



North Texas Romance Writers of America

HEART to HEART

Founded March 1933

Chapter 33, Region 5

Volume 29, Issue 1

WRITTEN WORDS

RISING STAR AWARDS MOST PAGES WRITTEN in January

Ron Campbell - 212
Jean Brown - 200
Linda Graves - 182
Nikki Duncan - 108
Jerrie Alexander- 75

STAR AWARDS MOST PAGES EDITED in January

Angi Platt - 360 pages
Ron Campbell - 240 pages
Jerrie Alexander - 150 pages
Nikki Duncan - 140 pages
Mary Duncanson - 109 pages

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Next Meeting: Feb. 20

Nikki Duncan and Misa Ramirez

present

'The Differences between Marketing and Promotion, Stepping Outside Your Comfort Zone, and Managing Your Time.'

See page 7

Spotlight on Lee Swift

By Kym Roberts

www.kymroberts.com

"In the shadows of the modern world", a world dominated by women, one man has taken center stage. His spotlight shines brightly, illuminating a new stage in his life. Lee Swift writing as Kris Cook has shot to the forefront with his erotic M/M/F books which "satisfy your deepest cravings."

Lee's flair for entertainment isn't just one dimensional. With a

background as host of a radio program, a screenplay writer, director and producer, Lee has found his niche as a romance author. His road to get there has created a voice so unique, you must experience it to truly appreciate his artistry.



Lee's background in radio:

With the previous in mind, here's the dirt. I went into radio at a small FM station doing weather on the weekends. At the time, more of a lark than a career move. I didn't (Con't p.3)



NTRWA
President
GINA
NELSON
P. 2

Stepping into the deep end

By Gina Nelson, NTRWA President

During the past year, I hunkered down, content to place one foot in front of the other, making my way through a time of mourning and deep personal loss. As I emerge on the other side, writing comes along and waves with a big smile. 'Remember me?'



Yes, I do. My fingers fly more freely across the keyboard. I'm able to write for minutes, instead of seconds, before I stop, distracted and impatient. Nascent creativity breaks forth, no longer immobilized by heartache.

On the brink of this decade and singular period in my life, I find I'm ready to step into the deep end and pursue my dreams.

Step into the deep end.

Last year the NT board decided to step into the

deep end as well, to invest in the future of our organization by bringing writing instructor Margie Lawson and two agents to our North Texas Two Step conference. True, we spent a bit more than we typically spend on our programs, but with marvelous results. We received many compliments from our attendees on both its content and execution.

In March 2010 we continue to influence our writing community in a pro-active way by bringing in Hollywood script and story consultant Michael Hague, plus *two* editors and *two* agents for our North Texas Two Step.

Michael Hauge will present *Story Mastery*, his unique approach to creating compelling fiction, and eliciting emotion in your readers. Again, we've spent a bit more; but we believe all of us will benefit from his unique approach to creating compelling fiction.

Grab your writer friends. Join us in March for the North Texas Two Step.

January Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on January 16, 2010 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The president and secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 11:45 A.M. With no corrections, the minutes of the December meeting as posted in the December newsletter were approved.

Board Absences: Kym Roberts, Program Director, was absent.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Gina Nelson reported:

The audit committee, consisting of Regina Richards, Ron Campbell, and Wendy Watson, will meet on February 20, 2010.

The chapter needs a website director. Jen FitzGerald, who has served her term limit of two years, will handle it until a new person has been appointed.

Treasurer: Chris Keniston reported:

Chris announced the checking ac-

count balance and presented the budget for 2010.

Membership: Jeannie Guzman reported:

As of today, we have 81 members, including 4 new members. Today we have 4 visitors.

Members can pay dues with PayPal. Those who don't pay by February 20 will be dropped from the roster and the e-mail loop.

All members, even returning ones, need to fill out membership applications. This can be done on line, and members will benefit from knowing others' experience and expertise.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

Newsletter Editor Jean Brown reported:

Articles and news should be e-mailed to her each month by the Friday after the meeting.

Conference Chair: Marty Tidwell reported:

Thirty-two have signed up for the North Texas Two Step Conference on March 20 and 21, featuring renowned screenwriting expert Michael Hauge (presenting *Story Mastery*), editors Adam (con't p. 3)

January minutes (con't from p. 2)

Wilson and Holly Blanck, and agents, Joy Azmitia and Becca Stumpf. Today, January 16, 2010, is the last day for members to sign up for the payment plan with a \$20 deposit. Members need to publicize the conference on all their e-mail loops.

Marsha West and Jerrie Alexander requested items and baskets for door prizes as well as items for the silent auction.

Writing Incentive Chair: Nikki Duncan reported:

Members who write 20 new pages (or 5,000 words) or edit 40 pages (or 10,000 words) will get a bead. Members can put them on a wire necklace or keep them in a shot glass and watch the beads add up to encourage them to write more.

Audio Librarian Nikki Duncan reported:

The \$10.00 deposit requirement has been dropped. Members can check out CDs from previous RWA conferences and return the next month.

Great Expectations Chair: Angi Platt reported:

There were 234 entries, 32 more than last year. Angi thanked Laura Martello for doing judge training and asked members judging to return results by the end of January.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Angi Platt, as outgoing president, presented a glass book cover holder to Gina Nelson. She also offered service pins to Marty Tidwell, Mary Duncanson, Jerrie Alexander, Marsha West, Carolyn Williamson, and Chris Keniston for service to NTRWA.

Gina Nelson presented flowers and a restaurant gift card to outgoing president, Angi Platt.

NEW BUSINESS:

A vote was taken to approve the budget, and it was approved.

Shelley Kaehr was spotlighted. She writes fiction and non-fiction under her own name, Leah Leonard, and Annette Shelley; and has a booksigning today for her non-fiction book.

FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The business meeting was adjourned at: 1:29 P.M.

Submitted electronically by Secretary, Carolyn Williamson

LEE SWIFT (con't from p. 1)

know that I would get hooked. I loved it. I got promoted to weekend announcer, then to full-time nights, finally ending up on a drive time show. As I progressed, I kept honing my announcing skills, and I kept moving to bigger stations gaining more and more knowledge. I worked at Rock, Pop, Easy Listening, and Country radio. My biggest success was in Country where I achieved fantastic ratings that got me a mention in Radio & Records Magazine - two years in a row. I was lucky to meet some really wonderful people in radio. My last job, I'd moved into management as a general manager of a station - chasing the almighty dollar I suppose. Bad mistake. I should've stayed on the creative side of the biz. After a shake up in ownership, I found myself without a job.

What was your style of programming? Were you a Howard Stern type with a certain shock value or were you more mainstream?

I was just myself. Upbeat was what I strived for. If I found something funny or interesting, I'd share it...if something moved me, I'd bring it to the forefront of my show--even personal events in my life were fair game.

The best compliment I ever got, was from a listener who told me at one of my on-site remote broadcasts that she would never miss my show because it had brought her out of a very dark place. Her son had died in the first Gulf War. I choked back the tears when she gave me a hug.

Tell me a few of your most memorable moments in radio.

(con't on p. 4)

Spotlight (con't from p. 3)

One of my funniest and most embarrassing moments was when I changed from a Rock station to a Country station. At first, I didn't know the artists or music that well.

One day on the job, I showed how green I really was. Just before the top of the hour, a classic country song was ending that segued at the top of the hour into a more current song. The classic song-Conway Twitty's "I'd love to lay you down." The hit song cued up: Alan Jackson's "I'd love you all over again." So, when I cracked the mic between these songs I gave the call sign of the station and said - "I can't agree more with Mister Conway Twitty - I'd love to lay you all over again. I mean... I'd lay you over and over again... Ummm..." Then I killed the mic and started Alan Jackson's song. The phones lit up like a Christmas tree. I thought I was fired for sure. But the people calling in were laughing. The program director was thrilled. I stayed there for five years, and I did learn a great deal about Country Music.

Would you ever consider returning to radio in some capacity or are you content with moving on to new chapters in your life?

Perhaps. It would definitely be intriguing to go back to broadcasting with the life experience I have now. If an offer ever came out of the blue, which would be unlikely, I would have to weigh all the pros and cons. My radio days were wonderful. Still, if radio comes back into my life it would have to be in a different role. I'd be more interested in some type of segment rather than carrying a complete time-slot. Writing is now my first love - broadcasting is down the list.

How Lee's experiences shaped his writing:

After radio, I wanted a change, but wasn't sure what that was. I believed (still do) that if we are open...your path will present itself to you. I did a jaunt in real estate, and was pretty successful. Still, it wasn't a path I wanted or was passionate about. Insurance sales. GROAN! Enough said. Finally, I landed a management job in a large corporation.

During all my career wanderings, my sister and I began writing screenplays and plays together. Really more dabbling than serious, but it was quite fun. But - after placing in some contests and actually winning one, we got more serious. I liked the collaboration. She gave me the female perspective;

I gave her the male. Highly educated, she had a wonderful family counseling practice. Her insights allowed me to understand characters' emotional depths more clearly. She was an incredible writer and I learned much from her - even though I was older by ten and half months. I know - my poor mother. LOL!

My sister and I went to the Austin Film Festival (AFF) in the fall of 2001. AFF always has a big focus on screenwriting every year. We were lucky to meet some agents and producers and pitch our latest work *DANNY BOY*, a screenplay about a budding romance growing between a woman and a man who were impacted by the same murder as children but on opposite sides: His father was the victim, her father was the killer. It got some nice buzz and we got some phone numbers. That's a big deal in the movie biz. Unfortunately, my sister was diagnosed with colon cancer two months later. Our entire focus changed - trying to get her well. Our embryonic screenplay writing career never got off the ground. I lost my sister to cancer in September 2003. I miss her very much.

After she died, I was lucky to get one of our short scripts *A SINGLE WISH* in a film festival. I ended up directing and producing it. Very fun. Also, two plays (*STRANGERS & IN THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS*) won contests. The later got produced and ran for two weeks at Kingwood College (now, Lone Star University - Kingwood). It was thrilling to hear our written dialog being delivered by actors. I tried to pitch *DANNY BOY* again, but it never got the traction it had before. I take it out from time to time and read some of it. Still makes me cry.



After my sister's death, my grief kept me from the writing desk.

Do you find your sister's influence in the depth of your characters? In their pain and in their joy? I get an almost twin-like impression of your relationship with your sister. A special bond that is not common among siblings.

You're correct that Angie and I were like twins. Only ten and half months apart...in the same grade, etc... Though she's gone, her influence remains. When I want to take a short cut, I can almost hear her saying, "You can do so much better." Character depth comes from the lessons she began and Shelley (con't on p. 5)

Spotlight (con't from p. 4)

Bradley continues. When I have a character who is moody, Angie's prodding comes flying in - "Go deeper..." Then I write some background about the character - they act on something. Next, Shelley's question that repeats over and over in my head - "Why did they do that?"

Do you want to return to screen writing? Where would you like to see your career path go? Have you ever considered making Danny Boy into a book instead of a screenplay? Or does it represent your sister in such a way that it's similar to a parent leaving a deceased child's bedroom untouched?

I do have a love of screen writing, and may try my hand at it again someday. For now, I'm focused on my romance writing. I have considered making Danny Boy a book, but that may have to come later. It's not a typical romance novel, though it does have romantic elements. I must admit - you're example of a deceased child's bedroom being left untouched is interesting. But no, I don't feel paralyzed by Angie's death in any way. She fought to live with such spirit; therefore, I embrace my life with each and every twist and turn.

How long did you put your pen down before Shelley convinced you to share your gift with others once more?

Thank you for calling it a *gift*. It took Shelley several years to get me back to serious writing. I dabbled from time to time, but nothing serious. Angie died in 2003, but due to her illness I hadn't written since 2001. I started writing seriously again in 2007.

Why does a man get into the romance genre?

ENTER STAGE LEFT: Shelley Bradley / Shayla Black

Shelley and I began going to lunch long before my sister died. Our friendship is now over 11 years and counting. We would talk about writing- she about romance novels - me about screenplays and plays. It was great. Shelley kept urging me to write again. I refused. But little by little, her coaxing wore me down.

I didn't want to write what my sister and I wrote. "You could write a romance novel." I thought Shelley was crazy, but her passion for the genre was infectious. She gave me several books to read from all sub-genres of romance- and I was hooked. Great

Great stories, engaging characters, exciting settings, and more.

2009 was a hugely successful year for you. For those of us who still live in the 20th century and like to feel the book in our hand as we hunt down the author to sign it, will your books be released in print in 2010?

Thanks. I did feel like I made progress and reached some goals in 2009. *PERFECTION* is slated for print in March 2010. *THREE TO PLAY* will not make it to print alone. I hope my publisher will consider printing it by pairing it with another novella of mine or another author's, but I'll have to wait and see. Though I don't have the contract for *CAPTIVATION* yet, I suspect it will go to print due to its length. My publisher typically is releasing the print versions about 6 months after the electronic versions.

Can you give me a teaser for your books, and for your current work-Captivation?

The *ETERNALLY THREE* (E3) series (paranormal erotic romance) is very loosely based on Western and Middle Eastern mythologies (angels & demons / jinn & ifrit) - where immortals' very existence depend on tripling with humans, similar to the laws of electricity (positive, negative, conduit).

PERFECTION is the first of the E3 series. A woman searches for her missing brother at a nightclub with a notorious reputation and comes face-to-face with two amazing men straight from her fantasies. She doesn't know these men are immortals. One an ancient jinn enduring a heavy guilt - the other a warrior angel brandishing a zealous fervor. But when the threesome come together, they share more than an exchange of energy, they share an unshakable bond that generates astounding power. Their enemies seek to destroy their perfect triad, which could unsettle the balance of power between angels and demons. Will the threesome be able to stand strong together - in trust and love - to defeat the relentless evil?

CAPTIVATION (still working on it) is book two of the E3 series. The characters were introduced in book one. The heroine, Eve, learned in *PERFECTION* that the people who had been giving her room and board are not human. She runs. (con't on p. 6)

Spotlight (con't from p. 5)

The Alliance (angels & jinn) send out a team to retrieve her - even if it is against her will. She's too important to let the Dark (bad guys - demons & ifrit) get their claws on her. Two immortals are assigned to keep her safe, Nash and Kronos. The more time they spend with Eve, the more their passions are ignited.

Other books (from fully-plotted to partially-jotted down) in the E3 series I hope to sell: *DEVOTION*, *OBSESSION*, *SEDUCTION*, and *REDEMPTION*.

THREE TO PLAY is an erotic contemporary ménage romance novella - about a woman about to turn forty. Beth plays her radio career (and her life) on the safe, conservative side. Enter the sexy duo, Clint and Dustin, forced on her by upper management to boost ratings. These two young studs heat her up from the inside out. The full-court press seduction crumbles her hesitation. When the three end up in bed, will old secrets force them apart or bring them together for a lifetime of passion?

Other novellas (May-Dec, MMF - works in progress) I hope to sell: *THREE TO DANCE*, and *THREE TO FLY*.

Another book I want to market that is in progress (paranormal romance-hot but non-erotic) *LOVE INK*.

I am thrilled with the success I've had with *PERFECTION*, my debut book. It is actually nominated for one of The Romance Studio's CAPA awards - Erotic Paranormal category. The reviews for *THREE TO PLAY* (novella) have been great and the sales have been wonderful. I am finishing up *CAPTIVATION*, the sequel to *PERFECTION*. I hope to turn it in at the end of January.

For this year, I hope to complete *OBSESSION*, *THREE TO DANCE*, *DEVOTION*, *THREE TO FLY* - and *LOVE INK*.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Lee for giving me the opportunity to tell his amazing story. What shapes an author is a joyous celebration of life. With our greatest sorrow, comes our greatest friendships. Our pain may define us for a time, but it does not stop us from sharing the gifts each and every one of us has to offer the world. With the support of our friends and loved ones we can continue down a path full of new experiences and opportunity.

In 2010 step forward as Lee has, and embrace life as never before.

Visit Lee at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28eJtmbDZ0Y>
<http://www.kriscook.net/>

MEMBER NEWS!!!

Abby Gaines . . . has a February release.

The Comeback
 Harlequin NASCAR
 ISBN 9780373185313
 February 2010

Gaby Colson's future depends on her convincing NASCAR driver Zack Matheson to enter and win the Bachelor of the Year Contest. Too bad Zack seems more likely to win Grouch of the Year! He can't focus on anything beyond his comeback in NASCAR and in the legendary Matheson Racing family. Gaby comes up with a creative way for them both to get what they want...but like most brilliant plans, it has its pitfalls, not least of which is the out-of-control attraction between her and a man who'll sacrifice anything...anyone to win.



Nikki Duncan ...signed a contract for SCENT OF PERSUASION, Sensory Ops Book 2. It's scheduled to be released this spring. She also has a Samhain Valentine's Day titled A KILLING CUPID.

SOUNDS TO DIE BY, Sensory Ops Book 1 Available Now
SCENT OF PERSUASION, Sensory Ops Book 2 Coming Soon

www.nikkiduncan.com | www.nikkiduncan.com/blog



Judi McCoy . . . will talk about 5

Easy Steps to Self-editing at the June 19 meeting. Afterward she'll hold a book signing at the Barnes & Noble in Hurst. Contact her if you're interested in joining the signing event.

Heir of the Dog, NAL, October 2009
 Death in Show, NAL, June 2010
 Hounding the Pavement, NAL, March 2009
www.judimccoy.com



Learn How to Market and Promote Your Work

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 workshop, Nikki and Misa will discuss the differences between marketing and promotion and share tips that they've learned along their paths to publication and things they've picked up since their first sales. Tips will include marketing ideas for print books and ebooks, for online and on paper, as well as when to know you are doing all that you can.



About NIKKI: Nikki Duncan is the author of the Sensory Ops series: *Sounds To Die By* (available now), *Scent of Persuasion* (slated for May), a third (planned for November 2010), as well as a spin off title (planned for August of 2010) from Samhain Publishing.

A former gymnast and competitor in Hunter Pleasure with Arabian horses, Nikki uses the focus and discipline she learned competing to efficiently (most of the time) divide her time between duties as mom, administration manager for an area franchisee, and a writer.

Nikki is currently writing the third Sensory Ops book and recently published a series of articles in Romantic Times Magazine on the agent search (January, February, and March.) Nikki is also working on a romantic suspense series targeted for Silhouette, as well as a children's story series with her oldest daughter.

About MISA: Misa Ramirez is the author of the Lola Cruz mystery series: *Living the Vida Lola* (January '09) and *Hasta la Vista, Lola!* (February 2, 2010) from St. Martin's Press Minotaur.

A former middle and high school teacher and current CEO and CFO for La Familia Ramirez, this blonde-haired, green-eyed, proud-to-be-Latina-by-marriage girl loves following Lola on her many adventures. Whether it's contemplating belly button piercings or visiting nudist resorts, she's always up for the challenge.

Misa is hard at work on a new women's fiction novel, is published in *Woman's World Magazine* and *Romance Writers Report*, and has a children's book published.



Doors open at 10:30.

Join Us for the North Texas Two Step

Register online

www.ntrwa.org

Our current registration period is extended until the end of the month! Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to see Michael Hauge's Story Mastery!

NTRWA members, sister chapters DARA, Yellow Rose: \$155 - All others \$185 until February 28,

After March 1, \$215 for everyone



North Texas Romance
Writers of America

PayPal Accepted

Texas Two Step Writing Conference Baskets

Our March 2010 Conference will be here soon. We've got an outstanding speaker, and two agents and two editors coming. It's going to be great but will be even better with your help. We need folks to make baskets, which we'll raffle to help defray costs and generate entertainment for our guests. Turn your creative muse loose, work together, and make something fun. Something you'd like to win yourself! Is it wall-to-wall chocolate in all its various forms? Is it perfumed lotions and gels to make your bodies soft? Maybe your deal is popcorn, Milk Duds, and DVD movies starring your favorite hunk. (Jerrie and Tracy will buy tons of tickets if the basket is full of Gerard Butler movies!) Maybe you always want to bid on those baskets with baked goods in them. Engage those wonderful imaginations you all have and come up with even better ideas than those above.

It will help us with planning, if one person in the group will email me the name(s) working together and the theme. After you put the basket together, tape a list of all the items and the approximate value to the outside. That clear plastic paper and ribbon makes it all the more festive.

We are conscious of the fact we just asked you all to contribute baskets to the November conference, and I can't thank you enough for your efforts. But if you were present at the last conference you saw how the raffle made the whole experience fun for the participants. So, please, find someone to work with, and lend a hand. With your help our conference attendees will go home with good memories and look forward to our next conference.

If you are attending, and we hope you are, bring your basket with you to the hotel either Friday night or Saturday morning. If for some reason, you're unable to attend, you can bring it to the March 13th general meeting. If that doesn't fit in with your plans, you might find another member close to you to drop it off, or we can have someone come get it from you. Let me know at mwest7012@sbcglobal.net. We won't have another conference until March 2012. You don't want to miss the opportunity to be a part of making our second Texas Two Step Writing Conference a success. Thanks so much.

Marsha R. West, President Elect

Joan Johnston on Writing the Unputdownable Novel

By Carolyn Williamson

Joan Johnston's great talk on creating a page-turner was presented at the San Francisco national RWA conference. While I attended another workshop, I was able to hear her speak on one of North Texas RWA's CDs.

Not only did I get a lot from hearing it, but I discovered I had downloaded the handout as well so I could read her examples again later. Below are some of the good ways she mentioned to open or end a chapter or a scene to make the reader want to keep reading.

1. Ask a question for which the reader wants to know the answer.

Example: (from *The Cowboy*)
"Callie couldn't stop trembling." Don't you want to know why?

2. Show a crisis, threat, hard to solve problem.

Example: (from *The Cowboy*)
"With everything at risk, she didn't want to make a mistake."

3. Anticipating a confrontation or clash (verbal or physical) between characters.

Example: (from *The Cowboy*) "You Blackthornes are all greedy, thieving sons of bitches."

4. Riveting action or compelling (unusual) behavior.

Example: (from *The Texan*) "A second later she was slammed back against the wall, a powerful male hand at her throat choking her." Surely, you won't put that book down now.

5. Anticipating what will happen when someone learns a secret.

Example: "You should have told him. I will. Someday. If he ever comes back."

6. Setting up a contest, competition or bargain to be met.

Example: "(from *The Cowboy*) If Trace's horse finishes in the top ten, you fund whatever operation he wants here at Bitter Creek." Don't you want to read on to see if the horse wins?

7. Forecasting a disaster, unless (someone does something).

Example. (from *The Cowboy*)
"Eighteen and pregnant. And unmarried."

8. Setting a deadline for a decision or some action (an ultimatum).

Example: (from *The Texan*) "A mare is in trouble, and he's needed there."

Another tip Joan gave was to orient the reader as to place and time in the first paragraph of a chapter or a new scene. You don't have to come right out and say it. For example: (from *The Cowboy*) "Blackjack thumbed away the condensation on the ice-cold bottle of Lone Star that sat on the red-checked tablecloth before him" You can tell he's in Texas and at a picnic or a cafe.



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NTRWA Monthly Meeting
Third Saturday of the month
Doors Open 10 a.m.
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Colleyville, TX

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