

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

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 September 20 meeting of MMRWA will be hosted at Gilbert's Steak House in Jackson, Michigan. Guest speaker is Tony Englund. Please see page 8 for directions.



The Write Stuff . . .

At the Chapter President's Retreat at National this year, I was pleased to learn that as a chapter, MMRWA is doing a lot of things right. Let's pass the chocolate and pat ourselves on the back.

We provide our members with an open, user-friendly writing community. We support and promote our published writers by attending their book signings and by subsidizing Cover to Cover, and our published authors mentor and motivate our unpublished members to work toward achieving publication. We recognize member achievements and member service to the chapter. We provide opportunities to socialize and network, sharing good news and bad, and we share market information and insights into the world of publishing. We provide regular, informative programs and guest speakers at our meetings. We study and improve the craft of writing in workshops, critique groups, and online with WRITING 101. We provide a library of writing-related books and tapes. With our Retreat from Harsh Reality, we provide an alternative for those members who cannot attend expensive and distant conferences.

I discovered that two important areas in which we do fall a bit short is in strategic planning and leadership development. We don't actively plan where we want the chapter to be in five or ten years, or what we hope to accomplish in a given time period. We don't have a program of any kind in place to groom members for leadership positions. We should have one if we want to maintain the vitality and viability of the chapter's leadership, and prevent member burn out when the same people end up holding office and chairing committees over and over.

Our guest speaker at the Chapter President's Retreat, Marge Smith (aka Elizabeth Sinclair), pointed out that many chapters work on the assumption that when the time comes to put together a slate of officers, members will step forward and volunteer to run. She said too many chapters operate this way (um, we're one of them, folks), and that it's not a good idea because future chapter leaders need time to understand the responsibilities of office. Training is needed, because an untrained or badly-trained officer, especially the president, can do a chapter irreparable harm. Long-time members of MMRWA can testify to past problems of this nature. Other chapters share similar experiences. I read about their horror stories on ChapLink. Some of them would curl your hair.

If we want to avoid the annual scramble for capable (or even willing) candidates, we should probably form a committee to address the topic of leadership development. Perhaps we could prevail upon the chapter's greatest leadership resource, our past chapter presidents, to serve on this committee--to identify potential leaders and mentor them, grooming them for future office. For example, they could establish criteria for running for office, such as gaining experience at the committee level for X number of years, and serving as vice-president, secretary, or treasurer before being eligible to run for president. We might even consider going to the president-elect system, so our presidents gain a year of experience before moving up to the top job. Another idea to consider might be going to two-year terms for our officers and only electing half the board in a

given year. That way we wouldn't have a completely new and inexperienced board elected every year; there would always be at least two experienced members sitting on the board.

And, while we're on the subjects of leadership, the Board and elections, guess what? Soon a Nominations Committee member near you may approach you to run for the 2004 MMRWA Board of Directors. It's your opportunity to give something back to the chapter, so please consider throwing your hat into the ring. You and the chapter will be the better for it.

Lana Miersen, President

August 16 MMRWA chapter meeting.

August speaker Sgt. Patrick J. Merrill fascinated members and guests at our August 16 MMRWA chapter meeting with his police/military/security knowledge.

While in the Air Force, he was employed as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician for over six years. Working as a bomb technician, he has served on protective details with the US Secret Service, US State Department, and the US Department of Defense. He has served on the protective details of four active and former US Presidents. In addition he has served on the protective details for Fidel Castro, Pope John Paul III, and King Hussein of Jordan.

After leaving the Air Force, Sergeant Merrill joined the Grand Rapids Police Department, where he has served as a nights Patrol Officer, a Community Officer, assigned to Investigations, and a Patrol Sergeant. He is currently serving as the department's Information Technology Liaison.

The highlight of his talk was the "arrest" of MMRWA member Marsha Ransom. With Marsha playing the part of a suspected criminal, Sergeant Merrill explained the accepted ways to frisk a male and a female and demonstrated the most effective way to handcuff a suspect. Marsha was set free at the conclusion of the demonstration. ☺

From front-line operations to organizational infrastructure, Sergeant Merrill has a well-rounded view of law enforcement and the justice system and is a rich resource of authentic details and information for MMRWA.

Member News

Dawn Bartley: Have to pick up my work-in-progress again to finish for November.

Jodi Copeland: Placed first in the Magnolia State Romance Writers (MSRW) 7th Annual Dixie First Chapter Contest. In category: Super Sexy/Erotica. Her entry, *Uncharted Waters*, has already been sold to Ellora's Cave.

Rohn Federbush: Sending query to Steeple Hill for *Pennies from Heaven*.

Nancy Fraser: Will be writing medical romance for Harlequin UK; waiting to hear from Silhouette Desire; running for re-election to National Board.

Patty Gordon: Writing lesson plans; sorting through ideas; dreaming.

Michele Hickerty: Had a great time in New York; had three editors and one agent ask for manuscripts; didn't final in Dorchester's contest; speaking at Autumn Authors.

Tammy Kearly: Sent submissions requested at nationals; working on contemporary.

Anne Marie King-Jakubiak: Received one rejection; have two manuscripts ready to go; received confirmation that I have been accepted for a Pro Pin; have a new grandson.

Shar Koenig: Working on a stand alone mystery, a "locked-room whodunit."

Lucy Kubash: I'm still writing my monthly column for the Mailmax paper and this month it is about our very own Flavia and Jenna. Theirs is such an inspiring story, and I wanted to make more people aware of PAWS WITH A CAUSE, who brought them together. My thanks go out to Flavia for sharing the story with me.

Pat Lazarus: Finished another chapter in *Storm Master*.

Loralee Lillibridge: I received a phone call that my long contemporary, *RAMSEY'S RETURN* is a finalist in the NorthEast Ohio RWA Romancing the Novel contest and is on its way to an editor for the final read! Everyone at my house is shouting, "Way to go, Mama!" See you all in Sept.

Lana Miersen: Spoke with Chris Keesler at national, re: *Falcon's Way*; also pitched a Flipside idea to Wanda Ottewell and she asked for a synopsis and three chapters; attended Chapter President's Retreat and the AGM.

Kathleen Nance: Waiting on proposals; working on book due in November, Day of Fire Book 2 of 2176 series.

Dana Nussio: I got my fourth sale with Steeple Hill last week. It's a 2-in-1 Love Inspired book with fellow author Irene Brand. My novella is called "What Child Is This?" and the book is called *CHRISTMAS MIRACLES*, but I've found out that both titles will change. :0) Release date is Nov. 2004.

Marsha Ransom: Still plugging away on work in progress.

Juli Schuitema: received rejection from St. Martin's Press; joined FF&P chapter; alternately working on two fantasies and the sequel to my romantic science fiction; going to Autumn Authors.

Dickee Six: Half way through historical.

Cheryl Steimel: Just returned from Europe, but I did get some writing done. I'm three chapters away from completing my romantic comedy and have outlined my next fantasy. Didn't final in Dorchester's contest or the Jasmine, but did send out a query letter to Avon; am speaking at Autumn Authors on public speaking.



Happy September Birthday

Michele Hickerty 11

Wil Emerson 15

Marjorie Sandoval 16

Patty Hall 28

This September issue of Mid-Michigan Mirror is featuring our new column written by our members currently unpublished in book length fiction. With insights gathered on their journeys toward publication, our members will share with us:

The Grind: Goals, Motivations and Conflict

By Michele Hickerty

What do you mean I need goals, motivations and conflicts? I have them. My goal is to be published. My motivation is to see my book in print and receive the affirmation that, yes, I am a writer. And my conflict is those damned editors. Oops, can I say damned in this article. Okay, I'll restrict myself. Oh, that's another conflict. Restrictions. Guidelines!

Why is it so easy to know my GMC but so incredibly hard to find it for my hero and heroine? On my quest, I surfed the Internet until I found barren desert. I read books on character building and Debra Dixon's GMC. I analyzed my favorite movies and novels. I made charts. I did character interviews. I had conversations with the air.

No matter what I tried, it didn't work. I failed in my search for the Holy Grail of GMC.

I didn't quit. I built magnificent GMC's for heroine Jane and hero John, but they always fell short of the mark. I couldn't maintain them through my story.

I drove myself insane trying to grasp these basic building blocks. Everyone's talking about it. You have to have it. Why can't I get it? It should be so easy.

Easy. Basic.

That's when I began to understand. GMC doesn't have to be some grand thing. It's basic needs for everyday reasons. It's what keeps us from getting what we want. It's Michele wanting to find GMC so that she can write a book that will get published but she can't find a decent GMC that her internal editor doesn't claim isn't good enough. It's John wanting to buy a new car so that he can get to work (and, of course, take his girl on dates), but he can't because someone's stolen his identity and killed his credit. He's afraid that it's because of something he did.

Do you see the GMC's in there?

Michele:

G – Find GMC

M – Publication

C – (external) missing GMC – lost and found ads haven't helped.
(internal) her internal editor

John:

G – Buy a car

M – Work and a love life

C – (external) Identity theft, (Internal) Fear

Once I started simplifying, I was saved by the hidden GMC truth. Look outside your plot for the basic things that your characters want, why they want them, and why they can't have them. The answer is there. Then let the GMC and the unpredictability of life create your plot.

The answer was easier than I'd ever imagined. Insert Rocky Theme here as I dance in circles with my fists in the air.

But what is this? Now, I'm hearing about themes. And scenes and sequels! Will it never end!

Well, for now, back to my story (with my simplified GMC chart next to my computer). John and Jane await on a dark and stormy night. . . .

Contests

Oak Leaf Award for Unpublished Authors, Oak Leaf Romance Writers

Deadline; September 1, 2003

Synopsis - 5 pages. Beginning of book, not over 25 pages

<http://www.geocities.com/CHARTEROAKRWA/Contest/contest.html>

2003 Golden Rose Contest, Rose City Romance Writers

Postmarked: September 8, 2003

Synopsis and first three chapters (55 page max).

<http://www.rosecityromancewriters.com/>

Hold Me, Thrill Me, Southwest Florida Romance Writers

Postmarked by September 15, 2003

Enter prologue and/or first chapter of novel and optional one-page synopsis, combined total pages not to exceed 16 pages.

<http://www.swfrw.org/contest.html>

2003 Opening Gambit Contest, Northeast Indiana Romance

Postmarked by September 15, 2003

Send us the first chapter (or prologue and first chapter) along with your synopsis for a maximum total of 30 pages.

<http://www.niraonline.com/gambit.htm>

Annual Fiction From the Heartland, Mid-America Romance Authors

Received no later than September 25, 2003

First chapter and synopsis not to exceed 35 pages.

http://www.mararwa.com/Events/contest_info.htm

Sweet, Spicy & Spooky, Smokey Mountain Romance Writers

Received by Sept. 30, 2003

One page set-up and ten (10) page scene between hero and heroine with an emotional impact. <http://www.smrw.org/contests/ssscontest/sss.htm>

L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future, Received Deadline: September 30th
<http://www.writersofthefuture.com/index1.htm>

Compiled by Donna Caubarreaux, 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. She sponsors several writing lists...
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**If you're having grammar issues, Purdue University has a good grammar website:
owl.english.purdue.edu**



**Directions to Gilbert's Steak House, 2323 Shirley Drive
I-94 and 127 North, Jackson, Michigan 49202
(517) 782-7135**

Take I-94 to the US-127/M-50 exit- exit number 138- toward LANSING/JACKSON.
0.33 miles:
Take the ramp toward LANSING/CHARLOTTE. 0.11 miles
Merge onto MI-50 W/US-127 N. 0.34 miles
Take the exit toward SPRINGPORT RD. 0.16 miles
Turn SLIGHT RIGHT onto SHIRLEY DR. 0.12 miles

2003 Meeting and Speaker Schedule

September 20 meeting at Gilbert's, Jackson—Guest speaker: Tony Englund

October 11 meeting at Gallagher's, Kalamazoo—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

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 wisepez@yahoo.com
MMRWA Angel Award: Maris Soule SOULEM@aol.com
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Deadline for October submissions to Mid-Michigan Mirror is September 20. Your submissions are welcomed and valued.

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