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Winner of the 1999 RWA® Mid-Sized Chapter

Newsletter Contest

The Mid-Michigan Mirror

A Reflection of Romance

A publication of the Mid-Michigan Chapter (#12) of Romance Writers of America®
Volume II Issue 4 **April 2004**



Volume II Issue 4

April 2004

Directions to Daryl's Downtown in Jackson will be announced on the MMRWABUSINESS@yahoo.com loop prior to our April meeting.

also

Please refer to: MMRWABUSINESS@yahoo.com for MMRWA meeting minutes and chapter business information.

Happy April Birthday To:

Pat Lazarus 2 Arlene Hodapp 18
Edith Wilson 25 Dickee Six 28



Thanks to the contributors for the April issue of Mid-Michigan Mirror. The next issue of the Mirror has room for news and contributions by our May Mirror deadline of April 20.

**Please query or submit at:
afbrigg@hotmail.com**

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of Romance Writers of America® is to promote excellence in romantic fiction, to help writers become published and establish careers in their writing field, and to provide continuing support for writers within the romance publishing industry.

One of the best ways to improve your writing is by participating in an effective critique group. Join authors Michele Hickerty and Chris Allen-Riley at 11:30 AM on **April 17th at Daryl's Downtown in Jackson** for our April meeting and program:

Developing and Maintaining a Critique Group from Veterans of the Field

Michele and Chris will teach us how to start our own group and how to revamp an existing group. Sharing tips, tools and hard learned lessons, they will give us ideas to make our own group more productive as well as improve the overall quality of the work produced.

Continued on page 3



Inventing the Future. . . President's Message from Michele Hickerty

The sun will come out tomorrow. . . or maybe the next day. . . or maybe next week. Procrastination. Have any of you been plagued by this writing demon? Next to the internal editor, I believe procrastination is the greatest enemy of the writer. It can take many forms. My brands of procrastination are Mahjong, cleaning closets, reading, email, phone calls. . . . Recognize any of those? What are your forms of procrastination?

What are the triggers? When it comes to writing, I don't usually put it off. I love to write, after all. That has not been the case for me this month, however. Like many authors, what has caused this terrible bout for me is editor related. For some, this could be fear of not delivering, fear of failure or of success, being in a holding pattern as you wait for revisions. . . rejection. And those are just a few – mine were the last two. And of course, there are other things that can set this off. Family, stress, guilt, writer's block, the feeling that something's wrong with the story, indecision. If I tried to name everything that causes procrastination and the forms it takes, I could go on for days. But that is not my point this month. As writers who want to make a mark in this competitive industry, we must identify what plagues us and come up with ways to curtail it.

One way to eliminate procrastination is to schedule a specific time of the day to write. Don't let anything interfere – even yourself. Just sit and write. One writing group I belong to uses the acronym BIC HOK TAM. I even have it as my screen saver which has been fodder for many conversations. What does it mean? Butt In Chair, Hands On Keyboard, Typing Away Madly. Sometimes, we have to remind ourselves that it doesn't matter what we write, as long as we write. You can fix bad writing. You cannot fix a blank page.

Another way to curtail procrastination is a critique group. Trust me, when you have people demanding pages from you on a regular basis, you feel the need to produce. This month, in Jackson, we will have a presentation on critique groups presented by Chris Allen Riley and Michele Hickerty. We will cover how to form one and how to manage it. We'll talk about why our group is successful and what we've had to add and eliminate to keep it going.

As always this month we will be doing a writing exercise. Tools, Tips and Tricks will make another appearance, as well, and I'll be discussing anti-procrastination tactics. I am still looking for volunteers to do this portion of our monthly meetings in the future. It's only a one month commitment, not a long-term gig. If you are interested, please contact me.

I hope to see each of you at the meeting! And remember, as we try to eliminate that monster called procrastination, **never trade what you want most for what you want at the moment.**

Michele Hickerty, President



Developing and Maintaining an Effective Critique Group continued from the front page

Born to another storyteller, Michele Hickerty has always loved the written word. She wrote her first play at the ripe old age of eight. Direct from her parent's garage, the one time performance played to an audience of six. And so her addiction began. She completed her first novel her sophomore year of high school, writing a daily installment for her biology lab partner.

Married for eleven years to Chuck with two sons, Adam and Drew, Michele writes to control the over abundance of testosterone in her life. She's failed miserably – her heroes are as unpredictable and alpha as they come. Thankfully, she also writes because she loves creating stories for the myriad of characters in her head.

A member of the Mid-Michigan RWA, Michele is the coordinator of the Happily Ever After contest, as well as the President for 2004. Additionally, she's the author of five novels as well as enough partials to keep her writing until 2025. Though she isn't yet published, Michele is a PRO member of the RWA with several requested manuscripts.

Chris Allen-Riley has been writing toward publication in the romance genre for five years. She is an RWA PRO member and at present, has three manuscripts under consideration at Silhouette and a fourth at Dorchester. She's had poetry published in various journals and recently sold her first essay to an anthology. *They Lied! True Tales of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Breastfeeding* will be released in April of 2004 from Viva Voce Press. Chris is also the Vice-President of the MMRWA for 2004 and provides monthly articles for the Mid-Michigan Mirror.

Chris writes to save her sanity. Married for fifteen years to Matt, she is a work-at-home mom, providing childcare for four children in addition to her two young sons, Killian and Corwin.

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Do Your Characters Behave True to Form?

Recap of the March 20 Meeting by Chris Allen-Riley

When I come across a character in a story who does something completely contrary to the person the author has encouraged me to buy into, I get frustrated with both the book and the writer. Often times, in order for the characters to grow as people, they must act in an opposing fashion. But there must be ample motivation behind the action, and the rationale must be clearly explained to the reader.

No one, not even our fictional characters, like to be stereotyped. But, it is true that similar personalities share similar traits. Using the wonderful presentation Marti Ocilka gave at the MMRWA, March meeting, we can classify these qualities into color groups. This method allows us to objectively look at our characters to make sure they behave true to form.

The character traits break down into four basic colors; brown, green, orange and blue. Each individual's personality, whether fictional or actual, is made up of a primary and a secondary color. In the interest of time and space, I'll give you a brief overview, highlighting characteristics and potential careers for each color.

Browns: Take pride in being dependable, feeling useful, developing and obeying rules, being responsible, they feel perpetuating their heritage is important. They need structure and consistency, as well as clearly defined role/job descriptions. They need to be appreciated for producing results. Other words that describe Browns are generous, dignified, cultured, steadfast, predictable, family, home tradition, work ethic and parental nature.

People who ignore deadlines, refuse to play by the rules and don't employ standard operating procedures, irritate Browns. These same people are often bothered by Browns' sarcasm, sharp criticism, doom and gloom view of things and their failure to see humor in a given situation.

Careers that would likely appeal to Browns: *caretakers* – nurses and doctors, *service oriented* – police officers, teachers and ministers, *responsibility* – leaders, corporate administrators, *love of society and for traditions* – lawmakers and politicians.

Oranges: Act with precision, love action and adventure, being a free spirit, are skillful with tools, respond well in a crisis, love to test the limits (any limits,) are exciting, lighthearted, spontaneous, natural entertainer, charming, witty and full of fun. They often have the urge to take off for somewhere else (sometimes *anywhere* else.) Oranges need variations, excitement, risk, spontaneity, challenges, competition, to focus on the present, active periods interspersed with quiet times.

Restrictions, authority, rigidity, and being told how to work irritate Oranges. However, Oranges irritate others by not following through, having little advance preparation, being careless and hasty and overlooking established priorities.

Good career choices for Oranges would be surgeons, musicians, entertainers, explorers, artists, craftsmen, hostage negotiators, test pilots, race car drivers, fire fighters, police officers, military personnel and fashion designers.

Do Your Characters Behave True to Form continued from page 4

Greens: Pride themselves on being competent, solving problems, being successful, thinking logically and understanding technology. Greens are abstract thinkers, perfectionists, analytical, precise, cool, calm, reserved and efficient. They need the opportunity to learn, the chance to shine in their areas of excellence, praise for their knowledge and to avoid routine and redundancy.

They are irritated by redundancy, stupid errors and illogical actions. They irritate others by splitting hairs/being critical, hurting others' feelings through what they feel is constructive criticism, which is actually perceived by others as being much harsher than the Green intended and skepticism.

Careers in which Greens would likely find satisfaction are scientists, students, analysts, lawyers, computer engineers, investors, logisticians, consultants, management and researchers.

Blue: Pride themselves on their abilities to maintain harmony, appreciate uniqueness, to communicate, as well as their willingness to help, their acceptance of self and others, their individuality. Additional words and phrases that describe Blues are, authentic, dreamer, become real, cultivate potential, spiritual, personal growth, making a difference, love, affection, compassion, sympathy, identity, nurturing and sharing.

Blues irritate others by taking emotional stands and moralistic positions, becoming overextended and creating dependencies. Blues are annoyed by impersonal treatment, criticism, hypocrisy, deception, insincerity and a lack of positive feedback.

As you read through the traits and characteristics, I'm sure you recognize pieces of yourself as well as people around you. I'm a Blue/Orange, while my best friend is a Brown/Green and my husband is a Green/Brown. Now look at your characters in conjunction with the color traits. You might have to look a little harder to find them. Unfortunately, the people that fill our heads and the pages of our stories aren't always as fully realized as your best friend or husband. Using this color profiling, we can bring our characters more fully to life.

When you've determined which color categories they fall into, reread the lists. These personality sketches can help strengthen your characters, so they jump right off the page and into the heads of your readers. In addition to creating a memorable story, our job as authors is to bring characters to life. We want our reader to care as deeply about these people as we do. By blending our creations with these universal behavior traits, we can create a kind of alchemy. One that breathes life into the written word.

Member News

Chris Allen Riley: Finished revisions on IM—going out in mail this week. Starting new IM.

Jennifer Armintrout: Have a wonderful new job as a secretary at a law firm which offers me plenty of child-free writing time. Still waiting to hear about my book being considered for Luna.

Tereasa Bellew: I mailed my query to Harlequin Intrigue yesterday. Whew! Now on to final revisions. Sold my story, *Night Bird*, to Hint of Seduction Newsletter.

Member News continued on page 6

**Member News** continued from page 5

Rosanne Bittner: April 17: Speaking & signing books at the LaPorte County (Indiana) Library (I was born in LaPorte) - Beginning at 12:00 pm.

April 21: Featured Speaker at Coloma High School's Honor Society dinner (about 180 people expected)

May 1: Signing WHERE HEAVEN BEGINS at Mid-Michigan RWA Retreat from Harsh Reality - 1:00

Annette Briggs: Getting my Pro Pin parts rounded up.

Diane Burton: Writing travel itineraries for the people I work with; new temp job in the oil and gas industry.

Flavia Crowner: working on WIP; researching; judging Noble Theme Contest.

Patty Gordon; enrolled in romantic comedy online class through the Killer Instincts Chapter.

Peggy Hanchar: Just writing.

Michele Hickerty: Still waiting on revisions to be returned. Wrote almost 200 new pages.

Tammy Keraly: Writing and submitting.

Anne Marie King-Jakubiak: Mailing out a partial; quitting smoking.

Shar Koenig: Nonfiction spinoff cookbook picked up by 2 camping catalogs; almost finished with classic locked room whodunit, *INK ON HER NOSE*.

Lucy Kubash: Wrote my pet column.

Laurie Kuna: Not much writing; end of marking period at school.

Pat Lazarus: Revisions on S.M.; writing on erotica.

Lana Miersen: Sent letter to Chris Keeslar inquiring about my futuristic ms; working on romantic comedy; retreat publicity and income tax.

Joan Noble: Pro pin recognition; three novels complete; Member Outreach RW and hoping to finish synopsis this spring.

Juli Schuitema: One film 1/2 is in production and starts principle photography in June; started work on a documentary; just beginning work on a script for feature length; still working on a fantasy novel; revising futuristic.

Cheryl Steimel: Paranormal query out to Flipside; five page synopsis requested; fantasy rejected by Avon; fantasy sent out to Dorchester; paranormal rejected by Flipside; Dorchester requested full manuscript of fantasy.



Sincere condolences to Leila Davis on the recent loss of her husband..



Seeing Is Believing By Gail Gaymer Martin

Writing fiction is a multifaceted process. The author must create characters, design commanding settings, capture an absorbing style, write compelling dialogue, and decide on the most effective point-of-view (POV).

Understanding Point-Of-View

In romance, the point-of-view usually comes from two major characters, the hero and heroine. The story is theirs and the reader cares about them. The focus of a romance is on the developing relationship between two people who have been brought together, but who have major conflicts that keep them apart. The emotions, feelings, and inner voice of these two characters offer the reader a deeper look into their conflicts, motivation, and goals. Focusing on these aspects of the hero's and heroine's character creates vivid, real life individuals who make you laugh, cry, and cheer.

Who has most to lose?

Once two characters POVs are selected, the writer must ask throughout the plotting, who has the most to lose in each scene. When the character is selected, then the scene is viewed through that person's eyes. What the character cannot see the reader cannot see. What the POV character thinks and feels is made known to the reader. The other characters attitudes and feelings can only be speculated.

POV Problems

Point-of-view problems are the major cause of stress for beginning writers. The author must put himself inside the head of the POV character so that he can write with realism. Read the paragraph below and ask yourself what's wrong with this paragraph.

Jill's pulse galloped when Brandon stepped through the doorway – muscular, assured, and handsome. His gaze trailed down the length of her wind-blown, golden-blond hair, then glided along her ivory skin, and rested on her full, coral lips. She winced as a red flush crept up her neck and covered her face.

Obviously, this paragraph has a point-of-view problem. Jill can only describe what she sees. Brandon sees her wind-blown hair and the red flush. And when you look in a mirror, how often do you describe your own golden-blond hair or full, coral lips? The description is most effective through Brandon's eyes.

Brandon came through the doorway into the sunlight and faltered. Jill. The wind ruffled her golden, sun-speckled hair. His gaze glided over her delicate, ivory skin to her full, coral-hued lips. He warmed, watching a rosy flush creep up her hairline and spread along her cheeks.

Not only, can the reader visualize Jill, but Brandon's characterization is enhanced because the reader can sense his attraction to Jill.

Jill's Point of View

So how could the same paragraph be viewed through Jill's POV?

Seeing Is Believing continued on page 8



Seeing Is Believing continued from page 7

Jill's Point of View

So how could the same paragraph be viewed through Jill's POV?

Jill's pulse galloped when Brandon stepped through the doorway – muscular, assured, and handsome. His gaze drifted along her frame, and the fiery heat of embarrassment crept up her neck. She longed to counter with her own admiration of his bold, manly appearance.

Notice that only what Jill feels and thinks is shown.

Using POV for Character Insight

Having the POV character look into a mirror for a description is weak writing, unless it is used to give insight into characterization.

Looking into the store window, Janet caught Bill's reflection. He headed for her, and she grimaced. Why today? She gaped at her straight, mousy-brown hair, wishing she'd gone for the dye-job and perm yesterday, instead of tomorrow.

Emotional reactions belong to the POV character, but physical description is most effective from another character. To make your writing believable, only describe what can be seen and felt through the POV character's eyes.

Award-winning author, Gail Gaymer Martin, writes for Steeple Hill Single Title, Steeple Hill Love Inspired, and Barbour Publishing. She has signed over thirty novel and novella contracts since her first novel in 1998. Look for Adam's Promise, first book in Faith on the Line Series, July 2004

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The following article first appeared in RWA® Online's March/April issue of LoveBytes. Used with permission.

The Sex was Great. Now What?

By Melissa Francis

There is a spark when they hold hands. Breathing is almost a chore, because they are so wrapped up in each other. Your reader feels the tension, as her lungs tighten and her heartbeat pumps faster. Touching, kissing, and caressing quickly turns into exploring, gasping, and groaning. Beads of sweat dot your reader's upper lip as she reads. Her fingertips tingle and she gulps her wine as she turns the page...

The Sex was Great. Now What? Continued from page 8



So, now what? Can tension continue after sex?

Sure it can! It does everyday. But writing about it sure can be difficult. Here is a short list of what I think will help your characters keep that spark all the way up to the HEA.

1. **Keep them touching.** I don't mean have them pawing each other every time they come in contact. I mean have them hold hands. Have your hero wipe a smudge off your heroine's cheek. Your heroine can caress the hero's neck or absentmindedly caress his arm as they are strolling. Let the reader see they like each other with body language.
2. **Keep them watching.** Not ogling, not drooling; just watching. Your hero can be captivated by her smile or her eyes. He can notice details like the flecks of gold in her green eyes or the small dimple in her chin when she pouts. She can catch him watching her instead of the movie or vice versa. Let the reader see that the thrill isn't gone, even after a thrilling romp.
3. **Keep them communicating.** Communication is the key to any relationship. Their conversations must move from basic small talk to intimacy. Do they have to agree on everything? Nope. But if they don't at least discuss some of what they disagree on, then the reader won't feel a trust developing. And without trust, you have no relationship...just a thrilling romp. And if the hero tells the heroine she's beautiful, well that's a bonus.
4. **Send flowers.** Or something! And not because of the mind blowing sex. Because it's Thursday. Because his eyes are blue. Because she smells like buttercups. Just because. (And while you're at it, will you share this secret with my husband? He won't take the hint from me...) Nothing makes a reader melt more than flowers for no reason. Oh, and it doesn't hurt the hero or heroine, either.
5. **Make love not war.** Fighting isn't tension, it's fighting. Great sex isn't love, it's sex. Your characters need to share some tender moments. Lust is fun, but love is what your book is about. Once the couple falls head over heels, make certain their next encounter is mental and physical.

A common complaint from readers is that if the sex happens too early in the book, then the book loses its sparkle. Don't let good (or great) sex be the only reason to read your book. Make it about the romance, the love, the happily ever after. Romantic tension is slightly different from sexual tension. One can exist without the other, but it takes both to make a great book.

There are other ways to create sizzle between your characters without making them argue all the time. These are just a few ideas to boost your creative juices. And honestly, if they work in real life, why on earth wouldn't they work in your book?

Melissa Francis is the Vice President and Newsletter Editor for RWA® Online. She makes her home in Oxford, MS. and writes in her spare time- between soccer games, math homework, and her paying job.

May be forwarded or reprinted with proper credits.

This article first appeared in RWA® Online's March/April issue of LoveBytes. .

Contests

**2004 Foot in the Door**, Los Angeles Romance Authors

Received deadline: April 15, 2004

Synopsis (10 page max) Query letter (1 page max)

<http://pages.ivillage.com/laromance/index.html>**Texas Gold Romance Award** (Published Authors), East Texas Chapter

Received deadline: April 15, 2004

Book published in 2003; by Region 5 member or set 75% in Texas.

<http://home.earthlink.net/~ralsobrook/texgold.htm>**Stepping Stone** (Published and Unpublished), Midwest Romance Writers

Received by April 15, 2004

First chapter and synopsis not to exceed 35 pages.

<http://www.literary-liaisons.com/cncontest2004.html>**5th Annual Orange Rose Contest** for Published Authors, Orange County Chapter RWA

Received by May 1, 2004

2003 copyright date.

<http://www.occrwa.com/contest.html>**First Impressions**, Tampa Area Romance Authors

Postmarked by May 1, 2004

First 20 pages, optional 1 page synopsis.

<http://tara.writerspace.com/firstimpress.htm>**11th Annual Ignite the Flame Contest**, Central Ohio Fiction Writers

Postmark deadline: May 1, 2004 Received by May 7, 2004

Enter: hero and heroine's first meeting (15 pages max), optional one page un-judged setup.

<http://www.cofw.org/Contest/contest.html>**The Published Maggie Award**, Georgia Romance Writers

Deadline May 3, 2004

All Region 3 Published Authors in romance fiction are eligible; (Region 3 states are: AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV).

<http://georgiaromancewriters.org/default.htm>**Molly Contest**, Heart of Denver

Received by May 8, 2004

Synopsis (max 5 pages) Beginning of manuscript (max 30 pages)

<http://www.hodrw.com/molly.htm>**Aspen Gold** (Published), Heart of Denver

Received by May 8, 2004

2003 copyright.

<http://www.hodrw.com/aspen.htm>**Great Beginnings**, Utah Chapter

Postmarked by May 14, 2004

First three pages.

<http://www.utahrwa.com/gbcontest.html>**Share the Dream**, Scriptscene Chapter of RWA

Postmarked by May 15, 2004; Received by May 23, 2004

First fifteen pages of screenplay.

<http://www.geocities.com/rewrit2002/contestrules.html>

Contests continued from page 10



Original Golden Opportunity, Toronto Romance Writers
Postmark Deadline: May 17, 2004
Synopsis + beginning up to 30 pages.
<http://torontoromancewriters.freesevers.com/goldenop.html>

Labor of Love Contest, Heart of Louisiana
Deadline May 31, 2004
Synopsis, prologue and/or first chapter(s) - not to exceed fifty (50) pages total.
<http://www.heartla.com/Contest.htm>

American Title Contest, Dorchester Publishing
Received by June 15, 2004
Completed Contemporary Romance: Read the rules!
Dorchester editors will read all the entries and request full manuscripts from potential finalists...
http://www.dorchesterpub.com/news/030504_WinContract.htm

Reveal Your Inner Vixen Contest (Published and Unpublished), Maryland Romance Writers Chapter
Deadline: June 15, 2004
Enter: A scene that showcases the sexual tension between your hero and heroine! It can be a flirtation, a kiss, or a fully described love scene, just as long as the reader can feel the heat.
25 maximum pages
plus an un-judged back-cover blurb style editor pitch (one page max.).
<http://www.marylandromancewriters.org/contest.html>

Indiana's Golden Opportunity Contest, Indiana Romance Writers
Received By July 1, 2004
Size of Entry: 55 pages (manuscript and synopsis)
<http://home.insightbb.com/~irwa/contest/contest.htm>Scriptscene Chapter of RWA
Postmarked by May 15, 2004; Received by May 23, 2004
First fifteen pages of screenplay.
<http://www.geocities.com/rewrit2002/contestrules.html>

Compiled by Donna Caubarreaux. May be forwarded with credits. Donna Caubarreaux is a member of Coeur de Louisiane, NOLA Stars, Heart of Louisiana, Kiss of Death, and Scriptscene Chapters of RWA. She received a RWA Service Award in 1997. She sponsors several writing lists. Used by MMRWA with permission

Schedule of 2004 Chapter Meetings

April 17	Jackson-Developing & Maintaining a Critique Group
April 30 to May2	St. Ives Retreat!
May 15	Grand Rapids-Sword Fighting Demo
June 19	Plainwell-Sandra Portko/Stress Reduction=Increasing Productivity
July 10	Lansing-Kevin Brink/ Naval Intelligence (tentative)
August 21	Jackson-Jennifer Armintrout, Building a Better Vampire
September 18	Plainwell-Golden Heart Preparation
October 16	Lansing-Merry Zylstra, Psychic
November 20	Grand Rapids-Bounty Hunter/Private Investigator
December 11	Laurie Kuna's-MMRWA Holiday Party

Other special dates:

July 16-20 Dallas Texas RWA® National Conference



2004 Mid-Michigan Romance Writers of America Officers

President: Michele Hickerty chelery1@yahoo.com
Vice-president: Chris Allen-Riley matt@wmis.net
Secretary: Tammy Kearly tammyk@voyager.net
Treasurer: Jennifer Armintrout WhoTom@aol.com

2004 Mid-Michigan Romance Writers of America Committee Chairs

I Will Write a Book/Write For the Money: Michele Hickerty chelery1@yahoo.com
Happily Ever After Contest: Michele Hickerty chelery1@yahoo.com
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