

♥ Winner of the 1999 RWA® Mid-Sized Chapter Newsletter Contest ♥

The Mid-Michigan Mirror

Reflection of Romance



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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.

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Shannon Godwin

Silhouette editor **Shannon Godwin**, spoke to MMRWA in an extended program on Saturday, January 15. "My job as an editor is to say, 'Can I publish this or not?'" Shannon told us.

Read all about it on page 3

Non-members seeking information about Mid-Michigan meetings and joining our group may contact:

Dawn Bartley bartleyd@chartermi.net



February 19
Mid-Michigan will convene at 11:30 at the Golden Rose in Lansing .

Think writing for young adults is for sissies? We are getting *WAY* informed about it in a program by Naomi Nash/Vance Briceland.

A preview on pages 7 & 8

**HAPPY
FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

Lana Miersen 4
Catherine McClain 6



Many thanks to the contributors to the January issue of Mid-Michigan Mirror and to the contributors to this February issue

Please see page 20 for directions to the meeting at the Golden Rose



From the Desk of Wil A. Emerson

Although January started on a sad note as we watched devastation grow in the aftermath of the Tsunami, we were enlightened to see a swift and generous outpouring of human kindness. It was a clear reminder that adversity brings out the best in mankind.

We as writers, tackle challenges in many ways as we explore the internal and external conflicts of human nature. We write endings as we see fit. Most writers want the blessing of happiness extended to everyone. Sadly, nature doesn't always allow the same endings. But that should not deter us in our mission.

When we share our words with readers near and far, we offer a ray of sunshine, extend sweet morsels of hope and provide a gift of love and laughter. Our mission is clear as we stand tall in the face of adversity.

February, of course, brings a mixed bag of unknown challenges, but we can't forget our heartwarming January meeting and how it made us smile. Our chapter year started on a high note with Shannon Godwin, Silhouette editor, presenting a lively dissertation on the editor's life. Laurie Kuna's recap of the meeting is highlighted in this newsletter. So while the weather may be cold enough to chill our bones, why not let the fires within prompt us to submit a manuscript that will hook the heart of vibrant, energetic Shannon. She's eager to review the next break out novel. It could be yours. How many hearts will you touch, how many smiles will you provide to those who have mountains to climb?

In this month of Love, continue to work on your mission, accomplish your February goals, and share a smile with everyone you meet. That smile will spread like a gentle wave--watch it grow.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Lansing, Cheers,

Wil, Emerson, President

Recap of the January 15 MMRWA Program

By Laurie Kuna

Before finding her niche as a Silhouette editor, Shannon Godwin majored in journalism and mass media at UNC at Chapel Hill, worked in sales and marketing at Random House, but she wanted to be an editor. So she freelanced as one. One long term job was at Barnes & Noble.com. When Mary Theresa Hussey hired Shannon at Silhouette, it was in Romance/Luna/Desire. She now works for Patience Smith at Silhouette Intimate Moments. But Shannon can acquire for every Silhouette line.

“My job as an editor is to say, 'Can I publish this or not?' Shannon told us. “It is not to teach you how to write.” She emphasized that the work has to be in very good shape when she sees it. She also offered us this advice:

Reasons Editors Reject Manuscripts:

The writing's not good.

Not compelling. Not unique. Not special. It has to not just be good; it has to be really good. She's seeing too many things just like it -- has to have that "oomph."

Not appropriate for her company.

The finished manuscript didn't live up to the promise of the synopsis.

The story is forced or contrived, or the author doesn't know what her characters are about.

She asks herself if she can relate to the hero and heroine.

Shannon confessed that she is personally not a fan of a love triangle, feeling it's an external conflict that results in trouble, and it takes away from the central relationship.

Shannon also provided us with this list:

Qualities that make a writer/manuscript stand out from the rest:

1. The ability to take something that's familiar and present it in a unique way. (She only gives something she buys off the shelf five pages before she stops reading, so know the art of telling a story.)
2. Knowing when your story begins, and not being afraid of losing that extraneous stuff if someone tells you to.
3. Being unique. i.e. They see a lot of cop heroes: police, detectives, undercover police. What she's saying is this is a harder sell because she sees LOTS of it, that doesn't mean she WON'T buy it.
4. Know your characters, know the art of story telling, and know how to build the story.

Recap continued on page 4

Recap continued from page 3

There was a question and answer session after Shannon Godwin's talk. The following are questions submitted by members:

Do agented manuscripts get priority over unagented?

Yes and no. IF it's going to auction, then the agented manuscript gets priority. If not, then not necessarily.

If a manuscript goes to contract, what happens next?

You get a revision letter. Then, she [the editor] line edits the revisions. Then she sends it to the copy editor. It comes back to her and she sends it to the author for changes if necessary. Then it goes to the typesetter. Then it comes back to her and she sends it back to the author for final changes before printing.

What's the process of scheduling the releases?

That's up to the senior editor. Contractually, they have to have it scheduled within a certain time.

Do most editors prefer emails to phone calls?

Unless you already have an email relationship with an editor, she [Shannon Godwin] doesn't recommend emailing. Phone calls are better. Make it easier for her to reply by sending an SASE or post card.

Do pitches at RWA National work?

That differs from editor to editor.

The number of authors per editors varies by editor. Shannon currently has 20 published and 6-7 unpublished authors. That's not the heaviest load of any editor at HQ/S.

Latest trends in romance?

"Good books are always the latest trend," Shannon told the group. She'd rather pull you back than push you forward, so she says don't be afraid to push the envelope. She's looking for innovation rather than more sex scenes or more bad language.

Average day for an editor?

Shannon comes in every morning with her To Do list, sits down to answer emails, if there's a meeting it usually runs over. Then she opens mail; starts line editing a manuscript, and something interrupts. Art fact sheets are often due. She proofreads, does revision letters for authors; writes back cover copy; brainstorms ideas with other editors, logs a manuscript into their systems; sends manuscripts to freelance editors. Line edits take anywhere from 4-6 hours to 20. [Then there are] calls, conferences, making up for being gone to conferences. [Shannon] does lots of reading of manuscripts at home at night or on weekends.

What percentage of the story should the hero and heroine be together?

The more the better. It is a romance. Readers want to see the sexual tension and see the two fall in love.

Recap continued on page 5

Recap continued from page 4

Is it all right to query another line after an editor has rejected it?

Sure, just don't query simultaneously.

What role does a first reader play in the submission process?

Does Silhouette Intimate Moments use them? Do they read all submissions? Shannon sends almost all of her slush to a first reader, and some of her agented material to a first reader. This person isn't an editor. They read everything they are sent, the entire submission, then write a summary of the manuscript and send it to the editor. Basically, this is so the material gets a first look. She says a lot of the stuff she sees "isn't very good," so not much of the stuff that gets sent to the first reader ever gets published. But some does.

Should you send an audio tape of the manuscript?

No. Send in a traditional manuscript.

Are the tried and true themes any good anymore?

Themes aren't the problem. The problem is when you read the same theme over and over and over and over. She uses the new TV show Desperate Housewives as a good example of a fresh look at lots of clichéd themes.

How long should you give a submission before asking about it?

6-8 weeks.

Do Silhouette editors still acquire across the lines?

Shannon said she still does if she likes it and thinks it fits another line, she'll send it on to the appropriate line. If you have a relationship with an editor, you should go to that editor. Don't go over her head and send something to some other editor.

How does she define overwritten?

She would say it's probably too much internal dialogue, or too much telling rather than showing. Keep it simple and scale it back. Don't tell her, show her.

"Keep in mind that, if you're seeing something on the bookshelves, we've seen it 100 times over."

The reality of the agent situation:

For category you don't need one because series romance doesn't have much contract wiggle. It's entirely up to you. Agents keep you from getting into nasty contract negotiations for you, and you never compromise the writer/editor relationship. Single title is a different story because of movie rights, foreign rights. She recommends that you do research on an agent before taking one on.

Recap continued on page 6

Recap continued from page 5

Do Silhouette editors go to the database to see what other editors have commented on a manuscript?

They might, but that doesn't mean just because someone else rejected a manuscript she won't look at it.

Where do the titles come from?

There was a push a while back for "hooky" titles, but for now, she doesn't really know where it's going.

How big is the slush pile?

She can receive between 30-50 unsolicited manuscripts a month. The question she asks is does the author understand what's going on enough to go through revisions?

Does she acquire for NEXT?

She can, but since it's a new line, she'd send a manuscript targeted toward that right to those editors.

Next is about focusing on where you are in your life. Lighthearted or literary, grittier, slice-of-life, crossroads, happy endings don't have to be "Let's get married." Explores women's issues. Complex issues of life. Rediscovering yourself. Can be about love, but romance isn't the main part of the plot. Men are part of women's lives, so it makes sense they show up in these books, but that doesn't mean marriage necessarily. It's not a "disease of the month." 75,000 words. The line isn't based on preconceived reader expectations, it's based on the story the writer wants to tell. (Sort of the book of your heart.)

In closing, Shannon gave examples of what she called: situations that not have been thought through [and pet peeves]:

Heroine goes alone to meet an anonymous tipster.

Heroine who is targeted by a killer but refuses to get a police escort. "My life isn't going to be compromised by a professional killer."

Phone calls that never work. She'd really like to see the scene where the phone call goes through.

Sexual tension isn't necessarily dressing sexy or an overtly sexy scene.

The camping excursion that goes wrong and the guy who notices things are missing but doesn't want to say anything.

"My apartment's been broken into, everything's been ransacked. Those darn kids!"

Would your reaction be that it was just some kids playing a prank?

People not doing their job because they've got a good feeling about something.

Virgins who've been holding out for years, and then giving it up in 10 seconds without much reason -- or 30 year old virgins.

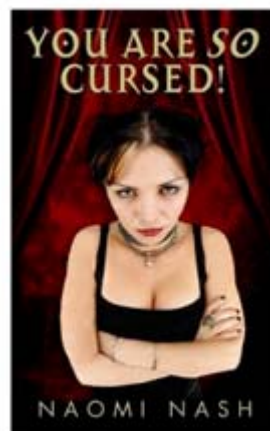
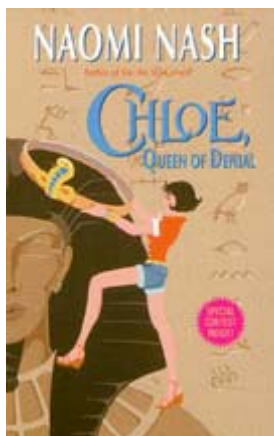
Google something.

Recap continued on page 7

Recap continued from page 6

Stereotypical busybody neighbors. There are often nosey neighbors, but they're not all stupid.
"Keep the characters real."
Small towns aren't all safe. Sometimes people lock their doors.
Millionaires who don't have security.
Heroines in NYC in '05 who dress like they're Amish.
Twenty-eight year olds who talk like they're eighty.
Do guys ever wear shoes other than boots?
People who haven't seen each other in years and don't react realistically.
If a man you don't know is in your room/house/etc uninvited, no matter how cute he is, you're going to be freaked out.
Women who won't give the father of their secret baby a chance because he one time said, "I'm not that kind of guy."
Heroes who always have a great tan, even if he lives in an Arctic climate.
Parents of children under five who say, "Okay kids, it's time to go to bed," and they say, "All right, Mommy -- or the kid breaks a family heirloom, and Mom is completely understanding.
People who have no money but can afford to cook big, sit-down dinners and feed everyone in town.
The foster care system isn't always evil. What if the foster care system didn't go wrong?
Career women are evil. She sees this as a way of establishing ex-wife, ex-girlfriend BAD, current interest, possibly good. We live in a society where lots of people both work.
Policies and processes for large companies don't allow individuals to access computers WITHOUT passwords or security.
Have you noticed kids are the "spitting image" of their parents?

Think writing for young adults is for sissies? We are getting *way* informed at our February meeting.



Get the dish on meeting info on page 8.

Meeting info continued from page 7

FEBRUARY MEETING INFO:

By Jodi Lozon, Vice-President

Location: Golden Rose in Mason/Lansing, MI (Directions on page 20)

Time: 11:30 am

Program: The Young Adult Novel

Speaker: Naomi Nash/Vance Briceland

Vance Briceland, who writes for young adults as Naomi Nash, wanted to be an archaeologist when he grew up. Instead, he has since worked as a soda jerk, a paper flower maker in an amusement park, pianist for a senior show tunes choir, a teacher of literature, and a glass artist with his own studio. He likes writing novels best of all. He lives in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Vance attended the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, for a bachelor's degree in psychology, and Virginia Commonwealth University for a master's degree in English. But to be honest, he doesn't know where the heck those diplomas went. He also writes for adults under the name of Naomi Neale.

Visit his websites at www.naominash.com and www.naomineale.com.

Written as Naomi Nash:

You Are SO Cursed! (Smooch)

Chloe, Queen of Denial (Smooch)

Beaner O'Brian's Absolutely Ginormous Guidebook to Guys (Smooch)

Senses Working Overtime (Smooch, July 2005)

Written as Naomi Neale:

Shop 'Til Yule Drop: King of Orient Are (Love Spell)

Calendar Girl (Making It)

The Mile-High Hair Club (Making It, August 2005)

Christmas Cards from the Edge: O Little Town of Kettlebean (Love Spell)

Approaching March Birthdays are: Juli Schuitema 17 and Pamela Trombley 22



Member News

- Chris Allen- Riley:** Working on requested revisions for Silhouette IM, finishing paranormal, waiting to hear from Dorchester & Vive Voce Press.
- Jen Armintrout:** Waiting to hear from Luna, finished a fantasy novel.
- Tereasa Bellew:** Polishing completed manuscript, working on a contemporary suspense.
- Diane Burton:** Working on a romantic suspense located in Grand Rapids.
- Lisa Childs Theeuwes:** Just sold women's fiction to Warner, loving the cover I just got for my March Gothic Eclipse Intrigue.
- Jodi Copeland:** Working on chick lit for agent, writing next book in Ellora's Cave Sons of Solaris series, finaled in 2005 EPPIE awards.
- Dana Corbit Nussio:** Sold book to Guideposts Book – *The Spirit of the Season* will be a September, 2005, release in the Tales From Grace Chapel Inn series.
- Wil Emerson:** Two manuscripts out to different houses, seeking agent, working my plan. Yeah!!
- Rohn Federbush:** Mystery is ready to submit and hoping to attend National.
- Melissa Ford Lucken:** Revising ...
- Nancy Gideon:** New book, *Warrior Without a Cause* will be on the shelves February 1! Waiting for line edits for book ? which will be out in August.
- Patty Gordon:** Trying to choose a project to settle down & finish!
- Peggy Hanchar:** Finished paranormal romance, sent to an agent, starting the sequel.
- Karen Holthof:** Continue to work on my writing and I am presently agent hunting.
- Anne Marie King-Jakubiak:** Sent a manuscript to Helm Publishing upon their request, finished revisions on another manuscript, moving ahead with current contemporary, while researching my next historical.
- Shar Koenig:** Busy with Koenisha Publications (celebrating five years) and family (son is getting married in May). A new mystery, a locked room whodunit, Ink on Her Nose, will be out in March, also shopping around the screenplay.
- Lucy Kubash:** Waiting to hear in my query at Steeple Hill, writing Mailmax column, and just writing.
- Laurie Kuna:** *Some practical Magic* is a finalist in Romantic Times' Best Book of 2004 in the small publisher paranormal/fantasy category; editor wants the sequel to *Some practical Magic* done & out by mid-summer '05.
- Pat Lazarus:** Working through a major shuffle in my elementary school mentoring program. Still doing art work for ImaJinn; dealing with a hubby on crutches since October 2 and looking at five more weeks of the same; trying to girdle up sagging middle in my fantasy/paranormal.
- Loralee Lillibridge:** Waiting for release date for Special Edition, option book being considered, will attend PASIC conference in NYC in March. Website is up: www.loraleelillibridge.com

Member News continued from page 9

Kate McAuliffe: I'm continuing to work on my medieval romance, I have been doing better at sitting down at least days a week to work on it for a couple of hours. This Monday I have an interview for a teaching position – 6th grade English with an emphasis on writing. I continue to be entertained by my young children. I am looking into getting a master's degree.

Lana Miersen: Working on revision and redecorating house.

Marsha Ransom: Still going to college, helping restructure husband's /son's business, working as office manager for husband's /son's business, planning a graduation and housewarming and wedding this summer!! Typing college essays and helping design website, business cards, etc. Writing plots in my head, but not much on paper.

Juli Schuitema: Working on 2 fantasies.

Dickee Six: WIP=cont. romance, still waiting word on my latest historical from editors.

Connie Smith: Finished women's fiction book, having another book looked at by editor, trying to think about what I want to write next.

Maris Soule: Sent out queries to agents, continuing with WIP, entered a mystery contest, going to Sluethfest in March, and may teach a class in writing for publication.

Cheryl Steimel: My romantic comedy fantasy has been released and is getting very good reviews. I've finished the sequel and started an alien story. I received a rejection from an agent but sent out a query to a new agency.

Deanna Talcott: Started new job as a Realtor for Lane Wagner & Co. in Lansing, worked on revising a new proposal for Silhouette Romance.

The Getting to Know the 2005 Mid-Michigan Board



Photo by Dawn Bartley

2005 Board above from left to right: Jodi Lozon Vice-president, President Wil Emerson, Secretary Shar Koenig, and Treasurer Lisa Theeuwes

President Wil A. Emerson:

Wil A. Emerson, 2005 president of MMRWA, has her eye set on publishing contemporary romances with a lot of psychological drama involved. She started writing about ten years ago after a creative hiatus of more years than she'd dare admit. It seems that her ventures as the family poet, songster and playwright always got her in a jam.

The Getting to Know continued on page 11

The Getting to Know continued from page 10

Family genes didn't include similar funny bones. So, while keeping out of the line of family fire, Wil raised three boys, finished nursing school, and received a Bachelor's degree in Nursing---while traveling like a vagabond behind a husband who had his own career objectives.

Wil's nursing career took many corners, but eleven years were spent managing the welfare of patients with kidney disease. Ultimately, Wil served as clinical supervisor for a large transplant program in Dallas, Texas.

After a two year stint in Europe in the late 90's, Wil returned home to focus on a relentless desire to write. *Taking Rosie's Arm*, women's fiction, was released in 2002. Wil has numerous projects on the table, seven complete manuscripts and one new manuscript that is being reviewed for representation by an eager agent who called one Saturday evening after reading the synopsis of *All in a Name*.

The year ahead offers rewards: On the board of MMRWA, another novel underway and the prospect of seeing one more novel in print. Six grandchildren also bring more joy than one could imagine. If Wil is not at her desk, she is either walking Mac, a playful Bichon or writing funny stories for the kids. They happen to think her family stories are pretty funny---because the stories are about their parents.

Vice-President Jodi Lozon:

As Vice-President for 2004, Chris Allen-Riley did a wonderful job and left me with some pretty big shoes to fill. I will, of course, do my best. I have several exciting speakers lined up for the 2005 year, and also look forward to interactive sessions that focus on all members from the newest writer to the one that has been in the industry for some 20 plus years. I, myself, have been in the industry for just over ten years. My first work was a romantic suspense novel I began in college quite by accident, or so I thought at the time. As it turned out, I was a writer all along -- someone had just forgotten to tell me up to that point.

Since writing word one all those years ago, I have realized what a rollercoaster ride the publishing industry can be. The high days can be truly high and so exciting you think you might never come back down to earth, and then there are the low days, where you are certain this industry and everyone in it is out to see that you never succeed. Sadly, it doesn't seem to matter if you are agented or unagented, or have 50 books in print or are still in the pre-published stage, the low days still come, and this is why having a supportive and industry-focused group such as MMRWA is so critical to my and your continued success as an author. Very few people outside of fellow authors understand what we face each day. My husband and the rest of my family and non-writing friends try, but honestly they can't fully grasp it, and so I am thankful for all of you who can.

As an author, I am in the early stages of my writing career. I have eight books published to date, seven of which are with an RWA-recognized publisher (Ellora's Cave) and two of which are currently available in paperback at local bookstores. I am agented and continuously striving to break into the New York publishing scene.

The Getting to Know continued on page 12

The Getting to Know continued from page 11

I have come close numerous times, having reached that all important buy or pass stage, only to have the ultimate pass decision come my way. It's really easy to lose your faith in these moments. Because I believe in myself, my writing and where it is going, and because I have friends and family who support me, as well, I still have my faith and after a few rough months in 2004, it is stronger than ever.

My books have received accolades from being selected as Recommended Reads by The Road To Romance and the Reviewer's International Organization to being a finalist in the 2004 National Reader's Choice Awards Contest and the 2005 EPPIE Awards Contest, among others. I have also received many wonderful reviews from Top Picks with RT BOOK Club Magazine to 5 hearts and star reviews from various other review sites. However, I don't always get good reviews and not every reader likes my work.

As pre-published authors we first experience this when entering contests. We will garner glowing feedback and a perfect score from one judge and the next will write all over our entry and give a score that we are certain must have been meant for someone else.

As a pre-published author, I learned this has a lot to do with having a strong voice, and that while the low score and not-so-flattering comments might be upsetting, they also might be a good thing. After all, don't we all wish to leave an impression with a reader? As odd as it might sound, I would much rather leave a lasting negative impression with a reader than to not affect them at all, because negative or positive it means that my writing does influence them in some way or other and that my book and voice stood out.

As the 2005 MMRWA Vice-President, I look forward to sharing time with you all, learning more about the publishing industry, and about one another, whether it be from a writing-standpoint or simply an interpersonal one. Further, I encourage you to contact me at any time with questions regarding MMRWA, or the writing marketplace in general, at: Jodi.Lozone@ttmps.com.

Thank you for selecting me as your 2005 Vice-President and best wishes for a wonderful year!

Jodi L. Lozon, w.a. Jodi Lynn Copeland

Secretary Sharolett Koenig:

MMRWA secretary Sharolett Koenig is the author of the Tim MacCulfsky young adult mystery series. A member of the American Christian Writers Association, Mystery Writers of America, Romance Writers of America and various local writers groups, Sharolett has always loved to write and discovered at a very early age that writing could have a positive affect on her school grades.

Living in the Midwest, her writing reflects experiences gained while homeschooling five active children and maintaining a private collection of over 200 bonsai trees and a happy household on 10 wooded acres in the country.

The Getting to Know continued on page 13

The Getting to Know continued from page 12

The first three published titles in The Tim MacCulfsky YA Mystery series are: *Plight of the Children*, *Right Up Your Alley* and *One On Nothing*. Two nonfiction: *Is This Really Good, Or Am I Just Starved?* and *A Writer's Concordance*. Coming out this year, a locked-room whodunit: *Ink On Her Nose* and a children's fantasy which I collaborated on with my daughter: *Ick! A Snake!*

Sharolett Koenig, President of Koenisha Publications - www.koenisha.com

Author of The Tim MacCulfsky Mystery Series

Coming in 2005: *Ink On Her Nose* - A classic locked-room whodunit with a modern "reality TV show" twist

Treasurer Lisa Childs:

Treasurer Lisa Childs is an award-winning author of romantic suspense for Harlequin Intrigue. She also writes women's fiction for Harlequin's new line, Next. She serves on the Romance Writers of America's Communications committee and is a contributing editor to Market & Industry for RWA e notes. She judges as many contests and volunteers to do as many critiques as she can fit into her busy schedule of writing, day job in the insurance industry and raising two young daughters.

Look for Lisa's upcoming releases, *THE SUBSTITUTE SISTER*, a March Gothic Eclipse for Harlequin Intrigue and *TAKING BACK MARY ELLEN BLACK*, an August 2005 release from Harlequin Next.

**Hook, Line, or Sinker**

An Exercise by Wil Emerson

The following is an exercise to assist in making our openings the catch of the day. We want to be hooked by an agent or editor. Dangling on the line is okay...it may net a request for more material. Sinker...not on our agenda! So let's make those precious few lines look like the beginning of a best seller. Don't leave an opening gasping for oxygen or flapping on the floor.

You can participate either by submitting your own first lines, anonymously is fine, and asking for feedback or by submitting a one line constructive critique that will be posted in next month's publication.

Remember, we are all here to help bring our writing to the next level so wise counsel, delivered with a smile, is a true gift to a fellow writer.

Hook, Line or Sinker's first catch out the water following on page 14

Hook, Line or Sinker continued from page 13

Opening lines: Three max. Critiques: One--you can use commas, semi-colons but you can't cover the page.

First opening out of the water:

"Kathryn Morgan, you have to follow through with your plan. If you don't, you'll live the rest of your life as a bitter, unhappy woman." My finger wagged at the reflection. The gal staring back gritted her pearly white teeth in determination.

Post your comments to brainchilde@websurfers.biz. Editor will select the returned entries for publication. Comments can also be shared at the opening of our general meetings.

Our own Rosanne Bittner tells us about:

Romancing the West

I suspect no other time period has been more romanticized in books, movies, and imaginations than the American West of the 1800s. The popularity of certain genres comes in waves, but through it all, the American West has remained a steady interest of readers and movie-goers alike.

During the first half of this century, pulp magazines were leaders in the popular fiction field and, for most of those years, the most popular pulps were Westerns like "Buffalo Bill," "Dime Western," "Ranch Romances," "Texas Rangers," "Six-Gun Western," and "Range Riders." Some of the best known writers of this [twentieth] century, including Louis La'Amour, Jack London, Sinclair Lewis, Tennessee Williams, and John Jakes, got their start with these pulp magazines, later moving on to write full-size novels.

I believe that the reason Westerns continue to be popular is the very same reason I love the subject and write about nothing else. This country's pioneers, especially those who braved the dangerous elements and terrain of the American West, give us something of which to be proud. When we read a Western, a part of us feels pride at what it took to make this country the great nation that it is.

"Romancing" the West began as an advertising ploy by land agents, the railroads and the government to encourage people to go west, settle new places and dream big dreams. "Free land!" "Gold!" "Silver!" were the basic temptations that drew people west, and it is sometimes argued that many settlers were not so much brave as they were ignorant of what really lay ahead. By the time they were deep into the prairies, plains, or mountains, it was too late to turn back. I have never seen any statistics on how many wives shot their husbands for dragging them into such hardship and loneliness, but I have no doubt that such things must have happened!

Romancing the West continued on page 15

Romancing the West continued from page 14

My novels are a grand mixture of romance and reality. I strive for historical accuracy, using real locations and real events. People and their situations aren't always pretty and perfect, but that's real life and that's what I write. Our ancestors struggled through some of the most difficult events in our history. The courage and tenacity demonstrated by those who migrated here from Europe was equaled by the Hispanics and African-Americans who also played vital roles in the settling of this rugged wild country.

Equally brave were the Native Americans as they tried to stop Western settlement. We know today, of course, that the treatment of our country's native inhabitants was in many ways shameful and one of my goals as a writer has been to reveal the truth about some of these events, things we were never told in our high school history books. Many readers have told me that through my books they have learned things they were never taught in school, and in an entertaining way. That is exactly what I set out to do when I started writing western romance.

Although the West has been romanticized in more ways than one, I think the "true America" does come through, and, for the most part, makes us feel good about ourselves and our ancestors. As far as writing the western romance, what better subject is there for creating true heroes and heroines?

There was a "gentleman's code" in the West, and although men could be rough and lawless and not care much for shaving or taking baths, most of them had a high respect and admiration for "proper ladies." Our western heroes can be ruthless on the one hand, yet gentle, courteous and sometimes vulnerable around women.

The western heroine can possess all the elements readers love in a heroine: [be] feminine but tough, gentle but courageous. It took a hell of a woman to help settle the West -- no fainting, delicate damsels here! Some single women even went west to settle under the Homestead Act (as in my novels *Montana Woman* and *Unforgettable*) In fact, one thing I love about creating western heroines is that in real life, women of the West had more independence and more rights than their eastern counterparts. These women not only tamed the West, but also tamed the men who tried to keep it lawless!

Believe me, western romance is not just cowboys and horses. It is often romance at its very best. It's wonderful to have a setting that allows me to combine reality with romance and end up with stories about the bond of love keeping two people together though some of the toughest times in history. Enjoy!

This article was written by Rosanne several years ago but still has pertinence and is back appearing in the Romantic Times newsletter available

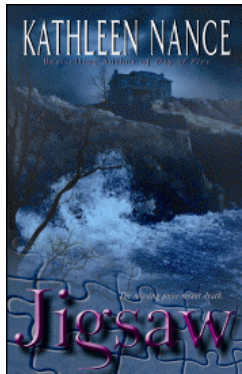
at: <http://www.romantictimes.com/index.html?/data/tips/3.html>

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Look What Our Published Authors Are Up To

DeAnna Talcott, Dana Corbit, Kathleen Nance, and Michelle Celmer Will be at Barnes and Noble in Northville on Feb. 10th for a book signing.

Dana Corbit Nussio's *The Spirit of the Season* will be a September, 2005, release in the Tales From Grace Chapel Inn series.



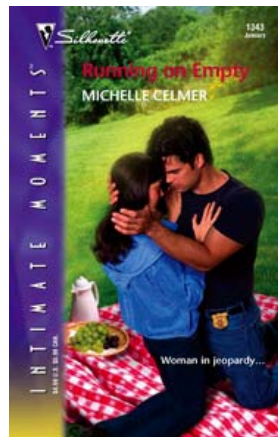
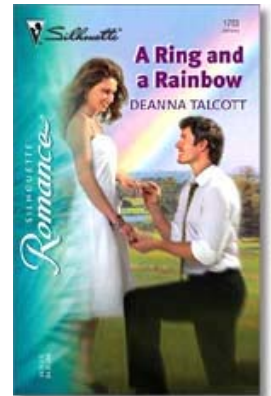
Jigsaw by **Kathleen Nance**, an April 5 2005 release from Leisure Books



Flavia Crowner's mystery, *Pie Pantry*, featuring her savvy wheelchair bound amateur sleuth, Sunny Farnum is available through Koenisha Publications - www.koenisha.com

DeAnna Talcott's new book, *A Ring and a Rainbow*, was a January 2005 release.

Deanna is also doing author interviews on Writerspace and Romance Junkies this month



RUNNING ON EMPTY By **Michelle Celmer**
Silhouette Intimate Moments
January 2005



Sweet as Sin by **Jodi Lynn Copeland** is available at Liquid Silver Books, Ellora's Cave and Paperbacks in Borders & Walden's Bookstores

Sharolett Koenig, coming out in 2005: *Ink On Her Nose* - A classic locked-room whodunit with a modern "reality TV show" twist. Check out Sharolett's site at: www.koenisha.com

Look What continued on page 17

Look What continued from page 16

Nancy Gideon's new book, *Warrior Without a Cause* will be on the shelves February!

Laurie Kuna: *Some practical Magic* is a finalist in Romantic Times' Best Book of 2004 in the small publisher paranormal/fantasy category.

Marsha Ransom I was excited to receive an e-mail today saying that my essay had been chosen to be included in an anthology called "See, I Told Me So!" The anthology was conceived and collected to provide encouragement for new or burnt-out homeschoolers, by a veteran homeschooler who wanted us to share what we would tell ourselves if we had the privilege of knowing then what we know now. I think it's an exciting concept and am delighted to be included in this project. What a thrill!

The following article appeared in the November/December 2004 issue of the Galley, Georgia Romance Writers' monthly online newsletter.
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THE CONTEMPORARY GOTHIC

By Rita Herron

Normally when we think of the gothic, we think of Victoria Holt and the historical novel. But today's market provides an opportunity for the contemporary writer to branch out and try putting traditional gothic elements into the contemporary novel. At present, the contemporary single title market does not have a specific line designated for contemporary gothic, but the editors are always looking for that special story with a unique twist, and if yours has a gothic tone or twist it might catch their attention.

Currently, the Harlequin Intrigue line is promoting a series of gothic books. According to Denise O'Sullivan, the Sr. Editor, they are actively acquiring for this line (now titled Eclipse.)

Kim Nadelson, former Associate Editor of Harlequin Intrigue and Denise O'Sullivan said this when I asked them what they wanted:

Basically we're looking for atmospheric writing style, strong focus on suspense/mystery and vivid sense of setting to evoke that Gothic setting. We are NOT looking for a paranormal slant (looking for more gaslight type approach.) If an author wants to flirt with the paranormal where things go bump in the night but it turns out not really a supernatural force (They were just being led to believe the house is haunted or they are losing their mind) that's okay. But no real ghosts or spirits please.

In the single title market, editors classify the gothic as a romantic suspense.

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THE CONTEMPORARY GOTHIC continued from page 17

However, today the term romantic suspense might encompass the gambit from light comedic suspense (Stephanie Bond, *Whole Lotta Trouble*, and Avon) to the darker grittier suspense of favorites like Tami Hoag, Kay Hooper, Beverly Barton and Lisa Gardener.

To fall into the 'gothic' realm, other elements must be present.

Here are a few specific elements which define the gothic:

1) An eerie, dark, sinister, atmosphere

Think of your setting/the house as part of the story. It becomes a character in itself because it poses a danger to the heroine, it holds secrets, sets an eerie tone, and threatens her in some way, so that it is inherent to the plot.

Settings: Old mansions, monasteries, churches, castles, supposedly haunted houses or towns, an old orphanage, a shack in the woods, a lake where someone died, a house where a murder occurred, etc. Also think cliffs, ridges, caves, secluded areas.

2) Setting the Tone – use your language to do this.

Words to describe the setting – eerie, murky gray, dark, sinister ... Think dark and stormy night

Look at these phrases and see how they add an eerie tone:

Granite sky, crumbling edifice, harsh brutality, hacking wind, fitful winter sun, echoed in crevices, dirty night, nagging wind, pitiless rain, icicles clung to the turrets, a prey to despair, road stretched like a snake across the moors

Also for atmosphere -- use your weather elements

Think blustery winds, cold temperatures, snowy cliffs and mountains, slick icy roads, rain or thunderstorms, sweltering heat – other elements that create danger and conflict in their own right but which add that extra sinister feeling to the story

3) Gas Light Elements – These are elements in the story which hint at danger, create tension, worry or fear.

For example:

The killer leaves a note or makes threatening phone calls, he leaves an object that triggers painful memories to the heroine, something that frightens the heroine because of a past traumatic memory, or he might leave a bloody note warning her that she is the next to die if she doesn't leave the house

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4) The Romance

For historical gothics, the first person (heroine's) point of view is the most popular. For the contemporary the author could choose.

For Harlequin Intrigue, readers like to have both the hero and heroine's POV.

With Intrigue, the romance and suspense go hand in hand – 50/50. Both characters should be involved in the mystery or connected to it in some way. Each should have something at stake.

Weaving the romance and suspense together is like weaving a braided rope. The external conflict/plot/mystery/danger moves the story forward and triggers insecurities (the internal conflict of the characters) which drive them together and give the push/pull of sexual tension.

5) Heroine

Today's gothic heroine is strong but vulnerable. She's smart/savvy, although she is in trouble, and is forced to accept help from the hero, even if she doesn't quite trust him. She stands up for herself, but she's in danger so must work with the hero who poses another threat.

6) Hero

The hero is strong, tough, bigger than life – dark, enigmatic. He's mysterious, more alpha, quiet brooding type, and tortured. The heroine might fear him or have reason to think he's the killer or that he is dangerous at first, but as the story progresses, she realizes that he needs her as much as she needs him.

7) Plot Line

Incorporate category elements for Intrigues or traditional romantic elements for your single title, but add that sinister, eerie, atmospheric setting as part of the plot

Intrigue – think traditional story lines—bodyguard, women in jeopardy, murder mystery, legal thrillers, reunited lovers, etc.

Rita Herron's first gothic Intrigue, *The Man From Falcon Ridge* is out now! Also look for her first two single title romantic suspenses (both gothic in tone) – *A BREATH AWAY*, May '05, & *IN A HEARTBEAT*, Nov. '05, and two more additions to her Nighthawk Island series from Harlequin Intrigue: *Mysterious Consequences*, Aug. '05, BK. 7 Title TBA, Sept. '05 as well as her Christmas Cops Anthology in Nov. '05. For more writing tips and updates, visit her at www.ritaherron.com

**The Golden Rose
3056 Okemos Road, Mason, MI 48854
Phone: (517) 349-9500**

Directions:

From the North (Mt. Pleasant): Follow US-127 South. Merge onto I-96 East via the Exit on the Left toward Detroit. Take Exit #110 toward Mason/Okemos. Turn right/South onto Okemos Road. Follow for 0.5 miles. Golden Rose is on the left hand side of road.

From the South (Jackson): Follow I-94 West/US-127 North. Take the US-127/M-50 Exit #138 toward Lansing/Jackson. Take the ramp toward Lansing/Charlotte. Merge onto US-127 North; follow for 25.5 miles to Hold Road Exit. Turn Right onto Holt Road; go 2.1 miles. Turn Left onto Okemos Road; go 2.1 miles. Golden Rose is on the right hand side of road.

From the South (Kalamazoo): Follow I-94 East. Take the I-69 North/US-27 North Exit #108 toward Lansing. Go 1 mile *Keep Left at the fork in the ramp.* Go 0.5 miles. Merge onto I-69 North; go 34 miles. Merge onto I-96 East via Exit #72 toward Detroit; go 13 miles. Take Exit #110 toward Mason/Okemos. Turn right/South onto Okemos Road. Follow for 0.5 miles. Golden Rose is on the left hand side of road.

From the East (Brighton): Follow I-96 West toward Lansing. Take Exit #110. Turn Left/South toward Mason/Okemos. Follow for 0.5 miles. Golden Rose is on the left hand side of road.

From the West (Holland): Follow I-196 East. I-196 East becomes I-96 East; go 72 miles. Take Exit #110 toward Mason/Okemos. Turn right/South onto Okemos Road. Follow for 0.5 miles. Golden Rose is on the left hand side of road.

Please send all contributions for the February the Mirror to:
brainchilde@websurfers.biz DEADLINE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE MARCH
2005 MIRROR FEBRUARY 20.

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RWA® Pro Liaison: Tammy Kearly tammyk@voyager.net

Web mistress: Michelle Crean mecrean@crean.com

MMRWA 2005 MEETING SCHEDULE

| Month | Location | Speaker/Program |
|--------------|-----------------|---|
| February | Lansing | Vance Briceland/Naomi Nash (The Young Adult Novel) |
| March | Kalamazoo | Maris Soule (Romantic Suspense) |
| April | Annual retreat | Elizabeth Grayson, Bestselling Historical Author |
| May | Jackson | (Tentative) Some Like It Hot (Trend toward erotica and the more sensual romance) |
| June | Grand Rapids | Roseanne Bittner/Staying The Course (Staying on top during industry turmoil and change) |
| July | TBD | TBD (will vote on having meeting this month due to RWA Nationals) |
| August | Lansing | TBD |
| September | Kalamazoo | TBD |
| October | Jackson | TBD |
| November | Grand Rapids | TBD |

Contests – This time there are many for published authors

Updated and all sites tested...Compiled by Donna Caubarreaux....

Award of Excellence - Published
Colorado Romance Writers
Deadline January 7, 2005
Copyright of 2004
<http://www.ecentral.com/members/crw/EVENTS.HTM#CONTNEWS>

Rebecca
LERA - Land of Enchantment Romance Authors
Received by January 15, 2005
First Chapter, 30 page max + optional one page synopsis.
<http://www.leranm.com/>

**2005 Write Touch Readers' Award
Contest** - Published
Wisconsin RWA
Deadline: Entries received by January 15,
2005
Novel-length romance with 2004 copyright.
www.eclectics.com/WisRWA/

Contests continued on page 23

Contests continued from page 22**Marlene Award**

Washington Romance Writers
 Postmarked by January 15, 2005
 Synopsis + beginning of book not to exceed 35 pages total.
<http://www.wrwdc.com/events.html>

Heart of the Rockies

Colorado Romance Writers
 Deadline January 31, 2005
 page down to access this information
<http://www.ecentral.com/members/crw/EVENTS.HTM#CONTNEWS>

Jeannie Gray Golden Friendship Award

Received Deadline January 31, 2005
 Tell us in 250 - 300 words about your hopes and dreams
 and how this award and entering the Golden Heart®
 moves you towards your goals.
<http://www.wittig.com/laurin/JeannieAward.htm>

Grand Beginnings Contest

Northwest Indiana RWA
 Received by February 14, 2005
 First five pages.
<http://www.nwinrwa.org/contestform.html>

Scarlett Letter Award (Published)

Tampa Area Romance Authors
 Received by February 14, 2005
 Copyright of 2004.
<http://tara.writerspace.com/scarlett.htm>

The Lories 2005 Best Published Contest - Published

From the Heart Romance Writers
 Deadline: Received by February 18, 2005
 Open to books published from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004.
<http://www.fthrw.com>

Romance Through the Ages Contest

Hearts Through History Romance Writers
 Received by February 25, 2005
 Beginning of manuscript not to exceed 30 pages + One to two page synopsis single spaced.
<http://www.heartsthroughhistory.com/contest.htm>

More Than Magic - Published

Romance Writers Ink
 Postmarked by January 15, 2005
 Copyright of 2004
<http://www.rwi-rwa.com/mtmcontest.php>

Winter Rose - Unpublished

Yellow Rose RWA
 Postmarked by January 15, 2005
 First 25 pages.
<http://www.yellowroserwa.com/pages/4/index.htm>

2005 Merritt Contest

San Antonio Romance Authors
 Received by January 26, 2005
 First chapter not to exceed 25 pages.
http://www.sararwa.com/merritt/2005_rules.htm

Golden Quill (Published)

Desert Rose RWA
 Postmark Deadline: January 31, 2005
 Copyright of 2004
<http://www.desertroserwa.org/gq.html>

Beacon Award (Published)

First Coast Romance Writers
 Deadline: February 1, 2005
 Copyright of 2004
<http://www.fcrw.net/>

Between the Sheets

Greater Detroit RWA
 Received by February 14, 2005
 First Ten pages.
<http://www.gdrwa.org/>

Contests continued on page 24

Contests continued from page 23

1st Annual Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence Contest - Published

Sponsor: Southern Magic Chapter
Receipt Deadline: March 1, 2005
Enter: Romance novels with 2004 copyright.
E-books from RWA-approved publishers eligible in hard copy.
<http://www.southernmagic.org/gwcontest.html>

The Daphne du Maurier Award

(Published)
Kiss of Death Chapter
Received by March 15, 2005
Copyright date of 2004
www.rwamysterysuspense.org

5th Annual Inspirational Readers Choice Contest (Published)

Sponsor: Faith, Hope and Love Chapter
Receipt Deadline: March 1, 2005 (entry form)
Enter: Inspirational Novels or Novellas with a 2004 copyright
<http://www.faithhopelove-rwa.org/contests.htm>

The Four Seasons Awards

Windy City RWA
Received by March 1, 2005
First Chapter up to 25 pages.
<http://www.scribesworld.com/windycityrwa/fourseasons.html#contest>

Barclay Sterling

Lake Country Romance Writers
Postmark of March 1, 2005
Beginning of manuscript up to 60 pages,
plus synopsis (unjudged) up to 5 pages.
<http://www.lcrw.org/rulessterling.html>

9th Annual Dixie First Chapter Contest

Magnolia State Romance Writers
Received by March 15, 2005
First Chapter up to 25 pages max.
<http://www.members.tripod.com/MSRW-Jackson/>

Barclay Gold (Published)

Lake Country Romance Writers
Postmarked by March 31, 2004
Copyright of 2004.
<http://www.lcrw.org/rulesgold.html>

The Daphne du Maurier Award

for Unpublished
Kiss of Death Chapter
Received by March 15, 2005
First fifteen (15) pages of manuscript
PLUS five (5) copies of a one-page,
single spaced synopsis.
www.rwamysterysuspense.org

Touched by Love Contest

Faith, Hope and Love Chapter
Received by April 1, 2005
Synopsis (ten double spaced pages max)
and the beginning of an unpublished manuscript.
Max of 50 pages total.
<http://www.faithhopelove-rwa.org/contests.htm>

Donna Caubarreaux is a member of Coeur de Louisiane, Scriptscene Chapter, NOLA Stars, Heart of Louisiana, Kiss of Death, and ChickLitWriters of RWA. She received a RWA Service Award in 1997. She sponsors several writing lists.
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