

Subject:

April 2014 Newsletter

Conference season is upon us. Don't miss what's coming up next...

[View this email in your browser](#)



Founded March 1983

April 2014

Chapter 33, Region 5

Volume 33, Issue 4

Letter from the President

by **Clover Autrey**

I'm going to tell you an ugly story about myself.

In my childhood, it was a common occurrence to have strange kids show up in our backyard. My dad refurbished our garage into a beautiful Chiropractic clinic, which meant his patients' kids would go out back to play while they waited on their parents to get their spines cracked back into order.

When I was around 13, my friends and I went out back to jump on the trampoline. There were these girls around our age just sitting out there, staring blankly, not talking.

We tried to talk to them but they wouldn't say a word.

Here's the ugly part. Since they wouldn't talk to us, and well, were weird, we started making faces at them, and saying things like, "why you so sad?" in baby voices. We were brats.

The 3 girls never responded.

When we went inside, my mom stopped us at the door and began telling us how those poor girls had just an hour before been bike riding and saw their friend hit and dragged behind a car, instantly killed.

I've never felt more worthless than I did at that moment.

It's been close to four decades, but I still remember that sharp lurch of shame.

It taught me two things:

First, I never wanted to be responsible for hurting anyone like that again.

Second, I don't know a damn thing about what is going on inside another person.

Fast forward. The day I first walked into La Hacienda Ranch, I had a chronically ill child, mounting medical bills, stupid job I hated, overwhelmed husband, and I just wanted a place I could leave that all behind for a few hours. I didn't share anything about my personal life with anyone. I just wanted to be treated like a normal person.

I tell you this because you never never know what that writer smiling and sitting next to you is dealing with. Some of us will tell anybody who wants to listen. Others, like myself, keep it quiet.

At North Texas, we have members dealing with divorce, with ailing parents, ailing spouses, health, emotional, or mental issues at home, cancer scares and cancer realities. We have members worried about their children, worried about finances, struggling with inadequacies when everyone around them seems successful.

We have members who have lost their spark for writing and want it back. We have members who are so hopeful their faces shine with it. We have members who have been rejected, rejected, rejected, yet still manage to climb back up that hill...

We have members that, for them, our meetings are their only few hours a month where they get to feel like a normal person.

I am so inspired and impressed by you. At your sincere willingness to encourage each other. To support each other. You're truly happy for each others successes and sad when things don't go a writer's way. I love that about North Texas. This group has unknowingly gotten me through some of the worst times of my life. I'm proud to call you friends. Keep it up for each other. Continue to be supportive and encouraging.

Let us always be hopeful and helpful.
May we continue to be kind to each other.

And when we fail in that, because we sometimes will, being human and all that, cultivate forgiveness and allow us a chance to do better. Because like I said, we don't know what is going on inside another person or what they are struggling with.

I love you guys, truly, and am honored to be counted among you.

Upcoming April Meeting Speaker:

Three Successful Authors Tell All - Sylvia McDaniel, Elizabeth Essex, and Kathleen Baldwin

Practice award-winning techniques and put best-selling concepts to work in your manuscript. This workshop is a HANDS ON classroom experience. So bring your current manuscript on laptop or a few scenes printed out and a pad of paper.

Amazon Bestselling Author Sylvia McDaniel will explain the Dollars and Cents of Writing

Emotion – what emotions do readers crave? What specific emotions motivate them to open their pocketbooks and shell out hard-earned cash for your book? There is a list and she's sharing it.

RT Reviewers' Choice Award and RITA Nominee Historical Romance author Elizabeth Essex will explain Emotionally-Resonant Writing. She will provide numerous examples to show writers how to use emotive scene-themed words, and emotionally powerful character-themed words.

Award-Winning Regency and YA author Kathleen Baldwin will open her Emotional Writing Toolbox and share numerous devices, including: the use of emotionally charged props, scene and sequel, and emotional ladders to help you maintain clear, logical, easily understood emotional arcs.

Great Expectations 2014 Winners

NTRWA thanks all the contestants, first round judges and final round editors for making the 2014 Great Expectations Contest a success. Best of luck to all on their road of publication.

CONTEMPORARY SERIES

MEGAN LONG, Associate Editor, Harlequin Publishing

*First: *Small Town Nurse, Surprise Pregnancy by Jill Kay Quincy*

*Second: **A Pinch of Cinnamon by Tanya Agler*

Third: Mistress of the Manor by Jen Arnold

Honorable Mention: All I Need Is The Girl by Joanne Dannon

Honorable Mention: Blackmailing the Country Music Star by Jessica Davidson

HISTORICAL

CHELSEY EMMELHAINZ, Assistant Editor, William Morrow Avon

First: The Heretic's Daughter by Jesica Trapp

Second: Sure Shot Annie by Kari Bovee

Third: The Caged Heart by Carla Swafford

Honorable Mention: Not Your Average Beauty by Michelle Helliwell

INSPIRATIONAL

RAELA SCHOENHERR, Fiction Acquisitions, Bethany House

First: Kept by Sally Bradley

First: The Elephant's Secret by Walt Mussell

Third: Heart of Valor by Natalie Monk

Honorable Mention: A Twisted Trail by Betty Woods

MAINSTREAM w/ROMANTIC ELEMENTS

ALEX LOGAN, Editor, Grand Central Publishing/Forever

*First: *First Blush by Jennifer Sanchez*

Second: Dead Man's Carve by Kym Roberts

Third: Blue Sun, Yellow Sky by Jamie Hoang

Honorable Mention: Where You Belong by Susan Dunn

NEW ADULT

ELIZABETH POTEET, Assistant Editor, St. Martin's Press

*First: **The Year We Fell Down by Sarina Bowen*

Second: Vengeance by Kym Roberts

Third: Sanguis Donum by Robin Nelson

Honorable Mention: Diary of an Almost Dead Girl by Samantha Lennon

ROMANTIC SUSPENSE

LAURA FAZIO, Assistant Editor, NAL/Penguin Group

First: Undercover by Linda Bond

Second: Seducing the Enemy by Ellen Lindseth

Third: The Deep End by Julie Mulhern

Honorable Mention: Images by Patricia Dane

SINGLE TITLE

MADELEINE COLAVITA, Editorial Assistant, Grand Central Publishing

*First: *Wild in Her Eyes by Laura Trentham*

*Second: *Welcome Home, Katie Gallagher by Seana Kelly*

Third: Love In Living Color by Shelly C. Alexander

Honorable Mention: Finding Mr. Wrong by Lisa Houghton

SPECIALIZED (AE,D,F,F,P,TT)

KRISTINE SWARTZ, Editorial Assistant, Berkley Publishing Group

*First: *The Illusion of Truth by Dawn Alexander*

Second: Watchtower by J. Hover

*Third: **Recurve by Lisa Fenley*

Honorable Mention: Sucker Punching Magic by Mia Jo Celeste

YOUNG ADULT

JULIE MIANECKI, Editorial Assistant, Berkley Publishing Group

*First: *The Bright Side of the Moon by Jo McAlister*

Second: Burn Me Once by Jo McAlister

Third: Alien and the Beast by Amy Paulshock

Third: Sucker Punching Magic by Mia Jo Celeste

***Partial requested*

**Full requested*

Permission to forward

The Carolyn Contest 2014 FINALISTS

Contemporary Romance

Kiss the Bride by Jody Wallace

Perfect Summer by Katie Graykowski

Seven Day Fiancé by Rachel Harris

The Wanted Bride by Sylvia McDaniel

Win My Love by Scarlett Scott

Erotic Romance

Dark Fancy by Sabrina York

Intoxicated by Jeana E. Mann

Masque by Lexi Post

The Princess and the Porn Star by Lauren Gallagher

Unbridled Temptation by Elle Saint James

Historical Romance

The Christmas Crossing by Bev Pettersen

Into the Land of Shadows by Kristy McCaffrey

The Letter by Sandy Owens

Saving Grace by Sandy James

The Training of a Marquess by Sandy Owens

Inspirational Romance

Catherine's Pursuit by Lena Nelson Dooley

The Nun & the Narc by Catherine Castle

That Impossible Dream by Shirley Kiger Connolly

Shenandoah Crossings by Lisa Belcastro

Shenandoah Nights by Lisa Belcastro

Mainstream with Romantic Elements

A Christmas Miracle by Sandy Loyd

Betrayed by Donnell Ann Bell

The Champagne Sisterhood by Chris Keniston

The Homecoming by Chris Keniston

Hope's Corner by Chris Keniston

Romantic Suspense

Bridge Over Troubled Waters by Jeanne Guzman

Flood, Flash, and Pheromones by Shelley K. Wall

Intimacy Issues by Claudia Whitsett

Mountain Hero by Cheryl Yeko

Quinta's Return by Nadine Christian

Series Action Adventure Romance

A Kiss to Die For by Gail Barrett

The Cradle Conspiracy by Robin Perini

Dangerous Memories by Angi Morgan

Explosive Attraction by Lena Diaz

Undercover Texas by Robin Perini

Specialized Romance

(alternate earth, dystopian, fantasy, futuristic, paranormal, time travel)

aHunter4Rescue by Cynthia Clement

Her Demon Prince by Cathleen Ross

My Darkest Passion by Carolyn Jewel

Warrior's Rogue by Nancy J. Cohen

Wicked Wind by Sharon Kay

CRAFT CORNER

by Isabo Kelly

Let's Begin at the Beginning

The opening of a book is one of the most important aspects of a story. This is what will pull readers in, what will grip them and convince them to keep reading. A lot of craft goes into the start of a novel. In this article, we're going to focus on when to start.

A brief caveat: don't worry about this too much in your first draft. You may well discover you've started in the wrong spot as you learn more about your characters and story, but none of the writing will be wasted. Everything you put on the page, even the stuff that gets cut, adds to your understanding of your story and allows you to infuse the tale with richness and multiple dimensions.

So when do you start your novel?

Well, you start at the beginning of your story. Easier said than done, right? When is the beginning exactly? Conventional wisdom says the start is the day the protagonist's life changes, the day their normal life gets turned on its head.

But if you've developed multi-layered, complex characters, they're likely to have had several experiences that changed their lives, for better or worse--though, since this is

fiction and fiction is all about conflict, usually for the worse.

Maybe your hero lost his parents in a terrible accident when he was 15. Is that the start of his story? Or does his story start when he turns 17 and discovers there's more to his parents' death than he thought? Does your story start at the end of the world? Or does it start on a "normal" post-apocalyptic day, when something else life-changing happens to your main character? Is it the day your hero and heroine meet? Or farther into their relationship when something changes in the status quo?

The type of story you're telling will play heavily into the choices you make here. A coming-of-age fantasy novel might start when the 12 year old heroine first meets the horse that changes her destiny. But if the story is a romance, you will probably start the day she meets the hero, or the day her relationship with the hero is pushed into a new realm.

Building a good, strong character means you create an interesting backstory for them. But a novel doesn't start in the backstory. It has to start at the moment things change in relation to the current plot. Are you telling a coming-of-age story, an action-adventure, a grown-up romance? Knowing this going in will help you decide the best starting point.

To complicate your decision, however, some writing instructors will say you should show your character in their normal life just before the change takes place so readers will get to know them and like them before all hell breaks loose. Others will say you should jump right into the action to hook readers and let them get to know the characters as they go.

Honestly, you can use either of these techniques and have a successful opening. But there is a trick to using each.

If you start with a normal day in the life of your character, you can't just show them taking a shower, getting dressed, going off to work as they might any old day. There's no tension in this and no real reason for readers to keep reading. On the other hand, infusing the "normal" opening with some level of tension will keep a reader's attention long enough to get to the dramatic life-changing event.

For example, as your heroine is getting ready, if she is thinking about the huge mistake she made at work the day before and contemplating the meeting she has to have with her boss as soon as she gets into the office, the "getting ready for a normal day" opening has tension. Then you can open that time rift, throw her into the past and into the arms of the

Highland warrior who's going to change her life forever. Readers will be worried about your heroine getting fired long enough to get to the point where her life really changes and the story really begins.

On the other hand, you might decide it's better for your story to open in the middle of the action. This is often put forward as the best way to start a modern fiction story, though there are some who will argue the point. If this is how you feel your story will be best served, you do encounter the issue of character sympathy. Opening in the middle of the action, means readers haven't had time to get to know your heroine yet and therefore might not care enough about what happens to her to keep reading.

To make this opening successful, you have to build in ways to reveal your main character as sympathetic from the very start. You have to give readers a snapshot of their character and why they should be worried about the outcome of your opening action.

A random man running away from gun-toting thugs could be anyone. Maybe he's just as rotten as the guys chasing him. Why do we care if he survives the chase? If you introduce an aspect of his character--through the action--to make him sympathetic, you give readers that reason to care.

Perhaps your running man sees a family with kids coming into view and knows if the thugs see them, they'll kill the family. So your hero leads the thugs in a different direction, even though it's more dangerous for him, in order to keep the family safe. This reveals a lot about your hero and gives readers the sympathy for him they need to keep reading and to care if the thugs catch him or not.

The way a book starts is always going to be a very personal choice, depending entirely on the genre and the type of story being told. Just keep in mind three points. First, the opening needs to start when this story starts--not in the backstory. Second, if you jump into action from the first sentence, you need to show your character's personality fast. And finally, if you start by showing a "normal" day, you need to fill it with tension, then introduce the life-changing moment quickly.

Making sure the opening of the book is both tense and character revealing will ensure readers stick with you past the first few pages. Then give them a truly plot-worthy upheaval in your main character's life and they will read to the very end.

Isabo Kelly is the multi-award winning author of science-fiction, fantasy and paranormal romances. Her upcoming fantasy romance, THE DARKNESS OF GLENGOWYN, started in the right place but not in the right way and had to be seriously tightened. For more on Isabo and her books, visit her at www.isabokelly.com, follow her on Twitter @IsaboKelly, or friend her on Facebook www.facebook.com/IsaboKelly

END OF BYLINE: This article was published in the RWA/NYC January 2014 newsletter. Permission is granted to share this article with the proper credits to the author and chapter.

A Note from the Newsletter Editor:

Please note photos included in the newsletter are provided by the members. Any photos you'd like to include can be sent to newsletter@ntrwa.org. It is at the discretion of the newsletter editor as to which photos will be included in the newsletter. Thank you.

March 2014 Meeting Minutes:

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, March 15, 2014 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:47 a. m. The minutes for the February meeting were approved.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Clover Autrey reported:

- Acknowledged Roni Loren for hitting the NYT and USA Today best-seller lists.
- Reminded members to sign up for the conference.

President-Elect: Angi Morgan reported:

- No report.

Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:

- No report.

Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- The Treasurer's report was presented and filed for audit.

Program Director: Lara Lacombe was not present. Clover Autrey reported:

- Today's speaker is Patricia "Pooks" Burroughs on the topic of Storyboarding.

Membership Director: Gina Nelson reported:

- 56 members to date.
- Guests at meeting: None.
- Reminded current members to please renew their memberships

Communications Director: Kim Miller reported:

- Send information / articles for inclusion in the newsletter to newsletter@NTRWA.org.

Website Director:

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek reported:

- Presented pencils to:
 - Roni Loren: So Into You and Nothing Between Us
 - Clover Autrey: Highland Son
 - SM Butler: Killing Honor
 - Chrissy Szarek: The Tartan MP3 Player

PRO Liaison: Jeanne Guzman was not present:

Great Expectations: Angi Morgan presented:

- Announcements delayed due to editor delay.

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- 128 entries to date.
- 244 judges.
- \$2186.15 net profit.

Hospitality: Michelle Welsh reported:

- No report.

Audio Librarian: Debra Owens was not present:

Writing Incentives: Christine Crocker reported:

- Distributed writing incentives.

Texas Two-Step: Lara Lacombe was not present. Clover Autrey reported in Lara Lacombe's absence:

- Blog site for the conference: ntrwatwostep.blogspot.com
- Dates are March 28, 29, 30, 2014.
- Conference basket donations requested from membership by Hospitality Chair Michelle Welsh.

- Suzan Butler - Conference Coordinator for the Friday night author signing at Hurst Barnes and Noble
- Chrissy Szarek – Conference Coordinator for the Sunday afternoon signing at Southlake Barnes and Noble

Bylaws: Angi Morgan reported:

- Bylaws changes approved via online membership vote.

Spotlights: Regina Richards reported:

- Audra Lewandowski is our spotlight for March.

Unfinished Business:

- No unfinished business to report.

New Business:

- Michelle Welsh presented special recognitions for Angi Morgan and Jen FitzGerald for their hard work on our Great Expectations and Carolyn contests (respectively) this year.
- Carolyn Williamson invited members to attend the DFW Writer's Conference.
-

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

Our mailing address is:

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

*[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)