

The Mid-Michigan Mirror... A Reflection of Romance

Winner of the 1999 RWA® Mid-size chapter newsletter contest

A publication of Mid-Michigan RWA®

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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.



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October Edition/Mid-Michigan Mirror
Volume IX~Issue 8



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Happy Birthday Wishes to:

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Julie McMullen	October 16
Karen Holthof	October 20
Anne Stone	October 23
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The President's Message

By Florence Price

I want to thank Renci Denham for the wonderful Personality Disorders program she presented at the September Kalamazoo meeting. It was both informative and interesting - Renci, you rock!

We will be voting on the Amendments to our Bylaws the week before our October 15th meeting. I'll be putting together another on-line ballot. Please take a few minutes vote on the Amendments.

In November we will also be using the on-line ballot for voting on our Board positions. Please plan on placing your votes!

At the September meeting, I presented some information regarding RWA's myRWA Chapter Websites. I believe that this platform would greatly benefit our chapter in a number of ways, and I'm recommending that the Chapter consider using this platform for our Chapter website. Please take a look at the Washington D.C. Romance Writers' (<http://www.wrwdc.com>) new site, which uses the platform. I will be putting this subject on the Agenda for the October meeting.

I hope to see many of you at the October 15th meeting that will be held in Jackson. Cindy Arends will be presenting the program *Cover Letters*, but until then...

Happy Writing!

Florence



MMRWA 2011 Monthly Meeting Schedule

October 15	Jackson-Cover letters by Cindy Arends
November 19	Grand Rapids (Grandville)-Point of View by Amy Weaver
December 10	Christmas Party-Location TBA

This Month's Meeting

October 15 at 11:30am
Hard Knock Grill
3705 Ann Arbor Road
Jackson, MI 49202
(517) 962-5451

Directions to Hard Knock Grill:

From Grand Rapids and also Lansing:

Starting in Grand Rapids, take I-196 E toward Lansing. I-196 becomes I-96 East.

(If starting in Lansing, take I-496 East, which becomes US-127 South.)

Merge onto US-127 South via EXIT 106A toward JACKSON.

US-127 South becomes US-127-BR S/M-50 East.

Merge onto I-94 East/US-127 South via EXIT 43A toward DETROIT.

Merge onto US-127 South via EXIT 142 toward HUDSON.

Take the I-94-BL / MICHIGAN AVE exit, EXIT 39.

Turn Left onto EAST MICHIGAN AVE / I-94-BL / ANN ARBOR RD. Continue to follow I-94 BL / ANN ARBOR RD. (If you reach US-127, you've gone about 0.1 miles too far.)

3705 ANN ARBOR RD. It is just past Sycamore St. (If you reach Hackett St. you've gone about 0.1 miles too far.)

From Kalamazoo:

Take I-94-BR East / M-43 EAST / West Michigan Avenue.

Turn RIGHT onto I-94-BR EAST / M-96 EAST / KING HIGHWAY.

Turn slight RIGHT onto I-94-BR EAST/ AMVET MEMORIAL PARKWAY.

Merge onto I-94 EAST.

Merge onto US-127 SOUTH via EXIT 142 toward HUDSON.

Take the I-84-BL / MICHIGAN AVE exit, EXIT 39.



Turn LEFT onto EAST MICHIGAN AVE / I-94-BL / ANN ARBOR RD. Continue to follow I-94-BL / ANN ARBOR RD. (If you reach US-127 South, you've gone too far about 0.1 mile.)

3705 ANN ARBOR RD is located just past Sycamore St. (If you reach HACKETT ST., you've gone too far.)

Member News and Recent Sales

Tracy Brogan: I sent my 2011 Golden Heart manuscript to the editor-in-chief at Kensington (requested during Nationals) and I'm keeping my fingers crossed that he'll like it. I entered several contests with a new contemporary WIP. Keeping my fingers crossed about that, too. It's hard to type that way but I'm not taking any chances! I also landed in the top ten out of 100 entries for the Ruby Slipped Sisterhood 'Best First Line' Contest with my Scottish Historical WIP. If I win, they'll pay my entry fee to enter the 2012 Golden Heart – which is a mixed blessing because I wasn't planning to have that one finished in time! I'd better get writing!

Tereasa Bellow: Although I shared this news at the last chapter meeting, some might not have heard my news. I sold my novella, *NightBird*, to TWRP. Have been busy with the final editing stages with that and finding it very fun!

Alison Hart/"Jennifer Greene": For the first time since I started writing, I haven't been able to do anything for almost for five months--I fell in February, had surgery at Cleveland Clinic for my right shoulder. But I'm back to writing now--starting the first of a trilogy for Special Edition. The first one I'm calling *PLAIN VANILLA*--all three have a spice theme.

Loralee Lillibridge: Very busy month. The launch of *ALL THAT MATTERS* contemporary romance for Tell-Tale Publishing was extremely successful, earning four and five star ratings on Amazon, B&N and Goodreads, and also from individual reviewers. Had great fun on my Blog Tour stops with my generous hostesses. Thanks, ladies. Thanks, also, to everyone who followed and left a comment. Winner in drawing for free Kindle was Ami Weaver. Print edition is now in the works. Second book in the Texas Hill Country romances is ready to submit. Finishing Book #1 in *JOYFUL NOISE* mystery series for Bell Bridge Books for summer 2012 release.



Patty Gordon: My news for this month: I made my second sale to Astraea Press - a novella called *Aegean Intrigue*.

Lucy Kubash: I am working on rewriting my third short story and then will start figuring out how to put the three on Smashwords in an anthology. I did receive nice thank-yous from two of the authors whose mss. I judged for the Maggie's awards (YA) and one of them has finalized.

Julie McMullen: My news is that I'm working on a new time travel romance that takes place in northern lower Michigan. It is the second of three books in my Michigan time travel series.

Florence Price: Still working hard on all my on-line projects. I've recently designed three new blogs and a new website. I've organized a virtual Halloween party and two blog tours for Tell-Tale Publishing. I hope to see many of you at the October meeting in Jackson!

Annette Briggs: I'm weaving family fun time with writing time and am still managing to progress with my story. Working on my steampunk and getting my vampire romance out of the crypt for submission to a publisher.

Jackie Braun's new book, *The Princess Next Door*, will be released in November by Harlequin Romance.

Maris Soule: I'll be at the Manistee Library on October 11, discussing *AS THE CROW FLIES*. I'm giving a session on writing the mystery at the Grand Rapids Writers' Groups' conference on Saturday, October 22. I'll be at Magna cum Murder, a writer/fan conference held in Muncie, Indiana from October 27-30. Not sure what my speaking assignment will be. And finally, I'm speaking to a local book group on November 1st. Am a little more than halfway through my wip. I need to get at it since I signed up for *I Will Write a Book*.

Patty Gordon: I sold my second novella to Astraea Press. *Aegean Intrigue* will be out before the end of the year!

Diane Burton: I started a blog. I'm working on my website. Fine tuning the sequel to *Switched*.



HOW IN HECK DOES THIS DING-DANG THING-A-MA-JIG WORK? (A view of the techy world from older eyes.)

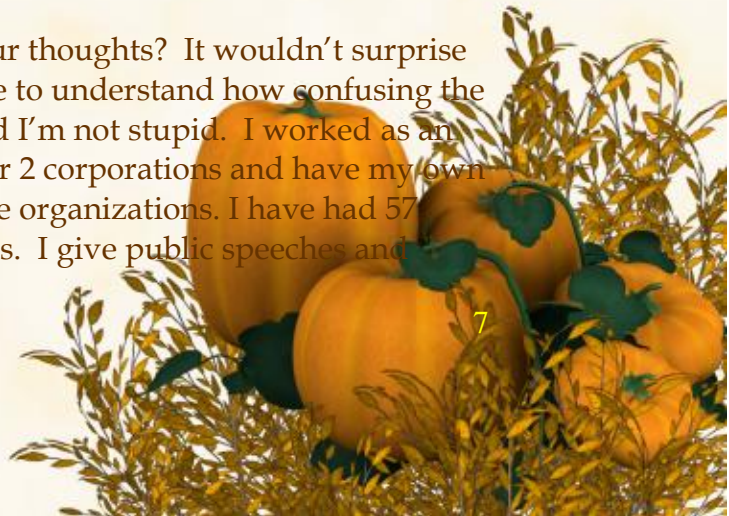
By Rosanne Bittner


Recently I saw the You Tube video of the grandparents trying to figure out how to use Skype, and it made me realize how much you “young ‘uns” out there (35 and younger) take all such things for granted. Yes, the video was funny, but I don’t think younger people realize how incredibly confusing the internet world can be for older people. In many ways, it’s not a laughing matter. Older people are truly and innocently being forced into a techy world that was unheard of only a few years ago. It’s kind of like speaking two languages. If you are born into a family that speaks two languages, it’s a snap. But when you’re an older person trying to learn a completely new language, it’s intimidating and often very difficult.

Our younger generation was born into the world of the internet. Now there are even computer-like toys that teach infants some of the basics. When older people like myself need to have something “fixed” on our computer or are confused about a certain program we have downloaded (or trying to download) we turn to our kids and even our grandkids to help us out. That can be embarrassing and even a bit humiliating to a perfectly smart, independent, and active older person who hates having to ask for help.

In this particular situation, it’s not like going from horse and buggy to the automobile. The change has taken place much faster than that, and the internet world of Facebook and Twitter and e-mail and texting and web sites and blogs and droids and i-phones that do absolutely everything keeps changing every day! I recently griped on Facebook about that very thing. I am tired of opening Facebook to find out it has changed yet again and now is intruding into my personal “space” to tell me what I should be looking at. Leave me alone, Facebook!! If there is something I want to find, I’ll go find it! Quit trying to get into my head!

Is that next? An apparatus that reads our thoughts? It wouldn’t surprise me. My point here is that younger people have to understand how confusing the “techy” world is to people my age. I am 66 and I’m not stupid. I worked as an executive secretary for years. I do the books for 2 corporations and have my own writing business. I am treasurer for two service organizations. I have had 57 novels published and have won writing awards. I give public speeches and






conduct workshops. I feel a good 25 years younger than my age and like to think I look quite a bit younger, too. I have no physical or mental ailments. I'm not some doddering old gray-headed lady who can't figure out how to open her computer. I've been using one for years. I'm on Facebook and Twitter and have a Blog and a Web site and use my e-mail and I have an i-4 Apple cell phone - yadda - yadda- yadda. But I am still a bit daunted by all that is happening with the internet world. I have often thought about how much more daunting it is for older people who are retired and still trying to learn all this stuff. I've been pretty much forced into it because of my many different jobs. For the bookkeeping I had to learn how to use Quick Books, and for my writing I have to stay up on all the avenues the internet presents for advertising myself.

I do remember my first computer. I cried and wanted to take it back because I thought I would never figure it out. That was probably 25 years ago! I wanted to go back to my trusty typewriter. It didn't ask me questions like "Are you sure you want to delete this?" Gosh, no! Will the computer explode if I do? That thing really intimidated me, and I wasn't an old lady then! I also remember when my parents bought their first TV - with a screen about one square foot in size and with knobs you fiddled with when the picture kept flipping or the horizontal would get all screwy. You could adjust brightness and of course every time you wanted to change the channel you had to get up and go do it manually. No wonder we didn't have as much of a weight problem back then. I remember our phone was on a party line - had to wait for a neighbor to get off the phone before we could use it. All phones had cords and manual dials and there was only one phone per household. There was no such thing as 911, and when my mom got sick the doctor came to the house. We didn't have to take her out. I remember learning to drive on a stick shift. I remember that when we printed something it was on a big drum-like machine with purple ink that you cranked with your hand. I remember the first memory machine at the lawyer's offices where I worked back in the 70's - a HUGE contraption that took up half the office! Only one girl knew how to use it and we were in awe of her. That would automatically print out certain legal documents and all she had to do was fill in the blanks, but there were codes to learn and all kinds of hoops to jump through to do it right. I don't remember what it was called, but it was some early form of a computer and it was big and noisy.

When I watch old black and white movies it really hits me how far we've come with telephones and television and airplanes and vehicles. I'm not so sure all of it is good, but in most ways it is. I will always remember my mother (now 90) saying that when they came out with bar codes for scanning prices it was the "work of the devil." To me the scariest thing about the internet is that, unlike something in print, once you put your words and/or pictures "out there," it's there forever. You can never take it back. Anyone can go back and find it at any



time. So I try to be careful with my comments on the internet. There is no eraser for texts or e-mails or any of the other forms of internet communication. Some people have learned that the hard way!!

This movement into a new century of communication has come fast and furious and changes every day. That's not easy for people my age and older. I am still trying to figure out how it all works. How on earth can my text message that I send out amid millions and millions of other text messages get to the recipient, who might be 5000 miles away, in just a couple of seconds? How does that one little message travel through space and land on someone else's phone that fast? In fact, how can ANYTHING just go into the air and land somewhere? And how did all that information, millions and millions of pages of info. On absolutely anything you want to know about, get into the sites where they are? Who did that, and when? You just go on the internet and type in anything - ANYTHING - and it will bring you zillions of answers. How can all the pages of practically every book ever printed now be found on the internet? Who scanned all that - and when?

I just want younger people to realize how astounding all of this is to older people and not laugh at them. They are NOT STUPID! They are proud and curious and want to enjoy this wonderful new way to communicate; but some of them are still remembering hand-dialed telephones and black and white TV's and stick shifts. They come from an age when you could explain everything in black and white - an age when men fixed their own engines and women wrote letters by hand. They are accustomed to being able to understand how things work. Texting a message 3000 miles away in two seconds flat just doesn't make sense to them. I guess you could compare it to teaching young people how to churn butter and milk a cow and make all their own clothes and make all their own meals and baked goods from scratch. It would be hard to learn those things when you've never done them before.

I don't think of myself as old at all. I keep forgetting my age. I was reminded the other day when I was watching TV with my 10-year-old grandson. Someone mentioned a "Hi-fi." He turned to me and asked "Grandma, what's a hi-fi?" Boy, did I feel old! And no, I still haven't learned how to use Skype on my new Dell laptop!



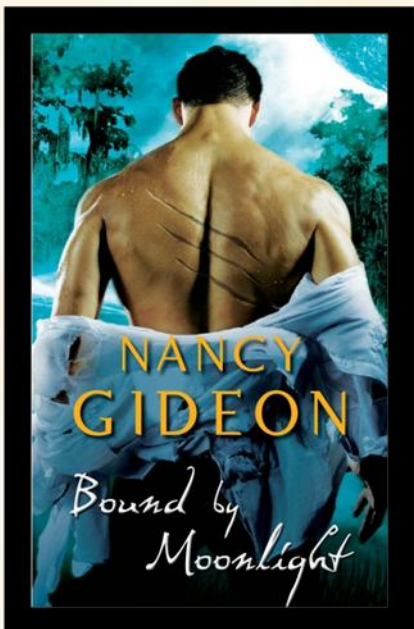
BETWEEN THE COVERS WITH NANCY GIDEON

By Tracy Brogan

For this month's Between the Covers Interview, I asked Nancy to switch hats! I'll be asking her the questions, truth or dare style! She went with just answering the questions. So, please read on to learn more about our own, fabulous Ms. Gideon!

With over 50 sales to her credit since her first publication in 1987, Nancy's writing career is as versatile as the romance market, itself. Her books encompass genres from historicals and regencies to contemporary suspense and the paranormal. Her works have been published overseas in Romanian, Italian, Russian, Portuguese, Danish, German, Icelandic and Chinese, among other languages.

A national speaker on writing in general and romance in particular, Nancy is a Western Michigan University Honors grad with a major in journalism and minors in history and communications. She's a member of Novelist, Inc. and the Mid-Michigan, Greater Detroit, PASIC and FF&P chapters of Romance Writers of America®, and is former vice-president, published author co-liaison, and was also editor of *The Mirror*.



TB: Nancy, please tell me a little bit about your most recent release and which aspect of this particular story you love the most.

NG: *BOUND BY MOONLIGHT*, the 4th book in my dark paranormal shape-shifter series with Pocket Books just came out in August. These are the books of my heart. I love these characters and have had a fabulous time developing the same hero and heroine through the first four books. The next two books in the series, *HUNTER OF SHADOWS* (11-29-11) and *SEEKER OF SHADOWS* (6-26-12) will continue in the same by

Moonlight world but will feature different heroes and heroines, although Max and Charlotte from the first books will be strong secondary characters.

TB: I've never contemplated writing a series! It must be fun to revisit the same characters, but more difficult to keep things fresh. You've obviously mastered the technique! What are you working on now?

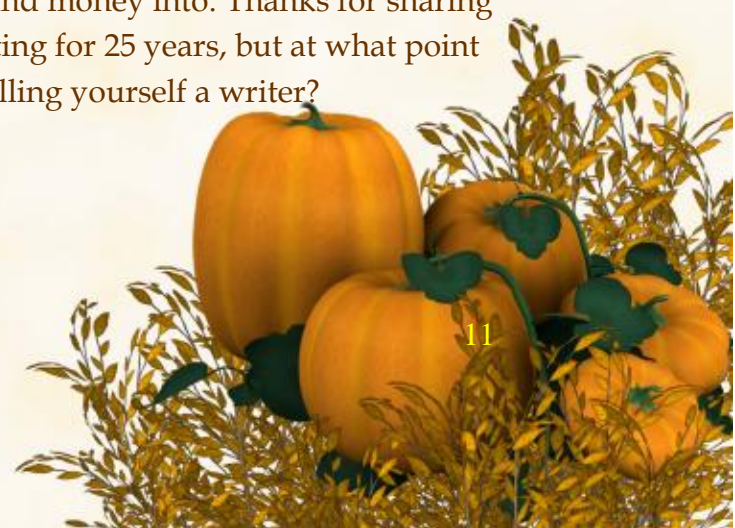
NG: I'm trying some very new! I'm branching out into non-fiction with a digital series on PR and Social Media for Writers. GETTING IT OUT THERE will be released in e-format with a topic a month over the next 18 months then will be compiled into a hardcover. A novel concept developed by Elizabeth Fortin of Tell-Tale Publishing. The first chapter on "Branding: What's in a Name?" is the debut offering from Wise Words, the non-fiction branch of Tell-Tale and will be available on September 23, 2011. I've been a speaker on writing topics for years (over 25 of them!). Finally I get to put all the research together and make use of my college degrees in journalism and communications. And I get a unique Patricia Lazarus cover. She did the ImaJinn Book covers for my vampire series and I can't wait to see what she's come up with. I'm busy putting together next month's offering on Budgeting Time and Money.




I'm also in the process of getting my rights back to my vast backlist (over 50 titles) so they can be re-released, perhaps with new series concluding books that I never got the chance to write. With all the changes going on in the marketplace, it's a very exciting time.

TB: Wow! That is an impressive body of work! And the digital social media book sounds like something we all need to read! Things are changing fast and it's hard to know which venues to put your time and money into. Thanks for sharing your expertise about that! You mentioned writing for 25 years, but at what point in your career did you first feel confident in calling yourself a writer?

NG: When I cashed my first royalty check.





TB: Ah, yes. There is nothing quite so validating as getting money for your work! I got a cash prize for the first writing contest I ever won and I made a copy of the check to keep forever. The money, sadly, is long gone! You write paranormals, so I'm particularly interested to know what inspires you?

NG: I find inspiration in the strangest places. A lot of times it's playing the "What if?" game while watching a movie or TV show. My oldest sister and I used to see who could guess the ending first...and a lot of times, our endings were better. My first hero was inspired by a rock drummer on the back of an album cover. The slick cool feel of Miami Vice and all that '80s music was what really kick-started me into writing toward publication. I always have a 'sound track' for the characters I'm working with.

TB: Good to know Don Johnson did some good for the world. Although I suppose we should thank Phil Collins, since I know the sound track was heavily influenced by him! I love that you have a sound track for individual characters as opposed to the whole book. And it makes sense because a characters playlist would say a great deal about their personality. What other techniques do you use to help develop your story?


NG: I start with the nugget of an idea. It could be a character, a setting or a scene and I start tumbling it around in my mind to expand and polish it. I never start writing until I have the perfect names and the killer first line. I do a very brief character sketch: name, age, stats, GMC how the character relates the others and how they see him/her. I used to do an agonizingly detailed outline but I let go of some of that rabid plotter mentality with the By Moonlight series and just let it write itself. So far, so good.

TB: Hah! I am also a rabid plotter. I can't start a book until I know how it ends. But I'm trying to let go of that as well. When you sold your first book, who did you call?

NG: My mom. I probably was incoherent. I didn't know any other writers back then and she was my biggest supporter.

TB: You know a few writers now! What did you do to celebrate your first release day? And your most recent release day?





NG: I never celebrate on release day. Usually I'm too busy promoting the book that just got released. I celebrate first advance check day. The first one, from the mid-'80s, bought the bedroom furniture I still have and the most recent went toward a new red Dell laptop, a virtual assistant (yeah My Girl Friday!) and my grandson's preschool. Do I know how to party, or what?

TB: You are very practical for a woman who writes fantastical stories! But a red computer is a fun treat. I'm sure you'll get lots of use out of it. And it's great to see you on the web. Here's another shout out for My Girl Friday virtual assistant! If only she did laundry. Describe a perfect writing day.


NG: 5:00 a.m. with first cup of Keurig coffee. Social Media out of the way, and an entire day of no interruptions (And neighbor with his very loud stereo working late)! Ahhh!

TB: Love the Keurig - until I realized I was drinking about 6 cups of very strong coffee every day. Thought I was having a panic attack and it turned out to be caffeine! I have since decaffeinated. But if I was up at 5:00 a.m., I'd have to go back to fully leaded. Who are some of your favorite authors/books?

NG: How long is this article supposed to be? I'll try to narrow it down to my always go-to authors: Dean Koontz, J.D. Robb, Lisa Gardner, Sandra Brown, Kresley Cole. I have hundreds of other favorite authors but these seem to dominate my shelve space. Oh, and I just bought up all the old Georgette Heyers on my Kindle app.

TB: Do you have writing rituals? Habits?

NG: I'm ADD with OCD rising and you ask me that? All my chapters used to have exactly the same number of pages...without even trying. My best writing habit is consistency. I always put in my time, every day. My desk area is a rainbow of Post It notes. I usually allow myself an hour to clear up obligations re: FB, Twitter, e-mail (and that time keeps trying to expand!) then by that time I'm on my second cup of coffee and I've settled in to write. Since I work full time, I have to make that stretch between 6 and 8 a.m. really pay off. I'll work evenings when I have to and usually all weekend.



TB: ADD with OCD rising? Hilarious! But you've decided to use those powers for good instead of evil and look at all you've accomplished! One thing I hear over and over from published writers is "You must put in the time and write every day." I agree that's true, but it's especially impressive when writers such as yourself also work full time. It just goes to prove that if you want to be a writer, you can be one, even if you have to carve out the time. (Note: That doesn't mean you can be as wonderful and prolific as Nancy! But it's a place to start.) Do you have critique partners and if so, how do you 'work' together?

NG: I have the most fabulous critique group in the universe! There are eight of us. We all write in different genres, some published, some working on it, some even living in different states! We try to meet monthly for a weekend session at one of our houses to gab, wine and whine, brainstorm and critique. We do a lot of quick reads via e-mail when we can't get together. Our main job is support and we are darned good at it. I don't think there's any crisis we haven't weathered over the years, either professionally or personally. I wouldn't still be writing if not for them...seriously. They are THAT good! We're extremely proud of three of them banding together to form their own publishing company: Tell-Tale Publishing.

TB: I've been hearing more and more about Tell-Tale Publishing! Writers should definitely check that out! Tell me about your first writer's conference experience. How are they 'different' for you now?

NG: My first conference was RWA in Seattle. Because of the \$\$\$ investment, I felt obligated to fill every second with workshops and events and I was nearly overwhelmed into a coma. My biggest thrill was having one of my Golden Medallion (the former RITAs) judges track me down to tell me if it was up to her, I would have won. Her name was Debbie Macomber.

When I go to conferences now, it's mostly business: meetings with agent, editor, publishing parties and signings. I approach them with a What's In It For Me prioritizing: 1) Things I have to do, 2) things I want to do (meeting with friends and getting out to see the sights) and 3) things I'll do if I have time (usually the workshops). I wear comfortable shoes, hydrate often, and let my ears rest when my brain gets full.

TB: Debbie Macomber? Seriously, that gave me a little chill. What does your family say about your career success and your professional journey?

NG: Usually, what's for supper? My sons are incredibly blasé about my writing since I've been published since my oldest was two. It's just Mom's job. They did think it was very cool when I got listed on the International Movie Data Base as a screenwriter and movie actress for my five minutes of fame as 'bar extra,' and when my oldest got to visit that indie horror film movie set. My sisters are very proactive about getting my name out there. My ex pretty much hated the whole idea which is kinda why he's my ex.

TB: My kids say that me writing a book has ruined our lives because now I'm always on the computer. I figure it will give them something to complain about to their future therapists- because other than that, I have been the perfect mother. (Cough, cough.) What is your favorite board or card game? Are you competitive?

NG: At the moment, Mahjong. Competitive? I'm OCD. Are you kidding? As part of my OCD 12-step program ;-), I try to limit it to being self-competitive, otherwise I'd drive myself crazy.

TB: During board games, my OCD manifests itself as the need to keep the piles of money straight. Perhaps I should try your 12-steps! Let's say you were stranded for a year on a desert island (with plumbing and electricity). What a five things (not including live beings ☺) would you take with you?

NG: 1) 4G/Wi-Fi access, 2) my iPad so I'd have tunes, Kindle, Netflix, e-mail and Internet, 3) my laptop, 4) outlet to recharge iPad and laptop, 5) my travel-sized suitcase w changes of clothing and sunscreen because I burn easily. I'm good for a year. I'm assuming my son will take care of my cat. When do I leave?

TB: You know, the concept of the desert island is to get AWAY from technology. I bet you take all that stuff on vacation with you all the time, don't you. I'm starting to think these OCD jokes are no joke! ☺ Let's get back to writing. What advice would you give to an aspiring, newbie writer?

NG: Learn your craft and sit butt in chair to practice it. Pretty simple, but highly effective.

TB: Short and sweet. And practical. What, if any, advice have you received that has been particularly helpful?

NG: See above. I do both things every day. Thea Devine's "Suck it up!" and AC/DC's "Let's a long way to the top if you want to Rock'n Roll" are my mantras.

TB: Where/how do you do your research?

NG: When I started writing, I was doing historicals which required a LOT of research. Thankfully, that was one of my favorite parts of writing. I had more cards to local and university libraries than I had credit cards. Now, I depend mostly on the Internet but am not above the personal interview. I researched the plot for one of my books by bumping into one of the hotel employees in an elevator at an RWA conference in Chicago and setting up an appointment in her office. I did tons of on-site research for my BY MOONLIGHT series in New Orleans. That was a dirty job!

TB: I love the pictures you posted for New Orleans! Very spooky and intriguing! What are a few 'myths' about being a writer that you'd like to dispel?

NG: That we can sit back on our laurels. Pfft! I wish. If anything, you have to work harder with each book to do better and reach farther. And earn out. That there's nothing more you can learn. That's sooo untrue. I discover surprising new information all the time from the most unusual sources, so you always have to be receptive to it. Social media. Need I say more?

TB: Just a little bit more! Tell me something most people don't know about you and would be surprised to learn. (Like maybe you play the ukulele or accordion. Or maybe you have a photographic memory, or something like that.)

NG: Actually I DO have a photographic memory. I used to read five chapters of material the night before a college exam and be able to recall it almost page by page. And I can tell my boss where every file and piece of paper is in our office when he calls while I'm in the middle of a luncheon with my editor in Orlando. I'm the go-to for entertainment trivia. I'm also ambidextrous.

TB: Geez, Nancy! You are making me feel quite average and inadequate!! But I'm sure that memory would come in very handy! I can hardly remember where I left my purse. Switching gears again. What is your all-time favorite movie?

NG: I'm a movie-aholic! I love a smart, well written script and jaw-dropping cinematography. Some of my favorites are: L.A. Confidential (what a cast!), 300 (the aforementioned jaw drop!), Constantine (slick and entertaining), American President (my two hanky movie), Once Upon a Time in the West (Henry Fonda made the most memorable villain!), Lord of the Rings trilogy (Sam was the REAL hero!) just to name a few. DVD and BluRay cases are taking over my apartment!

TB: Two words for you: Apple TV. Okay, so that's one word and two letters, but my point is, you can burn all those movies and get rid of the copies. My husband will be so proud of me for saying something about technology!

Nancy, thank you so much for sharing your story and your wisdom! You are the model of a great career and I hope you have continued success! (I know you will!)

Readers, be sure to visit Nancy at her website: <http://nancygideon.com/> and check out her new releases, as well as revisiting some of her previous work! She writes under her name, as well as Dana Ransom and Rosalyn West!



How to Succeed in Indy E-pubbing Without Really Trying

By CJ Lyons

I never dreamed of becoming an indy author/publisher. It's one of those a funny thing happened on the way type of stories.

You see, I initially sold to a major NYC publisher. That book, my dream debut, was a nice hardcover deal, a pre-empt, and garnered cover quotes from a dozen NYC bestsellers, including Sandra Brown. The editor wanted the sequel and it was already in the production line when the first book, my debut, was pulled from publication.

Why? Cover art--something I had no control over. But it meant my dream debut had crashed and burned.

I'd already made a leap of faith and left my medical practice after 17 years to pursue my life-long dream of being a full-time writer. And suddenly I was unemployed with no contract.


So what did I do? I kept writing. A few months later another NYC publisher came to me and offered me even more money to create a new series for them, which led to the Angels of Mercy medical suspense books. With the first book, LIFELINES, I became a National Bestseller.

I was able to pay my bills with my writing but I had several manuscripts that had undergone revisions and edits with NYC editors but never made it to publication for a variety of reasons--including those first two books. It nagged at me that these were books that had passed muster with NYC but the reading public would never see.

Then came Kindle. And Smashwords. And Nook.

Being a total cyber-klutz, I wasn't sure I'd be able to learn how to format and submit manuscripts, but with the help of Mark Coker's Smashword Guide, I mastered it. And so, by January 2010, I had four books on Kindle. (new to e-book formatting? I made a short video walking you through the basics. You can find it here:

<http://www.norulesjustwrite.com/break-free-from-the-slushpile/>)



I'd done my homework and read folks like JA Konrath who were true pioneers with self e-publishing, but I was skeptical about his advice on pricing books at \$1.99. So I priced mine between \$2.99 and \$4.99.

Then the Haiti earthquake struck. I decided since this was all an experiment anyway, I'd have nothing to lose by giving away my proceeds to Doctors Without Borders' relief efforts. In one month I sold 1,800 e-books and was feeling pretty good about myself.

Even better was when the reviews began coming in. Not just from readers but from some wonderful bloggers who'd discovered my e-books.

I had several more manuscripts finished, so I hired a freelance editor who'd worked with NYT bestsellers and an artist to create new covers for all my books. By the end of 2010 I had eight books up, with fans clamoring for more, and was poised to make more in a year from my indy e-books than from my NYC contracts.

All this without any advertising other than listing the books on my website and including them in my monthly newsletter.

I continued to experiment with a variety of price points and for the first time ever, actually was able to track sales to see what worked and what didn't--something NYC publishing could take a lesson from! After discovering that one of my books, SNAKE SKIN, had great reviews but lackluster sales, I decided to experiment with giving it away in an effort to help it find its readership.

Giving away books has always been my main promotional effort. Before e-books, I would buy extra copies of my print books and mail them to my newsletter subscribers as special reader appreciation gifts. Now I routinely give away e-books and have built a Street Team of fans eager for a chance to read and review my new books. (interested in how it works? You can find more info here: <http://cjlyons.net/for-readers/join-cjs-street-team/>)

Smashwords allows you to give a book away for free, but Kindle and Nook don't. So I set SNAKE SKIN for free on Smashwords and around three weeks later the free price finally propagated to Amazon. I woke up on Saturday morning to find 5,000 people had SNAKE SKIN on their Kindles.

Within 48 hours that number climbed to over 24,000 and at my agent's urging I changed the price to 0.99. By the end of the month almost 40,000 people

had downloaded SNAKE SKIN. Not only had SNAKE SKIN found its readership but sales of the rest of my books increased by 280%.

I didn't like the 0.99 price as a full-time price because I thought it was "cheap" and under-valued my work. BUT as a special sale price it certainly was effective--gaining me new readers without losing me any money.

That was on a book that wasn't selling well. Could I risk reducing the price of my bestselling book, the one that paid the mortgage, from \$4.99 to 0.99?

I decided it was worth a try. So for a limited time, I put my bestseller, BLIND FAITH, on sale for 0.99 and held my breath.

What happened next? By the end of the month I'd sold over 150,000 copies (of all my titles), BLIND FAITH hit #2 on the overall Kindle list, #4 on the USA TODAY, and #2 on the New York Times combined print and e-book bestseller list. (That squealing noise you heard? That was me doing my Snoopy dance of joy!)

What was the trick? I didn't do any big time promo for the BLIND FAITH sale. Just my normal newsletter and a few tweets and website/Facebook updates. So I can't take credit for this surge of sales.

I think it was a question of SNAKE SKIN already being on a roll, allowing everyone who viewed or bought it to see my name. Plus BLIND FAITH has a great cover and already had stellar reviews, including a Top Pick from RT, so building on SNAKE SKIN's momentum was easier for it than an unknown book.

Could someone with only one book do this? Honestly, I think it would be very difficult. I'm learning that with online sales momentum builds more momentum until you reach a tipping point. You need plenty of books in your arsenal (I'd recommend at least 5-6) to keep the momentum rolling from one book to the next.

No fancy tricks, no sleazy sales techniques, no expensive ads or trailers or sponsorships. Just readers who resonate with my brand of Thrillers with Heart and keeping an eye on my sales trends, ready to make those price adjustments when need be.

(I imagine log rollers dancing across timber streaming down whitewater

rapids-try that, NYC publishing conglomerates!)

Bottom line if you want to achieve success as an indy: be nimble, be quick, be fearless. And never forget: it's ALL about the reader!

As a pediatric ER doctor, CJ Lyons has lived the life she writes about in her cutting edge thrillers. In addition to being an award-winning, New York Times bestseller, CJ is a nationally known presenter and keynote speaker. CJ has been called a "master within the genre" (Pittsburgh Magazine) and her work has been praised as "breathtakingly fast-paced" and "riveting" (Publishers Weekly) with "characters with beating hearts and three dimensions" (Newsday).

Her newest project is as co-author of a new suspense series with Erin Brockovich. Learn more about her writing at <http://www.cjlyons.net> and find the tools you need to help you finish your novel and find your audience at <http://www.norulesjustwrite.com>

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Final Reflections

By Jennifer Kamptner

Hello! I would like to thank all of you for allowing me a bit of creative license while designing this newsletter. My predecessor, Tracy Brogan, put out beautiful newsletters and continued the standard for what I think is the best newsletter in the business—thank you, Tracy, for all the work you did as newsletter editor and helping me follow in your footsteps. I only hope I can do as well.

October is the month for BIAM and preparation for NaNoWriMo. I signed on for October Obsession/BIAM in hopes to finish my work-in-progress and meet the I Will Write a Book Challenge due the end of November. Easy, right? Only had to write 582 words a day to finish. Not so much. After dwindling inspiration and motivation to write this one I finally stalled out. For a pantsier like me that usually means I've gone wrong with a plot turn or character. Usually I know where I went wrong and simply go back and delete or rewrite to get the story back on track. Not this time. I realized that the only right part of this story was the first scene. I had to start over. Lost 37,000 words and will not

meet my goals. The good news, my passion for this story has returned and it *feels* right. So, even though I won't get it finished for the challenge I learned to trust my instincts and stop trying to write through that niggling feeling that something isn't right in the story. When I ignore it my muse deserts me so best to listen.

So in honor of my mistakes I leave you with this quote: *Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.*
~Scott Adams

