapter, on-line chapters, classes, conferences, workshops, working in critique groups, reading, writing/editing, entering and judging contests, and submitting. Besides the general goal to get better, we set specific goals for the year. At the August meeting, we will again take time to pull those out and see how we're doing. If you haven't written any yet, it's not too late. I'll have cards and envelopes for you.

One of mine for the year was to get a web site set up. Probably, before you get this newsletter, I will have given you an FYI on the NT Loop, telling you about the site (which will say Under Construction) and asking you some questions, which I hope some of you will take time to answer.

It's hard to stay positive in this business, but without doing that I think most of us would quit. So why not try a few affirmations.

*Improvement counts, no matter how small. Anonymous Who dares nothing, need hope for nothing. Schiller.*

## JULY MINUTES

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, July 16, 2011 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:37 A.M. The May minutes were approved as they were printed in the June newsletter.

### **OFFICER REPORTS:**

#### **President: Marsha West reported:**

A first sale pen was presented to Jeannie Guzman  
NTRWA's savings account will be closed and money transferred to the NTRWA checking account due to fees that are more than interest gained in the savings account.

It has been decided Deer Creek Cabins can list NTRWA as a link on its web site. Changes were made to the rules for the Great Expectations Contest (GE).

Query letters will no longer be required. Only a blurb will be required.

Approval has been given by the Board to spend up to \$120 to establish an electronic process for contestants to enter the GE Contest.

The date of the next Board Meeting has been moved to Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>.

Minutes approved as emailed to board.

#### **Treasurer: Ron Campbell reported:**

The treasurer's report will be filed for audit.

#### **Program Director: Nikki Duncan reported:**

The schedule for NTRWA 2011 calendar was reviewed as follows:

August – Discussion regarding e-publishing with Misa Ramirez has been cancelled. There will now be a panel of authors who will talk and answer questions about publishing.

September – Finding A Place in the Market with Tracey Wolf

October – Discuss Dialog with Julia Quinn

November – Members retreat

December – Christmas Party

**MINUTES**

**Membership: Jamie Webb reported:**

There are eighty-one members of NTRWA.

There were five visitors: Liz Lounsberry, Patrice Stanton, Carol Williams, Tiffany White and Nikole Berg

**Communications Director: Marsha West reported for Jean Marie Brown**

Articles are due to Jean Marie Brown by Sunday, July 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Website Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

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

If interested in learning how to operate the NTRWA website contact Jen FitzGerald.

Chose to postpone for two years using RWA web site to host NT site while glitches get worked out.

Two years of hosting will be purchased for NTRWA.

**COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:**

**PRO Liaison: Clover Autrey reported:**

To become a PRO you must submit a novel to an agent or editor.

**Hospitality Chair: Barb Han reported:**

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

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, August 20th at La Hacienda. The business meeting was adjourned at: 11:00 p.m.

Submitted electronically by Sheniqua Waters

Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

## SPOTLIGHT ON BARBARA HAN

BY CAROLYN WILLIAMSON

Barbara Han joined NTRWA and then enthusiastically jumped right in to volunteer for Hospitality Chairperson. Like some of us, she can be shy at first, but she takes on the challenge of mixing in as you can see in the answers to questions below.

### **1. Where did you grow up, go to high school? college? major?**

I've been in Dallas 30 years so I think I qualify as a Texan. I majored in Journalism at University of North Texas. My emphasis was in Public Relations and my minor was Marketing.

### **2. Are you married?**

Yes.

### **Children?**

Yes. Three beautiful children.

### **Where did you meet your husband?**

I was out with friends at a club celebrating my birthday. We invariably ended up talking about dating, and I realized I'd always veered toward blue-eyed, sandy-blond hair types. I decided right then and there the next guy I dated would have black hair, and said so. I literally looked up and there he walked on his way to the dance floor. I must've cracked a smile because I remember someone saying, "No. No way. You won't do it." Which felt like a dare to me. So, up I stood and there I went. I marched onto the dance floor and completely lost my confidence along the way. Pride wouldn't let me go back to my table, so I danced in the general area where he was, and by the end of the song we were dancing together. We hit it off that night, and we've been dancing together ever since.

### **What attracted you to him?**

The usual things in the beginning, his athletic build, his confidence. I loved his jet-black hair and dark eyes. What kept me around was his brain, I really like the way he thinks...how different our approach is to everything, and yet on all the important things we can finish each other's sentences we're so alike.

**SPOTLIGHT ON  
BARBARA HAN**

BY CAROLYN WILLIAMSON

**3. What are your hobbies?**

We're a big sports family and my junior high son has everyone into basketball. It's a great sport! Great exercise!

I love to explore. New cities. New reefs. New mountains. New foods. I'm fascinated with people and culture, so I've been studying a few languages. I speak Spanish, and I'm trying to learn French and Mandarin.

Reading is also huge for me, and I like to play video games.

**4. What are you passionate about?**

Family. Work. Life. Learning. My friends. Sports. Growth, be it personal, professional, or spiritual. I firmly believe we should all be pushing ourselves to know more, to be more, and to do more.

**5. What genre do you write?**

Contemporary women's suspense and romantic suspense.

**6. What happened to your e-pub deal?**

It started down a bad path in editing. My editor would rave about a few chapters and then send a note a few days later saying the exact same pages were terrible, unpublishable. I'd rework. They'd love it. We'd move on. Or so I thought. Then, they'd go back and tell me everything was horrible. This became a hamster wheel. It felt like I was working with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and then eventually I got the feeling I was being set up to be sold editing services. I found a way out of my contract without having to buy out, and got out as fast as I could. I knew when I took the deal it was a risk since they were new, and it didn't pay off.

I want desperately to see my name on a book jacket, so that part was truly disappointing. I felt embarrassed because I had already made my big announcement. But, the decision to walk away was the right choice, so no regrets...no looking back.

**7. What do you like about being Hospitality Chair?**

It's a great, super-fun role. It forces me to be social, so I get to meet even more great people. In a new environment or group I can really do the "wall flower" thing. Taking a volunteer position straight out of the gate forces me to interact, which I love to do, but it would take me way longer to work up the courage otherwise.

Barb Han, RWA PRO  
[www.barbhan.com](http://www.barbhan.com)

## NTRWA PANEL DISCUSSION

BY NIKKI DUNCAN

Join us in August for a panel of authors will be answering questions about the publishing business. Jaci Burton, Shayla Black, Sophie Oaks, and Karen Whiddon will be with us to discuss traditional NY Publishers, Category Series, Digital and Self-Publishing.

Our panelists will answer questions about where they started and how they crossed into other avenues of publishing if they have, as well as why they've made the decisions they have. This promises to be an enlightening meeting, so we hope to see you there.

## 2011 NTRWA Schedule

**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**



*The following article will appear in the August 2011 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor.*

## **YES, SPELLING COUNTS**

**BY MORGAN ASHBURY**

Recently there was a furor in the blogosphere with regard to a review offered on a book written by an "indie" author.

For those of you who are unaware, an "indie" author is a writer who, without benefit of publisher, has made their book available to be read, which the reader may purchase for that purpose. This is easily done these days using Amazon Kindle and the Barnes & Noble Nook.

I won't mention the name of the reviewer or the author, because those facts are not really important. The review did have some positive comments to make with regard to the novel as story-telling. However, the reviewer rated it poorly because the book contained copious spelling and grammatical errors.

Shades of High School mid-terms. Every time I took a test when I was in High School, some classmate would invariably ask, "Does spelling count?"

It would seem that some of us who are authors are still asking that question. Therefore, in this essay, here and now, let me answer that age old query, for once and for all.

Yes, spelling counts. It matters all the time, *every* time.

Why does it matter? First, spelling errors in a story tend to pull the reader out of the story. The effect is not so different from having a glass of ice cold water tossed in your face, without warning. The author's goal should be to hook the reader and keep their attention riveted on his/her book until the last page has been turned. Spelling and grammar errors work directly opposite to this goal.

Second, flawless spelling and grammar speak to the care taken by the author to present the reader with as excellent an experience as that author is capable of creating. When a piece contains numerous errors, it's as if the author has posted this caveat at the beginning of the work: "I don't respect myself or you

enough to go to the trouble to make it excellent."

Third, poor spelling and poor grammar equal poor education. Don't get me wrong. Some of the most intelligent, and wise people amongst us didn't have the opportunity to achieve more than a Secondary School diploma, if that. But you can bet your ashes they've taught themselves, and elevated their reading level to the equivalent of college graduate or beyond. Yes, they took great pains to be the best they could be.

We, who are authors, are authors *\*all the time\**. I believe that if we consider ourselves to be professional authors, then, by golly, we need to be professional in every face we show the world outside of our own bathrooms.

This means, that when we submit anything that people are going to read, we take care that it is clear, concise, and as clean in grammar and spelling as we can make it.

It means that when we receive a review for our work, we send a personal note or e-mail to the reviewer, saying, "thank you for taking the time." If it is a good review, why then, we will publicize it and perhaps be a tad more profuse in our thanks. If it is a bad review, we will simply forget it. Seriously. The best thing you can do in the face of a bad review—unless it is well deserved—is to act as if it never happened.

Finally, it means we don't rant and rave and bitch about life, the landlord, our editor, the horrible dinner we were served in the restaurant last night, the unsatisfying sex with our spouse afterwards, or the price of tea in China. It means we don't pepper those raves with reams of profanity. Contrary to the belief of some, scattering F-shots through one's prose doesn't make one appear anything but vocabulary-challenged.

In short, if we consider ourselves to be professional authors, then it behooves us to behave professionally, all of the time.

[Editor's Note — Did you notice the deliberate spelling mistake in the title?]

*The following article first appeared in the July 2011 issue of Inklings. Inklings is the newsletter of Romance Writers Ink, Tulsa, OK.*

## **WRITING IS A JOB**

**BY PEGGY FIELDING**

Writing is a difficult, time consuming job. Uh huh. Are you sure you want that job?

Everyone in the world (or at least in the USA) is convinced he or she could write a book if only he (or she) could just take the time to do so.

Prove it to yourself. Ask anyone... maybe the next person you meet in the street, a stranger perhaps.

That person's answer will surely be, "Yeah. I've got this great idea for a book, a romance novel, I guess. I just don't have the time to write the thing." Smile, nod and move on into the next block. You've just heard a typical American person's dream and his or her excuse for not working on that dream. Here it is in a nutshell.

I HAVE THIS GREAT IDEA AND I COULD WRITE A REALLY GOOD NOVEL IF I JUST HAD THE TIME.

It is to laugh.

Now here is your challenge: If you've been saying, "I just don't have the time to write my book," then you can prove yourself wrong.

Go now, this instant, even if you are at your wage earning job, to your purse or desk drawer, take out your pen and your notebook (or any scraps of paper you lay your hands on) and write at least one sentence.

Don't stop to cogitate... just write.

If you get carried away, and another sentence finds its' way onto the paper, go for it!

Should a customer or coworker intrude just smile and attend to your paying jobs' requirement.

Mentally you can work on another sentence to transcribe onto a piece of scrap paper.

By quitting time, you may have amassed ten or twelve or more sentences onto your scraps of paper.

Guess what, darling?

You have been writing your book while you've been supporting yourself and perhaps your family, at your wage earning job! You have also written a tiny chunk of your projected novel.

Write at least a sentence a day on scrap paper, and keep those sentences in a safe place at work and at home.

Hey... congratulations. You are writing a book, my friend. You'll soon see the sentences on scrap paper piling up at home and at work. Put a box or basket near your computer. Fill it with scrap paper on which one or perhaps two sentences have been written.

If you write a sentence or sentences every day, at home or at work, do you know what you've done within a month? You've found the time to write a piece of your first chapter of your novel... or maybe the entire chapter. Keep at it. You only need a minute, a pen and a scrap of paper.

*Peggy Fielding is a multi-published writer of both romance novels and nonfiction books. She had made a (sometimes sparse) living with her words, selling articles and short stories as well as books. She is at work on a new novel she is calling WHITE FLAME.*



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