

Jen FitzGerald

From: NTRWA Newsletter <newsletter=ntrwa.org@mail24.wdc03.rsgsv.net> on behalf of NTRWA Newsletter <newsletter@ntrwa.org>
Sent: Monday, September 16, 2013 1:29 PM
To: Jen FitzGerald
Subject: September Newsletter

Welcome to September and hopefully cooler temperatures here in North Texas! It was a crazy summer, with lots of news and lots of plans! What is on your autumn plate?

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Chapter 33, Region 5

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Letter from the President

Happy Fall!

Or as we say in Texas, Crank up the AC!

I'm so ready for some true fall weather. Temps over a hundred (or over 90, really) are more than I can stand. Even though I grew up in Galveston, I was never much of a beach aficionado. Give me a quiet library and a big stack of books any day.

When we settled in North Texas, I was excited to return to a location well versed in central air conditioning. And having actual seasons is a perk. Can you tell I'm waiting for snow this year?

I'm writing this while waiting for my wonderful Prince Charming to get off work. We're taking a little working holiday this weekend, heading to the cosmopolitan capital of this great state. My honey has a conference to attend and I'm going to burrow into a quiet hotel room and finish this #@** book if it kills me.

According to my writing coach, I should've finished this last week and should be writing two

short stories to post as teasers for the new series. Sounds like a wonderful idea, but for some reason, the ADHD side of my brain keeps finding other things to do while the creative side feeds itself junk food in the form of television reruns.

If all goes well, I'll be back on track by Friday.

Wish me luck!

-Michelle Welsh

August 17, 2013

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, August 17, 2013 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President was present. In the absence of the Secretary, the President-Elect recorded minutes. The meeting was called to order at 10:51 a.m.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Michelle Welsh reported:

- Discussed NT loop rules. By consensus, the chapter agreed to respond privately to birthday messages.

President-Elect: Clover Autrey: No report.

Secretary: Nancy Connally was absent.

Treasurer: Angi Morgan reported:

- Current balance - \$14,223.04
- The Treasurer's report will be filed for audit.

Program Director: Lara Lacombe reported:

- September program: Mallory Braus
- Two-Step Conference (2014) will be held at the Sheraton in Fort Worth. A booksigning will be held at Sundance Square. Speakers include: Amy Atwell, Cherry Adair, C.J. Ellison, Sophie Jordan, and Linda Castillo. Scheduled for the fifth weekend in March 2014.

Membership Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- 77 members and 1 visitor.

Communications Director: Heather Long was absent.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PAN Liaison: D'Ann Burrow reported:

- Distributed pencils to Chrissy Szarek, Jamie Webb, Ally Broadfield and Angi Morgan for book sales.

PRO Liaison: Jeanne Guzman was absent.

Great Expectations: Michelle Welsh reported:

- Need committee volunteers

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Need volunteer reader judges. Thirty have signed up.

Hospitality: Sidney Bristol was absent.

Audio Librarian: Clover Autrey reported:

- Library CDs are at the front of the room to allow easier browsing.

Writing Incentives: Chrissy Szarek reported:

- Announced members eligible to draw from Treasure Chest.
- Announced written goal participants.

Bylaws: Angi Morgan: No report.

Spotlights: Gina Nelson was absent.

- Christine Crocker was the September Spotlight.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

- Michelle Welsh announced that per new RWA-mandated By-laws, future boards will consist of five officers: President, President-Elect, Vice-President of Communications, Treasurer and Secretary.
- Carolyn Williams discussed RWA rules and regulations. She announced she is running for National RWA Director-at-Large.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 21 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Nancy Connally

Date Approved: _____

Date Corrected: _____

July 13, 2013

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, July 13, 2013 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and Secretary were absent. The President-Elect conducted the meeting. D'Ann Burrow recorded the minutes. The meeting was called to order at 10:37 a.m. The minutes for the June meeting were approved as printed in the July newsletter.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Michelle Welsh was absent.

President-Elect: Clover Autrey: no report.

Secretary: Nancy Connally was absent.

Treasurer: Angi Morgan was absent.

Program Director: Lara Lacombe reported:

- August program: Jodi Thomas will be the speaker. All members may attend a dinner with her Friday evening. There will be a booksigning after the meeting.
- September program: Mallory Braus with Carina Press will speak about the author/editor relationship.
- Per the member poll, there will be no retreat in November. The November meeting may be rescheduled to the second Saturday due to Thanksgiving.
- Conference will be in the spring every other year, possibly alternating with the member retreat.
- The 2014 Conference will be held at Sundance Square in Fort Worth. No update on potential booksigning except that books must be available through Barnes & Noble.

Membership Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- There are 72 members.

Communications Director: Heather Long was absent.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

Hospitality: Sidney Bristol reported:

- The "Taste of Texas" basket for RWA Conference has an approximate value of \$117.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

- Proxies for the RWA Conference were turned in.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, August 17 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Nancy Connally

Date Approved: _____

Date Corrected: _____

Most Pages Written

Most Pages Edited

- Suzan Butler - 357
- Trish Sanders - 250
- Angi Morgan - 245
- Cindy Dees - 230
- Molly Cannon - 200
- Molly Cannon - 932
- Angi Morgan - 920
- Carolyn Williamson - 726
- Cindy Dees - 580
- Lara Lancombe - 483

August Spotlight On...Christine Crocker

by Gina Nelson

NT members are writers, and so much more. We're teachers, tech writers, real estate brokers, nurses, probation officers, computer technicians, accountants, small business owners, and many other occupations and vocations too numerous to mention. This month we're shining our spotlight on a long-term member who is as passionate about music as she is about writing. She worked for twenty years in the music field. Let's get to know Christine Crocker.



Christine, tell us about your writing. What do you consider your genre(s)?

Besides western historicals, the genre closest to my heart is fantasy. I also have a couple of Regencies in various stages of completion and two western time travels.

Obviously, you love westerns. Is your husband a cowboy?

My husband is Texan born and bred. He used to tell our boys they should never ask a person where they were from because if they weren't from Texas there was no point embarrassing them. But I tease him by pointing out he had to go out of state to find someone to marry him. He grew up on a small farm between Grandview and Cleburne and although he trained his filly, a Morgan Quarter Horse cross, to saddle, he never got into serious cowboying like some of his family.

Are you currently working on a western?

I completed my first western romance earlier this year as my BIAY project. I haven't given up on it, but it has a lot of problems and as soon as I finish my current project I plan to tackle some heavy re-writes and editing. My current WIP is a YA fantasy, *Druid Wood*. The story of a boy who is a child of two worlds, his mother was of the fey and his father was of the mortal world. There are factions in both worlds that want him dead, and *Druid Wood* is the portal between the two worlds.

I find it interesting you enjoy writing both westerns and fantasy. Who was the greatest influence on your love of writing?

My high school creative writing teacher, Mr. Roberge was the first to encourage my writing. In college I took the first Science Fiction literature course offered at Cal State, and it was wonderful. There were only twenty students in that first class, and we were treated every week to a guest lecture by a science fiction great. Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and Harlan Ellison were just a few of the authors who came to speak to us and inspire us.

You spent many years in California around celebrities. Will you share one brush-with-fame story?

After college I lived with my voice teachers as a sort of au pair taking care of their infant daughter for room, board, voice lessons and an allowance of \$100 a month. I often had to drive Seth's prized vintage Mercedes to pick up various celebrities for their voice lesson. Whenever I had to take his car out I was under strict orders to use two parking spaces when parking and to park away from other vehicles. Under no circumstances was any harm to come to his car. On one particular occasion, I was to pick up Lucille Ball for a voice lesson. We almost made it back to the house without incident. I was stuck at a red light, a car to my left and cars in front and behind me, nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. Out of the corner of my eye I spot movement. A shopping cart comes barreling out of nowhere and I could only watch dumbfounded as it slammed into the passenger door. Lucille couldn't stop laughing, she said it was something that would have happened on her show. Thank goodness I had her to corroborate the incident. Seth got me a job as a paid soloist at the Wilshire United Methodist Church in Los Angeles. Kind of prophetic.

Music is your passion and an essential part of your life. How did your career in music evolve?

I was a piano major turned vocal performance major at Cal State Fullerton and fully intended to pursue a career in opera until I met my soon to be husband at a friend's home. He was a Marine stationed at LTA (a former dirigible base) near El Toro, Calif. (LTA stands for lighter than air.) It was love at first sight and I didn't even know his name. I just knew I was going to marry him and did three weeks later. When I was 40, he arranged for an audition with the Fort Worth Opera because, silly man, he thought I'd been deprived of my chosen career by marrying him. He was going to make the audition a surprise, but, thankfully, my sister-in-law convinced him I couldn't just go in unprepared. I sang two seasons with them then decided that was enough. A few years later, I became the music minister for First United Methodist Church in Joshua, a position I held for 20 years. I also play piano, hammered dulcimer, mountain dulcimer, and enjoy singing Scots and Irish folksongs.

Although the Turtle Creek Chorale is Dallas' award-winning men's chorus, you sing with them on a regular basis. How did your relationship with them develop?

The new Artistic Director, Trey Jacobs, was an old friend who contacted me via FB and asked if I would join in the female chorus he was putting together for a concert version of the Broadway musical "Ragtime." I sang with them again when they had Sandi Patti for their guest artist. Next spring I'll be joining them again for a concert version of Stephen Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street."

When it comes to writing, all of us struggle in some way. What challenges do you face?

My husband, family and friends have always been supportive. I'm probably my own challenge and biggest critic. The inner editor. I've tried all the tools for speed writing, i.e. storyboarding, Candace's fast track, plotting, etc. – I'm a panster through and through.

What lead you to NT?

I joined the Johnson County Creative Writers in 1984 and contested heavily for the next five years and did well, but soon discovered I had become a contest junkie, writing wonderful, polished first chapters but never completing anything. I realized I had to break that habit and become serious about my writing. Sometime in the 90s I visited NT many years as a guest of a western romance author, Sonja Birmingham, so when I moved to Watauga, five years ago, and decided to begin writing again, I remembered NTRWA and knew I needed this group of writers for the inspiration, incentive and support you all give.

Thanks, Christine, for sharing a bit of your life with us.

NT members, you may find Christine's delightful short stories featured in our NT anthologies, Deep in the Hearts of Texas and Love, Texas Style.

This article was used in the Sept. issue of Writer's Serenade, the newsletter of the Rose City Romance Writers of Portland OR. It may be used in sister chapter newsletters with attribution to the author and chapter.

How Thick is Your Skin

by Paty Jaeger

As writers we are a vulnerable lot in that we put our feelings down for others to see. Granted they are in the body of a character in our work, but they are still our feelings. And everyone who puts their feelings out there can be crushed. WE also do a lot of research to make sure what we are writing is accurate in period, occupation, and setting.

We have to grow a tough skin for those contest judges who "don't know" enough to be judging a category, or that critique that hurts, or that form rejection letter, or even worse, the lengthy rejection letter that said you came so close to getting published.

There have been two incidents lately in my little realm of historical writing that made me think about this topic. One was a post on my historical loop from a writer who received her judge's comments from a "historical" contest. She said more than one judge commented she needed to explain what a "union suit" was. Anyone who reads western historical knows what a union suit is. It is the one-piece underwear with a flap in the back that is still worn in some parts of the US today and used as PJ's by some women.

This was a case where the tough skin comes in- this writer could have thrown a tissy fit and asked what kind of judges are we getting for these contests, instead, she went on the loop and asked for different ways she could describe the clothing. I feel she was accurate in just saying what it was-any true reader of historical fiction will know what she is talking about. While she was calm, it upset me that someone was judging a category they shouldn't have been. Granted you will get readers new to the genre who may not know what a "union suit" is. But I would venture if the sentence said he

stripped down to his flannel or wool union suit, they would get the drift. Or the last thing he took off before jumping into the river was his flannel or wool union suit.

The second incident was a writer who submitted to a publishing house and received a rejection stating her historical information and characters didn't ring true. However, her writing/grammar, spelling, prose were commended. This was an instance when a tough skin was needed, but this person didn't have one. She sent several scathing replies to the editor. This was a case where she needed to perhaps have honest critique partners or take a second look at what she thought was historically accurate information.

Which of these writers will grow from the experience? Which of these writers do you think will go the farthest with their writing career?

Paty Jager is an award winning author who has been a member of RWA since 1998 and has held officer roles in online and local chapters. She's taught workshops at local and national level writer's conferences and online. Her fifteen published novels and three novellas have Western or Native American elements in them along with hints of humor and engaging characters. Her penchant for research takes her on side trips that eventually turn into yet another story. She also is the founder of CP Matchmaker a blog that connects critique partners.

You can learn more about Paty at

- her blog: <http://www.patyjager.blogspot.com>
- her website: <http://www.patyjager.net> <http://www.patyjager.net>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/#!/paty.jager>
- Goodreads: http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1005334.Paty_Jager
- Twitter: @patyjag.

This article was published in the RWA/NYC June 2013 newsletter. Permission is granted to share this article with the proper credits to the author and chapter. Thank you. --Alyssa Cole, Assistant Editor, RWA/NYC

What's a Hero

By **Jean Joachim**

When crafting a hero in a romance book, I call on my own desire, what kind of hero would I like to read about? The character comes to me rough and I sand him down, smooth out his edges as the image of my ideal hero gets blended with who this guy needs to be for the story.

As a romance writer, I'd say a hero is superhuman with a few human imperfections thrown in to keep him almost real. A hero must be protective of his lady. Who wants to read about a wimpy guy who lets the world run roughshod over his woman? Sure as heck not me! A hero doesn't have to be gorgeous, but being handsome never hurts. While he doesn't have to be tall, he should be taller than the heroine...and smart! All my heroines love brainy men...and so do I!

I love a man with a sense of humor, so I try to make my heroes funny and able to laugh at themselves, at least occasionally. My hero must be a man who listens to the heroine, though I know this is a great challenge for flesh and blood men. If the hero isn't listening to the heroine, then I'm closing the book.

A thoughtful gift from the hero, not necessarily something expensive, endears him to me. When my hero, Quinn Roberts, from *Red Carpet Romance*, gives Susanna a basketball because she's good at it and doesn't have one, he's carved out a special place in my heart.

A touch of jealousy, like a pinch of clove in a good recipe, makes the hero real to me. If he doesn't care enough to be jealous, then he's lost me. On the other hand, if he's so jealous he gets easily enraged, he scares me and again, I close the book.

When it comes to sex, it gets a tricky. My hero must be an experienced lover, but not a man-whore. If he's sleeping with every woman who walks by his cave, then I'm not interested. So where does he get all his experience? From women he knew before he met my heroine. He must be a lover who's tuned in to her responses, paying attention and remembering what turns her on. If he was once a womanizer, he must give that up once he falls for my heroine. Can't have her overwhelmed by

jealousy or coming down with STD, either!

And he must have foibles, make mistakes, screw up from time to time. He can't be doing everything perfectly 24/7. If he is, my heroine is going to feel he doesn't need her and hate him for being so much better than she. Imperfections make him more loveable.

Crafting heroes tests a writer. Knowing how perfect to make him, how imperfect to make him is challenging. Blending your ideas with your character's persona reminds me of mixing the perfect Cosmopolitan. In either case, the end result is thrilling.♥

Jean Joachim is the author of numerous books, including SUNNY DAYS, MOONLIT NIGHTS; NOW AND FOREVER; and THE MARRIAGE LIST. Her latest book, MEMORIES OF LOVE, is part of her Hollywood Hearts series. To learn more about Jean, visit her website www.jeanjoachimbooks.com or her blog at <http://jeanjoachim.blogspot.com>. Friend her and follow her at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Jean-Joachim-Author/221092234568929?ref=ts&fref=ts> and @jeanjoachim.

From the Newsletter Editor:

Apologies for having no August issue, the month quite literally ran away with us! Please accept my most heartfelt apologies to Christine Crocker (our August spotlight), whom I've also included in this newsletter. Another spotlight will go out on Friday. I hope you had a terrific summer! Don't forget to send those articles in!

2013 Meeting Schedule

Join us September 21st

Mallory Braus

Behind every great book is a great partnership—an author who has a dream and the editor who helps refine it. Mallory is an editor with Carina Press and will be discussing the editor/author relationship and how it can make the process of editing fun, and engaging as you develop the best book possible from that working relationship.

Email questions, comments, or articles to newsletter@ntrwa.org.

Our mailing address is:

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

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