



North Texas Romance Writers of America

HEART to HEART

Founded March 1983

Chapter 33, Region 5

October 2011

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Star Awards

Most Pages Written

Tracy Wolf
450 pages

D'Ann Burrows
175 pages

Jill Myles
120 pages

Most Pages Edited

Chrissy Szarek
511 pages

Kim Quinton
297 pages

D'Ann Burrows
200 pages

Join Us Oct. 15

"It's More Than Just Dialogue" with Julia Quinn



Free for NT members, \$5 for visitors
We'll meet in the large front room
See page 9 for more information

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President's Corner — Marsha West

The cursor is blinking. Screaming at me to push the keys. Write something—anything. I'd sat for some time staring, running various scenarios through my head to include in this article: How achy my feet and ankles are from standing for 12 hours, getting ready for a neighborhood get together, where we stand in each other's kitchens catching up. The terrifying moment I found the missing Scout lying on my bed after everyone had been up and gone for almost an hour, and I couldn't tell if she was breathing or not (she was, just sleeping deeply). The interesting posts on the PRO loop today about head hopping and POV (someone indicated using omniscient POV was okay in some circumstances; isn't that blasphemy?). This last one bears following up on.



That's lots of parentheses and odd sentence structure in the paragraph above. Isn't that what's in our heads sometimes when we're trying to make progress on our WIP? Even for us plotters, we hit that place we don't know what to write. (I haven't experienced this phenomenon in some time, only because I'm still in editing mode and haven't written anything new in almost a year—except for these articles and blogs.) However, when faced with the blinking cursor this morning, I did what I've heard from every writer on every loop, blog, or in person presentation. *Write something. Write anything.* Because then you can fix the writing. Without the words on the screen, you're nowhere in terms of making progress in your writing.

One part of me yearns to write new words. My fear of not having set up the story "right" in the first place keeps my fingers from the keys of the next book. "Right" being a relative term here, meaning I don't know if I have the GMC is as strong as it needs to be. I've filled out all my various charts and forms, and I know who the characters are. But what if I get halfway through or $\frac{3}{4}$ way through and find a basic weakness or flaw in the story structure? I'm still revising books 4 and 5, hoping to capture an e-pub who wants only 3 POVs. (I usually have the H & H, the bad guy, and supporting characters.)

How can I juggle another focus? I know many authors are able and have to do that. I've heard Angi Platt (Angi Morgan) say we should be writing the newest book, editing the last one, and planning for the next one. My mind boggles. And the folks who crank out four books a year? Truly gifted people. "Keep on keeping on" has been my theme this year, and so I've completed another article. While I haven't written new words on my WIP, I have written. Important according to Henry Wood: *If we neglect to exercise any talent, power, or quality, it soon falls away from us.* Hopefully, the retreat will jumpstart my WIP. Hope to see many of you there.

September Minutes

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, September 17, 2011 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:35 A.M. The minutes for the August meeting were approved as printed in the September newsletter.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Marsha West reported:

First sale pens were given to Jerrie Alexander and Marty Tidwell since they have sold books to publishers.

Jen FitzGerald was appointed President-Elect for 2012 by the Board.

The Nomination Committee is looking to fill the Secretary, Communications Director, Treasurer and Hospitality positions.

Treasurer: Ron Campbell: In the absence of for Ron Campbell, Jen FitzGerald reported:

The treasurer's report will be filed for audit.

Program Director: Nikki Duncan reported:

The schedule for NTRWA 2011 calendar was reviewed as follows:

October – Discuss Dialog with Julia Quinn

November – Members retreat

December – Christmas Party

Membership Director: In the absence of Jamie Webb, Roni Griffin reported:

There are eighty-four members (84).

There were no visitors.

There were two new members:

New members: Alysia Broadfield and Mindy Moore

Communications Director: In the absence of Jean Marie Brown, Marsha West reported:

Articles are due to Jean Marie Brown by Sunday, September 24th.

Website Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:

To gain access to the members section of the NTRWA website, members should e-mail website@ntrwa with the e-mail they use in the yahoo group and their RWA number.

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PRO Liaison: Clover Autrey reported:

To become a PRO you must submit a 40 thousand word romance manuscript to an agent or editor.

Once you become PRO you will have access to the NTRWA and RW PRO Loops.

D'Ann Burrow is a new PRO member.

Great Expectations: In the absence of Angi Platt & Wendy Watson, Jen FitzGerald reported:

Final round judges for the 2012 Great Expectations Contest are being finalized.

The NTRWA website will be updated with any new information.

Texas Two Step: Nikki Duncan reported:

The Texas Two Step conference will be held in March 2012.

Additional information will be sent on the NTRWA loop.

Writing Incentives: Roni Griffin reported:

Please provide feedback with thoughts the writing incentives and how/if things need to be improved.

Audio Librarian: Michelle Welsh reported:

CDs from nationals are available to check out.

**Spotlight Chair: Carolyn Williamson reported:**

Jill Myles was spotlighted and recognized.

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 15th at La Hacienda. The business meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. for the program Your Place in the Market by Tracy Wolfe

Submitted electronically by Sheniqua Waters

Date Approved: _____

Date Corrected: _____

Member News

Congratulations Marty Tidwell

"The Fall of Marla Jean" sold to Grand Central in a three-book deal.
Expected Publication Date is July 2012

Upcoming Events

November – Members' retreat - See page 11
for more information

December – Christmas Party

Spotlight on: SHELLEY BRADLEY AKA SHAYLA BLACK

By Carolyn Williamson

From her first sale of a historical romance to Kensington's Precious Gem line to her erotic and paranormal romances for Berkley Heat, Pocket Books, Ellora's Cave, and Samhain, Shelley, aka *New York Times* bestselling author Shayla Black has come a long way.

At the RWA national convention Sherrilyn Kenyon mentioned one of Shelley's historical novels, which included a clever telling of a handprint on a mansion window that was never washed because the child who made it, the hero's daughter, had died. Now she's kept busy writing erotic, paranormal, and soon, military thriller romances.



1. **Shelley, do you remember how you felt when you were trying to sell and kept getting rejections?**

Absolutely. When I first sold in 1998, there was no real e-publishing yet. So I kept knocking on New York's doors again and again. I'd been a Golden Heart finalist. I had an agent. I'd won a dozen other contests and placed in many more. But I kept hearing the frustrating "so close" thing. It truly was some of the most frustrating few years of my life.

2. **How many novels had you written before selling?**

Three. I had taken some time off after writing the third book to have my daughter. The spring following her birth, I heard about the Precious Gems line. I took that third book out and sent it off. I had an offer within two weeks.

3. **How many novels have you sold now?**

30 novels and 7 novellas.

Spotlight on: SHELLEY BRADLEY AKA SHAYLA BLACK

4. **How long does it take to write a novel now?**

If I don't have any other books in various stages of production, about 6-8 weeks. The book I'm finishing now has been in progress since March. But I've stopped multiple times to accommodate edits, copyedits and galleys for three other books, had surgery, attended two conferences, had a week's worth of company, and took a cruise for my 20th wedding anniversary. It's always crazy around here.

5. **How much time do you spend revising?**

I spend very little time revising now. I'm a big believer in pre-plotting, so when I sit down, I know not only where I'm going, but what each scene has to achieve and all the emotional downfall that will result. I'm always driving toward an end game I know. I think this tends to make both the storytelling and the prose itself more focused, which lends itself to fewer revisions.

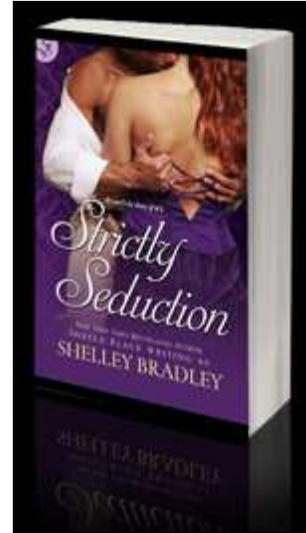
My Berkley editor and I have been working together for about 5 years, and we're quite used to one another's styles. Most revisions, I can do in a day or two, and they're usually for clarity or brevity. I'm venturing into some self-publishing now, and I love having control over everything, including the packaging. Hiring freelance editors has been a great experience. I'm not finding that they want a great deal of revision, either.

7. **Are you a pantzer or a plotter?**

As I said before, definitely a plotter. I like to have about 75% of the story worked out before I sit down to write. I allow myself some surprises along the way, but for the most part, I've got a story flow and trajectory that I'm comfortable with.

8. **Why did you start writing contemporaries?**

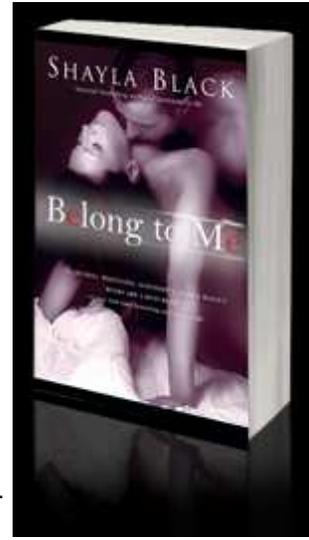
For a change of pace. After 9 straight historicals, I just wanted to try something new. I found that I really enjoy writing them, so I've continued to write them. But I confess that I'm enjoying editing and reissuing my out-of-print historicals now.



Spotlight on: SHELLEY BRADLEY AKA SHAYLA BLACK

9. **Can you speak to the issue of how you address sex in your books?**

The amount and content of the sex in any given book is the amount and content that serves the characters and the story. I don't sit around trying to dream up ways to make a book sexier. Some stories call for the intense bonding experience between the characters that I think will benefit from correspondingly intense sexual situations. Some stories, like the one I'm finishing now, call for a slower build-up to trust and desire before anything sexual happens at all. The amount and content of the sex in my books is also somewhat defined by genre. In my erotic romances, yes, there's more sex, but never more than 25-30% of the book. In my paranormal romances, the sex is definitely powerful, but less graphic. In my upcoming military romantic suspenses, I expect them to be sexy, but not erotic, as well. The stories aren't about the sex, even the erotics. It plays a big part, perhaps. But the stories are about the characters and the emotions, their growth and commitment. Anyone who doesn't get that simply wants to focus on the titillating and disregard everything else.



11. **What is your latest book coming out and where can we buy it?**

BELONG TO ME releases October 4. It should be available at Barnes & Noble, Amazon, Books-A-Million, etc.

You'll find a pretty complete list of buy links on my site: www.ShaylaBlack.com.

Julia Quinn

By Nikki Duncan

During her senior year at Harvard College, Julia Quinn realized she didn't know what she wanted to do with her life. This depressed her. In fact, the only thing that saved her sanity during this dark, dreary time was the fact that none of her friends knew, either. So she sat down with a big tub of Ben & Jerry's and a good book and decided to figure out what to do.

Getting a job seemed too difficult. She wouldn't mind HAVING a job, but she certainly didn't know how to get one.

Law school seemed too annoying. Everyone hated lawyers, and Julia liked to be liked.

Business school was not an option. They only took people who had been in the work force for at least two years, and, as noted above, Julia didn't know how to get a job.

The only option left (this shows you how narrow her world-view was) was medical school. "Aha!" she thought. "I could be a good doctor." She quickly picked up the phone and ran this idea past her parents, who were understandably baffled, since her degree was in Art History, but being the cool people they are, they said, "Great!"

Then she pulled out a pad of paper and proceeded to figure out how long this would take. It would be over two years before she could even ENTER medical school since she had to take all those pesky science classes in order to apply. Clearly, she needed to find something to do during that time, since she knew from experience that she probably wouldn't be studying as much as she ought.

That's when she looked at the book next to the tub of now-empty Ben & Jerry's. It was a romance. "I could write one of those," she thought.

And so she did.

Julia's been writing since and her writing has quickly earned a reputation for warmth and humor, and her dialogue is considered among the best in the industry.

Following Julia's presentation, we'll be heading to the Hurst Barnes & Noble at 2:00 where Julia will be doing a Q&A with readers and a signing.

Programming Notes from Nikki Duncan

The first weekend of November we'll be having our annual writer's retreat. This will replace the regular meeting for the month, so here are all the details you could need.

~ There is no registration fee.

~ We will have two great speakers on Saturday the 4th. One will be doing a Martial Arts Demonstration with the opportunity for people to have some one-on-one instruction if they want. The other will be talking about firearms and weapons.

~ You are invited to hang out and write with us and enjoy the presenters even if you are not attending the entire weekend.

Now, if you're interested in staying all weekend, here are the details for that.

~ We will be at the Jefferson Street B&B in Irving. The link is here:
<http://www.jeffersonstreetbnb.com/>.

~ You can book your own room on your own credit card, and the rates are very affordable.

~ All rooms have a mini-fridge so you can bring your snacks and drinks, and I have booked the cottage so we have access to the full kitchen.

~ My thought is that meals will consist of everyone bringing their favorites, or we can do a sort of sign up to cover a wide range. The key here is easy and no stress.

~ Meals can be eaten on your own, in your room with your critique groups or in the cottage as one big group. Whatever choice suits your mood for the meal in question works for me. Are you beginning to sense a trend here?

~ I will be checking in on Friday and checking out on Sunday, so if you're interested in staying and need access to the cottage kitchen just let me know. I'll leave the place unlocked while we're there so everyone can come and go.

If you want to stay, but need a roommate let me know at nikki@nikkiduncan.com. We'll work to find someone so everyone can be included. Hope to see you at the retreat



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NTRWA
2100 W. Northwest HWY
Suite 114-1081
Grapevine, TX 76051
NTRWA monthly meeting

NTRWA monthly meeting
Third Saturday of the month
Doors open @ 10 a.m.
La Hacienda Ranch
5250 Highway 121 South

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