

The Mid-Michigan Mirror

...A Reflection of Romance

Winner of the 1999 RWA® Mid-size Chapter Newsletter Contest

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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 PUBLISH AND ESTABLISH CAREERS, AND TO PROVIDE CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR WRITERS WITHIN THE ROMANCE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. February Program Description
2. The President's Corner
2. Member Birthdays
3. 2011 Meeting Schedule
3. Directions to Meeting
4. Member News
5. Lessons from the Pit of Despair: Managing Writer's Block By Kristan Higgins
7. Learning English the Passionate Way by Sherry Thomas
8. Ten Commandments of Writing by Karen Hall
10. Don't Be Ordinary by Paisley Kirkpatrick
11. The Bleepity-Bleep Golden Heart by Alyssa Marble
12. Top 4 Reasons to Write for Your Chapter's Newsletter by Lisa McManus Lange
13. Member Blog Addresses
14. Board and Chair Job Descriptions
17. Retreat From Harsh Reality
19. Retreat Registration Form
20. Final Reflection by Tracy Roper

February Program: Member Critique

by *Margo Hoornstra*
Vice President/Publicity Chair

The topic for the February 19, 2011 MMRWA program is Member Critique. As requested, Mid-Michigan RWA Members will be given the opportunity to bring portions of works in progress for evaluation by published members.

To help keep this program running smoothly, please respect the following rules of engagement.

1. Sign up through e-mail to me at mjhoornstra@sbcglobal.net with Member Critique in the subject line. Let me know your title and genre.
2. Limit the manuscript length to ten pages.
3. Bring three printed copies to the meeting with you. That way, you'll have any written comments or notations to take home.
4. Designate someone else to read for you if you'd rather not read yourself.

Attention published members, please e-mail me as well, again with Member Critique in the subject line, if you plan to attend the February meeting.

Please join us on Saturday, February 19, at Famous Dave's, 4505 Canal Avenue, Grandville, Michigan beginning at 11:30 AM.

The President's Corner

By Florence Price

This will be my fourth year as a member of MMRWA, and I've loved every minute of it. From my attendance at the 2008 Retreat From Harsh Reality, which was my first Retreat, to becoming the Mirror Editor in 2009, then on to your President-Elect in 2010 and now to serving as your President in 2011, every experience has been filled with friendship and encouragement. And, as I take the baton, or rather the bell, passed to me from Lucy's capable hands, I'm excited to look forward to the new year in great anticipation of the many wonderful programs and events planned for our chapter.

The Retreat From Harsh Reality will be here in just a few short months, and this year the schedule is being revamped so that participants will have more time to work together in Mini-Sessions/Writing Sessions, Muse Sessions or just time on your own (how many of us get that in our everyday lives?). Retreat Chair, Julie McMullen has done a fabulous job, not only in organizing this important Chapter event but also in putting a very professional Retreat brochure and flyer together, which should be available on the MMRWA website for download shortly.

In addition, several members will be contributing their talents to our monthly programs this year. Thanks go out to our President-Elect Laurie Kuna along with Renci Denham, Cindy Arends and Ami Weaver for volunteering to present some extremely interesting topics. And, of course, a big thank you to our Vice-President Margo Hoonstra for putting the program schedule together.

Also, we're planning to revive our Happily Ever After Contest. Diane Burton, Annette Briggs and Anne Marie Jakubiak-King have graciously agreed to serve on the HEA Contest Committee.

I feel that all of the above events, along with the participation of our members, will make 2011 a very exciting year for the MMRWA, and I'm thrilled to be a part of it all.

So, before I close, I want to thank Lucy Kubash for all her time and hard work during her term as President. Lucy will continue to serve our Chapter as the Secretary. And thank you to Rosanne Bittner for her continued expertise as our Treasurer, Alyssa Marble for her fantastic work as last year's Mirror Editor and welcome to our new Editor, Tracy Roper.

I hope to see many of you at the February meeting in Grandville, but until then...

Happy writing,

Florence



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BABIES!

January

04: Leah Denda
13: Linda Cossel
14: Rosanne Bittner
Melissa Lucken
17: Dana Corbit Nussio
18: Aileen Hyne
20: Joyce Soule
25: Dawn Bartley
Michelle Celmer
29: Cindy Smith

February

04 Lana Miersen
06 Catherine McClain
27 Dawn M. McClure

MMRWA 2011 MEETING SCHEDULE

January	No chapter meeting
February 19	Grand Rapids (Grandville) Member Critique
March 19	Lansing Income Tax Information For Writers
April 29 – May 1	Kalamazoo (Augusta) Retreat From Harsh Reality Yarrow Golf Course
May 21	Jackson Grammar and Copy Editing by Laurie Kuna
June 18	Grand Rapids (Grandville) Creating Cover Art by Pat Lazarus
July	No Meeting
August 20	Lansing Member Critique
September 17	Kalamazoo Personality Disorders by Renci Denham
October 15	Jackson Cover Letters by Cindy Arends
November 19	Grand Rapids (Grandville) Point of View by Ami Weaver
December 10	Christmas Party – Location TBD



February Meeting Directions

Famous Dave's
4505 Canal Avenue,
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 301-7711

- **Directions from Kalamazoo and southwest:**
- Merge onto US-131 N.
(35.5 mi)
- Take the M-6 W exit, EXIT 77, toward HOLLAND.
(2.0 mi)
- Merge onto MI-6 W.
(6.8 mi)
- Merge onto I-196 E to GD RAPIDS.
(2.6 mi)
- Take the 44TH ST exit, EXIT 67, toward RIVERTOWN PKWY.
(0.4 mi)
- Turn RIGHT onto 44TH ST SW.
(0.1 mi)
- Turn RIGHT onto CANAL AVE SW.
(0.1 mi)
- End at Famous Dave's

- **Directions from Lansing and points east:**
- Take I-96 W toward GD RAPIDS.
(44.4 mi)
- Merge onto MI-6 W via EXIT 46 toward M-6 W/HOLLAND.
(19.3 mi)
- Merge onto I-196 E toward GD RAPIDS.
(2.6 mi)
- Take the 44TH ST exit, EXIT 67, toward RIVERTOWN PKWY.
(0.4 mi)
- Turn RIGHT onto 44TH ST SW.
(0.1 mi)
- Turn RIGHT onto CANAL AVE SW.
(0.1 mi)
- End at Famous Dave's

- **Directions from Grand Rapids:**
- I-196 W toward HOLLAND.
(5.5 mi)
- Take the 44TH ST exit, EXIT 67, toward RIVERTOWN PKWY.
(0.4 mi)
- Turn LEFT onto 44TH ST SW.
(0.4 mi)
- Turn RIGHT onto CANAL AVE SW.
(0.1 mi)
- End at Famous Dave's

Member News!

Annette Briggs: spent much of the holiday traveling with my husband to family members homes and the usual Disney World. I'm excited about the wonderful online workshop I'm taking right now called: Eleven Senses -Who Knew? My do or die goal for 2011 is to have at least one presentable manuscript by the end of this year. It's been way too long coming.

Laurie Kuna: I'm currently working on several short (50-60 page) teacher-related materials for an offshoot of ImaJinn called Easy as Pie Guides and trying to get my Regency WIP back on track. I was asked to chair the PASIC (Published Authors Special Interest Chapter) industry reception at RWA this summer and got an acceptable bid from the Algonquin Hotel.

Sue Charnley w/a Rue Allyn: is pleased to announce the sale of her novella length, erotic romance, THE WIDOW'S REVENGE, to Red Sage Publishing. Release date TBA. A sample is available at <http://RueAllyn.com>

Lucy Kubash: I haven't any spectacular or even non-spectacular news but my goal for the year is just to finish something-- ANYTHING--and get it submitted. I am also thinking seriously of putting together a collection of my previously published short stories and selling them on Amazon for Kindle. But first I need to update them. So that's what I'll be doing for a while.

Alyssa Marble: A lot has happened since the last meeting I went to in September (or was that October!?). I finished my WIP, sent it to the Golden Heart--which was a nightmare!--on the very day of the deadline, edited the stupid thing one more time, wrote my synopsis, then my query letter and started sending them out to agents. No luck to date, but I'm keeping up hope! I've also started my next WIP and have 6K words!

Rohn Federbusch: Writing; researching Second Temple for "Salome's Conversion."

Maris Soule: is now a snowbird in sunny (but not that warm) Florida. Has one of her early romances ready to upload to Smashwords. Hopes to have it available as an ebook by the end of January. AS THE CROW FLIES received a nice review in the January 1, 2011 Library Journal. PR now being sent to libraries. (Release date March 16).

Jackie Braun: My next book is out in March. The Daddy Diaries is a March 2011 Harlequin Romance release.

Lana Miersen: On winter vacation in Florida. Registered for National in NYC; will stimulate the Big Apple economy while there and give MMRWA's regards to Broadway. :)

Florence Price: I've been doing a considerable amount of research on Druids and Celtic mysticism for my WIP - all very interesting. And, besides learning about and executing my responsibilities as MMRWA President, I've also spent time working with the other members of the Strategic Planning Committee to get our Strategic Plan for the Chapter in place.

ROSTER NEWS!

Please note that the Roster is updated each January. If you have any changes to your postal or web addresses, phone numbers, etc. please email Florence Price at (greg-flo.091094@sbcglobal.net).

Lessons from the Pit of Despair: Managing Writer's Block

By Kristan Higgins

Being a Connecticut Yankee, I never believed in writer's block. After all, I don't even have a muse. I just sit down and write. I'm *organized*. I have *outlines*. My people *farmed the rocky soil of Connecticut* and managed to *grow stuff*. We don't believe in inspiration. We believe in *work*. Writer's block was, I thought, for people who sat around drinking cappuccino and gazing out the window, waiting for their well-dressed muse to come drifting down. Surely I'd never suffer from it.

And I didn't! Well...er...not really. But a couple of years ago, September came trotting along, usually my most productive time, and there I was, churning out pages. Teensy problem...the writing sucked. I wasn't sure why. In theory, the story sounded pretty good. When I sat down to do it, it seemed so wrong. Shallow. False. I couldn't seem to hit the right note, get the right dynamic between the characters. I was writing, sure. I was, in fact, working harder and more than I ever had in my life (outside of birthing babies, mind you). But my story was, to be completely honest, crappy. I'm not being modest here. It was crap. Lots and lots of it, too. Hundreds of pages of crap.

Enter my brand of writer's block.

I'd say more writers suffer from this type of thing than will ever admit it. Lots of writers say they never have writers block...they can put anything on a page and then go back and fix it later. Well, that's what I was doing. Writing. Fixing. Deleting. Writing. Fixing. Deleting. Add to my insecurities a looming deadline. By December, I had only 100 pages. The book was due in March (on the ides of March, too...how's that for ominous?). I could do it, I thought, if I just wrote 10 pages a day. So I wrote ten pages a day! I did! Writing wasn't the problem...it was how weak the story was. I knew there were problems, but I couldn't seem to figure out how to solve them.



Finally, I had to stop and acknowledge reality: what I was writing was not going to make it. No matter how hard I'd been trying, this story just wasn't working. No matter how much I wrote, it still...sucked. The characters were awkward, the plot was flat and lifeless. I couldn't sleep. My stomach hurt all the time.

Finally, I emailed my agent, tears literally dripping into the keyboard. I *hate* disappointing people. I'm a middle child, okay? We're pleasers, and admitting that I was struggling was *hard!* But I had no choice. There was no way I was going to make this book work. *Dear Agent, you may as well fire me now, and I'll just send back the advance and crawl off into the cave where writers go to die.* Thus went my rather damp email.

My agent's response had an immediate calming effect. *This happens to everyone. You can't be a writer without coming up against this. Relax.* We talked about the book; she asked me to send her a list of the problems with the plot. I did. She asked for an excerpt. I balked, she bossed, I sent it, hating that she was seeing something that wasn't my best work. Two days later, she called me back with the following advice.

1. *Stop banging your head against the wall and take a break.* "But I can't," I said. "I'm *behind*. Also, I'm a *Connecticut Yankee*. My ancestors farmed this rocky soil. I have a very strong work ethic!"

"Who cares?" said Dear Agent. "You need a break. See a movie, read a book."

I started to hyperventilate. "But what if I'm distracted?"

"That's the point, dear," she said.

2. *Do your normal things.* Go for a run. Vacuum. Volunteer in your kid's school. Have lunch with your mom. It might seem like you don't have the time, but without balance in your life, you're simply going to end up gnashing on Tums and losing your friends. And your writing may well suffer, too.
3. *It's okay to ask for help.* The last thing you want to do as a writer is hand in a crummy book. After all, if you're published, you want to keep up a certain standard for your readers. If you're still looking for a sale, you obviously want to put your very best foot forward. I believe the worst thing a writer can do is hand in a book she personally doesn't adore. If you need more time, it's probably available. Need insight? That's what your agent is for. That's why you have a critique partner. Even editors have been known to help! If you're scared that you'll look bad by admitting you're struggling, think of it this way. You'll look like someone who really cares about the quality of her book.
4. *Try writing in a different way.* Again, the hyperventilation. I write *sequentially*. Chapter One, Chapter Two...What did she mean, write *differently*? That didn't sound very promising! "Well," Dear Agent said, "look where you are now, pale, shaky and exhausted. Try. Something. Different."
5. *Believe in yourself.* No matter how bad it is, it's probably not *that* bad. Dear Agent said, "You know...it's got you in it. It's really not that horrible." I thought she was lying. After all, compared to my last book...oops. See rule #6.
6. *Stop thinking about your last book.* In Dear Agent's word, get over it. Been there, done that, have that sitting on my bookshelf. It was, she said, like comparing your children. You can't. They're different. And guess what? You love them all.
7. *Next time you finish a book — and yes, it will happen — take a rest.* You are not a machine, no matter who farmed the rocky soil. Writing is a creative process. You need to recharge. Don't start a new outline the day after you finish revisions.

And so, fearfully, I took the weekend off. Went to a movie. Left my computer alone. Took McIrish, my longsuffering husband, out for dinner. For three days, I didn't write. And when I came back to the keyboard, despite the looming deadline, despite the weak parts in the book (and they were legion), there was something there. I looked at the essential idea. It was solid. It was workable. I just needed to figure out *why* the characters would do what I wanted them to do. I changed the heroine's career. Gave her a past. Invented another sibling. Wrote and rewrote a prologue until I felt like I had the tone of the novel down. Then I hunkered down and got through the mess I'd created, cut, rewrote, chopped, edited, finished the first draft.

And then, finally, I was able to see that the book had promise. It had heart, it had humor, it had all the elements that made it mine. It was far from perfect, granted, but I could see the light at the end of the tunnel. A few weeks later, after revising and polishing the manuscript ruthlessly, something rather miraculous happened. I fell in love with that dang book. Sure, it was a breech birth, and the labor was long and grueling and without anesthesia...but in the end, I loved that thing. And guess what else? Not only was it my very first bestseller... *Too Good To Be True* won the 2010 Romance Writers of America RITA Award for best single title contemporary.

Oh, the irony. ☺

The lessons I learned were many...but in the end, I guess one speaks most clearly. Hard is not necessarily bad. Hard can make you better. The struggle to produce a great book is a struggle worth engaging. The days when the words fly from our fingers, when the characters take on a life of their own...those are gifts. The days when they don't...maybe they're gifts, too, wrapped in different paper.

Kristan Higgins is a USA Today bestselling author and two-time winner of the Romance Writers of America RITA Award. Her seventh book, My One and Only, is due in bookstores on April 1st. Visit her website at www.kristanhiggins.com.

Learning English the Passionate Way

by Sherry Thomas

Some of you might know — Sybil, for instance, though I'm not sure whether she remembers such things — that English is not my native tongue. In fact I hardly ever spoke it during the first eighteen years of my life — the first thirteen couldn't be helped, I was living in another country; the latter five, well, let's just say I found American teenagers to be more alien than Martians and observed them from a distance with a mixture of astonishment and alarm.

But while in my teens I did not speak English in any noticeable quantities, I read a great deal of it. My bio tends to give the exaggerated impression — as bios are wont to do — that I learned English solely from reading romances. That was, of course, not strictly true, as I had a vocabulary of about 200 English words — likely less — when I got off the jumbo jet, not enough to read anything beyond little booklets provided by my English-as-Second-Language classes.



But I disdained those little booklets as a French gourmet disdained le Big Mac. I'd read thousand-page [wuxia novels](#) for breakfast back home, and here I was, stuck trying to decipher 10-page picture books about puppies.

So as soon as I could, I moved on to bigger and better things; and by bigger and better things, I mean those books with very colorful covers depicting a man and a woman in various stages of proximity, books that were stocked in K-Mart, Wal-Mart, the grocery stores, and the university bookstore that was a ten-minute bicycle ride from my new home (the married student dorm, since Mom was a grad student then.)

I still remember trying to decipher the back blurbs on some of those books with my very limited English. One book touted an "infamous pirate"—and left me scratching my head. I knew if you put "in" in front of another word, the resulting word meant the opposite of what the original word meant. So why would anyone care about a not-famous-at-all pirate?

Another book said it featured a governess. I got excited. I knew that a governor was the head of a state. And a governess was, of course, a woman governor. As I flipped through the first few pages, however, I became more and more confused. Since when was a governor given a small room in somebody's house and expected to look after the children?

The first romance that I bought and brought home was [Sweet Savage Love](#) by Rosemary Rogers, when I was a few months short of fifteen. I still have it. A couple of days ago I flipped through it and its tonnage of adverbs rather struck me. Characters stared *dourly*, interposed *lazily*, and exploded *violently*. But you know what, the lack of finesse in the writing was one of the reasons it made perfect reading material for me — all those I-hate-you's were easy to understand for someone whose grasp of the language was still shaky at best. And the histrionics kept me turning the pages.

I went on to read Lindsey, Devereux, and McNaught, though no one else gave my dictionary quite the workout Rogers did. It wasn't obvious to me then, but in retrospect, I see that at eighteen I possessed the vocabulary of a Victorian old lady. It was perfectly slang-free, since I never talked to the kids at school, and remarkably old fashioned.

For example, I am almost sure that I didn't know—or at least never used—the words "pee" and "poop" until after I'd had a baby of my own. "Dweeb", "twerp", "nerd", were those even words? And all the infinite

variety and splendor of the words and phrases that could be made out of "f**k?" They were Greek to me until I started reading blogs in 2003.

But I knew just about every synonym of *ardor* that could be found in a thesaurus. I knew that a marquess was ranked higher than an earl, who was ranked higher than a viscount. And I knew a thousand and one ways not to call a *penis* a *penis*.

And so...I became a historical romance writer!

This article is being reprinted with consent from the author. Sherry Thomas has three books coming out in 2011 and won the 2010 RITA Award for "Not Quite a Husband."

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF WRITING Or GOING BACK TO THE BASICS

by Karen Hall

"Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start." With those immortal words, let's discuss the basics of writing. And no, I don't mean using a stone tablet and chisel(though it might be fun for a bit)or even an old Empire typewriter and changeable ribbons(too messy) But it never hurts to review. So with a fresh calendar page heralding the new year, let's go!



1. MAKE A PLACE TO WRITE.

This is your inner sanctum. Nothing should be done here but writing. Keep your research books, supplies, and a large DO NOT DISTURB SIGN at the ready to announce this YOUR place and serious writing is done here. Barbed wire should not be necessary, but the sign can really help. I saw an idea that suggested wearing a special hat will signify you are busy and interrupters should approach at their own risk.(No lads, it's not time for biscuits)

2. READ.

Read a lot Try something outside your genre(vampires anyone?)to see what other authors are writing, or more importantly what readers are reading. Keep informed of trends. You may not want to write about the undead but it's important to keep up with what's going on the industry.

3. KEEP UP WITH THE INDUSTRY.

Yes, even a technophobe like me realizes you've got to know what's happening. Which is why joining a writing chapter for your genre can keep you informed of business changes, mergers, politics(there's politics in writing? Who knew?)that might very well make or break your career.

4. HAVE A SCHEDULE.

Create a schedule that works for you. Who cares if it doesn't work for anyone else? If writing from one o'clock in the afternoon until tea time(tea time is very important)is the best time, then claim it, wrestle it to the ground and tolerate no interruptions(taking the dogs out is acceptable but try to do it before you begin, right lads?)

5. BE FLEXIBLE.

Of course, life happens and can interrupt Commandment Three. The most important thing is to make your writing a priority. But also let those around you know that your writing is not just a hobby (unless of course it is) If life interrupts, let the dust settle, and get back to writing.

6. JOIN A CRITIQUE GROUP.

I personally believe this is essential for beginning and even immediate level writers. Writers started as readers, voracious readers and they can usually spot when something isn't working. Hearing your work read out loud can often show up a sagging plot or pacing. Meet regularly, either in person or on line.

7. TAKE ONLINE COURSES.

Unsure of how to develop your plot, make your characters jump off the page?(Down, lads! they're not *really* real)or pick up your pacing? On line courses can help in a very interactive way. Many will give you assignments and you'll have the chance to have responses very quickly from fellow authors. Most are reasonably priced as well.

8. ENTER WRITING CONTESTS.

This is a good way to receive an objective analysis of your writing. Choose contests that have a solid history (the Maggie, the Barclay, our very own Laurie)and with judges who are published or very close to it. Most contests are heading toward an online format, saving paper and postage.

And this leads me to Commandment Number Nine.

9. DEVELOP A THICK SKIN.

Because someone, somewhere is going to hate your work. And will tell you in such a way that you'll think they studied at the knee of Attila the Hun.(Take no prisoners!)Your critic may be wrong of course, but they may also point out things that while may seem clever to you, are actually slowing down your work. Take it with a grain of salt(or a cup of tea or a tiny bite of chocolate)take a deep breath and go back to the drawing board.

10. DON'T BE AFRAID TO START OVER.

Hole up with friends and take your work apart bit by bit. It may be as simple as re-arranging the action or completely making over your characters' motivation and actions. Good stories seldom spring from the head of the author fully formed. To paraphrase the Bard, "The course of good writing never did run smooth."

11. TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH.

Yes, I know I said ten, but my friends know I like to bend the rules. To quote The Princess Bride, "if you haven't got your health, you haven't got anything." Too many writers are struggling with health issues, particularly weight concerns. My friends, take care of your health. You know what your issues are. Get professional help if you must, but do it. Start a support group Help each other, inspire each other and take care of each other. May we all have our happiest and healthiest New Year ever!

Karen Hall writes Victorian romances for The Wild Rose Press. Her current release Pursing Love is available now. Be on the lookout for the sequel, Lessons in Love to be released later in 2011. And if you are one who likes Christmas all year round then check out her two short stories A Zebra in the Manger (TWRP) and A Christmas Proposal (Books to Go Now).

DON'T BE ORDINARY

by Paisley Kirkpatrick

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand **
 And a heaven in a Wild Flower
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
 **And Eternity in an Hour*



William Blake (1757-1827) (English poet, painter and engraver) is one of the earliest and greatest figures of Romanticism. He emphasized individual, imaginative, visionary and emotional creativity. He privileged imagination over reason in the creation of both his poetry and images, asserting that ideal forms should be constructed not from observations of nature but from inner visions. He declared in one poem, "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's."*

When I was a teenager my father gave me the talk. Not the one on sex, the one on being an individual. I remember his words like he spoke them yesterday and I am sure I might have dared to roll my eyes like my daughters did when I gave them the same speech. "If your friends jumped off the roof, would follow them? Be an individual, be unique and do what you think is best for you." I'm not sure he didn't regret these words at some time in his life because I took them literally and have never followed the crowd.

What I get from Blake's thoughts is that you should create what's important to you. It doesn't matter if it's writing a story, picking up a paint brush, taking photos, creating quilts, putting together culinary delights, etc. Creativity is the key. Learn who you are. Do something that makes you unique. Don't mindlessly follow the crowd. After you are gone, it will be your legacy - an inheritance for your children and friends.

I grew up in a home where artistic talent was everywhere. My mother was not only an award-winning oil painter, but taught herself to play the organ and also sewed and did needle work. My daughter Kellie inherited her painting talent. Having their artwork proves Blake's theory. They are no longer with us, but their essence is. I take great comfort in that.

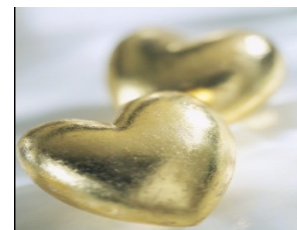
When I make a personalized quilt each one grows from my own creativity. I can't explain the joy I receive in making them and then hearing the squeal, feel the hug, or see the happy tears when they are received. My stories aren't published yet. When they are, I'll have a second contribution to romanticism. I love that word now that I know what it means. I'm searching for more ways to use it now.

Have you thought about how unique you are and what you are leaving as your legacy?

Paisley Kirkpatrick lives in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains, a gold mine for her muse. She writes in the 1849 Gold Rush era because of all the living history around her. A Scottish Heritage draws her to the strong, Scottish type of heroes who venture into these beautiful mountains and make them their home while stealing the hearts of strong-willed women. *This article appeared in the December 2010 issue of Tide Lines, newsletter of the Vancouver Island chapter of RWA. Permission to use by other RWA chapters with proper credit given to author and chapter.*

The Saga of the Bleepity-Bleep Golden Heart

By Alyssa Marble



Word of the Day: Procrastination.

Don't do it.

I spent a total of twenty-four hours in the car over the Thanksgiving holiday. Despite a rambunctious two-year-old in the backseat, fast food breaks to obtain new happy meal toys, and cramped legs, I was able to finish my Golden Heart entry.

Unfortunately, it was really late on Sunday night when we returned home and finally unpacked. The deadline was Thursday, December 2. So, being the Queen of Procrastination, instead of staying up until the wee hours of the morning to print my manuscript, I think, I'll do it Monday night. After the two-year-old goes to bed. I'll print it, get it ready to go, and then on Tuesday after 9 hours at my day job, I'll overnight my entry. Because, hey, it's Texas. And that's about a bazillion light years away from freezing cold Lansing.

So...The heavy duty laser printer I bought for a steal? The one that's been working just fine and dandy for the last few months? It broke. At 9-o'clock at night. The horrified scream echoed all the way to stupid, bleepity-bleep Texas.

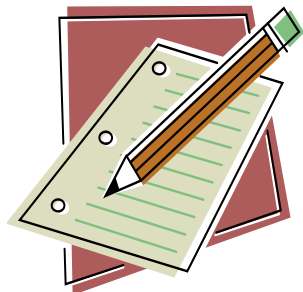
Picture this:

Crazy lady goes running into Kinko's wearing pink flannel pajama pants, leather clogs, and her husband's oversize gray fleece. She's already washed her face, taken off her makeup and has her hair up in an awful farce of a bun. She's carrying a really lovely Coach bag (totally matches the pajama pants). A briefcase is slung over her shoulder, and she's in such a hurry to get into the building the briefcase gets stuck in the door. She, of course, can't figure out why she's not moving forward and just continues to tug until she realizes she's stuck. Frantic, she's shrieking at it as she yanks it out. A very nice little college boy--who can barely contain his fear--politely asks through the blue haze of swear words, "May I help you?" To which she shouts "Yes-I-have-something-to-print-out-and-my-*****-printer-broke-and-I-need-to-ship-it-right-now-and-do-you-sell-alcohol?"

The good news: Not only does Kinko's print, but they also ship for the nominal fee of an arm, a leg, and a spleen. The bad news: They don't sell alcohol.

Oh, and the kicker? When the college boy asked me how much the package was worth for "insurance purposes," I told him, "A year of my life." Since the poor kid had no idea what I was sending out, he just blinked and said, "It has to be under a \$100."

Alyssa Marble is a member of MMRWA, has served as Mirror editor, and is currently working on her third regency romance while querying her second, "To Tempt A Smuggler."



Top Six Reasons to Write for Your Chapter's Newsletter—

by Lisa McManus Lange

Experience.

Never tried writing an article, personal essay, or interviewing another author before? The newsletter is a perfect opportunity to try something new. If your main forté is writing fiction and you suddenly find yourself stuck, switch gears and try your hand at something for the newsletter. Not only will it test and hone your skills writing in another format, but it will also give you the experience of working with an editor and meeting that dreaded "D" word—deadline.

Exposure.

The newsletter editor sends out articles (with your permission, of course) to the EditorLink loop. What does that potentially mean for you? Exposure. Other chapter editors often pick up articles to post to their chapter's email loop, or publish in their newsletter. Having a byline with your email address, website or blog address (if applicable) makes you accessible, attracting fan mail and visitors to your site/blog.

Portfolio.

If your article has been picked up by another chapter's newsletter, write the editor and ask for a copy of their newsletter for your portfolio. Although writing for newsletters is sometimes not considered a "clip" in the magazine article writing world, being able to say you have published in a RWA newsletter does hold weight. More pieces published in-chapter, and out, builds your list of published works; keeping a list of them keeps you organized. Mentioning these credits in a query to an agent or editor can only help you.

Motivation.

Seeing your name in print is motivation for any writer. It's only a taste of what being published in fiction format is like, but it could be just enough to keep you going on those days when you feel like concussing yourself with the keyboard and giving up. There is nothing like the looming date of a deadline to motivate, but the fact that your words might help someone else can be motivation in itself.

Courage.

It takes courage to put yourself out there. Not only to submit your work for consideration, but doing so for a publication to be read by your peers. Once you have submitted, the newsletter comes out, and no one hates you after, it will be all the much easier next time around. And heck, you might want to do it again, and maybe try submitting elsewhere, outside the chapter.

Support. *

Giving and receiving support is part of being in a chapter. Not only are you supporting your fellow chapter members by sharing your experience and expertise, but the support you receive not only from the newsletter editor, but also from members, is likely just what the doctor ordered if you are in a slump.

If you have any inclination to share, be heard, inform, or entertain, go for it. What have you got to lose? Not only have you supported the editor and the chapter, but you will have supported your own writing career by /writing/. You never know what path publishing in the newsletter, as well as potentially in other chapter newsletters, might lead you to. You are a writer—so write.

Lisa McManus Lange has been writing for her chapter's newsletter for the > past year. She can be reached at lisamc2010@... or visit her blog at www.lisamcmanuslange.blogspot.com

Member Websites and Blog Addresses

Lucy Kubash	www.lucynaylorlorkubash.blogspot.com
Maris Soule	www.MarisSoule.com ; http://marissoule.com/blog/index.php
Sue Charnley	http://www.susancharnley.com ; http://waitwhostolemychocolate.blogspot.com http://rueallyn.com (Rue Allyn/erotic romance pen name)
Tracy Roper	www.TracyBrogan.com
Rog Nelson	www.bikwitr.net

Please email me your website and blog address so I may include it in next month's newsletter. Visiting and posting comments on each other's websites/blogs is a great way to build name recognition! Build your brand!

And speaking of blogs, here are a few our wonderful Laurie Kuna would like to see...

Target Group:	Name of Blog:
For Clueless Politicians	Comeoutofyourfog.blog
Environmentalists	Fightthesmog.blog
Irish Dancers	Justgottaclog.blog
Maritime Battle Reenactors	Letsdrinkgrog.blog
Map of Jewish Worship Houses	Wheresthesynagogue.blog
Plumbers	Cleantheclog.blog
S&M Enthusiasts	lthurssgoodtoflog.blog



Take this job and...

The Strategic Planning committee has asked our Board members and committee chairs to provide a brief description of the tasks they perform. This is to educate new members, refresh the memories of veteran members, and also to encourage members to consider volunteering. Following are the descriptions in the member's own words and are not what's in the official by-laws. Some descriptions are pending. Please be sure to thank these members for their additional commitment toward improving our chapter

MMRWA 2011 Officers

President (**Florence Price**)
The President serves as spokesperson for the Chapter and acts as MMRWA liaison to RWA® National, makes the final decision on meeting dates, time and location, prepares meeting agendas, and presides at Board and Chapter meetings. She writes the President's column for each issue of *The Mid-Michigan Mirror* and reviews, prior to publication, *The Mid-Michigan Mirror*, MMRWABUSINESS Listserv notices, surveys, ballots, and all other correspondence publicizing MMRWA information. The President announces election results to the membership and signs all certificates of awards, merit, or recognition. She delivers a welcoming address at each Retreat From Harsh Reality and joins the Member Recognition Committee in presenting the First Sales Plaques at the Retreat Member Recognition Ceremony. When acting as spokesperson for MMRWA on matters affecting the organization, the President will voice the consensus of the Board and the chapter membership.

President-Elect (**Laurie Kuna**)
It is my understanding that the president-elect sits and eats bon-bons all day and doesn't really do anything unless the president is unable to perform her duties. (Sort of like the first runner-up in the Miss America pageant.) Oh, and I think she's supposed to take notes on what the prez does, so when she becomes prez herself, she'll have lots of references for how things run.

Vice-President/Meetings & Programs (**Margo Hoornstra**)
The VP's job is not so much to plan meetings, but to facilitate them. In the two years I've held this position, the members have been the ones who have chosen the topics and speakers. All I've done is formalize the what and who (topic and speaker) with the where and when (location and date of meeting.) The MMRWA members are the why and how.

Secretary (**Lucy Kubash**)
Secretary's duties include, taking minutes at the meetings (or finding someone to do it if you can't be there) and uploading them to the Business loop files. We have to include a copy of all our minutes in the chapter renewal package we send to RWA each year. The secretary updates the roster (which also is included in the renewal) and also puts that in the Business files. The roster should be sent to anyone who might need it for chapter business (board members, newsletter editor, retreat chair, loop owners). The job description in the bylaws also states it's the secretary's duty to keep track of chapter correspondence and membership applications. So much of the chapter business is conducted online now that there really isn't a lot of "paperwork" involved.

Treasurer (**Rosanne Bittner**)
Description pending.

2011 Committee Chairs

Historian/Membership/Policy ~ Dawn Bartley

The Historian shall archive all material relevant to the chapter and its members, including published articles, newsletters, photographs, and the like.

The Membership Committee Chair welcomes guests and gives them prospective member information packets. Upon receiving notice of the membership application, the Chair will send the new member a letter of welcome and a packet of information including, but not limited to, Chapter By-laws and the Policy & Procedure Manual, the current membership roster, plus writing tips and our published authors' promo items.

I Will Write a Book/Write for the Money~ Diane Burton/Laurie Kuna

Announce the challenge on MMRWAROM loop & rules. Inform those who want to enter to send the title, plus \$5 to me. Money goes directly to the Treasurer. Member who complete their novel by Nov. 30th are entered into a drawing and one winner is drawn at the December Holiday party. The winner receives 50% of the proceeds and the other 50% goes into the MMRWA fund. Post reminders and collect payment through June 30th. Collect final pages via email and announce all entrants. Ensure winnings are delivered to the winner.

Library ~ Lucy Kubash

For the library, we now only have conference cds and a few select books. In the past, the chapter librarians kept the materials and kept track of who had checked them out. That would still be the main thing to do, and just make sure the cds are ordered each year. (President often orders them at the conference.) Then sometimes you have to remind people to bring things back so that they can stay in circulation.

Member Recognition ~ Florence Price

The Member Recognition Chair is charged with recognizing member milestones, such as RWA[®] PRO status, first sales, contest placements and various honors and awards. Members will report milestone achievements to the Member Recognition Chair. The Chair will announce individual member's achievements at Chapter meetings, will procure the plaques for first sales, and will conduct the first sales and RWA[®] Pro formal recognition ceremonies (Toot Your Own Horn Ceremony) at the annual spring retreat. The Chair may also recommend to the Board that a deserving Chapter member be recognized with a service award for exceptional project or committee work.

MMRWA Angel Award ~ Annette Briggs

The Angel Award is an honor bestowed upon a member of Mid-Michigan who has made a significant contribution to the chapter. The chairperson is the most recent recipient of the Angel Award. The chair then organizes the selection of the next Angel. Nominations are collected from members and other Angels and a new Angel is selected by the committee. For the first time this year, the committee is large enough made up of Angels only and the BOD is no longer a part of it. The most recent Angel has the pleasure of presenting the award to the newest Mid-Michigan Angel at Retreat From Harsh Reality.

Mystery Gifts ~ Currently unassigned. This person collects member gift donations and brings them to the meetings, sells \$1 tickets, and turns the money over to the treasurer. Then a ticket is drawn to determine who wins the mystery items. This is a fundraiser for the chapter.

Newsletter Editor ~ Tracy Roper

To produce a monthly newsletter to be distributed one week prior to the chapter meeting. Request articles and member news, select informative, entertaining articles from EditorLink. Article topics are varied to appeal to members at every level of writing success and ability. Communicate essential information from the Board, Retreat Chair, and other committee chairs as required. Try to follow in Alyssa and Florence's footsteps and not tarnish the awesomeness of their editorial skills!

PAGE Liaison~ Margo Hoornstra

To do whatever mentor Nancy Gideon tells me to do.

PRO Liaison ~ Tammy Kearly

PRO liaison for MMRWA is available to steer a member through the eligibility process to become PRO, keeps a roster of all current PRO members, shares information with other PROs and general members that may come from various PRO outlets.

Publicity~ Margo Hoornstra and Donna Garrison

With the emphasis on CO-Chair. I depend on the multi-talented Donna Garrison to provide the necessary technical expertise, i.e. as in setting up the Facebook fan page. I can create press releases and the like with no problem. Getting them 'out there' is beyond the scope of my expertise.

Retreat Chair ~ Julie McMullen

I have a great team of co-workers who help organize Retreat. After all, it takes a chapter to put on our Retreat From Harsh Reality! The Retreat Director organizes the chapter's annual Retreat From Harsh Reality, starting with selecting the location; negotiates pricing for the weekend event; determines the schedule of activities; writes the Retreat brochures; writes articles for the Mirror newsletter and promotes Retreat to the public; handles registrations; recruits volunteers for the assorted committees (Book Basket, Speaker, Registration, Book Sale & Author Signing, Icebreaker, Muse Sessions, Promotion, Donations, and others); selects the menu; and takes care of any loose ends that crop up along the way to make sure that everyone has the writing experience of a lifetime. It is a year-around job, with peak responsibilities in January, March and April.

Retreat Speaker Chair ~ Laurie Kuna

The Retreat Speaker chair is in charge of identifying romance writers whose knowledge of the industry would benefit MMRWA members and then contacting them about speaking at our annual Retreat From Harsh Reality. Usually, those approached have been vetted either by the chair herself or by MMRWA members who've heard these authors speak at a conference. Sometimes, group members are approached by an author who's interested in speaking, then the chair does some research on the author.

Other factors taken into consideration include: Author's area of expertise; genre(s) in which the author writes; topic the previous speaker addressed; and to some extent the cost of bringing them to Retreat. Also, we try not to get two category authors in a row, unless one's, say, a straight category writer and the other's a romantic suspense writer; or, one's got other things she can speak on.

Website Liaison ~ Lynette Curtis

The chairperson of the Website Committee is the Website Liaison who oversees the appearance and content of the website, working in concert with the website's administrator, the Webmaster.



MID-MICHIGAN ROMANCE WRITERS OF AMERICA®

proudly present

RETREAT FROM HARSH REALITY 2011

April 29-May 1, 2011

Yarrow Golf & Conference Resort

10499 North 48th St.

Augusta, MI 49012

1-800-563-4397

OUR GUEST SPEAKER: CINDY DEES!

TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS OF WRITING MAGIC!

The Retreat

An annual event since 1985, the Retreat begins Friday evening and ends Sunday at noon. Who can resist a weekend in a beautiful setting, away from spouses, kids, traffic, and the rigors of day-to-day life in the "Real World," coupled with the chance to talk "shop" with other authors and aspiring authors? Attire is sweatshirts-and-jeans casual, and one-on-one conversation with the featured speaker is not only allowed, it's encouraged! Attendees welcome this rare opportunity to relax and talk writing, to learn and to share.

The Site –

A fabulous place to relax and be inspired!

The Yarrow Golf & Conference Resort in Augusta, Michigan is the perfect setting to kick back, open your mind, and reconnect with your muse. Magnificent scenery and unparalleled hospitality make Yarrow the place to rest, relax and renew your creativity.

CINDY DEES started flying airplanes while sitting in her dad's lap at the age of three and got a pilot's license before she got a driver's license. After earning a degree in Russian and East European Studies from the University of Michigan, she joined the U.S. Air Force and became the youngest female pilot in its history. She flew supersonic jets, VIP airlift and the C-5 Galaxy, one of the world's largest airplanes. During her military career, she traveled to forty countries on five continents, was detained by the KGB and East German secret police, got shot at, and flew in the first Gulf War. Her hobbies include medieval reenacting, professional Middle Eastern dancing, and Japanese gardening.

In 2010, she won a RITA award for Best Contemporary Series--Suspense and Adventure. She's a Golden Heart winner, Holt Medallion, Reader's Choice, and Bookseller's Best finalist, and a Romantic Times Lifetime Achievement Award nominee. This author's first book was published in 2002 and since then she has published over thirty novels. She loves to hear from readers and can be contacted at www.cindydees.com.

THE SESSIONS:

PUTTING THE "BIG" IN BIG, COMMERCIAL FICTION:

Every editor you ask these days says they're looking for a book with big, commercial elements. Cindy Dees will walk us through what they really mean and how to build "big" and "commercial" characters, relationships, and scenes and plots to meet the demands of an ever more competitive publishing industry.

BETWEEN THE COVERS: a Q & A Session about the Writing Process

Cindy will answer questions about the journey of writing your book from "Page One" to "The End" and offer tips on characterization, plotting, setting and anything else you may be interested in.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 4/29

6-7:00 p.m.	Registration
6:30-7:30	Dinner
7:30-8:00	Dessert - Chocolate Anyone?
8:00-9:00	Official Welcome & Ice Breaker
9:00 - ?	Bed, relaxation, private critiques...

SATURDAY, 4/30

7-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-9:00	Registration
9:00-9:15	Welcome
9:15-10:30	Cindy Dees - "Putting the BIG in Big Commercial Fiction"
10:45-12:00	Mini-Sessions/Writing Session
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Book Sale & Author Signing
2:00-3:00	Cindy Dees: "Between the Covers," a Q & A Session about the Writing Process
3:00-4:30	Mini-Sessions/Writing Session
4:30-5:00	Champagne Celebration: Angel Award, First Sales, PRO Pin Recognition, Toot Your Own Horn
5:00-6:00	Book Basket Raffle, Silent & Live Auctions (proceeds benefit the YWCA Domestic Assault Program)
6:00-7:00	Dinner
7:00-9:00	Muse Sessions or Time on your own

SUNDAY, 5/1

7-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00-9:30	Chapter Meeting
9:30-11:00	Romance/Biz Round Table with Cindy Dees
11:00-12:00	Retreat Wrap-Up
12:00	Adjournment

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- **Registration will be open through April 15, 2011. You may make a minimum deposit of \$50 to hold your spot with the balance due by April 15.** Registrations for weekend packages may be accepted after April 15th if space remains. Please contact Julie at retreat@midmichiganrwa.org to verify availability and pricing. No refunds can be made after April 15th. Final room arrangements are due by April 15th. A limited number of Saturday on-site registration spots will be available.
- **Published Author Critiques:** MMRWA's published writers are again offering one-on-one critiques for only \$15.00. For this amount, you will receive an in-depth critique of your first fifty pages and your synopsis, either in person at the Retreat, by phone or by mail. Contact **Dawn Bartley** at members@midmichiganrwa.org or see our website for more information.
- **Muse Sessions:** Bring your own work in progress to share with other writers and get great feedback and suggestions for improvement. We suggest you focus on your main characters, your plot/timeline or your 5-page synopsis and/or query letter for a small group brainstorming session. Detailed information will be e-mailed with your pre-Retreat packet.
- **Desserts and goodies:** Bring your favorite dessert to share Friday night!
- **Want to relax an extra day or play golf on a championship course?** Contact Julie at retreat@midmichiganrwa.org for information. These reservations must be paid in full by the Retreat deadline.

Confirmation via email will be sent upon receipt of your registration form. Directions and additional pre-Retreat information will be sent two weeks before Retreat. To reserve a space, you may send a *partial payment* but **full payment must be received by April 15**. One night stays can be arranged. **Please notify me if you require special room arrangements or have special dietary needs.** Questions? Contact Julie at retreat@midmichiganrwa.org or visit our website at www.midmichiganrwa.org.

***All activities are slated to be held in the Main Lodge in the Dogwood Room. Meals will be held in the Evergreen Dining Room, also at the Main Lodge.

RETREAT FROM HARSH REALITY 2011 REGISTRATION

April 29-May 1, 2011

Circle the package you want, write amount in Subtotal column, add critique if desired & fill in Grand Total.

Package Choice (Weekend includes room & Board)	Total for MMRWA Member	Total for non-MMRWA Member	Subtotal
Weekend - Double Occupancy (2 persons per room)	\$195.00	\$205.00	
Weekend - Single Occupancy	\$280.00	\$290.00	
Sat. only with breakfast & lunch	\$65.00	\$75.00	
Sat. only with breakfast, lunch & dinner	\$85.00	\$95.00	
Want a Critique by a published author? \$15.00 per critique			
GRAND TOTAL			

Each Standard Room has two double beds and a bath for either a Single or Double occupancy. Limit of two people per room. Friday night dinner, Saturday breakfast, lunch & dinner, and Sunday breakfast are included with the full weekend package.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone (_____) _____

(Email will be used only to confirm receipt of your registration and for 2011 Retreat-related information.)

Please print your name as you wish it to appear on your name badge: _____

If sharing a room, you MUST list your roommate: _____

(If you do not know who your roommate will be, assume you'll be in a single when you make your payment - or pay the deposit minimum of \$50 until you determine your room arrangements. If you pay a higher rate, we'll refund the difference if you end up with a roommate. We have a block of 25 rooms reserved until the April 15th deadline. All payments must be received in full before Retreat or your room will not be held at our lower rates.)

Do you have any special room needs or food allergies we should know about?

You may pay a minimum deposit of \$50 to reserve your spot at Retreat. Additional forms and brochures available at www.midmichiganrwa.org. Make checks payable to MMRWA and send this form (or a copy) & your payment to:

MMRWA Retreat

P.O. Box 2725

Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2725

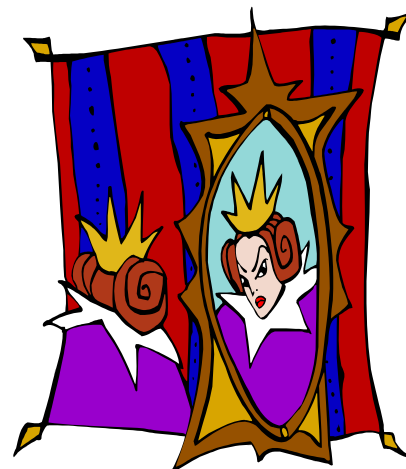
All advance registration fees must be paid in full by: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2011
There will be a limited number of one-day on-site registration slots available (cash/checks only).

Questions? Contact Julie at retreat@midmichiganrwa.org

Final Reflections

By Tracy Roper

Writers lean toward the eccentric, perhaps a byproduct of spending more time in our virtual worlds than with living, breathing human beings. I myself have several rituals to put me in the mood (for writing, that is.) First, I buy myself a venti-sugar-free-caramel-no-whip-soymilk-decaf-latte. It has to be this drink exactly. Venti because I need a big one. Sugar-free and no-whip because I'm always watching calories (usually watching as I devour them.) Soymilk because no cows should suffer just because I need my fix. And decaf because I am irritable by nature and caffeine just makes me that much more hostile.



With beverage ready, I clear away the debris littering my desk. School papers from my above-average children, a reminder from Honda that it's been two years since my last oil change, and copious notes to myself with Pulitzer-Prize-quality story ideas that I didn't want to forget, which now make little sense to me at all. One simply reads, "Narcoleptic mattress salesman." Not sure where I was headed with that.

Next, I gather my trinkets. A Jane Austin action figure lounges next to my computer screen, staring at me with benign indifference in much the same way she was once perused by Mr. Darcy. The irony is lost on her. Probably because she's plastic. At her feet lies a metal disk bearing the likeness of Poseidon, an ancient coin from the coffers of an Atlantis nobleman. (Okay, so it's from the Atlantis casino in the Bahamas. Close enough.) My bulletin board is covered with inspirational items: quips from successful writers, photos of a recent trip to Scotland, magazine pictures of a boat one of my characters might have sailed, and another of Gerard Butler because... well, just because. I have printed emails announcing my finalist status in a few writing contests to assure myself I'm on the right track, and another of the meanest, harshest feedback I ever received, to remind me that nothing written is unanimously loved by all of the readers all of the time.

In this tiny corner of my house, I begin to write. The beige walls of my guest room/office fall away, the drone of the washing machine fades, and my characters begin to speak. Sometimes slow and soft, sometimes shouting and animated. But they always have something to say. I like it here. They like it here. It's a reunion of sorts, and like a typical family, sometimes they annoy me. Sometimes they make me cry. But always, I am happy that they've come home to visit.

WORDS TO PONDER:

A PROFESSIONAL WRITER IS AN AMATEUR WHO DIDN'T QUIT. *Richard Back*