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October 2017 Heart to Heart Newsletter

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SEPTEMBER 16, 2017 MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, September 16, 2017 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and the President-Elect were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:47 a.m. The minutes for the August 19, 2017 meeting were approved.

2017 BOARD

President

Kim Miller

President Elect

Audra Lewandowski

Secretary

Robin Nelson

Treasurer

Cindy Dees

Program Director

Amanda McMurrey

Membership

Director

Angi Morgan

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Kim Miller reported:

- RWA National Board Elections concluded last week.

President-Elect: Audra Lewandowski reported:

- No report.

Contest**Coordinator**

Lisa Fenley

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

- The August 19, 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**

Program Director: Amanda McMurrey reported:

- Open to suggestions for program ideas.
- Today's Meeting:
 - o Rebecca Balcárcel presenting: Finding Your Voice

PAN Liaison

Chrissy Szarek

Writing Incentives

Chrissy Szarek

Membership Director: Angi Morgan was not present:

PRO Liaison

TBD

- No report.

Bylaws

Angi Morgan

Communications Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Send information / articles / photos for inclusion in the newsletter to newsletter@NTRWA.org by September 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

**Two Step
Conference**

Angi Morgan

Great Expectations

Lisa Fenley

Contests Director: Lisa Fenley reported:

- Need volunteers for both contests.

The Carolyn

Jen FitzGerald

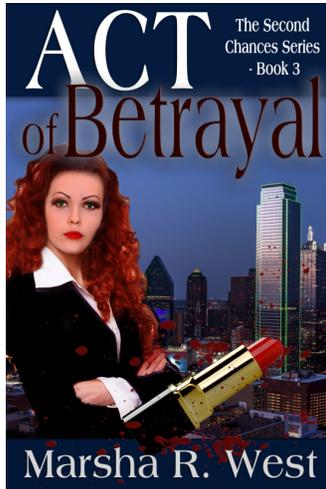
Spotlight

Jen FitzGerald

Hospitality

Jen FitzGerald

Great Expectations Contest: Lisa Fenley reported:



Act of Betrayal
Marsha R. West
available now

- Contest officially finished.
- Need at least (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.
- Opens November 14th for the 2018 contest.
- Need volunteers to assist for the 2018 contest.
- No current news.

Continued below...

Continued from above...

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek was not present:

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

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 was not present:
 - o If you haven't submitted your totals for August, 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.

Spotlight: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Need a new person to chair this position. Please see Jen FitzGerald and Kim Miller if interested.

Unfinished Business:

- No unfinished business to report.

New Business:

- No new business to report.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on October 21, 2017 at La Hacienda.

The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Lisa Fenley for Robin Nelson.

Date Approved: _____

Date Corrected: _____

This article was first used in the Sacramento Valley Rose RWA July-Sept 2017 Newsletter. Rights are granted by the author for circulation to other RWA chapters.

Five Things You Can Do Right Now to Improve Your Manuscript By Loucinda McGary, Sacramento Valley Rose RWA

Congratulations! You've finished the first draft of your story. Now what? You know you need to revise and edit, but where do you start? Or maybe you're stuck in the dreaded 'sagging middle' and need a way out. Or maybe you can't seem to get started on that love scene/gritty action sequence/emotional denouement. I'll tell you what works for me, and maybe it will work for you, too. I start small and simple. This helps me in two ways: first, I make some necessary basic corrections; and second, I get some editing 'success' which gives me the confidence to tackle the bigger writing issues. So here are my five suggestions to gain

some confidence and success:

RUN SPELL CHECK – True, it doesn't catch everything (like the difference between to, too, and two), but you might be surprised at what it does catch (like a character's name spelled different ways). It also checks for some very basic grammar (like sentence fragments Do you really want that many of them so close together?).

SHOW DON'T TELL – Do a word search (the "Find" button in Word) for 'it was' and 'there was.' Both of these phrases are triggers for telling (It was a warm, sunny day.). Instead, rewrite the sentence in your character's point of view (Beads of sweat formed on John's forehead as he squinted in the bright sunlight.).

FIND AND REPLACE PET WORDS – Every writer has words they overuse. I had a critique partner who once used the word 'it' five times in one sentence! Do another word search, but this time, press the key that says "Reading Highlight" and select "Highlight All." The Word program will highlight every instance of your pet word so you can plainly see how many times you've used it. Don't know what your pet words are? Try finding these: had, just, that, very, back, really, so.

USE MORE ACTIVE VERBS – Do a search for 'was' and see how many times 'was' is followed by an 'ing' verb. See how many of the 'was ...ing' phrases you can replace with the simple 'ed' form of the verb. While not necessarily an inactive verb, the 'was ...ing' creates a kind of filter between your reader and your character, more like telling. Using the plain old past tense of the verb creates more immediacy and quickens the pace of your story. For example: John was staring across the street. John stared across the street.

ELIMINATE PRONOUN CONFUSION – Do a search for 'he' and make sure it is clear whom 'he' refers to (John and Jim went to the store and he bought a cookie. As written, Jim bought the cookie. Is that who the author meant?). Do the same for 'she.'

Now that you've had these small and simple editing successes, you'll have the confidence to take on the big writing and editing challenges, like plot holes, character arcs, sagging middles, and difficult scenes. Happy writing!

~*~*~

Loucinda McGary's two great passions are travel and writing. She likes to set her stories of romance and suspense in some of the exotic places she has visited. Find her on the web at:

<http://www.loucindamcgaryauthor.com/> or on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/loucinda.mcgary/>

Phyllis Laatsch

SVR newsletter editor

Writing as Philippa Lodge

French historical romances:

The Indispensable Wife

The Honorable Officer

The Chevalier

Henri et Marcel

History, Writing and ... stuff: <http://philippalodge.com/>

The following article first appeared in the July 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

...And Then My Brain Explodes by Leslie Marshman, In Print! Editor

How often do you see a Facebook post about a particular song an author listens to while writing? How many blog articles have you read that detail someone's writing playlist?

The first time I heard discussions about music to write by, I thought whaaaat? And the more this topic was discussed, the more I felt like some mutant freak. I can't listen to lyrics without being distracted from my writing. I've tried, because it seemed to be one of those writerly things one was supposed to do. I spent a happy afternoon enjoying the music, listening to the lyrics of the songs, and accomplishing no forward progress on my word count.

In an attempt to research this issue, thus proving I'm not the mutant freak I seem to be, I did what I always do. I Googled. Apparently, playing music with lyrics while writing causes the brain to shift rapidly between listening and creating. But the brain works more efficiently when paying attention to just one thing. It has something to do with burning too much glucose and releasing too much cortisol and creating too much stress. In other words...and then my brain explodes.

Listening to repetitive sounds or background noise like rain or waves actually works to improve focus by blocking out other distractions. And there's no denying that listening to music or songs you like can improve your mood. I have friends who play music before they begin writing to put them into the scene. Especially the bow-chicka-wow-wow scenes.

I'm impressed by those who can listen to lyrics and write at the same time, but I will never be a member of that camp. I prefer total silence, instrumental music, or ambient background noise (rain, waves, the clink of ice in a glass of tequila—whatever). And I realize now that I've always been this way. Even in college, I could rock out like nobody's business, but not while studying. When I cracked the books, I cranked up the volume on the moog synthesizer version of Switched-On Bach.

Yes, electronic classical music. I've always marched to the beat of my own drummer. And that's okay. Synthesized Bach may not make my panties melt, but it keeps my brain from exploding.

~*~*~

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. lesliemarshman.com
[@lesliemarshman](https://twitter.com/lesliemarshman)

Dew Drop Continuity

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

Stories due January 28!!

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)

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