

Jen FitzGerald

From: NTRWA Newsletter <newsletter=ntrwa.org@mail27.wdc03.rsgsv.net> on behalf of NTRWA Newsletter <newsletter@ntrwa.org>
Sent: Friday, June 14, 2013 1:10 PM
To: Jen FitzGerald
Subject: June Newsletter

It's finally hot here in Texas and we've already had a bumpy ride with storm season! Have you been writing?

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Letter from the President

Turn Up the Heat!

It's hard to believe June is already here. I keep expecting the temperature to soar into the hundreds and melt everyone into puddles of sweat and goo, but it hasn't happened yet. Not sure why. Maybe it's the Zombie

Apocalypse, or global warming, or alien invaders waiting to lull us into complying with their every directive. Who cares, as long as I have Internet service, a word processing system to write my stories, and a never-ending supply of romance novels to keep my spirits up.

Ah, well. Back to the business of writing.

From a look at the sheets members fill out at every meeting, it appears we have a large number of romance writers living among us. They're determined to see their work published, be it in hardback, paperback, or digital. They want to be read. They want to be heard. They want to be paid!

With copious amounts of their beverage of choice (whatever libation it might be), they are writing happily ever after stories involving shape shifters, mythical creatures and plain old human beings.

The world we live in is a scary place. Danger is everywhere. Disasters happen and lives are changed or taken away. Forever isn't always happy.

If one of our little happily ever after stories can help someone escape from the rough texture of their everyday life for a few hours, we've done our job.

Let's do it well, my friends.

-Michelle Welsh

Congratulations to Kim Quinton for her first book sale!!

She sold Her Wish Before Christmas to Decadent Publishing!

May 18, 2013

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, May 18, 2013 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. The minutes for the April 20 meeting were approved as printed in the May newsletter.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Michelle Welsh reported:

- Changes in Committee Chairs: D'Ann Burrow is PAN Liaison and Marsha West is Conference Chair.
- Remember to fill in clipboards.

President-Elect: Clover Autrey: No report.

Secretary: Nancy Connally: No report.

Treasurer: Angi Morgan: No report.

Program Director: In the absence of Lara Lacombe it was reported:

- The June program will be EMT Tina Amlin.

Membership Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- There are 70 members.
- Introduced visitors: JoAnna Voyles and Caren Ectel

Communications Director: Heather Long was absent.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PAN Liaison: D'Ann Burrow was absent.

PRO Liaison: Jeanne Guzman was absent.

Great Expectations: No report.

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald: No report.

Hospitality: Sidney Bristol reported:

- Encouraged members to buy raffle tickets.
- Described items included in this month's prizes.

Audio Librarian: Clover Autrey reported:

- Distributed two CDs from the audio library.

Writing Incentives: Chrissy Szarek reported:

- Explained about the Treasure Chest.
- Reported on entries on the clipboards.

Texas Two-Step: Marsha West: No report.

Bylaws: Angi Morgan: No report.

Spotlights: In the absence of Gina Nelson, Angi Morgan reported:

- Nancy Connally was the Member Spotlight.

30th Anniversary: No report.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

- Michelle Welsh reported the Board met on April 20 and is considering organization changes that will require bylaws changes. She explained the process for bylaws changes by NTRWA, including approval by RWA.
- Need volunteers for committees.
- Angi Morgan reported that volunteer committee members are needed for bylaws review process.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 15, 2013 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Nancy Connally

Date Approved: _____

Date Corrected: _____

Most Pages Written

- Suzan Butler - 296
- Sidney Bristol - 196
- Michelle Welsh - 72
- Lisa Fenley - 68
- Carolyn Williamson - 50

Most Pages Edited

- Suzan Butler - 589
- Chrissy Szarek - 237
- Sidney Bristol - 124
- Angi Morgan - 120
- Lisa Fenley - 60

The Death of a Scene

This article first appeared on A Chick Who Reads blog on April 5, 2013 and was reprinted in the June 2013 issue of Tide Lines, newsletter of the Vancouver Island Chapter of RWA. Permission granted to other RWA chapters to reprint or forward with proper credit given to author and chapter.

by Shereen Vedam

I'm guilty of killing scenes.

At work, they call me the Delete Queen, because I'll have barely finished reading an email before it's sent to the trash. Not so much with my writing. When I first began to write, I was overprotective of every word, every scene and every chapter.

I still have a "keeper" folder for discarded drafts, even though nine

times out of ten, I never go back and look at what was taken out. In *A Beastly Scandal*, both publishers and agents had told me that the opening had to be shortened. I couldn't understand why. It was perfect just the way it was. Every chapter was an absolute necessity.

When this book finally sold, it was after part of the original chapter one and all of chapter two had been deleted. I still love those missing scenes, especially the one where the heroine goes to the stable in the small hours of the night and meets up with the ghost of a murdered blacksmith.

Yet, I finally understood why those scenes had to go. They were dragging the book's opening, the time between when the heroine and the hero meet again, when the story really gets going.

That is the reason for deleting a scene, whether in movies or in books. To pick up the pace, to move the story forward, to get on with the action. But that doesn't mean an author doesn't mourn a deleted scene.

Shereen Vedam is the author of heartwarming historical romances that have a healthy dollop of mystery with a pinch of magic. Her latest release is *A Beastly Scandal*, a fairytale-inspired Regency romance. Check out her website (<http://www.shereenvedam.com/>) for her upcoming books, become a fan on her Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ShereenVedam>) page, and/or follow her on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/@ShereenVedam>) and Pinterest (<http://pinterest.com/shereenvedam/>).

The following article appeared in the May 2013 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.

Watch a Book Blurb

by Joan Reeves

Creating and producing a video book trailer can be very time consuming — if you're doing it on the fly. Of course, since I was new to video, that's how I started. I always do things the hard way the first time. That's how I roll *G*. But what I learn from the process, I pass on to others, hence these articles. (This is so much information, that I decided to break it into 2 parts.)

The hardest part of telling any story, whether in a book or a video, is figuring out what to say that gets your message across. With books, you choose words. As a recent Mark Coker survey revealed, the more words; the better.

With a video, you use words, images, and music to get your message across. With videos, the shorter; the better.

Length

You want to get the message across as succinctly as possible – say in about 90 – 180 seconds. Currently, 90 seconds is best. If you're doing a book trailer, then you should be able to get that book blurb across in 90 seconds.

The first video I did was for *Old Enough To Know Better* – <http://youtu.be/0POqmMFKuuu> – which came in at 120 seconds. I tried my best to cut it down to 90 seconds, but I felt it had to be the length it was to "show" the blurb for this hot romance. So I worked on making the images and music as captivating as possible.

The next video I did – <http://youtu.be/S-swT1A9rBw> – was for my 4 romantic comedies that I call *The Lingerie Series*. Here it was actually easier to go short because I just used the 4 cover images with a tagline for each. This video came in at 72 seconds so that encouraged me that it was possible to be short and entertaining.

If you're doing a video to promote a group blog, for instance, then it's a lot harder to go short

since you have to give a couple of seconds to each author. but if the video is utterly entertaining, then the viewer will stay with it for a longer length. Here's an example of a video for a group blog – <http://youtu.be/S8JH7hnsApE> – which runs 129 seconds. I knew it was going to run long so I tried my best to make it as entertaining as possible and with upbeat music that, hopefully, has a wide appeal.

Ironically, the longest video I've done – <http://youtu.be/y415Y-EqcUg> – was a humorous one called How To Recognize An Author which came in at 141 seconds (2 min., 21 sec.).<http://youtu.be/y415Y-EqcUg>

How Long To Produce

I started keeping a notebook with the first video I did – Old Enough To Know Better. The project took about 8 hours spread over 2 days. I didn't quite know what I needed to do, and I had no materials organized in advance. So I was searching for stock photography for exactly the right picture to tell each progression of the story then modifying that photography to fit the template.

This was also true for music – searching for the right music at the right length. With most free or low-level subscription video websites, you're allowed 1 music source. It can be longer than the finished video length, but if it's shorter, you can't loop the music to keep playing.

Also, the limited text used to tell the story had to be edited again and again to get it as succinct as possible and to fit designated spots in the chosen template – either as captions to an image or a created "sign" containing the text or a Text box that would flow with the video. If you watch a couple of my videos, you'll understand what I mean by all this.

The second video I created — The Lingerie Covers — took less than 2 hours from start to finish. I already had all the book covers, and I didn't need any other art. I also had the music because it was the music I purchased to play in the background for the Introduction and Closing Credits of the audiobook editions of those romantic comedies. Plus, I had figured out

the process.

Joan's Video Creation Process

Here's what I learned that will hopefully make the process easier for you if you want to tackle producing a video.

1. Think on paper. Purpose: write down what you think is the reason you're doing the video.
2. With paper and pen, layout your project, i.e. create a story board. Actually draw rectangles and write in the rectangles what you will need in the form of Images and Text to put your message across.
3. Decide what kind of music fits your message. Example, with my romantic comedies, I knew I wanted something that sounded "fun." That was the perfect description for the music I had purchased for the Intro and Outro of my audiobooks so I used that for The Lingerie Covers. For the hot romance Old Enough To Know Better, I wanted something that sounded sexy and provocative. That described the music I had previously purchased for the audio edition of that book.

Once you have your project storyboarded, so to speak, then start obtaining the elements you need: template or theme, video clips, images, text, and music.

In part 2, I'll go through these elements: template, video clip, image, text, and music as well as give you a list of the video websites I'm using. Until then, check out my YouTube channel –

<http://www.youtube.com/user/JoanReevesAuthor> – so will better understand the things I wrote about. If you watch any of my videos, I'd appreciate a LIKE and a comment.

Reprinted from Writing Hacks, Joan's Free Subscription Newsletter

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The following article appeared in the May 2013 issue of Magic Moments, the newsletter of Southern Magic (Birmingham AL USA). This article may be reprinted with proper credits to the author and chapter.

Resurrecting the Undead

By Susannah Sandlin

So, I've spent some time with vampires.

People (you know...editors, agents, those kinds of people) keep telling us vampires are dead. Undead. Whatever. In fact, not to muddy the waters, but those same people also are starting to say paranormal is dead, or at least dying.

Bottom line: I believe there will always be a place for vampire fiction, but it's not an easy sell these days, whether you're talking about urban fantasy or paranormal romance or historicals. My guess is that the smaller or digital-first publishers are more open to it than the larger publishers, but in the end if you can make your story distinctive enough, it can overcome an acquisition editor's vampire fatigue.

The key these days in writing vampires is finding the elements that will set your vampire story apart in what is an EXTREMELY oversaturated market

in both urban fantasy and paranormal romance.

It's trickier than it sounds, because readers have certain vampire expectations that you take big risks in ignoring..

Basically, you can distinguish your vampires through your setting, your external plot, your species-building, or all three.

SETTING

One of the fun things about writing fiction is building the world in which your characters are going to live. Again, paranormal fiction is a very crowded genre. What elements can you put into your setting that will make it distinctive?

Your first decision is: will this be a real-world setting, or will it be a fictional place? If it's a fictional place, is that place found in the real world?

The key to choosing a real-world place is that it has to be a place with which you're very familiar or on which you're willing to do a LOT of research in order to get it right.

If you choose a real-world setting, can you find one that's unusual? CJ

Ellisson, for her VV Inn series, puts her vampires in Alaska. How fun is that? Colleen Gleason has a great series of historical vampire romances set in Regency England.

The second setting option is a fictional place within the real world. If you're a fan of JR Ward's Black Dagger Brotherhood (yum), she has the guys living in the fictional town of Caldwell, which is located in the real state of New York. Charlaine Harris put Eric and Pam and dull old Vampire Bill in fictional Bon Temps, Louisiana, outside the real city of Shreveport.

The advantage to the fictional setting within the real world is that you have the freedom to put buildings where you need them, and not be caught up in the real geography of an existing town, so there's a lot of flexibility to create as large or small a setting as you need. And by putting your fictional town in a real state, country, or place in time, you cut down on the amount of world-building you have to do.

The third option is to create a fictional setting within a fictional world. I honestly haven't read many of these with vampires in them except a few dystopian, futuristic, or post-apocalyptic fiction.

PLOT

If you're writing a vampire novel or thinking about it, you probably have some idea what those vampires are going to DO. They can't just sit around feeding all day long or you'd have a pretty dull book. Like human characters, your vampire characters must have the infamous goal,

motivation, conflict.

This is another area where you'll want to look for a fresh angle. The vampires versus vampire-hunters in an urban area has been done to death and is probably not going to fly with a publisher unless you have a compelling setting or vampire species. So, what kind of conflicts are your vampires up against? Are they the only paranormal species, or do they exist in a paranormal "multiverse"?

When you're deciding this, it's also the time to figure out if your vampire world is going to be opened or closed—do the humans know the vampires exist? Or do the vampires keep their existence secret? And how does this play into your external plot?

I don't think any of these options (open or secret paranormals, multiverse or single species) works better than the other. They're just things to consider when you're coming up with an external plot that's different from the other plots you've seen. Something for your vampires to do, even if your book is romance.

In romance, there are very common vampire tropes that work. Human vampire hunter falls for one of the monsters (Anita Blake, Cat and Bones). Vampire falls for human girl even though it endangers everyone (Black Dagger Brotherhood, Twilight). World-weary vampire finally meets someone who makes him want to keep living. These are great romance tropes, but the story around them has to be unique enough to set them apart from every other vampire romance using the same idea.

VAMPIRES!

There are some considerations to make before you ever start writing your vampire novel, relating to what traditional vampire mythology you're going to keep, and what you're going to ditch. As you consider these questions, think in terms of uniqueness. How can you twist your answers to these questions to make your vampires distinctive without making them too weird or too silly?

FEEDING

Will your vamps feed from humans? Can they feed from each other? Do they only feed from vampires or humans of the opposite gender? Does feeding involve sex? Always or sometimes? Is some kind of bond created between a vampire and a feeder, and is it permanent? Can your vampire also eat food or drink beverages? Are your vampires former vegetarians (I've seen this done and it's really clever) who struggle with their new protein diet? Do your vampires, a la Twilight, only feed from animals? How can you use those "food rules" to deepen your characters?

(I should add here that my Penton Legacy vampires do feed from humans, and that I proudly have the distinction of holding the top two spots in the Goodreads list "Books that Treat Humans like Cattle." I always want to say... "Yes, but the humans LIKE it.")

DEAD OR ALIVE?

You have to decide whether or not you want your vampires to truly be undead. Do they have a heartbeat? Bodily functions? (Ever notice how male vampires who never have to go to the bathroom or have frequent feedings nonetheless have no problem getting endless erections?)

Are they physically incapable of waking and moving during daylight hours? If so, can they go outside or must they stay in a light-tight space? Do they sparkle?

PROCREATION

Can your vampires reproduce? If so, with humans, or only with other vampires? (The answer to this can probably be determined by whether your vampires are truly undead or another race or species altogether.) How are new vampires made? Will a single bite do the trick? Exsanguination? How effective is it?

MORTAL WEAKNESS

What does it take to kill your vampire? After all, a hero who's truly immortal will be pretty dull. Stake through the heart? Removal of heart? Removal of head? Fire? Sunlight? How about more specific substances like silver (more common in werewolf mythology but does have a historical basis with vamps as well)?

SUPERPOWERS

What special powers do you want your vamps to have? Can they fly? Have superhuman physical strength? Mental powers? Psychic abilities? Can they see in the dark? Are their other senses heightened? There's a whole cafeteria line full of superpowers from which to choose!

The thing to be careful here is that your vamps don't have TOO many superpowers. You don't want them to be invincible in most cases, unless that factors into your external plot in some way. (I guess if you're writing a vampire superhero, it could work!)

POLITICS

Finally, how are your vampires organized? Are they loners? Do they live in groups, and if so, what are those groups called? How big are the groups? Is there a ruling body over the vampires that sets law and enforces punishment? If they're in a multiverse with other paranormal species, is there an over-ruling council that sets law? What are the relations like between the vampires and the other species? Are they at the top of the food chain, or the bottom?

THERE YOU HAVE IT! If you're considering a vampire novel, be it urban fantasy or romance, that should give you a few ideas to sink your fangs into.

Susannah Sandlin

is a member of Southern Magic (Birmingham, AL USA) and writes the Penton Legacy paranormal romance series . She also writes the Sentinels of New Orleans urban fantasy series as Suzanne Johns

2013 Meeting Schedule

Join us June 15th for the

Tina Amlin, an EMT will talk to us about first responders

Tina will join us to address the medical mistakes she finds in fiction, what happens and what doesn't. She'll also be answering questions.

Tina Amlin has been a paramedic for over twenty years. She got her start in EMS back in 1989 while at Baylor University where she joined Baylor EMS, a volunteer student first responder organization. She graduated from Baylor with a BA in Telecommunications and from McLennan Community College at the same time with a Certificate in Para-medicine. Tina worked for Scott & White EMS for nearly nineteen years in multiple capacities - dispatch, paramedic, training officer and supervisor before transferring to research three years ago. Her new job keeps her busy but gets her home at decent hours were her old job in EMS kept her on call 24/7.

Tina has one son, lives in Troy, and still works at Scott & White Hospital in Temple.

Tina has also delved into the world of writing with fan fiction in several different fandoms with over sixty stories penned. She still enjoys writing when she has the chance and loves to read.

Future Meetings:

July: Brenda Talley, NRH librarian. She'll be talking to us about maximizing research and the tools available to authors for research

August: Jodi Thomas, NYT bestseller

September: Mallory Braus, Carina Press, speaking on the editor-author relationship

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