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March 2016

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Letter from the President

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Howdy everyone! The webpage for the NTRWA Two-Step is now live. Jan and I are excited that NTRWA will be hosting **Margie Lawson**, editor and international presenter, on April 2 for her full-day seminar, Empowering Characters' Emotions: Scene Analysis with the EDITS System.

Attendees will learn four critical techniques in this seminar. In the morning session, we will learn deep editing technique through Margie's Four Levels of Powering Up Emotion, as well as why, how and when to use twenty rhetorical devices to add the most power to our scenes. In the afternoon session Margie will share with us her EDITS System, the ultimate show-don't tell power tool, and how to apply EDITS so our scenes' power will set a visceral hook with our readers.

*** This will be interactive, so be sure to bring five highlighters (yellow, blue, green, pink, orange) and five or more chapters of your work, double-spaced, printed on one side, in a binder.

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The seminar will start at 9:30 am and run until 4:00 pm. The cost of the seminar is free-yes, free!-for NTRWA members only. The only cost is \$25 for the BBQ lunch. Be sure to sign up as soon as possible, since we will be sharing this info with other local RWA chapters and class space is limited to 125 participants.

Not sold yet? I'm not sure how you couldn't be, but don't take just my words, how about these from Elizabeth Essex, RITA Finalist, *The Danger of Desire*:

I've attended one of Margie's all-day seminars, taken all her online classes, attended her workshops at RWA conferences, flown to Colorado to attend her four-day Immersion class, and hosted an Immersion class in Dallas. Margie taught me to challenge and push myself to make the hard changes from the first page of a manuscript until the very last. Working with Margie, you'll have the tools to make every single word count.

Go to www.ntrwa.org/texastwostepconference.aspx for more details and to sign up. This will be my first seminar with Margie, not to mention my first Two-Step. I can't wait-Jan and I hope to see you there!

Amanda McMurrey (writing as Amanda Byrd)
Programs Co-Chair



Where Does My Story Begin?

When I sat down to write *Here Today, Gone Tamale*, the first book in my *Taste of Texas* series, I pondered the best way to take a hold of the story. Would it be the plot? The setting? The mystery? Sure the mystery was important. Who wants to read a book with a predictable plot? And though I loved Far West, Texas and the desert towns near the border, they didn't reach out and grab me in the beginning.

Head bowed and eyes closed, I prayed like a child, "Dear Lord, how the heck do I write a story that will make readers smile and feel at home?" Now, you may not pray, and the good Lord knows I don't pray as often as I should; but the answer dropped into my soul.

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It was all about the characters. I decided to write lovable, quirky people I wanted to spend time with. I had to start with a heroine with grit and a bit of an attitude. She couldn't be svelte and perfect either. She had to love her tamales.

Once reporter Josie Callahan came onto the page, I needed a reason for her to leave the cool vibe and big city bustle of Austin—every Texan's dream—only to land back in postage-sized Broken Boot with her aunt and uncle. Josie was down on her luck. Laid off and jilted at the altar, she had nowhere else to go.

Now that my amateur sleuth was back home where she belonged, working in her family's Tex-Mex restaurant who else was there for her to interact with?

Ah, her sidekick. That would be a Chihuahua named Lenny. Why Lenny? Because that's what his previous owner named him. Why a Chihuahua? The story *is* set in Far West Texas, right? Now let's give that stereotype a twist. He's a long-haired Chi, which makes him extra cute and adorable.

Someone else was needed in the family, someone unpredictable and cantankerous—someone who could say all the things the other characters wished they could say. Senora Mari hit the page. This mighty matriarch, standing all of four feet, ten inches, oversaw everything that had to do with the menu at Milagro especially her famous traditional tamales. Much to my surprise, it turned out Senora Mari dreamt of dead people. Those poor souls murdered in Broken Boot came to her with clues about their murders. Unfortunately, Josie couldn't make hide nor hair out of them.

Finally where would a smart, sassy amateur sleuth be without a hint of romance in her life? Enter from stage left Josie's former college sweetheart, Coach Ryan Prentice. He's not too busy coaching the West Texas University football team to help out at Milagro now and then and lend a sympathetic ear. Sneaking in from stage right is Deputy Quinton Lightfoot. He put the silent in the strong and silent type. Intelligent and skeptical of Josie's investigative skills, he's willing to overlook her mistakes as long as she doesn't interfere with his investigation.

The stage was set. The dusty, artistic town of Broken Boot, Texas was the backdrop. Josie Callahan and the Martinez family were the leads. All I needed was a murder.

If you crave your Tex-Mex the way I do, check out the recipes in the back of my book.

Adios,
Rebecca Adler

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Amazon Poised to Sell Used E-books

Amazon's business model has long been dependent on resellers of used books and other merchandise. But a U.S. patent that Amazon Technologies in Reno, Nev., received last week indicates that the mega-retailer has its sights on digital resale, including used e-books and audio downloads. According to the abstract, Amazon will be able to create a secondary market for used digital objects purchased from an original vendor by a user and stored in a user's personalized data store.

Boston-based ReDigi opened the first marketplace for pre-owned digital music, which it launched in late 2011, redigi.com. Once a lawsuit that Capitol Records filed in U.S. District Court in Manhattan over the way it handles music downloads is behind it, ReDigi plans to expand into e-books and other digital items. In a press release issued yesterday, ReDigi commented that "the Amazon patent is further proof that the secondary market is the future of the digital space and that there is no turning back."

Story also on: <http://goodereader.com/blog/e-book-news/amazon-is-secretly-developing-a-used-e-book-marketplace>

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

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connected with other NTR 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

#ntrwa-gecontest

#dara-ntrwa-pals

Others:

#WhiteHatHeroes (Angi Morgan)

#chickswagger (Brynley Bush, Jerrie Alexander, Kym Roberts, Mia London)

MINUTES from February

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, February 20, 2016 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President-Elect and the Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:40 a.m. The minutes for the January 16, 2016 meeting were approved.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Suzan Butler was not present. Kim Miller reported:

- 2 Step Conference - Amanda
- Open positions:
 - Spotlight Chair
 - Membership Chair
 - Hospitality for the last six months of the year

President-Elect: Kim Miller reported:

- No Report

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- The January 16, 2016 meeting minutes were approved and filed for audit.

Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:

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

Program Director: Amanda McMurrey reported:

- Today's Meeting:

Just Answer the Question--

Editors or critique partners...when should you listen to *you*?

Presented by Angi Morgan

- Amy Atwell will be March's speaker.

Website Director:

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

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:**Membership Director: Open Position. Jen FitzGerald presented:**

- Membership renewals are through February.
- 25 members paid on time. 59 current members still need to renew.

Communications Director: Audra Lewandowski reported:

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

PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek was not present:

- No report.

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- 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.
- Jen Fitzgerald and Robin Nelson received their PRO pins.

Two Step Conference: Amanda McMurrey reported:

- The link is open to sign up for the conference.
- 24 people are registered to date.
- Margie Lawson is our speaker and it's a full day program. Members only. \$25 to pay for lunch, the rest of the program is covered for members. The event caps at 125 people.

Great Expectations: Lisa Fenley reported:

- Report filed:
 - The 2016 Great Expectations Contest closed with 131 entries.
 - Gross proceeds: \$3,705; Projected net proceeds: \$2,675
 - 426 entries judged

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Report filed.
- 200+ judges
- 115 entries
- \$2720 gross
- \$107.11 Paypal fees

Hospitality: Regina Richards reported:

- Requested a hospitality chair for the last six months of the year.

Writing Incentives: Chrissy Szarek was not present. Jen FitzGerald reported:

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- Top 5 Edited Pages: Angi Morgan-475, Carolyn Williamson-425, Tish Sanders-300, Jen Fitzgerald-154, Jerrie Alexander-126
- Top 5 Written Pages: Angi Morgan-650, Jen Fitzgerald-118, Carol Doss-100, Susan Miller-75, Jerrie Alexander-74

Bylaws: Angi Morgan presented:

- 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, March 19, 2016 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Lisa Fenley.

THE PERILS OF BEING PUBLISHED - Pacing...Yourself and Your Book

by Gerry Bartlett

I signed a contract to finish three books this year. It's what I wanted: a deal with a New York publisher, an editor and a deadline that would hold my feet to the fire. I work well under pressure. Or at least that's what I told myself and my agent when I proposed this project. Now that it's too late to back out, I've got to deliver. Oh, and finish book twelve in my vampire series that I promised my fans. I did want

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to do another novella or two on top of that. Self-publishing has proven to be both lucrative and fairly easy to do when I find the time for it.

Time, oh yeah. Now that I've come down to earth and actually looked at a calendar I realize that I may have promised more than I can deliver. I will have to give up some of the fun things that make my life worth living and actually treat my writing like a business for a change. So far I've stuck to a pretty tight writing schedule. I admit it hasn't been easy. But I'm producing pages fairly fast. That's the good news.

Now for the bad news. What I'm writing is different from my old reliable paranormals. I have been cranking those out since 2005. I know those characters inside and out. And my paranormal world offers many chances for action that keep the books flowing fairly well. My hero and heroine can even make love in chapter one and no one is surprised or disgusted. I've built in some enemies that I can always bring into the stories and lots of fun secondary characters to provide humor when I need it. Do you see how this makes it easier to write yet another book in my series?

But this new series is a different breed. I'm writing straight contemporary now.

It's set in Texas which is great because I was born and raised here. I have the Texas flavor in my bones. The proposal I sold with made my new editor go "Yee haw!" She loved it. But I'm having a bit of a problem keeping up the pace I set in those first few chapters. My beloved critique group isn't helping. Here's what last week's session sounded like: "Nothing happens in this chapter." "Why is this scene here?" "It started dragging here." "Don't write about a horse unless you've been on one yourself." You see why I stopped dead and wept over my keyboard?

Now I'm the first to admit that pacing is everything. I won't read a book that bores me. I just got rid of a full sack of books on my shelves that had bookmarks stuck in them around page fifty. I didn't finish the books. I'd bought the book in the first place so I couldn't blame the concept. The back cover copy had convinced me that the characters were the type I liked to read about. So obviously the pace had slowed and I lost interest. My time is too valuable to waste slogging through a book that drags. Why was it dragging? Was there too much internal dialogue? Angst about decision making? I hate that. Or the eternal backstory. People rehashing what happened in high school. Who cares if he dumped you at prom? If you haven't lived since then, you're a loser and I don't want to read about you. Move on!

Or maybe there was so much instant chemistry between our hero and heroine that I wanted to scream. Where's the tension? If we're so instantly attracted, why are

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we waiting to consummate/get together? Oh, wait, there was that stupid misunderstanding at the come-out ball. Please just talk it out. They don't, at least not with each other. Argh. The bookmark goes in and I move on.

Back to that critique group. We had a huge debate about what is considered action. It doesn't have to be a murder, apocalypse or attack by killer bees. Does it? I claimed it could be an event that moves the story along such as a phone call that gives the heroine important information. Maybe she breaks up with her boyfriend. Or rides a horse for the first time. Seriously, she doesn't have to fall off and break her leg for this to be action, does she? It was a big deal to her, a city gal. Good enough for me. Not for SOME people.

We finally agreed that the important thing to keep your pacing going was to keep the reader interested. Okay, what would do that? Loading the dishwasher? No. The hero coming up behind her and sliding his hand under her blouse while the heroine is doing that? Maybe. Developing the relationship can keep the reader with you. Describing the drapes in the drawing room? Not a chance. The fact that the hero has on jeans? No. But if those jeans are molding a muscular thigh. Hmm. Maybe. Humor can speed things along too. Get your reader laughing and they'll be happy to read more. Maybe the heroine was so flustered loading that dishwasher that she puts in the wrong soap and bubbles fill the kitchen. And if the bubbles come in handy for an erotic scene? So much the better.

Too much of anything can bore your reader. Endless sex scenes, unless you're writing erotica and know that's what your reader is looking for, can make anyone start to skim, looking for story. Describing the house, clothes, bedroom, will take your reader out of the story unless it's essential that the reader know how easy it is for your heroine to get out of that slinky dress. Conversations about what happened yesterday won't drive the story forward, especially if your reader was there when the event occurred. Your heroine keeping a secret about what she did yesterday can add tension. Her dread and the possible repercussions from the big reveal can keep pages turning.

So what did I learn about pacing? First, I'm writing fast and doing two books at once. So I've found it necessary to finish a chapter then let it cool off for a day or two before I go back and try to see with an objective eye if it is tight and moves fast. I tend to be repetitious. It's an old bad habit and cutting some of my repeats does help move things along. So I'll work on one book for a day, let that chill out while I work on the other one. This may not be for you. But it's always a good idea to let your pages simmer for a while before you declare them finished.

Of course my favorite pacing technique is the ever popular cliff hanger. I end

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every chapter with a question or hint that something is about to happen that could change everything. The reader has to read on in the next chapter to find out what that will be. Is it the danger a secret will be exposed? Does she hear footsteps?

Does the bedroom door open? Writing fast, you might end a chapter and then decide to take that last paragraph and move it to the beginning of the next one.

See how that works for you. It's all about keeping the reader engaged so she won't stick that bookmark in there and heave it into a sack.

Gerry Bartlett is the nationally bestselling author of the Real Vampires series. The book that is making her go crazy now is REAL VAMPIRES AND THE VIKING. She hopes to have it ready for release before Valentine's Day but don't hold her to that. Go to her website <http://gerrybartlett.com> for the latest news on her releases or visit her on Facebook or twitter.



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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