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# The Mid-Michigan Mirror



## A 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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### January Meeting

The January 2004, MMRWA meeting will be held at **12 pm** in Plainwell, at **Sam's Joint** on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Our speaker will be MMRWA's own Rosanne Bittner. Her program is entitled, "*YES, WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT.*" Few things change as far as the concerns of the writers, whether published or unpublished. We all need to cry together and celebrate together; to walk through the valleys holding hands and stay connected with ropes of support when we're climbing mountains.

Rosanne Bittner's writing career spans twenty years with over fifty published novels to her credit! She specializes in stories about the American West during the 1800's. A

prolific and popular author, she is currently broadening her literary horizons and has tackled the Inspirational Romance genre. Her future releases include; WHERE HEAVEN BEGINS, April 2004 by Steeple Hill, INTO THE PRAIRIE, July 2004 by Tor and WALK BY FAITH, January 2005 also by Steeple Hill.

Join us for this motivational presentation as we climb together to new heights.

Chris Allen-Riley, vice president 2004

### Inventing the Future...



Hi all! I hope you've had a wonderful holiday season and that each day of this new year will bring each of you closer to publication and even greater success.

First off, I'd like to thank each of the officers and committee chairs for volunteering to keep our chapter's programs running smoothly. You are all doing a great job! Secondly, if you haven't renewed your dues for 2004 do so as soon as possible. Send your check for \$25 to the new treasurer, Jennifer Armintrout. Her address is in your roster. Please note that the dues are \$24 if you wrote an article for the newsletter in 2003.

The new year is often a time for goals, and the other members of the new board and I have a lot of plans for 2004. In addition to maintaining our current programs and benefits, we'd like to implement a few new things. Now, don't go running for the hills or dragging out picket signs. It's nothing drastic. Our top goal is summed up in my first paragraph. We want to move every unpublished member of the MMRWA closer to that great big goal: Our beloved books in print. Additionally, we want the published authors to attain even greater success.

Please make it a priority to attend as many monthly meetings as possible. You won't be disappointed. Our vice-president and program chair, Chris Allen-Riley, has some spectacular programs planned for the year. Can you say Naval Intelligence Officer? How about sword fighting demonstration? Developing characters with personality Testing? Relaxation techniques and methods for getting into your writing groove? Another psychic – Mary Zylstra? These are just a few of the fabulous things planned. In addition to these, don't forget our chapter has a critiquing service open to all members.

2004 will also mark our 20th annual Retreat from Harsh Reality. Mark your calendars now for this very special event. It's sure to be an enriching experience for all. This is also when we will announce the finalists for the Happily Ever After Contest.

Let's make this year about excellence in our craft. 2004 will be a year to remember for all of us.

*Michele Hickerty*, President 2004



## **Your Character's Backbone**

From a workshop by Gail Martin

Interspersed with excerpts from a few of her 31 published manuscripts, Gail Martin convinced us of the importance of back-story in developing a character. Even though the entire back-story might not be used in the finished product, the writer's familiarity with all aspects of the hero and heroine creates believability for readers.

Walking and talking with attributes enumerated in the back-story, the rational characters more easily come to life in each scene. The character arc, changes and growth due to reactions to circumstances in the plot, is made transparent by back-story.

Permanent worksheets, which might be needed to pinpoint answers to an editor's question when the writer is already three novels away from the submitted work, also allow easy reference to use the hero or heroine of one story as secondary characters in subsequent works.

Examples of subjects mentioned in Gail's worksheet are: dark secrets, greatest fear, biggest regret and, most importantly: conflicts with other characters. Details about the make of their car, their parents' names or their birth order in the family help the writer and the reader keep the story straight.

Gail likened the back-story to the backbone, or spine, of the story as well as the character. She cautioned us to sprinkle back-story like salt into soup. A large lump of back-story

"creates boredom because it's passive." Techniques to more effectively foreshadow back-story are to use dialogue, introspections and flashbacks. The writer's goal is to maintain the reader's interest in the important points of the plot.

Gail gave additional instances of how she specifically withheld vital information about motivation, goal and reasons for conflict from the reader to keep hooking them into turning pages...and looking forward to her next publication date.

Be sure to check out the tape of Gail's talk from the MMRWA library. Your characters will thank you.

Rohn Federbush, Secretary MMRWA 2003



### Member News

**Dawn Bartley:** Still waiting to see if I have a job next year.

**Annett Briggs:** Contemplating my non-finaling contest results.

**Diane Burton:** Working on a contemporary.

**Peggy Hanchar:** Refining first three chapters and synopsis. Hope to send off before the next meeting.

**Tammy Kearly:** Submitting; very close to finishing second single title.

**Laurie Kuna:** Working on another proposal fro ImaJinn.

**Pat Lazarus:** Finished Storm Master—extensive revisions ahead.

**Loralee Lillibridge:** Still waiting to hear from editor and agent; working on mystery series.

**Melissa Lucken:** Working on revisions.

**Lana Miersen:** Putting a final polish on a Golden Heart entry; working on a contemporary comedy;

**DeAnna Talcott Pyle:** Waiting for a response from Sil. Romance; sent off contest entries; getting ready for Xmas party.

**Juli Schuitema:** Recieved rejection from Luna. Working on fantasy romance.

**Dickee Six:** Hoping to finish historical by the end of the year.

**Cheryl Steimel:** Completing a chapter a week on my current contemporary. Starting to work on my new fantasy.

**Barb Wismer:** Still revising.

### Spotlight on new members

Johanna Atwood Brown:

Let's see: what about me? I'm a teacher in a private K-12 school, who writes at night when I'm not too burned out. I teach English to teenagers all day and work my way through piles of papers and reading assignments in the evenings.

After my work is finished, I enjoy spending time writing. My professional area of expertise is teaching writing, though primarily academic writing. I have taught college-level composition courses and now teach writing intensive literature courses. I have also recently accepted a position facilitating a young creative writers' group at our public library

My areas of interest (if not expertise precisely) are music and dance. I'm currently a groupie rather than an active participant (though singing and dancing around the house must count for something, I'm sure...). In the past I played a couple of instruments and took classes in ballet, modern, and African dance.

I've always worked on my writing with great interest and vigor. I began to "write" before I could read or write. I informed my mother one day that I was writing a book and proceeded to scribble "words" and draw pictures on page after page of construction paper. I then bound the whole thing together and that was my first (and only) book.

Since then I have written journals, poetry, plays, essays, fiction and academic papers. I even managed to publish some of the above in high school and college literary magazines and –weirdly enough—in a few academic journals.

I have not, however, published any romantic fiction—nor had I written any until recently. But I am an avid reader of romantic fiction. I read Kathleen E. Woodiwiss when I was thirteen and never looked back.

These days I hope to improve my ability to write romantic fiction. I am not a fiction writer by nature, but enjoy telling stories and have completed three novella-length stories, groping my way toward bigger and better plotlines. I have two stories in the works. I have no idea how I'm doing, but I love to do it anyway.

Finally, I have to say that I am happily married to my prince charming, my soul mate, and the man of my dreams. My heroes are always based on my wonderful husband.



Sharon Chafin:

Currently, I'm the owner of a travel agency and have been so for 15 years. I started writing as a child, but put down the pen to attempt marriage. After 2, I got it right and started writing again. "Successful Attitudes" was an online magazine which printed 9 of my long articles. "The Shopper", a newspaper for the Chicago south suburbs printed 15 of my articles. I've lectured at schools, churches and organizations on various aspects of travel. Recently, I produced a booklet "117 Tips for Stress Free Travel."

Stephanie Maurer of Silhouette requested my manuscript. It's been with her 2 months and I get more confident every day that passes.

My passions are: writing, reading, cooking, and travel, all of which I strive very hard to extract the greatest joy from.



Jean DeSavage:

I've always had a fascination with pen and paper. My mother used to tell me I would write in or tear up any book I could get my hands on. I'm still devouring books today—either reading them or writing in bound journals.

I started writing my “stories” in elementary school. By junior high I had a collection that made the rounds of all the girls. Imagine my delight when, as a freshman in high school, my first article appeared in my high school newspaper. As a sophomore, I was a reporter for both my high school newspaper and a high school reporter for the Elkhart Truth in their special teen section. My junior and senior years I spent as editor of my school newspaper.

After leaving nursing school I found solace in writing again, just for the joy of it—no homework. With marriage, working full time as a surgical technologist and motherhood, my writing diminished for a while. When our children were teenagers, I became editor for the Southern California Marine Aquarium Society for 2 years. Then after returning to the Midwest, I edited our church’s newsletter for several years.

No longer working in the medical field, I’m now service manager for a fine furniture store in Kalamazoo. I’m still taking care of others and definitely writing—lots of reports.

In 2001, I finally started work on a paranormal romance that has been chasing around in my head for several years. Though life has a habit of stalling my progress in the last year, it is progressing and it will get sent out to publishers as soon as I get it well polished.

I hope to find a critique partner/group through MMRWA that will help me make my novel the best it can be and to continually improve my writing skills. I thoroughly enjoyed the one MMRWA meeting that I attended last year and look forward to getting to know other members in MMRWA.



Michelle Celmer:

I’m a full time novelist and serve as web mistress and contest coordinator for GDRWA. My book from Silhouette Desire, *Playing by the Baby Rules*, comes out in February.

### Happy January Birthdays

Leslie Burkhammer 1

Peggy Hanchar 2

Rosanne Bittner 14

Melissa Lucken 14

Dana Nussio 17

Aileen Hyne 18

Joyce Soule 20

Dawn Bartley 25

Michelle Celmer 25



### MMRWA Library News

MMRWA Library has 12 new tapes. We have received the tapes ordered from the 2003 RWA National Conference (held in New York). Unless something happens to keep me from attending the January meeting, they will be there. Or, if you cannot attend the meeting, you may request a tape be mailed to you (as long as you pay the postage).

For mailed tapes, contact me via e-mail: [soulem@aol.com](mailto:soulem@aol.com)

We now have the following tapes:

Page-Turning Pacing by Jackie Stephens

What Readers Want (It's Not What You Think) by Susan Wiggs

Compelling Themes: Barrier and Ritual Death as Thematic Goldmines by Pamela Regis

Playing Harball: Publishing as a Bloodsport by Claudia Dain

You Want Me to Change What? by Jacquie D'Alessandro, Jennifer LaBrecque and Brenda Chin

Basic Plot Twisting by Linda Conrad and Melissa James

What we Can Learn from Bridget Jones - A Soccer Mom Looks at Chick-Lit Novels by Kathleen Gilles Seidel

Love Scenes with Emotional Punch by Shelley Bradley

Undercover FBI Agents & Serial Killers: Secret Lives Revealed by Alicia Hilton

Taking a Ride on the Rollercoaster: Writing Romantic Suspense by Dee Davis

The Writer's Tool Box by Judith Ivory

The Great Agent Safari by Deb Stover

For those who still have tapes or books checked out, please return them so we can circulate the material to all members.

Thanks, Maris Soule, Librarian

The following article first appeared in the January 2004 issue of Magic Moments, newsletter for Southern Magic, RWA Chapter 178, Birmingham, Alabama, Kelley Zeringue, Editor. Reprinted with permission.

Ask AuntieWIP© By Southern Magic Writers

Published author Deborah Matthews of Southern Magic asked AuntieWIP, "How do you handle Point of View in your writing?"

"I never change the point of view within a scene. I usually stick to two points of view within the book, using the POV of the character who has the most at risk in the current scene. The split is never evenly divided. It is either the hero's or the heroine's book and the one who 'owns' it gets the most air time. I sometimes add three very short scenes in the villain's POV if I think it's necessary to establish his/her motivation. These are not 'rules.' This is just what works for me." Published author Lyn Stone; books coming out in 2004: Special Ops Series: Dangerous. Deadly. Desirable: DOWN TO THE WIRE, Sil. Intimate Moments, March; AGAINST THE WALL, Sil. Intimate Moments, May; UNDER THE GUN, Sil. Intimate Moments, Late 2004

"Handling POV (point of view) was one thing in writing that I didn't understand. No amount of reading how-to's gave me a hint until a friend suggested I try writing a scene in First Person. 'You'll understand POV then.' She was right. When I have a questionable scene where I suspect I'm head hopping, I write that scene in First Person, (in the view point of the main character of the scene.) If, as that character, I see or hear something that I shouldn't, then I know I'm slipping out of my character's head. This works very well for me." Published author Martha Krieger (aka Allison Knight); Two Traditional Gothics: THE BRIDES OF OWL'S HEAD & THE SECRETS OF HANSON HALL and, a contemporary Romance, BARGAINED VOWS. Available from: Wings ePress Inc. ([www.wings-press.com](http://www.wings-press.com))

"Though I always write in third person, I write my scenes as though they are in first person. That way I don't have to worry about head hopping, bouncing POV, and giving away things I shouldn't. I try to limit my POVs to one per scene, though I have had editors change my scene breaks and combine scenes. If I do have more than one POV per scene, I make sure that it is very clear that I've changed POVs and that I stay in that POV for at least a page. Always write the scene from the POV of the person who has the most to win or lose. Describe the hero from the heroines POV and vice versa. If you're in the hero's POV, unless he was raised in a household of girls or a straight guy with a queer eye, he isn't going to know a Laura Ashley from a Louis Vitton any more than your average housewife is going to know an AK 47 from a Gatling Gun. Make sure that the scene sounds like it's being related by the person who's doing the thinking/talking."

Published author Bonnie Gardner; SERGEANT DARLING May 2004 Harlequin American Romance

## RETREAT BROCHURES IN THE MAIL

Brochures for **Retreat From Harsh Reality** have been mailed out to all MMRWA members! The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat will be held April 30-May 2, 2004 at the beautiful St. Ives Resort where we met last year. This year will be very special for us and there's several little—and some not so little—surprises planned so mark your calendars now. Elizabeth Bevarly is pretty excited about coming too and, if her emails are any

indication, she's going to fit in with this group perfectly.

Members only registration is open through February 7 and you can reserve a spot by returning your completed registration form and a deposit or payment in full. We have increased the attendance limit for next year only to 75 to make sure there's room for everyone but that still means you have to send in your registration and at least a partial payment to hold a slot. After Feb. 7, registration will be opened up to nonmembers. All registration closes on Saturday, March 27.

Don't forget about the MMRWA Gear orders too. Prices are the same and there are a few new items to choose from.

If you have any questions, please contact Pam Trombley at [ptrombley@voyager.net](mailto:ptrombley@voyager.net). See you there!

### Contests

#### **Rebecca Contest, LERA**

Received by January 7, 2004

Best ten pages plus query letter (one page set-up if you don't enter the first ten pages)

<http://www.leranm.com/contest/rules.html>

#### **Marlene Awards, Washington Romance Writers**

Postmarked by January 13, 2004

Synopsis + beginning not to exceed 35 pages

Information not up at their website as of 11/24/03: [www.wrwdc.com](http://www.wrwdc.com)

Email [wrwmarlene@aol.com](mailto:wrwmarlene@aol.com)

#### **2004 Merritt Contest, San Antonio Romance Authors**

Received by January 15, 2004

First chapter (30 pg max) + Synopsis (5 page max)

<http://www.sararwa.com/contest2004.htm>

#### **Winter Rose Contest for Unpublished, Yellow Rose Romance Writers**

Postmark deadline of January 15, 2004

First 25 pages.

<http://www.yellowroserwa.com/pages/4/index.htm>

**Annual Erma Bombeck Writing Competition**

Deadline Midnight January 20, 2004

You can enter online...no postage!

Cash prizes...Personal Essay - 450 words or less.

<http://www.wcpl.lib.oh.us/adults/erma.html>

**2004 Heart of the Rockies Contest, Colorado Romance Writers**

Received by January 31, 2004

First two chapters (max 40 pg) + synopsis (ms 12 pgs)

<http://www2.ecentral.com/members/crw/>

**Romance Through The Ages Contest, Hearts Through History**

Received by Feb. 3, 2004

First 30 pages (max) + synopsis (2 pg max)

<http://www.heartsthroughhistory.com/guide.htm>

**2004 Laurie Contest, Smokey Mountain Romance Writers**

Received Deadline of February 12, 2004 (Deadline extended)

First chapter (max 25 pgs) and synopsis (5 page max)

<http://www.smrw.org/contests/laurie/laurie.html>

**Between the Sheets, Greater Detroit**

Postmarked by February 14, 2004

Love scene (10 page max with a one page set-up)

<http://216.234.116.27/gdrwa/sheetform.html>

**Grand Beginnings Contest, Northwest Indiana**

Postmarked by February 14, 2004

First five pages.

<http://www.nwinrwa.org/contestform.html>

**Magic Moment, Heart and Scroll**

Postmarked by February 14, 2004

First ten pages.

<http://www.passionatepen.com/scroll/magicmoment.htm>

**Stella Cameron Romance Genre Contest, Pacific Northwest Writers Association**

Postmarked by Feb. 17, 2004

Max: 50 pages, includes first chapter and synopsis (5 pg max).

<http://www.pnwa.org/home.html>

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

**Directions to Sam's Joint**

675 N. 10th Street, Plainwell, MI 49080

Phone number: 269-685-8235

From **Southeast** (Detroit/Jackson/Kalamazoo) or southwest (Benton Harbor/Coloma) take I-94 to Exit 74B onto US-131 N. (toward Grand Rapids) stay on for almost 15 miles to exit 49A onto M-89 E. toward Plainwell. SEE BELOW:

From **Northeast**: take US 131 S. to exit 49A onto M-89 E. toward Plainwell. SEE BELOW:

**All points East and North** should get to US 131 by the shortest route possible (MapQuest can help you, there ARE much shorter routes, but somewhat confusing), take exit 49A toward Plainwell and then SEE BELOW:

**The rest of the directions:**

Head EAST on M-89 (Allegan Street) for just under a mile. The road narrows just after the first stoplight. You'll get to another stoplight just after a small park to your right. I believe it's the second light you'll get to. At the light, go LEFT onto N. Main ST (CR-A45) for about 1.87 miles. Just after a cross road, you'll see a small airfield to your left. Sam's joint is on the opposite side of the road, or to your RIGHT.

**2004 Mid-Michigan Romance Writers of America Officers**President: Michele Hickerty [chelery1@yahoo.com](mailto:chelery1@yahoo.com)Vice-president: Chris Allen-Riley [matt@wmis.net](mailto:matt@wmis.net)Secretary: Tammy Kearly [tammyk@voyager.net](mailto:tammyk@voyager.net)Treasurer: Jennifer Armintrout [WhoTom@aol.com](mailto:WhoTom@aol.com)**2004 Mid-Michigan Romance Writers of America Committee Chairs**I Will Write a Book/Write For the Money: Michele Hickerty [chelery1@yahoo.com](mailto:chelery1@yahoo.com)Happily Ever After Contest: Michele Hickerty [chelery1@yahoo.com](mailto:chelery1@yahoo.com)Library: Maris Soule [SOULEM@aol.com](mailto:SOULEM@aol.com) and Lucy Kubash [lucykubash@parrett.net](mailto:lucykubash@parrett.net)Membership/Historian: Dawn Bartley [bartleyd@chartermi.net](mailto:bartleyd@chartermi.net)Member Recognition: Jodi Lynn Copeland [jodi.copeland@ttmps.com](mailto:jodi.copeland@ttmps.com)and Cheryl Steimel [wiseprez@yahoo.com](mailto:wiseprez@yahoo.com)MMRWA Angel Award: Maris Soule [SOULEM@aol.com](mailto:SOULEM@aol.com)Mystery Gifts: Chris Allen-Riley [matt@wmis.net](mailto:matt@wmis.net)Newsletter Editor; online distribution: Annette Briggs [afbriggs@hotmail.com](mailto:afbriggs@hotmail.com)Newsletter printing & distribution: Laurie Kuna [lauriecarroll55@worldnet.att.net](mailto:lauriecarroll55@worldnet.att.net)PAN Liaison: Dana Nussio [nussio@earthlink.net](mailto:nussio@earthlink.net)Perseverance Fund: Jennifer Armintrout [WhoTom@aol.com](mailto:WhoTom@aol.com)Policy: Nancy Fraser [nfraser2@cogeco.ca](mailto:nfraser2@cogeco.ca)Program: Chris Allen-Riley [matt@wmis.net](mailto:matt@wmis.net)Publicity: Juli Schuitema [jl\\_schuitema@yahoo.com](mailto:jl_schuitema@yahoo.com)Retreat: Pam Trombley [ptrombley@voyager.net](mailto:ptrombley@voyager.net)RWA® Pro Liaison: Tammy Kearly [tammyk@voyager.net](mailto:tammyk@voyager.net)Web mistress: Michelle Crean [mecrean@crean.com](mailto:mecrean@crean.com)

**Deadline for February 2004 submissions to Mid-Michigan Mirror is January 20. Your submissions are welcomed and valued.**

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