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September 2017 Heart to Heart Newsletter

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 Chapter 33, Region 5
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 Volume 35, Issue 9

AUGUST 2017 MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, August 19, 2017 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and the President-Elect were present. The meeting was called to order at 12:24 p.m. The minutes for the July 15, 2017 meeting were approved.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Kim Miller reported:

- No Report.

President-Elect: Audra Lewandowski was not present:

- No report.

2017 BOARD

President

Kim Miller

President Elect

Audra Lewandowski

Secretary

Robin Nelson

Treasurer

Cindy Dees

Program Director

Amanda McMurrey

Membership

Director

Angi Morgan

Contest**Coordinator**

Lisa Fenley

Secretary: Robin Nelson was not present. Lisa Fenley reported:

- The July 15, 2017 meeting minutes were approved and filed for audit.

Communications**Director**

Jen FitzGerald

Treasurer: Cindy Dees reported:

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

**2017
Committee
Chairs****PAN Liaison**

Chrissy Szarek

Program Director: Amanda McMurrey was not present. Kim Miller reported:

- Open to suggestions for program ideas.
- Today's Meeting: Allison Campolo – Martial Artist
- September's Meeting:
 - o Please join us September 16th for Rebecca Balcárcel presenting: Finding Your Voice

Writing Incentives

Chrissy Szarek

PRO Liaison

TBD

Membership Director: Angi Morgan was not present:

Bylaws

Angi Morgan

- No report.

**Two Step
Conference**

Angi Morgan

Communications Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Send information / articles / photos for inclusion in the newsletter to newsletter@NTRWA.org by August 28, 2017.
- Social Media—please complete the profile information for your social media formats to share with the chapter. If there are changes there is a form online.
- Please send in an office selfie.
- If you need information added to the website, send to website@ntrwa.org

Great Expectations

Lisa Fenley

The Carolyn

Jen FitzGerald

Spotlight

Jen FitzGerald

Hospitality

Jen FitzGerald

Continued below...

Continued from above...

Contests Director: Lisa Fenley reported:

- Need volunteers for both contests.

Great Expectations Contest: Lisa Fenley reported:

- Contest officially finished.
- Need (2) volunteers to run the 2018 contest.
- Looking for new editors for next year.
- Looking for two more to help with the contest reorganization. Need technical expertise.

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Contest complete.
- No current news.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek reported:

- RWA pins for milestones (starting at 5 books published.) Pins are \$10 apiece. Order through RWA. You must order your pins yourself.
- No pencils to distribute this month.

PRO Liaison: OPEN POSITION:

- Need someone to take position
- If you are not a PRO member, please see Clover Autrey for application information. PRO pins must be purchased from RWA.
- PRO membership allows you on the NT PRO loop, where training and information are provided to our chapter PRO members.

Hospitality: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- If you have ideas for gifts, please notify Jen FitzGerald.

Bylaws: Angi Morgan was not present:

- No Report.

35th Anniversary Committee:

- Charm Program: Chrissy Szarek reported:
 - o If you haven't submitted your totals for July, the window is closed. Please send totals the Friday before the next meeting.
- Anthology / Continuity: Jen FitzGerald reported:
 - o Must take place in Dew Drop, Texas.
 - o Due January 27, 2018.
 - o Must be romance, but no Erotic. Must be PG13.
 - o Words 3000 to 3500.
 - o E-book only.
 - o The NTRWA website has a link to find more information and the town 'bible'.
 - o Sign up for your space in the anthology.
 - o Twenty people participating so far. There is room for more.

Unfinished Business:

- No unfinished business to report.

New Business:

- No new business to report.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on September 16, 2017 at La Hacienda.

The meeting adjourned at 12:29 p.m.

Submitted electronically by Lisa Fenley for Robin Nelson.

Date Approved: _____

Date Corrected: _____

The following article first appeared in the June 2017 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.

Thanks,
Leslie Marshman
Editor, In Print!

~*~*~

THE EDITOR'S CORNER

Keep Your GPS, Just Give Me A Roadmap
by Leslie Marshman, In Print! Editor

I used to be a hardcore plotter. I worked out every detail of my book in advance. I outlined. I knew what would happen, when it would happen and to whom it would happen.

Then I'd sit down to write and find myself bored stiff. It was like I'd already written the story. In a slightly different format, sure. But even so, there was nothing new, nothing exciting. I had shot my wad, so to speak.

So I took a break from the book and started writing and selling short stories. I'd begin with a vague idea, and twelve hours later I'd written an entire story. I just let it flow. And it flowed like a mountain waterfall during the spring melt.

I started to wonder why I liked writing shorts so much. Of course, there was the sense of accomplishment that comes with finishing, submitting and selling something. But it was more than that.

I realized what had jump-started my passion was the more spontaneous process. I'd get an idea—a place to start. I'd figure out where I wanted to wind up when I was done—my final destination. And then I'd write. I'd stay on a straight course for a while, then maybe back up and make a turn, try a slightly different route. I was still headed in the same general direction, but I wasn't sure exactly how I'd get there. Freeway all the way? Or blue highways and back roads?

For me, writing is a lot like taking a road trip. On road trips, I don't need GPS. I don't want a voice telling me how many feet before turning right, or that I missed my turn and need to recalculate. Especially if that missed turn was intentional. Maybe I'd seen a detour that looked more picturesque, a trail that seemed more exciting. However, I don't want to get hopelessly lost either. So I never leave town without a map. I like adventure, but I want to get my bearings from time to time.

On my current WIP, I'm using a roadmap instead of GPS. Rather than plotting the book to death, I've jotted down possible plot points—like circling landmarks on a map. Now I simply figure out how to reach them while I'm writing. (Yes, "simply" was sarcastic.) Sometimes I pull over to study the map and consider my options. A new idea could steer me somewhere unexpected, and that's okay. It's not like I'm locked into nonrefundable hotel reservations in towns I don't want to visit. I can go where the story takes me.

Like a road trip, writing isn't necessarily about hauling ass from point A to point B. It's about enjoying the journey and appreciating the scenery along the way. Holy crap! Writing is fun again.

~*~*~

Leslie Marshman writes contemporary romance and suspense, and her publishing credits include short stories. Leslie called Denver home until she married a Texan without reading the fine print. She now resides halfway between Houston and Galveston. She's the editor

of HBA's In Print! newsletter and contest coordinator for HBA's Judge A Book By Its Cover contest.

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Editor, In Print!

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CORE STORY

Or Why We Write What We Write
by Jo Anne Banker

As writers, we all have a core story, a common theme, infused throughout our novels. It inspires our characters to pursue their goals, to overcome whatever conflicts we throw in their paths, motivating them to strive for their happily-ever-after. This theme is the underlying meaning of the story, the life lesson exemplified throughout. It normally has a universal nature, one understood as part of the human condition, so it transcends race, religion, and language, and instead encompasses experience. It might be a coming of age story, or good versus evil. Perhaps it's betrayal, or lost love renewed. But if we examine our tales, whether they be filled with fantastical creatures, lords and ladies, or Navy SEALs, we'll find that each of us writes our own individual core story.

Recently, Jayne Ann Krentz signed her new Amanda Quick historical release, *The Girl Who Knew Too Much*, at Murder By the Book here in Houston. During her chat with the audience, she promised her readers that although she'd changed the landscape of her new novel from Regency England to the Hollywood/Southern California coast in the 1930s, she had not changed her core story. Jayne/Amanda knows that her readers pick up one of her books with the expectations of a certain type of story and characters, and she wanted to assure us those would always be there. A strong suspense plot, a dark hero who walks with an emotional limp (and sometimes a physical one, too), a smart, fearless heroine, and that core story, which in Jayne's case is about trust. What makes her romantic stories so beautifully yummy is the trust her hero and heroine develop for each other.

As it turns out, my core story is about healing family hurts. I believe each of us has some type of family karma, and that it's healthy to identify and work with what we're given. Why do some have co-dependent relationships that promote victim consciousness, while others

come from a healthy nurturing place? Why is it important for some people to have children, and some choose not to? Why do some express obsessive behavior destructively, becoming alcoholics or drug addicts, where others focus that same obsessive behavior into eating right, exercising, and living healthy?

I write stories where love not only heals family, but where it often forms new families. Not always with biological family members, or sometimes with lost family members found. My stories are often about children separated from a parent in some way. My maternal grandmother had four children, each with a different man. I don't know why. She died before I was born. But the half-siblings, each seven years apart, all grew up without fathers. My own father and paternal aunt were both adopted. In the five generations I've researched, either adoption, growing up without a parent, or raising someone else's child is prevalent. Parent/child separation, family karma. I recently joked with friends that I write about the skeletons in everyone else's closets to keep my own rattling bones at bay.

Multi-published New York Times bestselling author Sharon Sala says that everything in her stories comes full circle, because that's how she sees life. "We are born, we live, we die, and as one life ends, another is beginning. Full circle.... From conflict to solution. From sadness to joy. From being alone to finding a happy-ever-after love. From beginning to end..." Sharon writes characters we all love, and we love seeing them come full circle to their HEA.

Popular historical author Shana Galen finds her central theme tends to be the fish-out-of-water trope, usually in her heroines, sometimes in her heroes. Shana believes there are several reasons she writes this core story. First, "...a character who doesn't have all the answers and is unsure of herself is approachable and likeable.... Secondly, this convention gives me lots of opportunities for conflict and comic relief. If I throw a character into a situation she's not ready for, she can get into trouble and she can also mess up in funny ways. Thirdly, this is a theme in my own life. From a young age, I've held views and opinions very different from those of my family and friends. ...I became a romance writer, which is not exactly a common profession." Because it's familiar to Shana, it's easy for her to write. Feeling out of place is something to which we can all relate. And Shana's stories are action-packed, and her characters do get into lots of fun trouble!

Award-winning romantic suspense author Colleen Thompson writes about women harnessing their anger in a positive way, "...using [that anger] to find their strength and right a wrong rather than continuing to 'behave'." Colleen gravitates toward this theme because "...women are fed from childhood the message that it's not nice not to be nice, so much so that we end up swallowing the unpleasant and internalizing the damage rather than risking making a scene and drawing attention to ourselves. What happens when a woman reaches her limit and stands up for herself or those who can't protect themselves? What price does she pay, and what rewards can she reap?" Colleen is tough on her heroines. She puts them in situations where if they want to live, they'd better find the emotional strength to fight for what they love.

My friend and three-time Golden Heart® finalist, Kay Hudson, and I were talking about common themes a few days before Jayne brought it up at her book signing. Kay's core

story is about "...starting over, beginning a new life, a new adventure, a new romance." Kay doesn't know why, except "...it always seems like good story material, and a springboard for humor, as my heroines tend to be the sanest person in the room, surrounded by oddball associates." Kay wrote an article once on how she came to write what she writes, and found a line that sums it up for her. "Love is funny. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it."

I've spoken with writers who say nothing personal ever appears in their stories, it's all about the fantasy for them. I've talked to many more who agree there's something of themselves in every one of their protagonists. But I believe that even if it's subconscious, everyone's core story is a basic life lesson learned deep in our own psyche. We don't choose our theme, then write a story around it. In fact, we often finish a story without even being aware of any theme. But it's there.

Can you identify yours? What thread of life is your common theme? What's even more interesting is why that core story is yours.

~*~*~

Jo Anne Banker writes about the secrets that families guard and the love that heals them. She is a past Golden Heart® winner, with two additional Golden Heart® finals to her credit. She has volunteered with her local RWA chapters, serving as President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and contest coordinator. She owns a bookkeeping service, and finds balance in the creativity of her writing. Jo Anne lives in Houston, Texas with three overly-pampered cats. She enjoys the theatre, an eclectic mix of foods, good friends, and family.

Dew Drop Continuity

We have twenty-two members signed up--
Are you one of them?

If not and you're interested, then [sign up here](#).

For the details and other links, [visit the website](#).

Any questions that aren't answered,
shoot an email to Jen: [jen . fitzgerald . writer @ gmail . com](mailto:jen.fitzgerald.writer@gmail.com)
(and, you know, remove all the spaces)

SEPTEMBER 2017 PROGRAM

Rebecca Balcárcel presenting

Finding Your Voice

*We keep hearing that great writing is all about “voice.”
So what is it and how do you find and develop yours?*

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