

Jen FitzGerald

From: NTRWA Newsletter <newsletter=ntrwa.org@mail219.atl171.mcdlv.net> on behalf of NTRWA Newsletter <newsletter@ntrwa.org>
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To: Jen FitzGerald
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*Founded March
1983
2016*

May

*Chapter 33, Region
5
Issue 4*

Volume 36,

Letter from the President

[INSERT HERE]

What is a Spotlight Chair?

The NTRWA Spotlight Chair helps to build a sense of community within our organization by helping members get to know each other a little better via both newsletter and in-person interviews.

Responsibilities:

- Create a list of twelve to twenty interview questions.
 - Time: about 20 minutes just one time since you can use the same questions for the entire year of interviews
- Personally invite ten members to step into the Spotlight. Get their contact information and schedule their Spotlight months for Jan-Oct. No Spotlights are done in November and December.
 - Time: 5-15 minutes at one or two meetings.
- Send the questions to the designated Spotlight each month, compile their answers into an interview format, and send to the newsletter editor
 - Time: about 15 minutes per month
- Present a Spotlight interview at the January thru October meetings.
 - Time: about 5 minutes

Time Investment:

Minimal. This Chair position doesn't require attendance at board meetings. But attend anyway because they're a great way to learn more about the business of writing.

How this position allows you to serve the membership:

Spotlight builds a sense of community. It's just easier to talk and laugh and learn with people we feel we know a little better.

How this position allows you to serve the individual member being interviewed:

Stepping into the NTRWA Spotlight helps a writer hone skills for both print and in-person interviews in a safe and welcoming environment. That can translate into smoother, easier interviews in other venues down the road.

How this position serves you, the Spotlight Chair:

Being Spotlight Chair has real benefits. Developing a greater

understanding of the interview process from both sides will serve you well as you grow and advance in your career as a writer. Some people are born with the gift of being at ease speaking before groups. Most aren't. Serving as Spotlight Chair allows you to hone your public speaking skills and increase your confidence in a comfortable, welcoming environment. Remember, you can make money simply by writing a great book and putting it out there, but you can make MORE money by writing a great book and putting yourself out there with it.

If you're interested in serving as the 2016 Spotlight Chair, see Angi. It'll be a worthwhile step on your author's journey.

Speaker for May:

Pam Dougherty

Audio Book Narration -- The Basic Questions Answered

- What is involved in securing a narrator? Where would a writer look? Is there a professional group for narrators, or is are relationships built by referrals from other writers?
- What are "best practices" to include in contract negotiations when securing a narrator? Does the narrator receive a percentage of the gross sales, or is it fee-based?
- How long does it take to convert a novel to an audio book? Is there "lead-time" to consider if one wants to publish their audio book at the same time they present the novel for sale?
- In what format should a writer present their work to a narrator? Word? Simple text file? A copy of the e-book itself?

June--Laura Drake--Backstory
July 16th*--Trisha Dolan--Opening the Third Eye to
Creativity
August--Mary Theresa Hussey--What Editors Really
Want

The following article first appeared in the April 2016 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.

HOW TO WRITE FUNNY

Edited by John B. Kachuba

When I was at Half Price Books (my go-to spot for gift shopping) last December, I picked up a copy of *How To Write Funny*, edited by John B. Kachuba. Looks interesting, I thought. Apparently I thought so in 2001, the first time I bought and read it, and in 2006, when I read it again. So I passed the new copy along at the chapter Christmas party and reread the old copy I found on my shelf.

How To Write Funny is not a technical manual for humor writing. Most of the contributors agree that humor in writing stems from the mindset of the author more than from any tricks of the trade, although there are certainly technical suggestions throughout. The articles and interviews cover a range of writers and writing genres: fiction and non-fiction, short and long,

prose and poetry. Many of the contributors confess that they tried and tried to be “serious” writers, but it was like fighting nature. That’s true the other way around, too—it’s not easy to write “funny” when your nature wants to write “serious.”

The heart of the book is really about the nature (there it is again) of humor. What makes people laugh, and why? This is terribly subjective, of course, and pulls a wide variety of ideas, many depending on age, gender, ethnicity, and culture. Not all humorists are the same, either: the person who tells hilarious stories may not be a writer, and the writer who has you falling off your chair laughing may be too shy to speak in public. Many of the contributors list the authors they love, and the name that comes up time after time is Mark Twain, followed closely by Robert Benchley and P.G. Wodehouse.

Most helpful for romance writers is Jennifer Crusie’s article, “Happily Ever Laughter: Writing Romantic Comedy for Women.” She points out that women respond to situational humor rather than jokes. “Nothing is a tragedy,” Crusie says, “if you can laugh at it.”

Several other funny women are included, and their approach to humor is much like Crusie’s. Connie Willis says, “Exaggerating the literal truth, if it’s done well, shows us the emotional truth of a situation.” Esther Friesner, in “Take My Wizard . . . Please,” discusses humor in fantasy and science fiction, and by extension paranormal. Patricia Case tackles “Writing ‘Funny Bits’

for Kids.”

“The funniest fiction,” says Roy Blount Jr., “involves characters who are not trying to be funny.” Remember Burns and Allen? (Hey, I *know* some of you are as old as I am.) George was the straight man. It was Gracie, with her totally unique view of the people and events around her, who was funny, and *she had no clue*. She was just being herself.

Joe Lansdale talks about mixing humor and horror. Bill Bryson points out that British and American humor can be quite different. And Tom Bodett says, “I don’t think you can write funny unless you think life is funny.”

How To Write Funny may not actually teach you how to write funny, but if you lean that way, it will give you some ideas. It’s available as an e-book from Amazon. You may have to hunt for a paperback copy.

Kay Hudson tries to keep a humorous outlook on life, and hopes that others find her writing at least mildly amusing, although she'd prefer they Roll On the Floor Laughing. She posts book reviews and random thoughts on her blog, KayHudson.com.

This article was originally posted by Alicia Dean on Authors Network, a Yahoo group.

I and some author friends have decided to declare war on free books. Even though I myself have offered my books for free, I believe it has become a disastrous practice, and I think we need to put a stop to it. (I am doing away with my monthly freebie blog post but will

continue to share the 99 cent book post.)

Attempting to organize writers to take a stand and no longer offer free books is quite daunting, but it's not impossible. It's only impossible if we never try it. I say, let's give it a shot. If each and every one of us reaches 100 authors and each of those reach 100 authors, so on and so forth, we can accomplish great things. I have written a post below that I thought we could use to share with others and see if we can get this thing off the ground.

I have also started a Facebook group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/604361846382896/>

We are using the hashtag #ValuedAuthors. We can strive to get other authors on board and continue spreading the word. Randomly, we can go on Amazon and contact authors with free books and share our feelings and ask them to reconsider and join us.

Below is an article I've written. Feel free to share/tweak, etc.

What Price are Authors Paying for Free Books?

Which statement applies to you?

A) My writing, my time, my talent, has no value. I spend hours and days and months laboring over my manuscript, sweating blood and tears, pouring out my heart, until my 'baby' is finally ready to go out into the world. Then, I happily give it away for free.

OR

B) I work hard to create an excellent experience for readers, and my time and talent is valuable. Going forward, I will no longer offer my books for free, with the exception of giveaways of my choosing.

If it's 'A,' then there is no need for you to read any further. If it is 'B,' pull up a chair.

We have all heard the arguments, for and against giving away books. The arguments 'against' are endless and valid. In my opinion, the only valid argument 'for' is that we would like readers to sample our books and, in turn, purchase other works by us and become faithful readers of our work. In reality, how well has that worked for you? Have you given away tons and tons of books, only to find out that the plan backfired and did not lead to any noticeable sales? Have you yourself downloaded tons of free books that you don't even bother to read?

I say it's time authors take a stand and take back our value. Many readers have grown so accustomed to receiving free books that they expect it. They might pay \$15 for a Nora Roberts or Stephen King ebook, but for less-than-famous authors, it's free or nothing. The only way to stop this is for authors and publishers to cease, immediately, offering their books for free.

If readers no longer have millions of free books at their disposal, they will begin to pay for them. As it should be. I get that a lot of readers are hesitant because they might waste money on a book that isn't all that great, but if they read the 'look inside' feature and the blurb, they should have a pretty good idea of the kind of experience they will have. Life is a gamble, after all. They can still get the lesser known books for a more reasonable price than the big names, but really, honestly, should that price be free? All authors once were and are readers. We have spent tons of money on books. Some were not worth it, but overall, I'd say I

definitely got my money's worth. That is the way it should be, and I believe, the way it can be again.

I will admit, I have made my books free on several occasions. But, no more. I am hereby declaring war on free books. If you are interested in joining me, post this logo and statement on your site and help spread the word.

(I've attached a logo you can include and place on your website, etc)

Statement:

As part of VAC (Valued Authors Coalition), I vow to no longer offer my books through sales venues for free. This does not include subscription services such as Kindle Unlimited where authors receive compensation. This also does not include offering book giveaways, at my discretion, whether as contest prizes, for signing up for newsletters, blog comments, ARCs for reviews, etc.

Here is a letter we can share with readers, if we choose:

Dear Valued Reader:

We love you, and you are an important part of why we write. But, we have become weary of giving our hard-earned work for nothing. While we love to offer free books as prizes and offer specials and contests, we no longer wish to make our books permanently free, across all venues.

We want to provide a valuable experience to our readers, but we want to be fairly compensated for doing so. We are readers as well, and reading has afforded us countless hours of pleasure, for which we

are happy to pay. We cannot expect other forms of entertainment to be free... we pay for cable television, concerts, CDs, movies, golf, bowling, and so forth. We should also expect to pay for books.

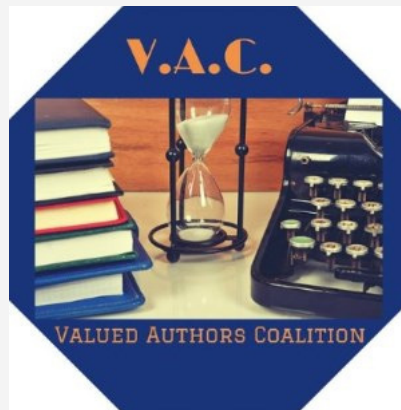
Are you a teacher? Do you own your own business? Are you an administrative assistant, a nurse, an attorney, a doctor, a receptionist, a nanny, a pilot, in food service or manufacturing? If so, do you provide your time and skills for free? Of course not, and writers should not be expected to either.

We hope you understand our position and that you will support our attempt to restore value to the world of reading and the hard-working, talented authors who offer us an escape from reality for a few precious hours.

With Love...

VAC (Valued Authors Coalition)

Alicia Dean



CONTESTS, COORDINATORS, AND CASH

Help Us Help You!

North Texas RWA's primary source of income is from our two contests: the fifteen years strong Great Expectations Contest and the younger upstart, The Carolyn Readers Choice Award.

Right now, each contest is completely coordinated by a single person, with some help from one or two others.

These two coordinators give up a lot of writing time and personal time to serve the chapter in this capacity, and while they're (mostly) happy to do it, the adage of "many hands makes light work" certainly applies to these two endeavors.

Without the income from the contests, we couldn't bring you interesting speakers like Amy Atwell on preparing for your book launch (Feb 2016) or Pam Dougherty on audio books (May 2016) or Two-Step Conference programs like Margie Lawson's Empowering Characters Emotions (Apr 2016).

With that in mind, Lisa and Jen are asking you to step forward and help in one contest (or both if there's crossover.) Some tasks are a bit more time consuming than others, but none require hours upon hours of work at any given time.

The Great Expectations needs much more help than the Carolyn, so when perusing the "help wanted" lists, please bear that in mind.

**HELP WANTED: THE 2017 GREAT
EXPECTATIONS CONTEST**

· **FIRST ROUND JUDGE:** If each member of the chapter judged at least one entry, it would cut down on the number of outside judges needed. Finding

qualified judges who will respond in a positive, professional manner to each entry is difficult—as members of the chapter, we comprehend that our contest’s reputation is forged by our judges. Each contestant receives THREE judged versions of his / her entry, with the additional requirement that at least one of the judges is a published author. If we use 2016 as an example, that means we needed a minimum of 393 entries judged. Every judge counts, even if it’s only one entry.

- **JUDGE COORDINATOR:** The Judge Coordinator will provide updated judging guidelines to all first round judges and will assist in sourcing both first round and final editor judges for the contest. First Round judges should be in place by January 1, 2017. Final Editors must be in place prior to October 1, 2016. Benefits of this position: interaction with numerous industry professionals and excellent networking opportunities.

- **CATEGORY COORDINATOR (NEED THREE):** The Category Coordinators will each be responsible for three categories (we have a total of nine). The responsibilities include: entry reformatting, preparing the document for judge distribution, distributing the entries to first round judges, judge follow-up, and score verification upon the entry’s return. Time frame is January 1 – February 7, 2017. Benefits of this position: enhanced software skills, interaction with contestants (many of whom go on to publish), networking opportunities, and an in depth knowledge of the financial implications of this contest to the chapter.

· **COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**: In concert with the chapter's VP of Communications, ensure all advertising goes out as needed, contest information is distributed on all chapter loops and in the RWR, blog and website information is updated / posted, and all finalist / winner announcements post to the loops and the RWR. Benefits of this position include contact with all RWA chapter loops, blog management skills, and gaining knowledge of the advertising field. Time required is minimal and runs from August 2016 (RWR submission and initial advertising) to March 2017 (finalist and winner announcements.)

Training will be provided for all volunteer positions and will occur this summer (most likely in August 2016), so that we're ready for the 2017 Great Expectations Contest season. Please contact Lisa Fenley at FenleyGrant.Author@gmail.com if you can help.

HELP WANTED: THE 2017 CAROLYN READERS CHOICE AWARD

ENTRY EMPRESS/CONFIRMATION QUEEN—as entries arrive, enter information into the master spreadsheet and send out pre-written confirmation emails (Nov 14 to Feb 14)

ADVERTISING ANGEL—ensure that any and all advertising (free and paid) gets done as needed (Aug 14 to Feb 14)

REMINDER DIVA—send pre-written reminders to judges once they've had a book for three weeks (Jan 14 to Apr 20)

VERIFICATION MISTRESS—compare the EmailMeForm data to the contest spreadsheet and a)

verify the entered scores are correct and b) verify that the returning judge was marked ready to receive the next book; correct information pertinent to spreadsheet sorting on the original scoresheets (Jan 14 to Apr 30)

JUDGE WRANGLER—query previous judges; send confirmations; send reminders prior to books being sent out; handle contest correspondence (Oct 14 to May 14)

BLOG MOMMA—post updates as needed (at least weekly) to the contest blog (Nov 14 to May 14)

Training will be provided for all volunteer positions and can occur at the volunteer's convenience, but should probably be done prior to September so that we're ready for the 2017 Carolyn Readers Choice Award season. Please contact Jen FitzGerald at carolyn.award@ntrwa.org for more information or to volunteer.

Thanks!!!

Lisa Fenley & Jen FitzGerald

Your NT contest coordinators



Carolyn Rae has a cover and a title but no release date for her new book, *Searching for Love*. The cover features a turquoise squash blossom necklace that the hero gave to the heroine to replace the one they had to trade for some gas when stranded in Mexico.

Congrats Carolyn!!!

SOCIAL MEDIA

The updated membership roster is available in the YahooGroups file section. It should be on the website shortly. Those who have notified us of their social media links...that information is included. We did not include phone numbers or addresses. If you'd like to contact a member, please use the provided email address.

If you'd like your information to be included, please use the Social Media update form in the members only section of our website. Please remember that information on our roster is for members only use and is a violation of chapter bylaws to be sold or used for profit.

<http://ntrwagreatexpectations.blogspot.com/p/ntrwa-social-media-form.html>

MINUTES from APRIL

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, April 16, 2016 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President-Elect and the Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:43 a.m. The minutes for the March 19, 2016 meeting were approved.

OFFICER REPORTS:

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

- Angi Morgan discussed upcoming changes to the Bylaw. Bylaw changes required by RWA National to be approved – This is our 30 day announcement that we will have an on-line vote for by-laws. We are permitted to add three positions to the Board. The Board will decide which 3 positions we would like to add.

President-Elect: Kim Miller reported:

- No Report

Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:

- The March 19, 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:
 - **Write like a Winner...or Brainstorm like a Boss?**
- May's Meeting:
 - **Audio Book Narration -- The Basic Questions Answered Pam Daughtry will speak about**

Audiobooks.

Website Director:

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

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS

- **Membership Director: Angi Morgan reported:**
- Membership renewals ended February 29th.
- Please renew your membership.
- 76 members to date.

Communications Director: Audra Lewandowski reported:

- Report submitted:
 - Send information / articles / photos for inclusion in the newsletter to newsletter@NTRWA.org by April 28, 2016.
 - Social Media—please complete the profile information for your social media formats to share with the chapter.

PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek was not present:

- No report.

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.

Two Step Conference: Amanda McMurrey reported:

- Conference complete. Costs still accruing.
- Survey coming to members for feedback on this year's 2-Step Conference featuring Margie Lawson.

Great Expectations: Lisa Fenley reported:

- Report filed:
 - The 2016 Great Expectations Contest closed with 131 entries.
 - Gross proceeds: \$3,705; Projected net proceeds: \$2,625
 - 426 entries judged
 - Winners announced 3/31/16.

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Report filed.
 - 200+ judges
 - 115 entries
 - \$2720 gross
 - \$107.11 Paypal fees
 - April 20th hoping to have all scores returned. Announcement at the end of May.

Hospitality: Faith Stencil was not present. Amanda McMurrey reported:

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

Writing Incentives: Chrissy Szarek was not present. Amanda McMurrey reported:

- Top 3 Edited Pages: Gina Nelson – 710, Carolyn Williamson 340, Amber Autrey - 247
- Top 3 Written Pages: Lisa Fenley – 79, Michelle Welsh – 74 Clover Autrey - 50

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, May 21, 2016 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Lisa Fenley.



#delish

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.

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

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