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# Heart to Heart

North Texas Romance Writers of America

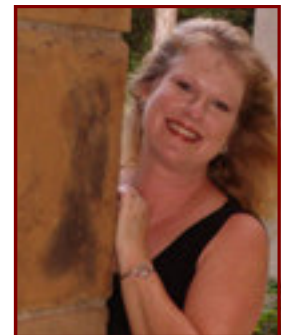


Next Meeting June 20, 2009

## THE DOLLARS AND SENSE OF PROMOTION

Our next meeting is Saturday, June 20th at 10:30 a.m. at the La Hacienda Restaurant where Sandra Ferguson will discuss how and where to expend promotional money and effort; explore advertising areas from branding to blogging; from websites to works (keywords for web advertising, that is); from signings to speaking engagements and how to make the moments away from the writing add up to the most successful promotion.

Sandra Ferguson, a freelance writer, calls Texas home. Her love of family and the Lone Star State influence her writing of romantic suspense, nonfiction articles and fillers, and anything else she can pen to paper that will pay the bills. Sandra has been a ten-year member of Romance Writers of America and North Texas Romance Writers. When not busy at the computer, Sandra divides her time among chasing her kids, the dog, the vacuum, and her husband. Visit with Sandra at her blog: [Lonestar Meanderings](http://Lonestar Meanderings) or [sandraferguson.net](http://sandraferguson.net) ‡





## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

"So 2009 is my year. It's my time to get that story on the page and finish projects that deserve to be finished. It can be your year too. Let's grab it together and do all we can to help ourselves further along the road to publication." *January President's Corner*

**Goals. Encouragement. Take Action. Keep Writing. Distractions. And the next step – Recognition.**

I didn't know if I was going to write about recognition since writing is such a subjective world. And by recognition I'm not only referring to contest finalists. You can't have recognition without putting your writing out into the world for criticism. Ooo...criticism.



Novices, experienced writers and published authors all receive harsh criticism or praise of their work. It's part of the writing (art) world. There are several reasons to enter a contest, the most important to get your work in front of an editor. But that's not a goal a writer can control. You have to get past the first round judges, and their criticism. Good or bad, whether you agree with the interpretation of your work or ignore all the advice, you have to be prepared that a stranger may not understand the words you agonized to get on the page. I'd like to tell you that it gets easier, but I don't think that's the case.

Back to recognition. Once found, it's super nice and makes you feel awesome. For me, it's definitely the stroke to my ego that keeps me submitting. Even the contests where I don't final, if there's one judge who really loves the story, who took the time to tell me they want to see the book on a shelf at a book store...well, let's just say that it justifies letting the clothes sit in the dryer a little longer while I write another paragraph. ‡

## 2009 OFFICERS

### Board of Directors:

#### -President

Angi Platt  
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#### -President-Elect

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#### -Hospitality

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#### -Great Expectations Chair

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#### -Audio Librarian

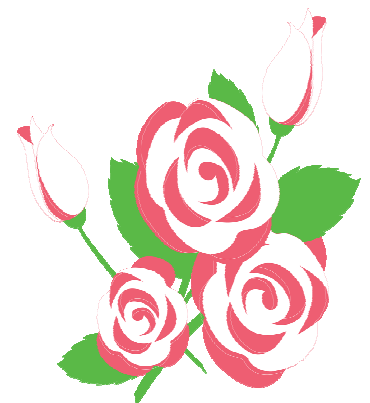
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## MAY MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER:** A regular meeting of the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on May 16, 2009, at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The president and treasurer were absent for the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 10:40 a.m.

### OFFICER REPORTS:

**President Elect, Gina Nelson reported:** The April minutes were approved and will be filed for audit. The next Board meeting will be held May 30, 2009, at 11:15 a.m. at the Olive Garden Restaurant on 114 in Grapevine. All members are welcome to attend.

**Membership Director, Shelley Kaehr reported:** We have 63 members. Two visitors were in attendance.

**Treasurer, Chris Keniston reported:** Gina Nelson reported for the Treasurer. The report was given and will be filed for audit.

**Program Director, Marty Tidwell reported:** The Writers Round Up prices for members will be \$65.00 in June. Installment payments for members will be accepted. Margie Lawson will present the program.

**Communications Director, Alley Hauldren reported:** The deadline for news for next month's newsletter is the Friday following the meeting. Alley has access to articles from other RWA chapters but would like articles from NT members.

**Web Site Director, Jen FitzGerald reported:** Please send articles or member news to be posted on the web site.

**PRO Liaison, Clover Autrey reported:** NT has two new PRO members: Tracy Bell and Susan Harrison. Marsha West received her PRO pin. PRO members can sign up for the PRO Retreat featuring Beta-reads in July.

### COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

**Audio Librarian, Nikki Duncan reported:** The audio library is brought to meetings. If anyone wants to borrow something special, please e-mail before the meeting. Members can borrow tapes or CDs after paying a one time

\$10.00 fee.

**Bead a Book Chair, Nikki Duncan reported:** Those who signed up will receive a bead for each 5,000 words written or 10,000 words revised.

**Great Expectations Chair, Marty Tidwell reported:** Mary Duncanson resigned as chairman for the 2010 contest. Members interested in chairing the 2010 or 2011 contest may speak with Angi Platt for details.

**Hospitality Chair, Marsha West reported:** NT will be donating a basket to the Pro Literacy Readers For Life book signing held at the RWA National conference in July. Members may contribute cash or gift cards from national chains directly to Marsha.

**Spotlight Chair, Shelley Kaehr reported:** Shelley presented a spotlight on Karen Whiddon after the meeting. Next month's spotlight will be on Clover Autrey.

There was no old or new business. The business meeting

### RIISING STAR AWARDS-- MOST PAGES WRITTEN

**Candy Havens - 360 pages**  
**Alley Hauldren - 100 pages**  
**Marty Tidwell - 80 pages**  
**Marsha West - 54 pages**

### SPUR AWARDS-- MOST PAGES EDITED

**Nikki Duncan - 481 pages**  
**Carolyn Williamson - 373 pages**  
**Marty Tidwell - 336 pages**  
**Candy Havens - 325 pages**  
**Marsha West - 300 pages**



## SPOTLIGHT: CLOVER AUTREY

**From Shelley Kaehr writing as Leah Leonard**

### **When did you first start writing?**

I wrote my first book 18 years ago and have been hooked on developing characters and putting them through hell ever since.

### **How did your background/childhood/experiences, etc. prepare you or your muse for your writing?**

I come from a very large family so there was always something going on and many different kind of characters around to draw from.

### **When did you first know this was more than just a hobby?**

Before I wrote my first book, I thought that being a writer had to be the coolest job in the universe. Every book I read, every movie I saw, I'd rewrite in my head.

### **How did you decide to make this your profession?**

It was inevitable. I wrote for sixteen plus years before getting published simply because I love it. I have several completed novels looking for a home. Well, okay, not all of them. Some I wrote while learning to write and should probably never see the light of day. They're kinda scary.

### **Your website mentions you are primarily a fantasy writer. How did you get interested in that genre and when did you begin writing it?**

Write what you love, right? I adore fantasy. Fell in love with it when I read a short story called *Sand Sister* by Andre Norton that was buried in an anthology. I fell instantly in love with the genre, especially how she had romance in all her books. Who knew that writing style would be dubbed the paranormal romance genre decades after she originally started it? There's just something about magical creatures and quests that I'm drawn to. I read a lot of different types of books, but every other one is a fantasy.

### **You've got some really neat books! Where do your ideas come from?**

Even within the fantasy genre I'm too stubborn to go with the norm. You won't find the standard elves or goblins in my books. I like to play with variations of mythological creatures

then change them up into my own so there is just enough similarities to be comfortable, but taken in a new direction. I've written variations of mermen, nymphs, animal empaths,



seers, demons, trolls, reapers, and a race with healing blood. There's so many possibilities with fantasy. But as far as getting ideas for stories, the characters come first. One time I was in the pool, gazing up at the clouds and I wondered what it would be like to be a mer-person, but one who didn't know it and was raised far from water. With just that thought, there came an entire book. It just seems to work that way, even with all the magical things surrounding them, I'm very much a character-driven writer.

### **Describe your journey to publication – who did you sell to first, how?**

My very first short story *Jase's Challenge* was published in a little known ezine, which no longer exists, called *Deep Magic* and then it went into their anthology. Even though it didn't bring me huge accolades it's a story close to my heart since I based two of the characters on my sons, one of which has cystic fibrosis. It's about two brothers who are trying to find an orphaned baby dragon a new mother and the way they interact with each other still pulls at my heartstrings. It took a few more years to have a full book published. I had a few bites after World Con, and then I decided to go smaller press and was picked up by The Wild Rose Press. I've been very happy with them.

### **How many rejections did you originally receive before getting a yes? Or did you sell right away?**

I wish. I have quite a rejection collection. And by sending different manuscripts to some of the same agents, I have a few identical form letters, even blurred in the same places.

### **Describe your philosophy on getting published. Is it skill, luck, timing or a little of all three? Please elaborate.**

*(Spotlight continued on page 5)*



(Spotlight continued from page 4)

I believe people make their own luck by being tenacious and resilient. If you want something bad enough then you will work at it and gain the skills you need no matter how long it takes or what path you have to travel to get there. Of course timing matters. Your manuscript could be wonderful, but the agent you approach just happens to have another client with a similar premise so they can't take yours. My dad taught me that when it comes to selling anything, there will be ten people who tell you no, but there will be one who says yes, so you have to push through the numbers to find that one.

**Do you have an agent? If so, do you think this is necessary and how did you get one?**

I do not have an agent, though I am certainly looking. Obviously I don't believe it's necessary to have one, but I'll bet it's a heck of a lot easier in many ways. Guess I'm still pushing through all the "No"s.

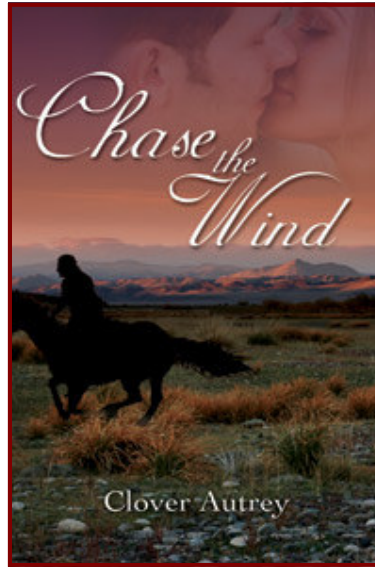
**Voice – when did you first realize your writer's voice was starting to take hold? After how many books?**

For me, it was a grammar issue that drowned out my voice. I'd just write and write, but when I went back to edit, the grammar was so horrendous that I completely edited out my voice. It just didn't sound the way I heard it in my head anymore. So I studied, poured over several grammar books, joined an online group where my work was slashed to pieces, but oh did I learn. Once I could see that my grammatical issues were no longer a problem and my pieces were no longer getting ripped to shreds, my voice was able to shine through. I think it gets better with everything I write. As it should. I hope every book I write is better than the last.

**Tell us about your friends and family. How have they supported your writing career?**

My family thinks I'm nuts, but since we are all very supportive of each other's "hobbies" they don't complain. Honestly, I

think they were all a little surprised when I finally got the call, er email. My best friend, Faith, on the other hand, totally gets it. As a writer herself and daughter of a multi-published author, she is the one I call first with any writerly angst or good news.



**Tell us briefly about your two latest published books.**

I have a series I'm writing for The Wild Rose Press about a people I've created who bond with eagles. I studied the habits of eagles and then gave all of their qualities to my Eaglekins, their mating behavior, dominance factors, and territorial issues. They are so much fun to write about, especially when their age-old traditions are challenged. The first book is called *Upon Eagle's Light* and the next one *Chase the Wind* will come out later this year.

**What advice would you give to writers who know in their hearts this is what they want to do? Any mistakes you've made you'd like to help others avoid? Any strokes of genius or personal epiphanies you'd like to share?**

If anyone knows in their heart this is what they want to do then nothing will stop them. Nothing. Even rejection after rejection. The hardest part for me, still is, is getting my query letters just right for the right editors. The fantasy queries are written different than a romance query. As soon as I read about how to write a query geared especially for romance is when I finally got some hits, which finally led to publishing. You can't underestimate those first letters.

**Please list your websites, contact info and anything else...**

I've got a bunch, too many really since I have a hard time keeping them all updated so I'll just list my website and blog. There are links there to my Myspace, Facebook, Twitters, Character Bar, Cystic Fibrosis blog, Fantasy Group blogs, and Sweet Romances recom-

mendation List, Goodreads. It's almost ridiculous.

Website: [eaglekinseyrie.com](http://eaglekinseyrie.com) Blog: [clovercheryl.blogspot.com](http://clovercheryl.blogspot.com)

‡





## MARKETING AND PROMOTION, E-PUBLISHING AND NY PUBLISHING: THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MARKETING AND PROMOTION & STEPPING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

By [Nikki Duncan](#) and [Misa Ramirez](#)

*(first released in the RWA PROspects Newsletter)*

It's never too early to begin marketing yourself and promoting your stories, but knowing how and where to begin can be tough. In this series of articles over the next few months, Misa and I will discuss the differences between marketing and promotion and share tips that we've learned along our paths to publication and things we've picked up since our first sales.

### What's the difference between marketing and promotion?

**ND:** Marketing is when you spread your name far and wide. Promotion is spreading the message of your product, your book, far and wide.

**MR:** Marketing and promotion work hand in hand. I see marketing as keeping me, the author, in the minds of readers. This is where branding comes into play and is a valuable tool. You can brand yourself, brand your book series, brand a character... and then use specific activities to promote that brand in every way possible. Building the brand--or marketing your name, your book, or your series--helps stimulate demand.

Marketing means committing to some sort of advertising (which can be free or paid) and publicity (meaning being mentioned in the press, having articles written, etc).

Promotion, on the other hand, focuses on one specific thing...like your first release. It focuses on immediate sales and means doing things to ensure that you're continuing to give your readers what they want. How you market this first release, or a book in one series, will likely be very different from how you market book 2, or a book in another series. Some promotional tools that work within a solid marketing plan (and you should have a plan!) include bookmarks, postcards, book signings, speaking engagements, informative web sites and paid advertisements found in publications like Publishers Weekly, Kirkus Reviews, etc. You have to be proactive in marketing yourself and promoting your book. Instead of bookmarks, I created recipe cards for *Living the Vida Lola*. This was a promotional tool. I then sent these recipe cards out to independent booksellers as part of my marketing plan. I also handed them out at book signings as a way to promote my presence at the bookstores.

To successfully market, you have to first identify your potential audience, and how to reach them. You then go back to promotion by using the 'brand' you already have in place (continued advertising, promotions, public relations, etc.) to reach that audience.

### I'm not outgoing. What can I do that will fit within my comfort zone?

**ND:** Judi McCoy said in a workshop recently, "You're a writer. You aren't allowed to be introverted." Marketing and promotion may be uncomfortable for you, but at some point if you hope to be a huge success you have to step outside of your comfort zone. You have to promo your books and talk to people. The internet can lessen the burden for you. People always think that I'm an extroverted person rather than introverted. "It's easy for you to join a group and get to know people," or "You leave a crowd feeling energized whereas an introverted person is exhausted afterwards," they say to me. Based on my natural tendencies, both statements about me are false. You've heard the phrase "Fake it till you make it." That's what you have to do.

It's my choice to succeed as a writer. To do that, I have to step out of my comfort zone, because no one is responsible for my success except me. In crowds of people I don't know, that means putting on a brave face. It means telling myself every day that I am not afraid of rejection and that I can handle it if someone doesn't want to be my friend, agent, or editor. Some groups are easier for me to meld into than others, but if I don't put the effort forth to let people get to know me then it's my fault. It's exhausting and draining and I crash into bed at night like a brainwashed zombie (is that an oxymoron?), but with the crash is a satisfaction that I've done what I can for the day to ensure my success.

**MR:** There are things you can do to look confident, even if you aren't feeling confident. If you're at a book signing, for example, try to stand. Don't sit behind a table! Have something to hand out (like the recipe cards I mentioned above). If you're handing something to someone, chances are they'll take it. They may not buy your book, but they're walking away with something concrete, something that has your name on it, your book title/cover, and it will act as a continual form of marketing.

*(Marketing continued on page 7)*



(Marketing continued from page 6)

With e-publishing, book signings don't happen, so you're off the hook! However, like Nikki said, creating an online presence is so important no matter what path you take to publishing. Maintain a professional attitude, find your voice and use it, and market yourself! It's not always easy, but it is part of the job. If you want to be successful, you have to devote a certain amount of time to the marketing of your books/brand. Eventually, it'll become more comfortable.

**ND:** To piggy back on what Misa said about e-publishing and book signings, keep in mind that in many cases there will not be book signings as an e-published author. However, there are e-publishers that release books in print as well as electronically, so you may still have the option of book signings if they're important to you. Regardless of the publishing medium, if you're nervous about a book signing, invite your friends and family to help create buzz during the event to people in and out of the store. Ask the CRM to make announcements throughout the event to encourage people to come see you. One author I know sends out eVites to everyone she knows when she has a book signing. Another holds only one book signing after each release and invites everyone she knows to

that signing. Both authors have huge turn outs. The people they know help put them at ease and draw in new readers by watching for people who are looking on to see what's happening. Caveat: It is important to not use these people as a crutch to keep you from talking to new people. Stay aware for people looking curious. Say hi, offer candy or a bookmark or something. You'll be amazed how many people will stop and chat with you, and even buy your book.

Next month we'll dive into types of marketing and how to approach it.

~ Nikki Duncan recently sold *Sounds to Die By* to Samhain Publishing. It will release in October 2009. She's a Golden Pen contest finalist, has done promo work, website design, and book videos for several authors for e-publishing and NY print books. More can be found out about Nikki and her writing at her website [www.nikkiduncan.com](http://www.nikkiduncan.com).

~ Misa Ramirez releases *Living the Vida Lola*, a Lola Cruz Mystery, in January 2009. The second book in the series will be released winter 2010. Misa is the co-founder of [www.chasingheroes.com](http://www.chasingheroes.com), was a middle school/high school Language Arts/English teacher until recently, and she helps Brenda Novak with her diabetes auction. More can be found out about Misa at her website [www.misaramirez.com](http://www.misaramirez.com).

## HEROSCOPES: THE GEMINI HEROINE

**By Bonnie Staring**

She's the talk of the town, talking about the town.

Born between May 22 and June 21, the Gemini heroine is the rule-bender of the Zodiac. She's a gal who thrives in environments where she can color outside the lines and make up the rules as she goes. This makes her a popular addition to any guest list – whether it's a wedding, garden party or monthly staff meeting, she'll make sure it's a happening event. Who knew how much fun a stapler could be?

The Gemini heroine is the master of change. Her adaptability and creativity are legendary, and so is her tendency to take on way too much. Let someone else steer the ship and spot the icebergs while she takes on the roles of cruise director, catering manager and makes sure the cabana boys know where to find the Lido Deck.

The way to a Gemini heroine's heart is to stand out from the crowd (in a good way). Be warned: she's the type who prefers a lengthy test drive to ensure things stay interesting past the third date. Ideal dates for her capture her attention, so treat her to a night of celebrity-spotting, a day of outdoor antiquing or an evening of dancing near the peak of an active volcano. Famous Gemini heroines include Anne Frank, Queen Victoria, Stevie Nicks and Marilyn Monroe.

~ Bonnie Staring is a comedic triple threat (writer, performer, coupon user). Her articles regularly appear in a variety of magazines and she conducts workshops on creativity and discovering your inner superhero. See what else Bonnie's been up to at [www.bonniestaring.com](http://www.bonniestaring.com) ‡



**Next month:**

**The Cancer Heroine**



## HOSPITALITY NEEDS HELP WITH NATIONAL'S "BASKET"

By **Marsha West, Hospitality Chair**



Wendy and I are working on the cowboy hat for our "basket" for nationals. Remember our theme is "Hats' off to Romance."

It's very important to bring your gift cards for \$5, \$10, \$15, \$10, \$25 or more to the meeting June 20th. They should be for National chains. You can also bring cash or send a check, and I'll pick up cards for you. A few people have already done that. We did such a great job last year, I know lots of folks are wondering what NT will come up with for this year. We need your help. The hat without much in it will not be nearly as cool as if we can fill it with goodies. Thanks so much. My mailing address is 7012 Allen Place Drive Fort Worth, TX 76116 Marsha R. West ‡

## BABS ~ BEAD A BOOK INTO SUBMISSION

By **Nikki Duncan**

As writers, the best way to get a story written is to write it. Seems like a simple concept, but most of us work and have families. Life easily intrudes into our writing time, minimizing the importance of getting those stories written. The BABS program is an incentive program. For every 5K new words written and every 10K words edited, you get 1 bead. Beads are accumulated to make whatever you want with them. Some suggestions include jewelry or book things.

Email me at [nikki@nikkiduncan.com](mailto:nikki@nikkiduncan.com) if you're interested in more information about the BABS program!



## AUDIO LIBRARY

By **Nikki Duncan**

Whether you're looking to improve your craft, get inside the head of a criminal, improve your approach to pitches to agents and editors, or trying to select the perfect publisher for you and your books the NT audio library has something for you. Finding answers to your questions is as easy as listening to a CD while you drive around. And it's inexpensive!

For a one-time \$10 donation to NT, you have access to the audio library. The library consists of workshops from previous conferences. You check out the CDs that pertain to your current goals at one meeting, listen to them over and over, and bring them back to the next meeting. Repeat the process.

Email me at [nikki@nikkiduncan.com](mailto:nikki@nikkiduncan.com) if you are interested in checking something out. If it isn't already on CD, I'll do my best to have it ready for you by the next meeting. If you need help figuring out what you may want to check out, I may be able to help you choose. I've listened to many of the offerings. ‡







## THE TIME CAPSULE: AUGUST 1990



*With the National Conference just around the corner, I found this story from the 1990 edition about a first timer NT member's trip to San Francisco very amusing. I hope you enjoy it too ...*  
Chris Keniston

### You Can Take the Girl Out of the Country, But...

By Rebecca Rosas aka Rebecca Palsley

Editor Paula Oates

I was totally prepared for the San Francisco conference. I had four-hundred dollars, sixty-three credit cards, a list of eighty-nine emergency phone numbers, my medical insurance card, and just in case all else failed to get me out of trouble, I also had my rosary, which has been blessed by every priest I've ever encountered since I got it in 1965. **Nothing** was going to happen to me in that city. Everything was going to go smoothly, because after all, I **am** a professional, and I can handle any given situation.

When I got there, the airport shuttle bus man was mean to me. I was alone in this huge city, and this man was being mean to me. I tried to be mature about it, but when I finally got into my hotel room, I sat down and cried. Then, through my tears, I saw the servi-bar. Dear, dear servi-bar. I had a drink, then immediately realized I was drinking alone. First sign of alcoholism. God, I'd only been in San Francisco for an hour, and I was already a drunk. I stopped drinking and tuned on the television to the hotel channel. The screen flashed: "Welcome Rebecca Rosas". My eyes widened. The TV knew me. I picked up my drink again.

I decided to go downstairs to see if I could find anyone I knew. I got on the elevator. A man was already in it. He stared at me with 'that gleam' in his eyes, and said, "You're looking good tonight." I felt nauseous. Trapped in the elevator with a sex maniac. I had left my rosary upstairs, and to make matters even worse, the guy wasn't even cute. He asked, "Are you a romance writer?" I just knew he was going to offer to help me write the hottest love scene that ever found its way onto a page. May all romance writers forgive me, but I denied knowing anything about "those books".

I fell asleep that night with one hand on my rosary, the other on the dear, dear servi-bar.

The next day was better. My Texas friends arrived, and I discovered that my roommate liked the servi-bar as much as I did. I met Nancy Yost, my editor, for the first time at the cocktail party that night. It was so neat to finally be able to put a face with the voice and handwriting I knew so well. I took fifty-

one pictures of her.

The workshops began the next day. I was trying to be as professional as I know how, but I was absolutely enthralled with the whole thing. To think that I was with all those writers! That I was eating the same Chinese stir-fry lunch in the same room as big agents and editors! Well, I just could hardly stand the excitement! As a new author, I got to wear a pink ribbon on my name badge, and I caressed it so often I nearly rubbed a hole in it. I met Tracy Farell, editor for Harlequin Historicals, and her hair is as naturally curly as mine! We talked about how everyone thinks we're lying when we say we've never had a permanent. I took her picture to send to my mother, who was under the mistaken impression that **no one** has hair as curly as mine. My book, *The Barefoot Bride*, was on sale at the book fair. I kept going in there, looking at it, and think, "Gosh, Beck, you're a writer, and you wrote that book. You're here in San Francisco with hundreds of other writers, your agent, your editor, and your own bar. What more could you ask out of life?"

Avon took its writers out to eat that night. The restaurant was just gorgeous. A private dining room, crystal chandeliers, place settings with twelve forks, seven spoons, five knives, sixteen different glasses... the whole elegant bit. The food was so fancy, I didn't even know what it was. After the entree, they served the salad. Salad **after** the entree? I later learned the salad was to 'cleanse the palate' before dessert. Well, I've never 'cleansed my palate' before, and I guess mine has been dirty for thirty-two years.

Anyway, I thought I'd done pretty well with my manners, and I was feeling rather smug...until I discovered that I had eaten Ellen Edward's bread. She's the Senior Editor at Avon, and I ate her bread. "Mortified" does not begin to describe how I felt, but Mama never told me your bread plate is always on your left, and never on your right. At home we always eat it out of the bag anyway. (For those of you who have read *THE BAREFOOT BRIDE*, you now know that I didn't have to work too hard to characterize Chickadee McBride. I just wrote what came naturally.)

Yes, I went to San Francisco totally prepared and with the firm vow to be a true professional. I guess I don't know what a professional is, because I messed up lots of times. But I had the time of my life. My advice to those who will be attending their first conference soon is **be yourself**. Have a good time. Learn. Laugh. Eat an editor's bread. Do it all. It's a lot like your very first kiss.

Scary, awkward, wonderful, memorable and over all too soon.

‡



## PROCESS EXAMINATION #6: THE MOTHER OF ALL REVISIONS

by Kellie Hazell

*The following first appeared in the October issue of Romance of the Desert, newsletter of the Saguro Romance Writers, edited by Kellie Hazell.*

This is the sixth unit in a series designed to help writers find or better employ the tools they use to write best.

Last month, I urged you to step back from process examination and let your subconscious mind direct the completion of the draft. This month, I encourage you to dive back into the analysis of what you're doing and why as you revise the draft.

The revision processes writers use are just as diverse as our draft creation processes. Before you start revising, it's a good idea to journal how you've handled revisions in the past and the pros and cons of that method. From there, consider how you might want to improve your revision process and establish a plan of attack first for the process you'd like to use and second for how that process will be applied to your draft. It's important again to establish a metric for monitoring your progress (pages revised, scenes completed, days until deadline, etc.).

Regardless of how you intend to revise, it's a good idea to spend some time pre-revising just as you would pre-writing. Pre-revising is a term I use for detailing those elements of the story I want to make sure are clear and effective in the final draft. I also find it extremely helpful to take the time to generate a story outline, character biographies, and story timelines at this point if I haven't done so already. Having this information handy and centralized will make some parts of revision infinitely easier than flipping through a draft to find the exact shade of blue you made the hero's eyes and so on.

As for revising itself, no matter how you tackle it, make sure that you are active not passive. That is, don't just read your story and expect all the right words to be there when you hit a rough patch. Before each session, create a ritual that gets you into the guts of your story so you know what each word is supposed to accomplish. Your revision should be tailored to meet the needs of each scene as it relates to your overall story. As before, monitor your progress as you revise and adjust as necessary, noting your reactions to your process.

Next month I'll wrap this series up and offer process suggestions for submitting your novel. ‡

## REAL MEN: ONE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

By Robert Forseth

When Dara asked me to write this article for the newsletter, I had to admit to myself that I wasn't sure what to write. All the way home from the meeting I was lost in thought and contemplating what exactly I should say. Now, reclining in my wicker-backed office chair and listening to the melodious tunes of Nora Jones, I was hit by an epiphany; or rather slapped upside the head was more like it!

What did I do? Unceremoniously ejecting Nora, I tore off my shirt, exposing my tanned and ripped upper torso [at least in my mind it's that way], slammed in the soundtrack for Top Gun and turned up the bass. Now, I sit back in my chair - with the heart defibrillating whine of jet engines starting - listening to real men's music.

Looking down at the epitome of man's stoic visage of power and masculinity I realized something; gravity had taken over! I couldn't see my belt buckle. Oh well! I guess this take on reality won't work for my introspective. So, I might as well begin with the meat and potatoes of it all.



*(Real Men continued on page 11)*



*(Real Men continued from page 10)*

Men are not like women! Take apart the fabric, the essence, the chemical, physiological and biological make-up and you still have a very different person. As writers, you women need to know this. We are not like you. You may have already guessed this one but, I had to make sure.

So, what is a real man? If you look back in time, you will find the outer shell of what a man is, as we have taken on the various rolls dictated by the social and moral compass. But this is not who we are either. Now, don't look to me as a norm or this will get you into trouble. I'm wired differently. Let's face it - I write romance! So, let us look deeper into the male psyche, shall we? Fundamentally, we think differently. There are a few different types of men and I think that we need to explore this for a moment.

We can be categorized into about three types. Pro-magna man, average Joe and, well, the ones with the feminine side kicking in. Let us begin this exploration with observing a man's reaction to something he doesn't like (we'll get to the other stuff in a moment). With Pro-magna, say the wrong thing and he goes to fists; no discussion. He's about beer, boobs and sports. The average Joe, on the other hand, will have words or a discussion with temperance of hostility but will still work it out with a beer. And the last man will - I don't know - go off in the corner and sulk? But he will let it go and have a glass of wine with you! Now a woman - wow - bad news!

Just watch the e-mails fly! They will practically hold discussion groups about it! Sorry, I was distracted there a bit. Reflection on my daughter and wife I guess.

Men have basic needs. They are: attract women, have sex and let the women provide for them. Okay, that's the lion family. Really, we do want to do that part - you know - provide, it's a pride thing, I guess. The sex part?

We think about it all the time. It drives us as a species. No kidding! I believe it was documented that we think about it once every three minutes. I must be getting old because I'm up to seven minutes. How often do women think about it? Once every three days, if that?

Now about the other stuff. As a man, we do care about the little things when it comes to who we are and what makes us who we are. We want to be masculine. We groom ourselves and try to make sure that we look good for you women (including trying to smell good). How we do this is based on our perception of ourselves and this is formed

over time as we grow up. This is important. Men form an idea of who they are based upon roll models from their youth. A policeman, fireman, cowboy, soldier, a dad, etc. From this, we base our lives and our standards that guide us as men and how we conduct ourselves with women and events in our lives.

That said, how does this apply to writing? We all need characters whether they are the sideline fillers, the next novel's main star or this story's hero. What makes up a hero? Let's face it; Mr. Pro-magna doesn't cut the mustard, does he? After all, he's a bit too brutish. Now take average Joe, a man of the 90's who is form-fitted into the new millennia and sensitive to women's needs and he has some sense of style. He cares about how he looks for his girl. When called upon, he will let her dress him, after all, we seldom have true taste and surely can't do that properly, but, he will, in turn, be attentive to her needs as well as being mindful of his roll by her side. He is courageous in the eye of adversity and will gallantly defend her to the death. Make no mistake; a man will die for a woman. A man who truly believes, as I do, that a woman is someone to worship, admire and protect, will do just that. No man should dare speak ill of his gal if he doesn't want to fire up that boiler. It will blow!

Now the man on the opposite side of Mr. "P", he will not always stand up for the same values but we are not talking about the norm here. That doesn't make him less of a man or at times not a hero; he is far more diplomatic and eloquent is all, but will look to other avenues to find a resolution.

Men have always been the same. Maybe in the past we couldn't express ourselves in the same ways we can now but we have believed in the same values. Expression was different, that's all. Social constraints - we all have them and most live by them.

So, where does this blathering lead you? Hopefully to a better understanding of what a real man is. We can't be everything in one package and I guess that is the short line of it all. So building a man for your novel has to be formed on a basis that supports who real men are. Unless men don't read this stuff and therefore you can build whatever you like! How does your man fit into these categories? Does he pay attention to the little things that you do, like the way you whisk your hair out of your eye when you find yourself engaged in a stimulating conversation? Or the way that you pull at your ear when you're nervous? Is he even house broken? There are lots of little things that help bring in a man grounded in reality.

In retrospect, I find that after writing this article I now have to ask myself the question; am I a real man? Hell no! I'm Bond, James Bond! ‡



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## MEMBER NEWS

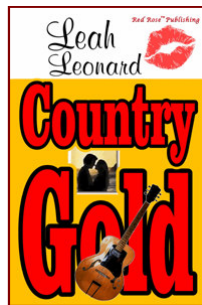
**See Jane Run**  
By Angi Platt  
Made the  
Daphne de Maurier  
Category Final!



Candy Haven's  
**Dragons Prefer Blondes** from  
Berkley Trade will  
be out  
July 7, 2009!

Shelley Kaehr sold her novel  
**Man of the Year**  
(writing as Leah Leonard)  
as well as her short story  
"The Toy Store" to  
Red Rose Publishing!

Country Gold  
by Leah Leonard  
(Shelley Kaehr)  
is now out from Red  
Rose Publishing



RWA PRO Liaison  
Sherry Davis's  
book, **Here Comes the Bribe**,  
published by The  
Wild Rose Press,  
will be out in June,  
2009!

Marty Tidwell's  
**Diamonds Aren't Forever** is a  
finalist in RWA-San Diego's Spring  
into Romance Contest in the  
contemporary single title category!

Jax Cassidy's  
**Sunswept**,  
published by  
Phaze Publishing,  
will be released  
May, 2009

