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February 2016

*Founded March 1983**Chapter 33, Region 5**February 2016**Volume 36, Issue 1*

Letter from the President

Hello, NTRWA!

Your somewhat respectable president here. I know we've talked a lot about career burnouts before, as it's super common with writers. It may have even been a topic of a president's letter in the past. But it is a real struggle writers face at one point in their writing lives. The industry changes so fast, and it can be overwhelming at best.

We all want to be the superhuman writer that pumps out a book a month, and manages multiple social media with still time to sleep and eat. We push and push with no breaks until suddenly we hit the proverbial wall. At that point, we have to step back. We can't go any further.

That's what happened to me last year. And it kills me a little inside to admit that. I withdrew and didn't talk to anyone for months unless I had to. It was this group that started pulling me out of my funk. Emails and texts asking how I was got me to meetings and being at the meeting was a creative shot in the arm. I leave every meeting energized and ready to rock. And about the time it starts dwindling away, it's time for the next meeting.

This year, I've scaled back a lot in my professional life. Writing is taking a forefront and everything else is secondary. We can't completely wipe out deadlines. It's common in

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career fields in general, and particularly in the publishing field. But we can set reasonable ones that don't require superpowers to achieve.

At some point, we all need to take a minute to breathe when things start getting overwhelming. Hiding doesn't make it go away. I'm just now getting back into the groove of writing I had eight months ago. But I've learned a lot about how I respond to being overwhelmed and stressed. I'd like to think that will help me the next time I'm feeling the heavy burden of a career burnout.

Saying NO might not be the ideal answer to something you might want to do, but sometimes it's the best answer. Too many group projects, too many books to write, too many social media accounts to watch over can burn even the best multi-tasker out. The best thing we can do is take that step back before it's too late.

Maybe I'm preaching to the choir here, but it's something that's been on my mind lately and I wanted to share. You guys will be seeing a lot more of me now than in the last few months. Maybe not enough to get sick of me though. Keeping things manageable, after all, right? Have a great month, NTRWA.

~S.M. Butler, NYT & USA Today Bestselling Author

To Be or Not To Be...

Treasurer...

That is the Question

NT will be in need of a treasurer next year as I won't be able to run for that particular office again. Besides, there are other ways I want to serve NT and, well, I can only juggle so many things.

Let me just say that treasurer is a job I **never** wanted. I deal with the finances for the businesses my husband and I own, and I hate it. But NT needed one, so here I am. Three years later, I almost enjoy it. Almost.

The job has changed in last three years however. Due to National RWA's IRS audit, treasurer duties were altered. The most notable change is that the treasurer is no longer allowed to physically deal with the money. The treasurer is now more of an independent auditor of a chapter's funds. But...the State of Texas requires organizations such as our to have a minimum of three board members: president, secretary, and...you guessed it...treasurer. If we want our chapter to continue on—and, sadly, many chapters have been dissolved in the last three or four years—someone is going to have to run.

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Now if you think you need to be good at numbers to be treasurer, you'd be wrong. Earlier today I failed to correctly subtract 78 from 108 in my head. I came up with 20. Go ahead and laugh. It's all right. I know it's amusing. I'm notoriously bad at calculations in my head. Obviously.

So the question becomes, if you don't have to be good at numbers to be treasurer, what do you have to be good at?

Spreadsheets and organizing data.

Don't let the word 'spreadsheet' scare you. Sure, spreadsheets have a lot of functionality, but it's primarily the rows and columns and cells that are utilized for NT's needs. Getting basic mathematical functions to work is easy. Plus, a functional spreadsheet template has already been created, so all one has to do, really, is plug and play.

Some duties do take a bit of time, but here's another secret—you can delegate different tasks to different people. Sure, the treasurer maintains the financial records, but there's no reason why Jane Doe member can't send out the membership dues confirmation receipts. Jana Doe member can take on GE entry fee confirmations. Jenny Doe can do the same for The Carolyn entry fees. As the saying goes, many hands make light work.

NT needs a treasurer to stay in business. Please keep the job in mind. I'll bring my laptop to every meeting and if you want to take a look at the spreadsheet, just ask. If you have questions at any time—I'm just an email away: treasurer@ntrwa.org.

Jen FitzGerald

NT member since 2006

NTRWA Treasurer

The Carolyn Readers Choice Award Co-Coordinator

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is important to a writer's world. Complete the social media form <http://ntrwagreatexpectations.blogspot.com/p/ntrwa-social-media-form.html> and get connected with other NT members.

FOLLOW ON TWITTER

Let us know if you have a # (hashtag) specific to promoting North Texas authors. Share other hashtags on our loop or with the hashtags below.

#TXauthors

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MINUTES from January**CALL TO ORDER:**

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, January 16, 2016 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and the Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:45 a.m. The minutes for the December 12, 2015 meeting were approved.

OFFICER REPORTS:**President: Suzan Butler reported:****Awards Presented:**

- Winners of the December drawing:
 - Free RITA Award entry: Jan Schliesman
 - Free Golden Heart Award entry: Lisa Fenley

President-Elect: Kim Miller reported:

- No Report

Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:

- The December 12, 2015 minutes were approved and filed for audit.

Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:

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

Program Director: Amanda McMurrey was not present. Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Today's Meeting:

From Closed Doors to Chandelier Swinging:

Writing the Perfect Love Scene For YOUR Book

Presented by Roni Loren

Website Director:

- If you want to post information to the website, please contact Jen FitzGerald.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

Membership Director: Gina Nelson reported:

- 62 members through the end of December.
- Membership renewals are through February.

Communications Director: Audra Lewandowski reported:

- Report submitted:
 - Send information / articles / photos for inclusion in the newsletter to newsletter@NTRWA.org by January 28, 2016.

PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek reported:

- Pencils presented to authors present for recent releases.
 - Kym Roberts: *Books to Die For*
 - Gina Nelson: *The Good, The Bad, and the Guacamole*
 - Regina Richards: *The Blue Breeze*

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- Carolyn Williamson: *The Royal Wedding Cake*
- Lavender Daye: *The Mating Game*
- Cindy Dees as Ava Drake: *Ace in the Hole*
- J Kathleen Cheney: *Dreaming Death*

PRO Liaison: Clover Autrey reported:

- If you are not a PRO member, please see Clover for application information.
- PRO membership allows you on the NT PRO loop, where training and information are provided to our chapter PRO members.

Great Expectations: Lisa Fenley reported:

- Report filed:
 - The 2016 Great Expectations Contest closed with 131 entries.
 - Contemporary Series: 10
 - Historical Romance: 21
 - Inspirational Romance: 14
 - Mainstream with Romantic Elements: 12
 - New Adult: 9
 - Romantic Suspense: 17
 - Single Title: 16
 - Specialized (FF&P): 12
 - Young Adult: 20
- Please sign up to judge through the website or the blogspot.

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Report filed.
- 73 entries to date.

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- The 2016 Carolyn Contest will run from November 14, 2015 to February 14, 2016.

Hospitality: Regina Richards reported:

- No report.

Writing Incentives: Chrissy Szarek presented:

- Top 3 Edited Pages: Gina Nelson, Cindy Dees, Kym Roberts
- Top 3 Written Pages: Kym Roberts, Lavender Daye, Jen FitzGerald

Bylaws: Angi Morgan was not present:

- No Report.

Spotlights: Open Position:

- No Report.

Unfinished Business:

- No unfinished business to report.

New Business:

- No new business to report.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 20, 2016 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Lisa Fenley.

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The following article appeared in the November 2015 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor. It may be reused by RWA chapters with appropriate credit to the author and chapter. Permission form is on file with the editor.

I, You, and Point of View

By Maureen Castell

I've read many articles on point of view, all explaining the differences and when (usually) to use them. But I cannot remember reading anything about how to use point of view to help you write your story. This article shares how I do this. First, though, the basics: what is point of view (POV) and what types of writing use which.

Let's keep this simple and just talk about point of view in stories, what is sometimes called "Narrative point of view". Here's how Wikipedia defines it:

Narrative point of view: the perspective (or type of personal or non-personal "lens") through which a story is communicated (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narration>)

This "lens" is commonly known as first person, second person, and third person point of view.

*** First person POV is when the narrator is "in my head" — essentially telling a story about themselves**

Think biography or chic lit, or extended stories about a single heroine, usually as told by the heroine. Think Laurell K. Hamilton's Princess Merry or her vampire slayer Anita Blake.

*** Second person POV is when I (the narrator) am speaking to you (the reader)**

The most common non-fiction usage of this POV is in technical writing — instruction manuals, assembly instructions, cook books, etc. You rarely see this POV in fiction, although I wouldn't say never. Fan fiction (in the privacy of our own diaries) may qualify.

When I was a teen, my best friend and I used to tell each other stories using the characters in our favourite television shows, like *Star Trek*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Rat Patrol*, etc., and because we played major parts in these stories, it was always "I did this" and "You did that".

*** Third person POV is when the narrator is telling a story about someone else (not themselves)**

This is the kind of POV you see most often in fiction, especially romance novels that switch between the hero and heroine's perspective. Here is where you use "he

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said/she said” and other variations, while pretending you are seeing things only from the focus character’s point of view.

Most novels stay in the same point of view (for third person, that doesn’t mean the same character, but the same perspective). However, you can combine POVs. I recently read stories that combine points of view. For example, the heroine might use first person in her chapter, but the hero’s chapter would be in third person. It’s an interesting way of showing the reader that the story is really about the heroine, but the hero has a major part as well.

Here’s an example of the same passage done in the three points of view (from a course on writing Children’s fiction):

First (character talking to reader)

There’s no such thing as fairies, but try telling my neighbour that. She thinks fairies are why Brandy, my cat, is coming home with burrs twisted into his long fur.

As if. But she seems pretty convinced, and if she’s right, well, that means it’s her fault.

Second (character talking to her neighbor)

There’s no such thing as fairies. I know you think fairies are why Brandy is coming home with burrs in his fur, but I don’t think so.

But if you’re right, it’s your fault.

Third (narrator telling reader about the character)

Christine knew there was no such thing as fairies, but she couldn’t convince her neighbour. Her neighbour believed fairies were why Christine’s cat, Brandy, kept coming home with burrs twisted into his long grey fur.

Silly, of course, but Christine knew one other thing. If it was true, it was her neighbour’s fault.

The differences are subtle, but let me point out a few (other than the obvious):

- The character’s cat has long grey fur, but in first person only the fact the fur is “long” is mentioned, because the reader doesn’t know that and it’s a significant piece of information. In second person, where both the character and the person she is talking to *know* the fur is long and grey, no mention of these two facts is needed, but the reader can guess from the context that even if the cat’s fur is short, having burrs in it is unpleasant. In third person, we get the full description, because the narrator *wants* the reader to know the fur is long (and hence *particularly* unpleasant when tangled with burrs) and grey (because we want the reader to see it).
- The second difference is length. Third person is a bit longer because the

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narrator wants the reader to be able to imagine what is happening, and the POV requires a slightly more long-winded introduction. The same can be said of first person, but the narrator, a ten-year-old girl, is not going to add in details she doesn't think are important at the time. With second person, you've got two people who know what's going on and the reader is left to guess for themselves.

- The third difference is tone. In these examples, first person is a bit snarky, second person is a little more polite, while third person could best be described as explanatory or distant.

Of course, skillful writers will clue the reader in to the important points, but it's also important to be true to your characters, and if your narrator is one of those characters, then your ability to keep the reader informed might be limited. For example, first and second points of view do not lend themselves to including necessary backstory. A character talking to the reader or another character isn't likely to stop in the middle of the action and say, "I remember when you and I did this exact same thing last week, don't you? Remember how we went to Mrs. Johnson's and hid behind her rose bushes and you got all scratched up because you were leaning too close to the bush?"

It's not easy to do, which is another reason why I (and the majority of authors I read) write in third person.

But sometimes I get stuck, or I re-read what I've just written and realize my character would never do that. So why didn't I see it when I wrote the scene? And how can I figure out what the character *would* do instead?

The answer to the first question is obvious when you think about it. I didn't see it when I wrote the scene because I am the *narrator*. I've got a goal in my head and I want the character to say and do certain things so that we can get to the next scene or plot point, so I plough ahead and make them say and do that stuff. Yes, I try to make my characters true to their...well, their *character*. But sometimes that means they would never in a million years do what I just had them do, but they do it anyway because I *need* them to do it so we can go forward.

Can you say "bad writing"?

So how do I fix this?

Knowing the problem helps. Knowing that I'm thinking more about the plot than the character is a big clue. So when I get into this situation, I take a fresh sheet of paper (or open a new file) and rewrite the scene from my character's POV in first person. After a couple of sentences, I can get into my character's head and suddenly I know how they speak, how they act, and what they will say. And now the character can tell *me* how we're going to get to the next scene.

I don't know if this works for everyone, but I find when I'm writing third person POV, I tend to keep my distance. Suddenly writing in first person seems to free up my

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inhibitions, sometimes even my language. I'm my mother's daughter — I rarely, if ever, swear, and when I do it's usually "Charlie Brown" curses (Rats!). But put me in the head of a foul-mouthed character, and I blush at the language coming out of my pen (or keyboard). It's scary at times, but it does get over that self-consciousness. And once I have the scene in first person, I'll just copy it back into my MS, switch it to third person, and voila! Problem solved.

Of course, you can't just switch the "I"s to "she"s. You have to do some cleanup, maybe drop in some explanations. Look at the differences in my example. If I just changed the pronouns, it could sound weird, especially the "As if" part:

There's no such thing as fairies, but try telling Christine's neighbour that. She thinks fairies are why Brandy, Christine's cat, is coming home with burrs twisted into his long fur.

OK, maybe that's not a good example, but trust me, some of the scene's I've rewritten this way *do* sound odd.

So when you decide what point of view to write in, remember that you don't have to stay in that POV *while you write*. Changing perspectives can get you out of tangled scenes and implausible actions, and eventually show you the light at the end of the tunnel.

I hope this trick helps you with your own writing.

Maureen Castell is the pen name of Susan Haire, a member of the Toronto Romance Writers. Maureen spends her days living in her characters' heads while waiting for The Call.



Happy-trails to you! ;)

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

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