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Happy New Year!



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Letter from the President

HELLO 2015

When I was in my 30's I can honestly say that the only time I thought of the year 2015 was when I watched BACK TO THE FUTURE. I never thought it would be much different than the 1980's. I was really looking forward to the time all the kids would be out of the house and I'd have more time to write. Even 10 years ago I never thought so much of my time would be promoting my own books. Of course in 2005, I rarely thought I'd sell...ever. Seeing my stories in print seemed like a fairy tale.

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I've always been drawn to movies of the future. But I never imagined all the gadgets and apps and time-consuming social media platforms that are here today. They can be distracting, not only for writers, but everyone. Have you seen or experienced the [selfie stick](#)? I just spent a week in NYC and they are dangerous. If you thought people were distracted walking around looking at their cells...just wait until you're in Times Square and people are walking around wielding selfie sticks. Ouch.

Back to 2015 . . . The year of what next? But here we are and I still haven't thought beyond 2016 and my releases next year. 2020 is only 5 years away. Just 5 short years. Nope. Imagining my life then gets me nowhere. Goals? Mine are simple. Get healthy and write. And in 2020, they'll most likely be the same.

Angi Morgan
NTRWA President

Upcoming January 17th Meeting:

Angi Morgan and Amanda McMurrey: Interviewing--both sides of the note taking

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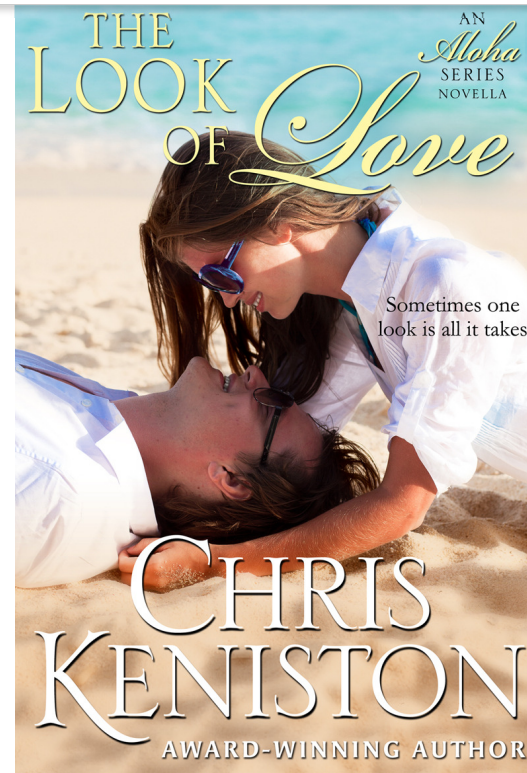
MEMBER NEWS

Tammara Webber - now a PAN member of RWA, and was put on the RWA Honor Roll

Marsha R. West - 3rd book is coming out in March in e & print format by MRW Press and is called 2ND ACT. It is the first of 4 in The Second Chances Series.

C. Marie Bowen - *Hunter's Gamble*, a short story, will be included in the Prairie Rose Publications anthology *Cowboy Kisses*. Target date is Jan 22.

Chris Keniston - New January Release
Shall We Dance



A 2016 Texas Two Step?

by Angi Morgan

A 2016 TEXAS TWO STEP?

For some time now we've been debating how our conference should work. The workshops are successful. Everyone goes home happy, full of knowledge. But the stress that it puts on our volunteer crew and pocketbook is enormous. What's the true purpose of a chapter

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conference? Quite simply it's to educate our membership. We don't need to raise money with the TWO STEP. We just need to break even. OR . . .

THE DEBATE

Should we have a regular type conference? A conference open to all writers.

Or should we have an all-day workshop free for members, but at a charge to other writers?

I threw out the idea of a reader's event, but I see this as direct competition with Fresh Fiction events any month we'd choose. And it wouldn't benefit the entire membership.

MY CONCLUSION

I'm all for making it easier on volunteers. And I also think that the chapter's money should be spent on the chapter membership. But what's your opinion?

WHY DO I ASK?

Suzan Butler had volunteered to be the 2016 conference chair. She will now be president in 2016. So a new conference chair is needed. Any all-day event or conference plans need to be finalized a year out (which we are fast approaching).

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AS THE CHAIR?

Angi Morgan is an award-winning author of Harlequin Intrigues. Her work has finaled in the Daphne du Maurier, Booksellers' Best, Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence & the Romantic Times Magazine Best Series First Book.

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The following article first appeared in the December 2014 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.

The Perils of Being Published - Are You Really Ready To Be Published?

by Gerry Bartlett

Recently two of my friends complained about books they had downloaded on their e-readers. One liked the actual story but found that words were frequently just used wrong. Example: The heroine had a guilt picture frame. Spell check wouldn't catch the error in the sentence. The author needs a dictionary. Gilt is the gold leaf on a frame. Guilt is how you feel when you've done something wrong. Get my point? This kind of mistake happened over and over again and took the reader out of the story. Also, there were missing words. This happens to me when I'm writing fast. I leave out a simple word. Here's an example: Tim jumped out the car before it stopped. Of course you can see I need "of" between "out" and "the". But when I read quickly, my mind inserts the "of" automatically and just refuses to see that I forgot a pesky word. So did the author. But a person new to the story doesn't do that and again is taken out of the story. It's aggravating.

How do you fix this? You need to slow down and have someone else read your work. If that's not possible, then let the story cool off for a week or two. Seriously, are you in such a hurry to make the big bucks that you can't wait and let the pages sit in your computer for a while? Trust me, waiting and then looking at the story with fresh eyes will let you see things you missed the first time. Then there are the tricks you've read before—printing it out, using a new font or even reading it aloud. They work or they wouldn't be tried and true.

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The other friend had a different complaint about the story she downloaded. It was professionally done and didn't have the errors the first one had. Its problem was that it was shallow with none of the depth that made the reader care what happened to the characters beyond chapter one. It had potential. The plot wasn't a cliché and the characters could have been brought to life. But the author didn't bother to make the reader really get to know her people. She coasted on the surface of these characters. If you don't know what deep point of view is, go to Google and look it up. Read articles about how to get it for your characters. We need to feel what your hero and heroine are feeling. This will make invest us in your story and we'll care if they get to the happily ever after or not. Also make sure you motivate your characters. Why do they do what they do? Driving in a blizzard only works if your heroine has a really good reason to be out there. Otherwise? Ever heard of TSTL? That stands for Too Stupid to Live. Enough said.

Bottom line? These authors needed more education and time before they rushed to publication. I know how it feels to see your book on a shelf, whether it's a digital or bookstore one. There's no denying the rush. But do you want a review that picks your work apart? That calls your people cardboard or fusses about the mediocrity of your story? Worse, do you want people to return your book for a refund? It happens more than you'd like to think.

Discoverability works two ways. There's word of mouth that this is a great book and you need to read it. And then there's the poison that can spread when readers say don't waste your time. If you get no reviews, that can be as devastating as a pile of bad ones. Sometimes readers will try a book with a one star review out of curiosity. But if it seems that one star was justified from the get-go, back it goes for their money back.

Are you so desperate that you are offering your work for free? Then where's the value for your time? I work hard to make my books the best they can be. I did release my novella for

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a cheap 99¢. I called it a love offering to my loyal fans. I don't plan to do that again. Why? Because it took me two months to write the story. Yes, I've earned money since its release, but it bothers me every time I see that price. Less than a dollar for 30,000 words and a good story? Which I proofread dozens of times on the screen and on paper and ran past my critique partners. I had to pay someone to create a cover and upload it. I invested in my work. And my reputation was riding on the quality. So will yours. Remember that.

Gerry Bartlett is the nationally best-selling author of the Real Vampires series. Her latest release is Real Vampires Say Read My Hips, book eleven in the series, available now wherever on-line books are sold..

The following article appeared in the December 2014 issue of Heart of the Bay, the newsletter of the San Francisco Area chapter of RWA. Permission is granted to RWA chapters to reprint or forward this article with proper credit to the author and chapter.

Balance

By Theresa Rogers

Balance is something I strive for in all areas of life, but it particularly impacts my writing life. So many areas in our writing lives call out for balance because, let's face it, most of us are borderline obsessive in our ability to dive right down the rabbit hole with whatever aspect of our writing we find ourselves tackling that day.

There are dozens of areas a writer needs to balance, but here is a short list of the most difficult ones:

- Writing and jobs

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Writing and editing

- Social media and writing
- Research and writing
- Plotting and writing
- Editing and writing
- Producing content for websites/blogs/promotion and writing

Most of us have to work at a job other than writing in order to make ends meet. This means there is precious little time and energy to bring to our writing lives. Add to that that our spouses/partners/kids need attention as well and we can feel like, other than those lovely hours between midnight and three in the morning, there isn't any time for us to write. Those hours used to be golden but if you've tried to stay up that late lately, like, say, after you turn 35, it's not so easy anymore. And don't talk to me about trying to get through the next day.

One answer to all these problems can be having a schedule. I know, we schedule out everything in our lives, and it can get to the point that if one more thing is scheduled we might just have to burn something down to the ground, but a schedule is a really great way to make sure your writing gets done and you don't start to resent your cat for the capital crime of needing to be fed.

The bigger demon beneath the time conflicts listed above is trying to feel truly "finished" for the day. When does your day end? How do you ever know when it's OK to stop? When is enough "enough"?

A friend of mine recently moved from working for a company to working for herself. During the first weeks of her transition, I dragged her to all my favorite cafes, and we'd work for several hours together, after which we'd call it a day. She said this was the single most helpful thing she'd done in the aftermath of her huge shift.

What worked about that? The schedule. In other words, structure.

A schedule's job isn't just to tell us when to start and stop. Its real job is to train us to be satisfied with our effort for the day and be able to turn that part of ourselves off. It gives us a structure within which to work.

My husband is a successful restaurant entrepreneur. For years, he struggled to turn off his "restaurant professional" self and click into "father and husband" self. One reason was because his hours were so irregular— one day he'd work from morning to afternoon, the next he'd work from afternoon to evening, and who knows what kind of calls he'd get at night about something that broke or some other problem. He's said it's become a lot easier

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Since he started using more regular hours at work and decided not to put himself out in the call line for anything but emergencies at night. He gets as much done in his regularly scheduled hours as he can, and then lets it go until the next day, knowing he'll be able to dive right back in. His structure trained his brain to be able to shut off his "task brain" when he walked out the door at work and turn on his "home brain."

Doing the same thing at the same time every day trains your body and mind to turn on and focus on a specific task. Don't believe me? How many of us eat at the same time every day? Ever notice how, even if we weren't hungry fifteen minutes before noon, we're suddenly starving right on the hour? That's the power of training our bodies and minds to do the same thing at the same time every day.

The same can be true for writing. Herein lies the power of the schedule.

If you set aside even just an hour every day for your writing, and you do it at the same time, your brain will learn to keep the flow of ideas in check until you are ready to let them loose. It will learn to dive in quickly and give its all because it will learn that it's time for that to happen.

Scheduling also gives you the confidence that what you're doing is your job. It's easier to tell people you can't be disturbed during a certain period if that period happens at a regular time. Your family/friends/ partner can rest easy, knowing there *will* be a time to tell you all about the guy who got on the subway that day with no pants, instead of being constantly rebuffed for who-knows-how-long and maybe the rest of the evening. Kids especially need to know that you'll be available at a specific time so they don't feel adrift and anxious.

I know there's a large camp that feels that making goals for each day is the way to go. I don't have anything against this, and if it works for you, please do it. J But if you have other people waiting to interact with you and/or limited time or other tasks waiting for your attention, working until you reach a goal can be harder. How long will it really take for you to finish? If some goals only take fifteen minutes and others take hours, holding everything off until you're done can add stress to the already stressful idea of having to make the goal. It also gives your brain no clear, learned message when to stop.

That said, it can be helpful to plan out long-term goals and break them down to steps to put on your schedule. When you know how much time you have set aside for writing, you'll be able to schedule out realistic day-goals that fit in your time slot.

Keep in mind how you best work when creating a schedule. If your best time of day is in the morning, you may want to schedule writing time then. Some people work best at night, but after working all day, find they're too tired and frazzled to work then. Shift your timing around until you find the sweet spot that works for you.

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Since you've figured out how to schedule in your writing time, you may have to be firm about protecting it. You may meet resistance to the idea that you're not available for the time you devote to your writing. This is a tough one, and I don't have any simple solution. But it really is OK to stand up for your right to pursue your heart's desire.

During the holidays, remember your whole schedule may be thrown off because of guests, family, friends, parties, shopping for food, shopping for presents, more friends, too much family ... yeah. Plan ahead so you can still meet any goals you've plotted out on your schedule and avoid any unnecessary panic. If needed, you can use your schedule to get out of those really fun things everyone's planned that you just love, darn it, and wish you could go to, but I've got this dang *schedule*. Hint: A friend of mine calls *The Nutcracker* the Buttcraacker. His schedule is a great, non-bad-feeling-inducing way just not to be available when it's playing, dang it.

So: schedule time and do your best to make it the same time every day. Understand you're training your brain with the structure you're creating. Be sensitive to the other demands on your time, but also stand up for the time you need. And know that sometimes your schedule will need to take second place to other events in your life. If you have a schedule, then that's ok—you'll know exactly when you can get back to putting your soul on paper.

Theresa Rogers, president of the San Francisco Area chapter of RWA, has published both fiction and nonfiction. Take a look into her writing soul at www.theresarogerswriter.com.

This article was first used in the Sacramento Valley Rose RWA January/February 2015 Newsletter. Rights are granted by the author for circulation to other RWA chapters.

Five Self-Pub Lessons Learned

By Yvonne Kohano

When I was a virgin in the fiction-publishing world, I was incredibly naïve. I thought all that mattered was the writing. Channel wonderful characters to tell a good story. Repeat often. Enjoy success.

I was deflowered quickly, and the process was a hard-knocks learning experience. Money, greed,

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#1 – Assess Your Strengths and Hire Well for the Rest

I am an author, you see. I write. So I hired an aggregator, a company that offers services to indie authors for a fee and/or a percentage of resulting royalties. They would take care of editing, formatting, cover design, conversions, distribution and promotion ‘stuff.’ In my due diligence, I reviewed their webpage terms, compared them to similar companies, and reviewed books they’d shepherded to completion. From a business perspective, they seemed like a good choice.

I hired, but I didn’t necessarily hire WELL. Examples: Their editor wanted to change dialogue to read as precisely as a college paper – for a backwoods hick character. Instead of providing design concepts to me, their cover designer wanted me to sketch out what they would then draw (SO not my forte). Detailed information about where my sales occurred and for which books was spotty and incorrect.

From this, I learned I am a control freak, and I’m darn good at it. (Yes, I’ll own that label proudly!) I’m better off selecting my service providers individually and aggregating everything myself. It takes more time but saves me headaches and heartaches. If someone isn’t working out, it’s less disruptive to replace a single moving part than the whole machine. Embrace your inner control freak at whatever level of freakiness is comfortable for you, and hire well accordingly.

#2 – Follow the Money

Understand where your royalties come from and how you’ll be paid, and get it in writing. I expected sales reporting that reflected a reasonable time lag, say 30-60 days in arrears. I also expected transparency in terms of units of sales, distribution channels, and easy to compile tracking. Silly me.

In reality, chunks of our industry still use an abacus in a dark, cold room that would make a Dickens counting house look like a five star resort. Aggregators usually receive reports from distribution channels on a quarterly basis, and they might pay you a quarter in arrears on top of that. And some distribution service suppliers charge you a percentage of your royalty for this pleasure.

The closer you get to the distribution channel yourself, the better off you can be financially. This means you have to take over the middleman roles. Six months then morphs into one to two. I keep a spreadsheet of sales through various channels to track the effectiveness of promotional campaigns. This helps me understand where I want to spend my time uploading and self-publishing. And I can follow the money right into my bank account.

#3 – Craft Improvement is Continuous

In an online forum, a romance writer posted that she had three great manuscripts underway, all of which she felt sure would be immediate bestsellers. You see, she studied writing in college years ago, so she knew she was great. The fact that she didn’t complete her MFA degree was something she glossed over as immaterial to her greatness. When questioned about recent craft courses, she said she didn’t need them.

Hubris is an ugly thing, masquerading as misplaced self-confidence. You don’t need to spend a mint full of money or all of your free time on the continuous improvement we all need it. RWA University offers many options, some of them free. Chapter meetings, online chapter discussion boards, and topical groups might provide the insights you need to make that next character unforgettable or that good story great. If a

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humble opinion...)

#4 – Promotion is Part of Your Author Job

You're a writer, and you want to write. I get that part. But remember the children's tale about hiding your light under a bushel? You are a published author. You are also a brand and a businessperson. Indie or traditional, you are in charge of your own promotion. Assuming you wrote a terrific story already, enhancing your discoverability is the next most difficult thing you have to do.

You don't need to spend hours a day on social media or speak to a group every weekend. (Unless you want to, of course.) Fiction writers tend to be solitary souls and putting ourselves out there, hawking our wares, can be supremely uncomfortable. Get over it. You are the person MOST invested in your success, so who is better able to tell the world how you offer escape and enjoyment through well-crafted words?

Whenever you have an opportunity to tell people you are a published author, hand them a card. Online, point them to your webpage. Ask them what they like to read. Make a list of your favorite books in different genres as a conversation strategy, and use it if they don't read your type of writing. Rip open that bushel, and let your light shine bright!

#5 – Don't Expect Success – Work for It

I recently heard an author say it took him eight years to be an overnight success – and I believe him! Truth time: there are VERY FEW overnight successes. The debut author who hits it big with a short investment of time is not the norm.

I didn't begin publishing until I had three books ready to go. I released one a month for three months. I kept writing, working on the next books in the series, promising my readers a schedule of upcoming releases. Having multiple books helped my discoverability, and I developed a modest following.

It was not enough. You hear this repeatedly. How do you sell more books? Keep writing. Write the next book. In an industry where 3,000 books are published a day, we struggle to get noticed. Three years ago, the tipping point for a body of work was estimated at 10 books. Today, it's projected as an even dozen.

So keep writing and improving. Success is on your horizon if you keep at it. Do NOT give up!

Love's Touch of Justice, the long-awaited full length Book Seven in the Flynn's Crossing Series, now available as an ebook and paperback! Follow **Yvonne Kohano** at www.yvonnekohano.com, on Facebook as Yvonne Kohano, and on Twitter @yvonnekohano.

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