



HEART TO HEART

North Texas Romance Writers of America

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER—OCTOBER 2009

“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. Recognition.

Write some more. Submitting. Waiting. And the next step – Writing Again.

You’ve finished. You’ve submitted. And now you’re waiting.

What’s the next step? Well one path may be to enter the RWA® Golden Heart contest with your finished manuscript. It’s that time of year. Don’t forget to join RWA PRO® since you’ve finished a manuscript and submitted. But the writing step we need to take is to plot, research, plan, and start writing again.

After all the revision this past year, it’s difficult to put new ideas and new words on the page. But it’s a must. Try joining a book in a week loop and just writing on anything. Get as many new words on the page as possible.

Need a new idea? Try some writing exercises to see if that gets your muse jump-started. Review old manuscripts (but I advise to review only if you’re pursuing publication on that particular work). Start a completely new story by free-writing. Take your fresh ideas from wherever they’re given. Are you keeping a notebook (physical or electronic) of ideas? Writing down great character names, situations, or locales?

Last month I attended the Baylor game with my daughter. Each freshman that attends the week-long orientation receives a “Line” shirt. Each shirt has a name printed on the back. After half-time, several freshman walked by and I noticed the name on a shirt: Malcatraz. Woah! I was immediately hit with a new hero--had the full picture of him in my head. His friends call him Traz, but the heroine calls him Mal (for malcontent). By Monday, this guy was Jack Malcatraz Jr. He goes by Traz because his family calls him “Little Jack,” which of course drives him crazy.

At this time, I’m writing a historical...so Traz is impatiently waiting in his own story file. Hopefully my subconscious writer is working on the perfect situation and imperfect heroine for him. ‡



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AUGUST MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on September 19, 2009 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The president and secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:36 A.M.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President, Angi Platt reported:

Payments for the Margie Lawson seminar may be made through PayPal. Critiques donated for the seminar include awesome authors Lorraine Heath and Tami Cowden

Membership Director, Shelley Kaehr reported:

NTRWA now has 74 members. Our visitors were: Jean Marie Brown, Kim Quinton who writes contemporary romance and romantic suspense, Cynthia Scarbrough who writes romantic suspense. Both Kim and Cynthia joined NTRWA at the meeting.

Program Director, Marty Tidwell reported:

In October Shelley Bradley will be speaking on The Business of Writing. 37 people have now registered for the Margie Lawson seminar.

Website Director, Jen FitzGerald reported:

An article by Clover Autry is up on the NTRWA web site.

PAN Liaison, Shelley Bradley reported:

Planning for a published author retreat is in progress.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

Audio Librarian, Nikki Duncan reported:

Dreamin' in Dallas CDs/cassettes are available to give away.

Hospitality Chair, Marsha West reported:

15 baskets are needed for the Margie Lawson seminar. Critiques from published authors will be available for the silent auction.

The business meeting was adjourned at: 10:53 a. m.

RITA® & GOLDEN HEART® DRAWING



Each year NTRWA has a drawing to encourage its members to enter the RWA® Golden Heart® and RITA® contests. Last year, Laura Martello won the NT drawing and went on to become a finalist.

Members must complete the entry form. A name will be drawn from those entering at the October meeting. The entry form is available on-line ([members only section](#)), in the [YahooGroups file section](#), or you can email President@ntrwa.org.

Please submit the forms electronically (or via mail) by Thursday, October 15th. You do not need to attend the October meeting in order to receive the entry fee reimbursement. NTRWA can either pay the entry fee directly for you, or will need a copy of your entry receipt in order to reimburse you.

The drawings are open to all members-in-good-standing (as of October 15, 2009) of NTRWA who meet the eligibility requirements for the RITA® or the Golden Heart® and, in the case of the Golden Heart® drawing, are members of RWA PRO® as of October 15. ‡



RISING STAR AWARDS MOST PAGES WRITTEN

- Shelley Kaehr —567 pgs
- Shelley Bradley-- 230 pgs
- MaryDuncanson--107 pgs
- Nikki Duncan--100 pgs

SPUR AWARDS MOST PAGES EDITED



- Shelley Bradley--585 pages
- Nikki Duncan-- 570 pages
- Jerrie Alexander-- 300 pages
- Mary Duncanson-- 247 pages
- Michelle Welsh-- 220 pages

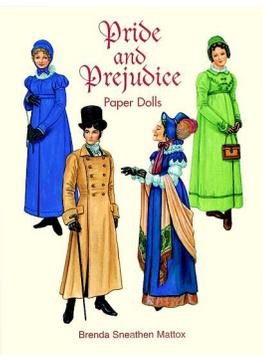


A TIP ON HISTORICAL FASHIONS

By Sarah Winn

The following article first appeared in the Sept. 2009 issue of HeartLine, the Heart of Carolina newsletter.

I write mostly historical romance. Unfortunately from a research standpoint, I have not settled down into one particular era. While I've written mostly in the 1800's, fashions changed rapidly in that century. Starting with the straight skirt and empire waistline of the Regency Period, dresses moved to the bell-shaped skirt that grew into a near umbrella-shape with the



wide hoops of the 1860's. Hoops were replaced by bustles of various sizes until the 1890's when the straight skirt returned.

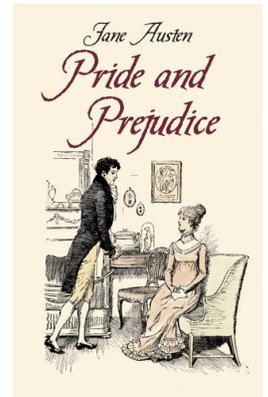
Finding reference books that not only accurately described these changes but also give inspiring, color illustrations is sometimes difficult and always expensive. I noticed paper doll books

of various periods being offered by Dover Publications, Inc., ordered one, and quickly became hooked. I recently completed documenting the fashions of the 1800's with Dover's, *Pride and Prejudice Paper Dolls*. This charming little collection contains multiple costumes from five female and three male characters from Jane Austen's book.

Using supplies that can be obtained from most craft stores, I've assembled my fashion collection into a scrapbook. Costumes were pasted onto white sheets of paper that are held in plastic sleeves. The sleeves not only protect the pasted-on prints, but also make it possible to rearrange the pages as I add to the book. Dolls and costumes need not be trimmed exactly since they are printed and mounted on white paper. The covers for the scrapbook are held together by metal screws and these have extensions so that book can be expanded.

To avoid pages full of headless costumes, since there is only one doll for a number of different costumes, I scan the heads and sometimes, when necessary, the feet or hands of the dolls into a graphics program on my computer. I transfer a copy to Word and experiment with trial and error printings until I got printed heads the same size as the original dolls. Then I make as many copies as needed to give each costume a full figure. Printing the heads on specialty (shiny) paper makes them more compatible with the costumes.

After pasting heads to costumes, I spread the dolls, along with any descriptive material I might want to keep from the book, around my living room, so I can arrange them as I want them to appear on the pages. Since no children live at my house, it can be a bit embarrassing if friends drop in unexpectedly, but I look them squarely in the eye and say, "This is research." I use the front and backs of each sheet of paper, so it's helpful to lightly initial the upper right corner on one side of a sheet and the upper left corner on the other side, before I start pasting, to be sure I keep the pages properly orientated.



At the beginning of this article, I may have implied that this is an inexpensive way to collect historical fashions. Let me be more specific. The paper doll books from Dover cost about \$7 each. I have six books in the collection I've just finished. The scrapbook supplies cost about \$25 on sale, and I've had to buy additional glue and filler sheets. But I now have 201 color prints of costumes covering all the major fashion trends of the 1800's for adults and children, males and females. I could have saved more by skipping the scrapbook and referring directly to the paper doll books, but where's the fun in that?

If you're interested, you can see many of the books available from Dover Publications at www.doverpublications.com. If you get on their mailing list, they happily send snail-mail catalogues.

~Sarah Winn's latest historical, *The Fetching Foundling* from Whiskey Creek Press Torrid, is set in 1851, the year of the Crystal Palace. www.SarahWinn.com †

Bead A Book Into Submission

The BABS program is an incentive program for our members. For every 5K new words written and/or every 10K words edited, you get one bead. Email Nikki Duncan, at BABS@ntrwa.org if you're interested in more information about the BABS program!



DIALOGUE, IT'S NOT JUST TALK

By Janet K. Brown

The following article ran in the Sept. 2009 issue of *Love Letters*, the newsletter of Red River Romance Writers in Wichita Falls, TX.

Here is my diagnosis for making dialogue dynamic:

D ~ Different Goals

The best dialogue comes when two characters desire different goals from the conversation. This provides tension, and dialogue should always have tension.

I ~ Interview your characters

Find out how they would answer certain questions even if the questions aren't posed in your manuscript. This deepens your knowledge of a character's reaction.

A ~ Action

Fiction and non-fiction are similar to stage plays. Dialogue is more than words. We need gestures, body language, even moments of silence to set the stage, put the reader into the story.

L ~ Listen to your characters talk

Each one should have their own way of talking, so that we recognize the speech without putting their name to the line of talk. Educated/use slang? Pet names? Recurrent phrases?

O ~ Out loud reading

Prose and poetry have meter in common. When you read your work out loud, does it have rhythm, cadence, and energy? Is it missing a word or is it three words too long? You can only tell by reading it out loud. Be sure if you change it, to read it out loud again.

U ~ Use of dialogue

Dialogue only has three uses.

1. Move the story along.
2. Intensify characterization
3. Both



If none of those uses apply, then take out the dialogue.

E ~ Eliminate words

Dialogue should be concise. Eliminating words that we've slaved over and think are beautiful is hard, but sometimes necessary. We can strengthen by elimination. One part of speech to eliminate almost totally is adverbs like almost totally.

- > Beats or tags? Which is best?
- > Beats - gestures/body language
- > Tags - he said

Sometimes using neither is best.

Summary advice to helping your dialogue:

1. Read every day from your favorite writers- both in your chosen genre and in other genres.
2. Periodically read or reread a writing craft book or take an online course. For help with writing books, check my group blog. <http://www.bookstowriteby.blogspot.com>
3. Write something every day even if you delete it and start again the next day.

~ Janet K. Brown loves and lives dialogue in short stories, romances and women's fiction in Wichita Falls, TX. ‡

Audio Library



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, Nikki Duncan, at librarian@ntrwa.org to check out a CD.

Yellow Rose Award

Throughout the year, many of you give to our chapter in countless ways, big and small. Each year we honor one of our members for their devoted service with the Yellow Rose Award. It's time to nominate this year's honoree. Choose someone who is not on the NT Board, but who serves with enthusiasm nonetheless.





T IS FOR TITLE

by Kathleen Coddington

This article first appeared in Sept. 2009 Bouquet of Romance, Pocono Lehigh RW, Easton, PA. Kathy Kulig, Editor

As authors we often spend hours wracking our brains for the perfect title that will not only grab the reader's attention, but will also best exemplify our story. In the end, as is often the case, after all our hours of agonizing over just the right choice, our publisher weighs in. They either change the title or assign us that task, which is exactly what happened with my second book. Originally titled "Love's Tangled Web", after I submitted it my editor informed me that I had to find a new title because the company already had a similarly named novel. After days of crumpled paper filled with possibilities, "Mistress of Deception" became the new choice. All that hard work got me to thinking about titles in general. Titles and covers help sell books, so here are a few helpful tips to keep in mind when selecting your next title:

- * Make sure the title fits the tone, theme and genre of your story.
- * Keep it short. Use descriptive nouns and short words with lots of punch. *Taken, Defiance, Signs*—there's a reason why movie makers and publishers use titles like these.
- * Consider alliteration or tried and true words with a twist, like *Pride and Prejudice, Miss Understanding, Mythalliance, Made of Honor*.
- * Shoot for something original. Run a search on Amazon.com. If you get lots of hits, it might be wise to choose a new title. On the other hand, titles can not be copyrighted, so if the absolute perfect title for your book has already been used, feel free to use the same title.
- * Brainstorm. List a bunch of possible choices, then list some more. Look to poetry, folklore and fables, Shakespeare and the Bible for ideas.
- * Look to your book for ideas. Focus on the stories theme—revenge, forgiveness, justice, etc. One of those words might do the trick. Or perhaps a line of prose or dialog holds the key to the story and hence to a fantastic title.
- * Have a backup in case your publisher doesn't like your first choice or has just bought a book with the same or a similar title.
- * Reserve a page in a notebook for possible titles. Sometimes the best ideas come in the middle of the night, even from a

snippet of a dream so keep a pencil and the notebook handy. Or set up a file for titles as I've started to do. I often query my critique partners for words they would use to characterize my story or to help select those titles that most resonate with them

On a lighter side, according to the list of titles up for 2008's Diagram Prize (a prize awarded by the British publishing magazine *The Bookseller* for the oddest title of the year) there are a few authors out there who obviously have very different ideas about choosing titles. Among my favorite entries: *I Was Tortured by the Pygmy Love Queen, If You Want Closure in Your Relationship, Start with Your Legs, and Cheese Problems Solved*. Of course it's hard to beat the catchy title of the first prize ever awarded in 1978, *Proceedings of the Second International Workshop on Nude Mice*. Apparently mice have a whole other life we know nothing about.

First impressions are important so give your next title the attention it deserves.

~ Kathleen Coddington writes paranormal and historical romance. She currently has three books published with Cerridwen Press. To find out more about her, visit her website at www.kathleencoddington.com or go to www.jasminejade.com.‡



Great Expectations Contest 2010

Deadline is December 30th of this year. Twenty-five pages for \$20.00 as an NT member. You can't beat that price anywhere. And it's getting harder to find a contest that provides three judges' comments.

We'll be drawing for a free entry fee at the December meeting (you must be present to win). Entrants must be unpublished and uncontracted in book-length romantic fiction (over 20,000 words). Published authors must be unpublished and uncontracted in the category entered.

For information on how to enter or judge, please contact: GEcoordinator@ntrwa.org.



PLOTTING THE ROMANCE: THE BASICS

by **Margaret Moore**

The following article appeared in the September 2009 issue of *romANTICS*, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor.

In a romance novel, the romance, or the developing of a committed relationship, is the primary plot. In other words, it's about the emotional journey of the characters from strangers or friends/enemies to lovers and to a committed partnership. All other elements of the story—suspense, mystery, opening a restaurant, for instance—are secondary. Their primary function is to provide situations for the romance to develop. In other words, the activity of the story is the catalyst/conduit for the developing relationship.

In terms of plotting basics:

Act I:

In a romance, the "inciting incident" is not necessarily the first thing that happens. The inciting incident of a romance novel is "the meet"—the first time the hero and heroine confront each other in your story.

Several other things should also happen in Act I:

1. Set the stage. Where and when is the story taking place?
2. Introduce the hero and heroine.
3. The meet -- how, when, and why do the hero and heroine meet? What are their first impressions of each other?
4. Introduction of the conflicts (internal and external) that are going to work against the relationship.

In the first act, the internal conflicts don't have to be, and indeed shouldn't be, described in great detail. They should be indicated/hinted at/implied. The details, and especially the motivations of the characters, should be revealed more in the middle, to keep it from "sagging." Tell too much in the beginning, you've got nothing left for the middle.

Act II:

In a romance, this is where the relationship develops and intensifies. This is, usually, where the characters fall in love (unless you're doing a love-at-first-sight story).

The characters learn more about each other—what makes each other "tick," their issues and their history. They discover

the explanations for the other's "problem" and gain sympathy, empathy and understanding. This is where trust develops.

This is also, but not always, where the relationship becomes more physically intimate—first touch, first kiss, first time they make love. If the relationship is already physical, this is still where the emotional development of the relationship takes place.

Act III:

In a romance, the crisis that precipitates the ending of the novel should also threaten the survival of the romantic relationship between the hero and heroine. It can be physical or it can be internal (hearing something that shakes the heroine's faith in the hero, for instance).

This is also known as "the black moment" in a romance—when the romance seems hopelessly doomed and there can't be a happy ending for this couple.

At the climax, both the internal and external plots—the romance and the rest of the story—come together. The danger is overcome and survived; the problems are solved; the necessary confessions are made; love is shown/proven/revealed.

The successful resolution of both the external and internal conflicts create the satisfying ending. However, the denouement of a romance must also tie up any loose ends (i.e. ensure that the subplots have also concluded satisfactorily), and, most importantly, must also leave the reader convinced that this couple is in a long-term, committed relationship.

~ USA Today bestselling author and past president of Toronto Romance Writers, Margaret Moore has written over forty historical romance novels and novellas for Harlequin, Avon and HarperCollins Childrens Books. Her latest novel, *The Viscount's Kiss* (Harlequin Historical, August 2009), features a naturalist who loves spiders and a woman who loathes them. Visit Margaret at www.margaretmoore.com ‡

Cover Autrey is the [Fort Worth Romance Novels Examiner at Examiner.com](#). She has an interview of Wendy Watson and her new book, *I scream, You Scream* there now called "[Wendy Watson Scoops Out Mysteries](#)".



MY FIVE BIGGEST WRITING MISTAKES (SO FAR)

By Christine Ashworth

The following appeared in the March 2009 edition of *LARA Confidential*, the newsletter of the Los Angeles Romance Writers. Talia Clare, Editor

Mistakes happen in every profession. An actor who goes in for a stage audition, without memorizing the monologue first, has made a mistake. (Yeah, did that one.) And then there's the professional ballet dancer auditioning for a new company, who leaves her pointe shoes back at the hotel. Big mistake. (Uh, yep. Did that one, too.) What about the temporary secretary, who purchases some artwork for her office and then expects the boss to pay for it? That mistake could cost your job. (Okay, okay. I admit it. My excuse is, I was very young and full of myself. And yeah, I did lose my job. But I still have the artwork.)

So it won't come as any surprise when I tell you that writers make mistakes, too. Here are a few that I've made in my six plus serious years of writing. Hopefully, by sharing my dirty laundry, you'll be able to avoid them (or maybe recognize them in yourself) and nip them in the bud.

1. The Beginner's Rewrite Mistake

Before I actually decided to give writing my all, I dabbled. "Dipped my toe in", so to speak, while earning a living, having kids, and buying a house. I came up with great characters, terrific plots, and then tried to put them together in a novel. Wrote a chapter or two, over several months, mind you—and then got stuck. Of course! The first two chapters were crap. I couldn't go on if those chapters weren't completely right. So I rewrote them, and rewrote them, until I made myself sick even thinking about those characters. I think I went ten years without finishing that novel. (In my defense, this was pre-RWA, pre-LARA, and pre-every writing book ever published.)

Getting it right: Do yourself a favor. Keep writing, and don't look back. Just plough your way through the book, even though you're not sure where your novel is going. Until it's done, you won't be able to see it clearly. And as Nora says, 'you can't rewrite a blank page'.

2. The Sexy New Idea Mistake

This is another face of the Rewrite Syndrome. I had finished a couple novels and felt pretty good about myself. So I started another one, an idea that kinda came to me. Once I got half-way through it, though, the bloom wore off. The romance was over. I hated my characters, hated the plot, and couldn't care

less if the hero and heroine got together for smoochies. So when a new story beckoned, it became impossibly exciting, forbidden even. The hero and heroine are dynamic, the plot so compelling. And sexy? Honey, it's all you can do to NOT put those two in bed together! And so I abandoned one story in order to tackle the Sexy New Idea.



What a mistake. Because inevitably, that one, too, stalled when another Sexy New Idea beckoned. I wasted almost a year jumping from story to story, which did not endear me to my writing buddy. (I can still hear her say, "Will you finish something so I can read it?!")

Getting it right: Write the Sexy New Idea down in a journal for later, then force yourself to finish the current novel. After all, you can't sell it if it's not finished, right? May as well put your time in, and hone your craft.

3. The Know-It-All Mistake

This one was more personal, and more difficult for me to overcome. I'd been writing for...well... ever. Both my dad and my brother had published books, and lots of them. So what was the big deal? I knew what to do. I'd watched them, saw them cash the checks. They'd made a living doing it. It was in my blood, right? I had this writing thing down, man. I knew exactly what to do.

Uh, yeah. Not so much. Writing is one thing, and one thing only...writing. Actually doing the work, day after day after day. I didn't know it all: I had plenty to learn. A part of that was learning to play nice in critique groups—how to say circumspectly what it was I was trying to say, and still have them respect me in the morning. It took several embarrassing stumbles before it hit home - I truly didn't know everything. I still don't know everything. And the funny thing about that is, the older I get and the more I write, the more I realize I still need to learn.

Getting it right: This one is two-pronged. Keep writing. Push on through until you get to 'The End.' Also, keep your mind open and think twice before you speak, when giving or getting a critique. After all, there is still so much to learn, no matter how long you've been writing.

(Five Biggest Writing Mistakes continued on page 9)



(Five Biggest Writing Mistakes continued from page 8)

4. The Eager Pitcher Mistake

Okay, so there I was. I'd gone to RWA National a couple of times, pitched, failed, succeeded, and still wasn't published. (What's up with that?!) So, I went to a smaller conference in April a few years back, where I had an appointment with an editor that I REALLY wanted to publish with. But I had nothing—I mean nothing—written that would fit the house she worked for. So I came up with three ideas that sounded right. That would fit the line the editor worked for. I honed those pitches to perfection. In my meeting with the editor, I was bubbly, passionate about my three pitches—and stunned when she actually chose one that she wanted to see.

The only problem was, it hadn't been written. So after panicking the minute I got home, I started writing it. And it sucked. Not totally, not completely, but I didn't know the line well enough to write for it. By November (7 months later, ahem), I'd exhausted myself trying to write something that wasn't my style. I sent her a note, telling her a little white lie (something about a family illness), and that I was sorry but I wouldn't be sending her my manuscript. (Okay, that might have been going overboard—surely she didn't remember me or my pitch—but I felt guilty.)

Getting it right: Do yourself a favor. Don't sign up for a pitch appointment at any conference if you don't have the manuscript finished. Don't think you'll race to finish it in the month or two before the conference—real Life has a way of slamming you when you least expect it. Trust me on this one. I've done it more times than I can count, and no one yet has bought the book.

5. There's Gotta Be A Shortcut Mistake

Because of my innate arrogance (see Mistake # 3), a few years into the writing, I figured I'd get a leg up if I read all the writing books, listened to all the tapes, talked to all the published writers and went to all the conferences I could in search of the elusive shortcut to becoming a bestselling author. Because, you know. "There's Gotta Be A Shortcut."

Getting it right: Yeah, about that. Eight novels on, I've come to realize that not only are there no shortcuts, but that I'm still in my apprenticeship as a writer. The only shortcut is to stop procrastinating, sit down at the computer, and write. Go to bed, get up, and do it all over again. That's my current plan. One of these days, the book will be solid enough, amazing enough, to push me from apprentice to journeyman.

But the only way I'll get there is to keep writing, no matter what.

May you have the stamina to do the same!

~ Christine Ashworth has been a member of RWA and LARA since 2002. She's been writing for six years and has completed eight novels, with at least twenty novel partials that have fallen to the Sexy New Idea Syndrome. Her day job a victim of the souring economy, she's currently holding office hours at the Coffee Bean in Simi Valley from 8am to noon, most weekdays, with the help of her laptop, her iPod, and the gracious CB&T crew who keep her in coffee and bagels. If you're ever in the neighborhood, stop by and say hello. ‡

Conference is coming!

It's gonna be great. It will be even greater if you help. We need folks to make up baskets, which we can use for the raffle. What we hope happens is a two to four of you work together on what you'd like in a basket. Is it wall-to-wall chocolate in all its various forms? Is it perfumed lotions and gels to make our bodies soft? Maybe your deal is popcorn, Milk Duds, and DVD movies starring your favorite hunk. Maybe you always want to bid on those baskets with baked goods in them (remember conference is in November.) Which reminds me, **baskets with holiday themes will go well, too.** Engage those wonderful imaginations you all have and come up with even better ideas than those above. So far we only have nine, and I'd like to have at least fifteen.

Please **one** of you Email me the name(s) of the group and your basket idea. I personally don't think we can ever have too many baskets of chocolate, but I wouldn't be as thrilled if it was all bath salts. After you put the basket together, tape to the outside a list of all the items and the approximate cost.

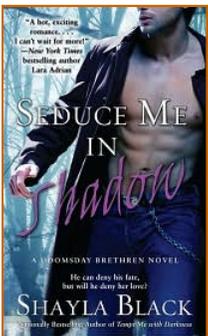
Based on the experience of other conferences, we believe this can be financially beneficial to the chapter. We offered extremely low prices and generous payment terms for our own members to encourage greater participation than we've had in the past. We've got an outstanding speaker, and two neat agents. If you are coming, **bring your basket with you to the hotel either Friday night or Saturday morning.** If you are **not attending**, you can still contribute a basket. **We can find a place close to you to drop it off or we can have someone come get it from you,** but you must let me know at mwest7012@sbcglobal.net That way you too can choose to be a part of our first ever, Texas Two Step.

~ Marsha R. West, Hospitality ‡

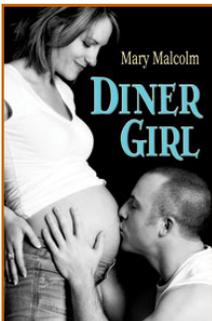




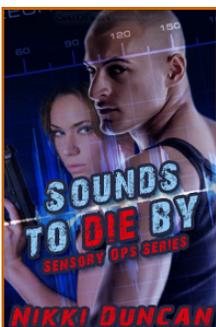
MEMBER NEWS!



Wendy Watson and Shelley Bradley (writing as Shayla Black) will be signing books after the October NT meeting, so 10/18 @ 2pm at the B&N in Hurst. I'll be signing *Seduce Me in Shadow* (and possible backlist) and Wendy will be signing *I Scream, You Scream*.



Diner Girl by **Mary Malcolm**
 "This is *not* your average Cinderella story. It is, in fact, so much more. Superbly written and a definite keeper, this is a story everyone should enjoy at least once. I highly recommend *Diner Girl*."

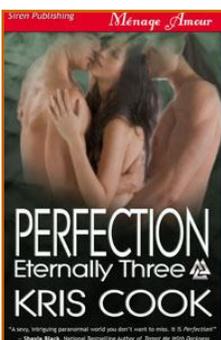


Nikki Duncan's *Sounds to Die By* will be released by Samhain Publishing Oct. 13th, 2009.

Angi Platt now has representation by Jill Marsall of the Marsall/Lyon Agency. She loved *See Jan Run* and is very excited about the manuscript!

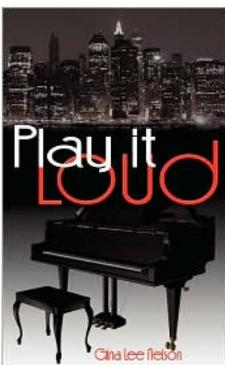


Congratulations! **Nancy Connally** was approved on Sept. 1 for PRO!



Lee Swift, writing as Kris Cook, received 5 Stars for *Perfection*! From [Just Erotic Romance Reviews](#) (JERR): "Eternally Three is one of the sexiest reads I have experienced in a long time!" - "Micki's character is the strongest heroine that I have ever read..." - "...the sex in the book is AMAZING!" - "I can't wait for the next entry in the series."

Lee / Kris also has an interview at [Book Junkie's Contest](#)



Gina Lee Nelson's *Play It Loud* got a great review at Long and Short Reviews. Gina said "she makes wonderful analogies between my writing and the New York music scene, the main character of my story."



PRO SOUND-OFF

with **Maria Connor**

The Question: You recently achieved PRO status, which means you completed and submitted a book! What advice do you have for those who are still struggling to finish their manuscripts?

I recently read a comment from a published author about a motivational writing challenge organized by an RWA chapter designed to encourage aspiring writers to finish an entire manuscript within a set period of time. Essentially, the gist of her message was that writers who need to be prodded to write or finish a manuscript lack the self-discipline to ever become published.

Truly critical and disheartening words for any writer struggling to pursue a career as a romance novelist. First, it implies that simply cranking out 55,000, 75,000, or 120,000 words is enough to get you across that threshold to publication. But even more than it, it undermines any effort put forth by those who dream of walking into a bookstore to see their name next to the likes of Nora Roberts, Julia Quinn, and Jayne Ann Krentz.

Having been a member of various chapters for a number of years, I've encountered many, many talented writers who struggle with finishing their WIPs. I believe the "three-chapter" syndrome (writers who only finish the first three chapters before abandoning the manuscript) is a common ailment, and I don't think the single cause for it is a lack of motivation. Quite frankly, I think motivation has very little to do with it. I think perhaps writers don't know how to channel their motivation effectively; in other words, "How do I write this book?"

So if it isn't a lack of discipline or motivation keeping writers from completing their manuscripts, what is? Maybe it's one of the following:

- Unrealistic expectations
- Lack of a firm deadline
- Lack of time
- Lack of skill
- Overwhelmed by magnitude of the project
- Fear of failure

(PRO Sound-OFF continued on page 11)



(PRO Sound-OFF continued from page 10)

- Distracted by new ideas and challenges
- Trying to write to the market and/or unable to find their "voice, niche"
- Lack of confidence
- Feeling like the chances of actually getting published are too slim
 - Discouraged, frustrated by lack of progress
 - Distracted by workshops, how-to books, etc.
 - Writing process is still evolving and/or trying to find a writing process
 - Perfectionism
 - Being swayed by outside influences (i.e. "Do it like this, not like that.")

I think the key to finishing a book—and bringing yourself that much closer to a chance at getting published—is analyzing what's holding you back and then developing an alternative route around that road block.

Personally, I write to deadline. Without a deadline, I'm like a little puppy that is first distracted by the pretty butterfly only to veer off in the other direction when she catches sight of a kitty cat but then stops to roll in a patch of clover. I've learned I have to create deadlines for myself like entering contests, participating in writing challenges, critiquing with a partner, and submitting my work to agents.

My 10-year journey to PRO (and a full manuscript) was derailed by several of the items on this list, but the number one obstacle was—and is—fear of failure. As a published journalist, I know I can meet the requirements set forth by my editors. Therefore, I fully expect that same result when it comes to my fiction. Yet, for some incredible reason, my romance writing wasn't coming out all clean and perfect and dazzling like I assumed it would. I've had to come to terms with the fact that writing is 1) a learning process which everyone has to go through, even me, and 2) editing is part of writing, especially good writing. When I finally gave myself permission to write less-than-perfect prose, the pages started accumulating, and soon I had 10,000 words, then 25,000 words, then a full-length novel.

Writing a book is no easy feat, especially when combined with the ego and emotion that go into it. I think some of the people who struggle the most with finishing a WIP are those with genuine talent—they know it takes more than words on a page to make for quality work, and they bear the burden of not just writing but writing well.

Aside from the internal issues that hold writers back from

finishing a project, there are sometimes external circumstances that complicate things: family demands, illness, technology, distractions, lack of know-how. Again, the key is identifying these issues and developing an action plan to circumvent them.

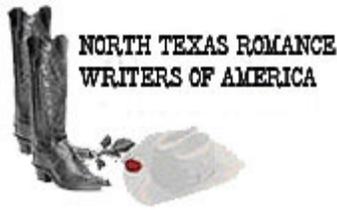
With a family of five living in 1,300 square feet and a husband who works 80 hours a week, I am forever battling the soundtrack of family life and a schedule rife with interruptions—time to make dinner, time to take the 16-year-old to work, time to supervise homework. And while I sincerely want to be published, getting up at 5 a.m. simply isn't an option that works for me. Instead, I've learned to work in bursts and tune out the joyful noise of children by donning headphones. I've also found it helpful to arrive at work an hour early to dash a few thousand words.

Sure, writers need to be self-motivated, but I think it is unfair to assume that any writer struggling to finish a manuscript simply doesn't "want it bad enough." A comment like that belittles the effort that it takes to even attempt to write a book. Instead, published writers, those that have achieved PRO status, and anyone else who has made it to The End can better serve their aspiring peers by offering encouragement and sharing how they overcome the challenges that lie between page 1 and page 250.

For those writers yet to make it through an entire manuscript, take a break from the hamster wheel of futility. Spend some time analyzing what's working for you, what isn't, and what's holding you back. There are lots of workable solutions to these issues, but first you have to know what your issues are. Remember, everyone's process is unique, and it may take some experimentation to find what works for you. Whether your inspiration comes from participating in a writing challenge, writing in 15-minute increments, getting up at 5 a.m., or writing on your lunch hour, the most important factor in determining success is perseverance.

~ Maria Connor's manuscript, *Willing to Learn*, a sexy, sassy romance about a brothel that caters to women, won second place in both the First Coast Romance Writers unpublished Beacon contest and RWA-San Diego's *Spring Into Romance* contest in the contemporary series category. Learn more about Maria by visiting www.maria-connor.com. ‡





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NTRWA Monthly Meeting
Doors Open 10:00 am
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We're on the web!
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NEXT MEETING OCT. 17, 2009

Nov 6—7

With Margie Lawson
Agent Melissa Jeglinski
of the Knight Agency
and Cori Deyoe of 3
Seas Literary Agency.
[www.ntrwa.org/
writersroundup.aspx](http://www.ntrwa.org/writersroundup.aspx)



THE BUSINESS OF PRE-PUBLISHING, PUBLISHING,

Please join us as our very own Shelley Bradley shares her insight and, knowledge about the ever-changing business of publishing. No matter where you are in your writing career, this is a great opportunity to learn from someone who has invaluable insight into today's market.



Shelley is the national best-selling author of 25+ sizzling contemporary, erotic, paranormal, and historical romances for multiple print and electronic publishers. She lives in Texas with her husband, munchkin, and one very spoiled cat. In her “free” time, she enjoys reality TV, reading, and listening to an eclectic blend of music.

Shelley has won or placed in over a dozen writing contests, including Passionate Ink's Passionate Plume, Colorado Romance Writers Award of Excellence, and the National Reader's Choice Awards. Romantic Times has awarded her Top Picks, a KISS Hero Award and a nomination for Best Erotic Romance of 2007.

A writing risk-taker, Shelley enjoys tackling writing challenges with every book. ‡