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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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The MMRWA October 18 meeting is being hosted at **Sam's Joint in Plainwell MI at NOON**. The guest speakers are **Nancy Gideon** and **Laurie Kuna**: The topic is "Passion, Prose & the Paranormal." Please see page 10 for directions.



The Write Stuff . . .

In June, I finally finished my first manuscript. Mere words cannot express how elated I was. I rode on that high until September, when I experienced another first.

When the mail came, and I saw that big, fat, self-addressed Tyvek envelope, I knew the worst had come to pass. My heartfelt, eloquent reaction was, “Oh, [expletive deleted]!!”

I tore open the envelope, and there atop my manuscript was the dreaded rejection letter from the agent who declined to represent me. It was brief and to the point. She said there was a lot to recommend my manuscript, but she wasn’t enthusiastic enough overall to be the best advocate for my work. She wished me luck in finding a good agent.

My reaction after reading the letter surprised me. I didn’t weep and wail, and after my initial verbal lapse at the sight of my SASE, I didn’t swear again. Much. I didn’t even reach for the chocolate. There wasn’t any in the house--a serious oversight. Merlot had to suffice.

I was disappointed to be sure, but I reasoned that it was better to be rejected than to be represented by someone who was not as enthusiastic about my work as I am.

Really. All things considered, I took the rejection very philosophically. At first. And then I read it again and again and again. And the realization dawned. Of course she wished me luck in finding a good agent. She knew I needed it. The phrase “snowball’s chance in hell” came to mind.

About the umpteenth time I read the cursed letter, and after who knows how many glasses of merlot, I began reading between the lines, and the agent’s true meaning became increasingly clear.

Dear No-talent Wannabe:

You clueless hack. Run, don’t walk, to the nearest therapist because you’re crazy if you think anyone will ever publish the drivel you write. Obviously, you are learning English as a second language and still have a long way to go.

If you hadn’t included an SASE with your submission, I would have used your manuscript to line my pet vulture’s cage. If you ever send anything to my office again, I’ll feed you to him.

*Sincerely and Unequivocally not yours,
The Agent From Hell*

After such savage rejection, drastic action is required. I contacted my critique buddies and whined, whined, whined. As it happened, they experienced recent and cruel rejections of their own. So, we all went out and wallowed in collective self-pity.

We held our pity party at The Cottage Rose Tea and Bistro. We said rude things about the incompetent cretins who rejected us. We pitied them because some day, when we are all successful, rich and famous, they will all slit their wrists because they were fool enough to reject us. And then we consoled ourselves with delectable, highly caloric tea goodies and decadent desserts.

I highly recommend this method of easing the sting of rejection. It works. We parted feeling reinvigorated and ready to face the dense, diabolical demons of the publishing world again. The very next day, I sent out queries to other (hopefully more enlightened) agents, and went back to work on a proposal for the new Harlequin Flipside line. In fact, since everything is fodder, I incorporated this experience into my WIP.

I'm still waiting to hear from the editor who requested the full manuscript of *Falcon's Way*. I'm hoping and praying for good news, of course, but if that is not to be, well, there are other editors out there. And, of course, there is The Cottage Rose, good friends, and tea and sympathy.

Lana Miersen, President



Member News

Chris Allen-Riley: Submitted requested manuscript to Shannon Goodwin at Silhouette. Finished requested revisions on another manuscript for Silhouette. Working on third contemporary for Silhouette too.

Jennifer Armintrout: Manuscript currently being passed around TOR Books so the junior editors can point and laugh.

Dawn Bartley: Summer passed too fast; threading together my work in progress.

Rosanne Bittner: Finishing #3 of her "America West" series, INTO THE PRAIRIE. Second inspirational: WALK BY FAITH, due January, so lots of writing to do! Conducting a workshop at Autumn Authors Conference, Chicago: "Finding Your Niche." Showing new products made by her family's company at the Novi Expo second weekend of October.

Diane Burton: acquiring rejections and looking for a job that actually pays money; writing a monthly review for the Lansing State Journal.

Jodi Lynn Copeland: Revisions for editor at Desire; finishing requested full; finishing requested contracted manuscript for *Ellora's Cave*.

Wil Emerson: Busy! My book is in the hands of Playtone Productions (Rita Wilson/Tom Hanks) –a crap shoot but fun. Working on a medical romance for Mills and Boone; finished a community play—lots of work.

Rohn Federbush: Attending Emerald Conference to pitch one contemporary and an historical.

Peggy Hanchar: Just about finished with Scottish romance. Babysat grandson for my granddaughter to get her book to an editor.

Michele Hickerty: Lost job; got job. Finished edits on contemporary. Working on new contemporary.

Arlene Hodapp: Contemporary ms accepted by editor, pub date will be 11/04; working on proposal for another contemporary.

Aileen Hyne: Have three chapters and a synopsis that *work*.

Tammy Kearly: Working on second contemporary in ST series.

Anne Marie King-Jakubiak: Sent out two manuscripts, back to writing.

Laurie Kuna: Finished second book at the end of July; polishing it.

Pat Lazarus: Writing, back to work at school, developing new reading program.

Loralee Lillibridge: *All That Matters*, Lorelee's entry in the Melody of Love Contest, single title/long contemporary category is a finalist., and *Ramsey's Return*, long contemporary entry in the Northeast Ohio chapter's Romancing the Novel Contest, has won 1st place.

Melissa Lucken: Working with agent on a game plan.

Nancy Gideon: Received a 4-star review from Romantic Times (October 2003) for her vampire paranormal romance *Midnight Crusader*.

Gail Martin: Sold a three book proposal to Love Inspired. Received Holt Medallion for *Loving Hearts*. *A Love for Safekeeping* won the 2003 Winter Rose and Romantic Times Reviewers Choice Award for Best Love Inspired 2002. *Loving Treasures* won a Holt Medallion this year for Short Inspirational.

Terrilyn McManus: Working hard to get started on a novel.

Lana Miersen: Received rejection letter from agent; working on proposal for Flipside; no word yet from Dorchester on *Falcon's Way*.

Juli Schuitema: Working on fantasy; started college.

Dickee Six: Lost chapter in cyber-space from WWII historical—if found, please return.

Maris Soule: received good/bad news from Hot Java. They would have published my book, but they're out of business. So, I have *The Crows* with another publisher (for consideration) and I continue with WIP and will speak at Autumn Authors.

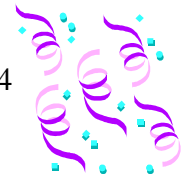
Barbara Wismer: I moved back to Michigan about a year ago (Grand Rapids). I am a software consultant and have been 'on the road' for the past ten years. Finally able to settle down here in Michigan and am very excited about it. I write contemporary/paranormal, currently refining the focus on my first book.



Happy October Birthdays



| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Diane Burton 2 | Sarah Reyers 9 | Holli Bertram 12 |
| Julie McMullen 16 | | Shar Koenig 24 |
| Anne Susemihl 31 | Lisa Childs Theeuwes 31 | |



The **September 20 MMRWA meeting** was held at Gilbert's Steak House in Jackson. We were privileged to have Tony England share with us details (complete with visuals) of his exciting careers.

Tony England always wanted to be a pilot. But when his imperfect eyesight seemed to rule that out, he enrolled at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to study physics. Liking field work, Tony earned his Ph.D. in geophysics, a combination of geology and physics. Creating theories to predict the electrical properties of the moon

and the planets, his work was noticed by the National Academy of Sciences which was urging NASA to bring scientists into the Apollo and Skylab space programs as scientist-astronauts. Remembering his dream of becoming a pilot, Tony jumped at the chance, joining the Apollo program in 1967. He was allowed to attend Air Force flight school, where he learned to fly several different jets, including the T-37 and T-38.

Tony England was on the support team for Apollo 13--the mission made famous in the recent movie--and was in the control room when the "Houston, we have a problem," message came from the space capsule. He helped the NASA engineers on the ground design the CO2 scrubber aiding the astronauts to return safely to Earth. In fact he was the team member who read the instructions on how to build the scrubber over the radio to the astronauts in space.

Tony left NASA in 1972 to join the United States Geological Survey where he went on and led scientific expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctica. In 1979, NASA asked him to return to take his last chance as a part of the new space shuttle program. In 1985, Tony finally got his chance as mission specialist onboard the Challenger space shuttle where he was responsible for conducting experiments in the onboard laboratory.

"The most wonderful thing about being out in space," Tony told us, "was the view of the Earth below."

Now a professor of electrical engineering at University of Michigan, Tony teaches and does research in environmental remote sensing. When young people ask him how to become an astronaut, he tells them that a person never goes to school to become an astronaut, they become an astronaut because they were something else first—like flight engineers or medical doctors or scientists.



THE DAY I MADE MYSELF A LIAR...OR, WHY I CHOSE TO E-PUBLISH

By Jodi Lynn Copeland

E-publishing is one of those words that make many authors cringe. E-publishing! But that's not in print. Don't you want to be able to hold your book in your hands? How will people even know it's out there? Did you hit your head when you woke up this morning?

Well okay, all of these are logical points and exactly the reason it took me so long to convince myself to give e-publishing a try in the first place. I, like many others, had this negative slant on it. The royalties are low, the recognition isn't there, blah, blah, blah.

So what made me change my mind?

I was talking with a multi-published friend of mine, who has been in both the mass paperback and e-publishing arenas for some time, and was interested in her take on how the two publishing areas compare. Her answer, 'Hands down, the e-publishers have it'. Huh? 'Yeah, you have the freedom to write the story you want, to include elements

that might be considered taboo by other publishers, and mostly the ability to explore your creativity’.

Oooh...this is where the artist in me grew wide-eyed with wonder ...did you say explore my creativity? I have creativity! Oh, and wouldn't it be fun to explore it! But... this is where the cynic in me glowered at the artist ...are you forgetting the goal? To be able to write full-time and get rid of the need for a day job? Oh, yeah. Darn.

Here I went back to my cross-published friend, who quickly assured me there is money to be made in e-publishing, so long as you are able to write a compelling or at least page-turning novel and choose the right publisher to carry that novel. She blurted off the names of a handful of e-publishers and what I could expect to make, two of them, both sensuous romance or romantica (erotic romance) publishers came in with the highest figures. Well, they do say that sex sells, right?

But can I write sex? I mean, yes, I can write sex, I do it all the time for my manuscripts aimed at lines like Silhouette Desire and Harlequin Flipside (then Duets), but I mean, can I write ‘SEX’? And what if my mother finds out? She'd read some of my love scenes from the sweeter books, but romantica isn't sweet. Oh, it can be, it can be very emotional, loving, and sweet. But in general it has a tendency to be hot, spicy, and not exactly the kind of things I want my mom reading. But the question wasn't ‘Can my mom read ‘SEX’,’ the question was ‘Can I write it?’

Before I even attempted to write ‘SEX’, I had to revert to my original question, ‘Did I want to try my hand at e-publishing?’ There are many sensual romance markets these days from the lightest form (Harlequin Blaze and Temptation Heat) to the bit more intense (Kensington Brava, Red Sage ‘Secrets’), to the even more intense (Liquid Silver Books, Ellora's Cave, Amber Quill), and the format these publishers carry varies from print on demand to monthly paperbacks to e-publications.

My final decision, to market to Ellora's Cave was based on two things. 1) Money (the royalties for a full-length novel (50 -60K) are very nice. 2) I didn't want to write for a market that would put me in competition with other lines.

By #2 I mean, if I were to be accepted by Harlequin Blaze or Temptation Heat then I would be in competition with Silhouette Desire. What would this mean for the three Desires I currently had under consideration? Well, most likely it would mean they would be booted as rarely are authors allowed to write for competing lines. So, I still had the option to target Brava, Secrets, etc. But as I had already spent days, months and years waiting to hear back on my Desires, did I really want to market a house where I would spend yet more days, months and years to hear something back? Let's face it, waiting stinks. And we do it a lot in this industry.

For once in my writing career, I wanted to write something fun, fast, and steamy that I would get a yes/no response back on within the same decade. Reverting back to my cross-published author friend, she told me Ellora's Cave was looking and they were generally fast in response time.

My mind finally made up, I set down and wrote that fun, fast and steamy novel, and true to my friend's word, it was accepted for publication within two months after I first queried them with a partial. A month later, with the book already under contract, I finalized with it in an RWA contest that I had entered well before signing with Ellora's

Cave. The final round judge was an editor from Harlequin Blaze. She placed me first, offered great feedback and encouraged me to submit to her. Of course I couldn't, I already sold the book elsewhere. Yes, I could send her something new. But did I want to? Honestly, not really. For one thing it would only put my *Desires*, which six months later were still under consideration, back into competition, and frankly I loved my new publisher.

The editors at Ellora's Cave are fabulous! The authors are fun and friendly. And the fans are unbeatable. And the best news of all, as of July 2003 they are RWA-recognized. How's the money? I honestly have not gotten my first royalty check, my first book, *UNCHARTED WATERS*, debuts in a couple weeks (late September 2003), but I have spoken with other authors and I know what to expect. I know royalties probably won't hit the 5-figure mark, though for the more popular authors they have, but I also know it will be a nice 4-figure number.

Do I still plan to target paperback publishers? Well, first off, Ellora's Cave is a paperback publisher, meaning they do produce in paperback. While most stores still don't carry the books on their shelves—more are starting to—all titles are available for ordering. So see, I do get to hold my book in my hands. As far as targeting other publishers...I finally heard back on those three *Desires*. I received revisions for them all, and with any luck it will lead to a sale or two in the near future. If that happens, will I continue to write for Ellora's Cave? You bet! In fact, I have a 12-book paranormal contemporary series in the makings. The first book of which is set to be released in early 2004. There's a lot to be said for the ability to explore your creativity without bounds. I, for one, couldn't imagine being without it.

As far as that burning question, 'Can I write sex?' If my first reviews, among which is a wonderful 5-star from Just Erotic Romance Reviews, are anything to go by, then yes, I can. And guess what, I even told my mom. She admitted she preferred tamer books, but that she was also very proud of my accomplishments. When I explained the royalties weren't as high as some of the paperback publishers, but were very nice and if I generate three or four full-length novels a year would be enough to pay my bills, she was even happier.

Do I think e-publishing or the sensuous romance market is for everyone? Definitely not. But I think they are both worth taking a look into. They are also both growing in popularity. Even the tamer lines are becoming hotter. In fact, I find myself going back through my *Desires* as I do revisions and stepping up the heat with those things I learned while writing my romantica novels.

Anyone interested in trying your hand at either e-publishing or targeting the sensuous romance market, I encourage you to contact me with any questions via e-mail at: Jodi@jodilynncopeland.com, or stop by my website and read through the handful of excerpts posted there... www.jodilynncopeland.com. Also note, with Ellora's Cave acceptance to the RWA their wait time has lengthened slightly. They still get back to prospective authors faster than most publishers, but the short turnaround time I experienced won't necessarily hold true for all submissions.

Good luck and Happy Writing!

2004 Mid-Michigan RWA Candidates for Office

President Candidate Michele Hickerty: Michele has been a member of the RWA since 2001. Since joining, she's worked with publicity and the MMRWA's contests – Write for the Money, I Will Write a Book, and the Happily Ever After. This year, she is a speaker at Autumn Authors. Outside the RWA, Michele's acted as the Drama Coordinator and the Chair of Music and Worship at her church. Currently, she is the Director of Outbound, Group and College Programs for the Council for Educational Travel USA.

Vice President Candidate Chris Allen-Riley: Chris has been a member of the MMRWA for nearly three years and is the chapter's current purveyor of Mystery Gifts. She will also be speaking at the 2003 Autumn Authors Affair. In addition to her writing related activities, she coordinates activities for various local charities, including the MI SIDS Alliance and The Humane Society. She tutors several subjects for the fourth graders at Chandler Woods Charter Academy.

Secretary Candidate Tammy Kearly: Originally from the U.P., I have resided in Okemos for the past 10 years. I worked in the newspaper advertising industry for 14 years, first at a small paper in Houghton, and then at the Lansing State Journal for over 8 years. I've just spent the most glorious year writing full time, traveling and basically living a deadline-free existence. I joined MMRWA in Jan of 2003. I received my PRO pin in May.

Treasurer Candidate Jennifer Armintrout : Though she's a new addition to MMRWA, Jennifer received a crash course in the inner workings of the chapter from Michelle Hickerty and Chris Allen-Riley. As sole financial planner of the Armintrout-Erwine household, Jennifer is adept at finding money where there appears to be none. She promises to apply the same talent and determination to the post of MMRWA Treasurer.

Write-in candidates are allowed with the permission of the candidate.

Contests

Valentines Over Vegas "Feel the Magic" Cactus Rose Chapter

Postmark deadline: October 8, 2003

Beginning and synopsis not to exceed 30 pages.

<http://cactusroserwa.home.att.net/contest.htm>

2nd Annual Romancing the Tome, Coeur de Louisiane RWA Chapter

Received Deadline: October 11, 2003

Enter: First five (5) pages and two (2) page synopsis

<http://www.geocities.com/coeurdelouisiane/Contest.html>

12th Annual Heart of the West Writers' Contest, Utah Chapter of RWA

Postmark Deadline: October 15, 2003

Opening 20 pages.

<http://www.xmission.com/~utahrwa/howcontest.html>

On The Far Side, Futuristic, Fantasy & Paranormal

Postmark Deadline: October 31, 2003

First ten pages and two page (unjudged-single spaced) synopsis

<http://www.romance-ffp.com/contests.htm>

Laurie for Published Authors, Smoky Mountain Romance Authors

Deadline: October 31, 2003

Enter: Any romance novel published between July 2002 and July 2003.

E-books eligible in a bound hard copy.

<http://www.smrw.org/contests/pubbedlaurie/publaurie.htm>

GOTCHA! Contest, Silicon Valley Chapter

Postmarked by 11/01/03

First fifteen (15) pages.

<http://home.earthlink.net/~svrwa/2003gotcha/2003gotcha.htm>

Obadiah Press, Enter before December 31, 2003

Write a 1,000 to 2,000 word original article or essay based on the theme "Hope" and you could win \$5000*.

http://www.obadiahpress.com/contest_writers.htm

Hook, Line & Sinker, Hudson Valley Romance Writers

Received by 11/01/03

First three pages

<http://www.hvrwa.com/hvrwacontest.htm>

The Dreaded Synopsis, First Coast Romance Writers

Received by 11/1/03

Synopsis up to ten pages

<http://www.geocities.com/fcrwrwa/dsynop.html>

OVRWA First Chapter Contest, Ohio Valley

Received by 11/8/03

<http://www.ovrwa.com/contest/>

Golden Heart Contest, Romance Writers of America

Deadline for entry form: November 15, 2003

<http://www.rwanational.org/ContestRules.htm#general>

Rita Contest for Published Authors, Romance Writers of America

Deadline for entry form: December 2, 2003 (You can do this online)

Deadline for book: January 10, 2004

<http://www.rwanational.org/ContestRules.htm#RITA>

Donna Caubarreaux is a member of Coeur de Louisiane, NOLA STARS, Heart of Louisiana, Kiss of Death, Scriptscene and From the Heart Chapters of RWA. She received a RWA Service Award in 1997 and she sponsors several writing lists

2003 Meeting and Speaker Schedule

October 18 meeting at Sam's in Plainwell—Guest speakers: N. Gideon, L. Kuna: Topic: "Passion, Prose & the Paranormal"

November 15: Golden Rose in Lansing--Gail Martin will speak on "Romantic Baggage--How to Handle Back Story."

December meeting is the Christmas Party—Details TBA

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.



2003 Mid-Michigan Romance Writers of America Officers

President: Lana Miersen j.l.miersen@cablespeed.com
 Vice-president: Pat Lazarus LazArt2000@cs.com
 Secretary: Rohn Federbush rohn@comcast.net
 Treasurer: Diane Burton Dburton72@aol.com

2003 Mid-Michigan Romance Writers of America Committee Chairs

I Will Write a Book/Write For the Money: Michele Hickerty chelery1@yahoo.com
 Happily Ever After Contest: Michele Hickerty chelery1@yahoo.com
 Library: Maris Soule SOULEM@aol.com and Lucy Kubash lucykubash@parrett.net
 Membership/Historian: Dawn Bartley bartleyd@chartermi.net
 Member Recognition: Jodi Lynn Copeland jodi.copeland@ttmps.com
 and Cheryl Steimel wiseprez@yahoo.com
 MMRWA Angel Award: Maris Soule SOULEM@aol.com
 Mystery Gifts: Chris Allen-Riley matt@wmis.net
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 Retreat: Pam Trombley ptrombley@voyager.net
 RWA® Pro Liaison: Tammy Kearly tammyk@voyager.net
 Web mistress: Michelle Crean mecrean@parrett.net

Deadline for November submissions to Mid-Michigan Mirror is October 20. Your submissions are welcomed and valued.

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