



Connections

The official newsletter of the Connecticut Romance Writers Association

Connecticut Chapter, Romance Writers of America, Chapter 1, Region 1

President's Letter

November 2009

To have a great idea, have a lot of them.— Thomas Edison

One of the things that I've found is that in order to write a 400-page novel, a writer needs to really, *really* love an idea. Otherwise, you may as well just stick your head in the oven now. Finding that idea — let's call it *The One*, shall we? — has always been a bit tough for me. To this end, I'm constantly on the prowl, like a vampire...or perhaps more aptly, like my dog, who's always hungry, always alert, always ready to stumble upon some bacon.

We never really know what's going to hit us, do we? Why will this one become *The One*? Last winter, I fell for Daniel Craig. It seemed like those grumpy looks would indicate a certain personality (not that I have a personal knowledge of Mr. Craig's personality...not yet, I should say). But those ruthless cheekbones of his were the starting point for the hero in my latest book. Once the way a man nodded really *affected* me. It was just this really charming nod...I can't explain it. Sure, it's weird, but hey! We're writers, and this sort of thing is encouraged.

My friends often tell me stories, hoping that they'll inspire something that will end up as *The One*. "Guess what? I met a woman today who married her uncle's brother!" Or "My wife told me she wanted a divorce when I was making pancakes for our kids. On Christmas morning." This stuff is gold for us, isn't it? I am always so grateful! I keep all my ideas, from James Bond's cheekbones to the Christmas morning bombshell, in a computer file. Only a fraction will become books, but maybe one of the less inspired ideas will lead to something else. You never know.

We often hear the phrase "filling the well"...a dorky expression, but a great idea. Our imaginations are so hard at work so much of the time that we need to stoke the fires a bit. Watching movies, reading for pleasure, getting together with friends, taking a walk, eavesdropping as people break up at Starbucks...it's all part of the process. Let your mind become overloaded with ideas for books or characters or plot twists. Don't worry if they never ripen. Some of them will.

So don't forget to stoke your imagination, fill your well, feed your mind simply by being a person. As you all know, I'm a huge fan of the Yankee work ethic, but I've come to realize that we also need to rest our minds, take a break and have a little fun. And if that makes you feel a little guilty, well, just look at it as part of the job.

Cheers, writers!
Kristan

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November 21st

Kathryn Smith on *Writing for the YA Market*

MONTHLY MEETINGS of the CTRWA are held at The Four Points Sheraton in Meriden. Non-members are welcome to observe a meeting before joining. Meetings begin at 10:30 a.m. with a speaker or workshop at 11:00. PYOW lunch follows. See our website (www.ctrwa.org) for more information and directions.

COMMUNITY

MEMBER NEWS!

Joy Smith: I've reworded The Pledge, now titled Spirit Lover. Just sent out 6 submissions and am keeping my fingers crossed.

Lori Avocato: My new book is out! My Air Force nurse who pulls a hunky guy out of the ocean romance called *Heaven on Earth* is now out from The Wild Rose Press. An air force nurse romance--oh how nostalgic!

Pat Grasso: Finaled in the Published Beacon contest with Enticing the Prince!

Marie Roy: My story *Night Fantasies* went live at Aspen Mountain Press this past weekend. I'm attaching the cover art for that story which is basically about a woman who dreams the same sexy dream every night and one day when she meets the man in her dream wonders if dreams really do come true. Also, I just received the final edited version of *Deadly Affair*, book two in my Todd Hollow series and scheduled for a December release.

Kristan Higgins: The rights to *The Next Best Thing* have been sold to Rhapsody Book Club...I'll be a featured author on the Romantic Times website and in the Rhapsody catalogue...finished revisions on *All I Ever Wanted*...came up with a new idea for a book, always a challenge.

Karen Pinco: Bought an AlphaSmart on Ebay. A public thank you to Toni Andrews – my word count has exploded!

Kelly Morse: I Passed my EMT practical and written exams!!! Yea me! I also received positive feedback from an editor concerning a short story. I have the revised version almost set to send back over. Cross your fingers!

Karlee's Etter's script, *Hope Amongst the Stars*, was selected by Mystic Seaport Museum for their yearly, Lantern Light Tours. Last year, the seaport was chosen by Time as the second best holiday destination in the nation primarily because of Lantern Light Tours. No pressure, right? Sure (gulp)...but after months of writing, editing and re-writing drafts, Karlee's completed script is ready for its premier Nov. 28th. Visitors from across

New England and New York, and numbering over 10,000 will travel to the nineteenth century village of Mystic and experience Christmas Eve 1876 through the eyes of many Victorian-Era characters, including Karlee's nineteenth century persona, Mrs. Wheldon.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Can you write a story in six words?

Shaunee Cole:

Morning: veil, funeral. Afternoon: Brazil, Carlos.

Lindsay Downs:

Wanted-Wife. No experience. Will train
Wanted-Husband. Experience necessary. Will love.
Wanted-New husband. Last one died.

Lori Avocato:

Mysterious stranger in my photo album.

Marie Roy:

For sale, a set of golf irons, never used.

Pat Grasso:

Rejected aspiring author shoots editor.

Kristan Higgins:

Author commits suicide, manuscript unfinished.

Bob Bonitz: Sobbing, she kissed his lifeless lips.

Kelly Morse: He woke up dead.

Karen Pinco:

Human cloning successful. Met myself today.

Nominations for the 2010 Board Positions

Toni Andrews - President
Shaunee Cole - Vice-President
Janet Messina - Treasurer
Kristan Higgins - Media Director
Jennifer Iszkiewicz - Publicity Director
Karen Pinco - Secretary/Membership Director
Bob Bonitz - Member at Large

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An Interview with Susan Crowley

Tell us a little about yourself.

I'm married with two grown daughters, a cat, a dog and a miniature rose bush. I'm not good with plants so my husband waters it. When I'm not writing, I have a part-time job at a college as a webmaster.

I'm a cross over author from science fiction and fantasy. In 2007, a friend who was a science fiction author and also a romance author told me, "Honey, I've read your work. You're really a romance writer." I went to the bookstore to look at romance and fell in love with paranormal romance.

What kinds of books do you write?

Paranormal romance but with complicated life and death sometimes world saving plots which I've been told borders on urban fantasy. I just love creatures of the night. LOL

What made you write your first book?

My first book WHEN LOVE SURVIVES was published by Tease Publishing LLC on October 15th. It will become part of a print anthology next year.

I dreamt about WHEN LOVE SURVIVES and wrote it fast and furious. It's 15k words. Then I started doing research on the World Trade Setting disaster which is the setting for this unusual love story between a young woman who is half elf and half leprechaun and a shapeshifter as they become rescue workers at Ground Zero.

Can you tell us about your journey to publication?

It's been a long one. For me, I think the genres changed. I wrote primarily sword and sorcery as a science fiction and fantasy author. That's hard to publish now. I also had romantic elements in my stories. Editors would constantly tell me I was "sweet" and they were publishing gritty, edgy stories.

When romance was recommended to me, I went to the bookstore and found through reading jacket covers that I was probably a paranormal romance author. I kept buying and reading--doing my research into what the genre was about. I read paranormal romance blogs online, I read how to write romance books, and then I

started writing. I rewrote a manuscript I had thought to be fantasy and found it came alive in romance. I joined RWA and CTRWA, FFP Romance online, and Rom-Critters online critique group. I started my blog Nights of Passion to enter the romance community, meet more authors to talk to, and become the eventual platform for my books.

I went to workshops especially Fiction Fest. I went to booksignings of friends. I submitted like crazy but always with a plan--a list of agents and a list of publishers. I decided to be honest and submit to publishers of the authors I read. I was rejected and ignored and in the meanwhile went RWA Pro. I kept at it both in submitting and writing.

I talked about WHEN LOVE SURVIVES to a friend and she recommended I submit to the house that publishes her. I got an email first from the editor-in-chief asking when it would be convenient for her to call me. When she called she said she loved it, all the editors loved it and they were trying to decide who would be my editor. She sent me a contract. I get along really well with my editor and she sent me edits and suggestions. There's actually a lot of communication.

In my experience so far, Tease is a small, young publisher but they care about their authors. I was completely speechless when I saw the gorgeous cover.

Publishing is hard work. There's the rewrites from my editor, and while a small publisher may makes suggestions and buy some strategic ads in Romantic Times, etc., the author is really supposed to do guest blogging and booksigning and whatever to get the word out. I have a list of things I do and will do. Elaine Isaak's workshop on promoting at one of our last meetings and Stella Price's workshop at Fiction Fest on making promotional materials has already helped me a lot and turned out to be perfect timing.

What are you working on now?

Actually I just signed two more contracts with Tease and I'm buried in rewrites. A big thank you to Kristan Higgins and Lori Avocato for their help with query letters and synopsis for THE VAMPIRE'S WISH, which has been retitled as THE STORMY LOVE LIFE OF LAURA CORDELAIS. This vampire romance is a full-length (95k words) which is tentatively scheduled to

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come out in November as an ebook. Next year it will come out in print. Also Tease is publishing another novella, my 20k word vampire romance, *A VAMPIRE FOR CHRISTMAS* also to come out in November.

Any advice for the unpublished CTRWA members?

Come to our meetings, to our workshops, to Fiction Fest. I learned more studying how to write and publish romance from our colleagues than I did in college or all my years as a science fiction and fantasy author. Romance Writers rules when it comes to really knowing how to teach writing and publishing.

For more information about Susan (and how to order her books), visit her Nights of Passion Blog : <http://nightsofpassion.wordpress.com> or her personal website: <http://www.susanhannifordcrowley.com>

Turn Your Two Dimensional Writing into 3-D by W.E. Thomas

Is your writing flat and lifeless? If so, check to see if your characters are using their senses, and I don't mean their common sense. What I am referring to are their five senses. Sensory details will give your characters the dimension they may be missing.

For example, if you have a character in a kitchen, make sure your character smells or tastes something cooking on the stove or baking in the oven. Your readers should be able to taste it too!

If you have a character caught in a storm, make sure they feel the rain stinging their face or sense the electricity from the thunder storm. You want your reader to feel like they are in the scene with your character. (Hint: Don't use the word feel when describing what your character is feeling.)

Seeing is one of the senses that is used above all others. For this reason, don't take it for granted. Use this opportunity for your character to see something important that will drive the story forward. This can be done through foreshadowing as well.

A character's sense of hearing can set the scene for where it is taking place or for what is about to come. Take advantage of this sense by incorporating unique sounds that will grab the reader's attention and also move the story forward.

By using what your character hears, smells, tastes, feels, and sees you will add another dimension to your writing. Readers can all relate to sensory details and need them to feel as if they are part of your story, which is right where you want them to be. Nora Roberts does this to perfection in her four MacKade books. These brothers become your friends and neighbors as you read the series, and you can't help but miss them when they are gone.

Making your characters seem life-like takes time, talent and a great deal of editing! Don't give up though; there is something to be said for perseverance. Making your characters come to life is the art of writing; using these skills as a writer is the technique. Practice this technique by using one or two senses a day in a writing exercise. Your writing will take on a new dimension.

Wendy Elvin-Thomas has a Bachelor of Science in education and enjoys writing when she is not chasing after her three children. She is currently working on a romantic suspense trilogy featuring the O'Briens. You can learn more about W.E. Thomas and her writing at her website, wethomas.com.

This article appeared in the Oct. '09 issue of Bouquet of Romance, Pocono Lehigh RW, Easton, PA.

If it's November, it's National Novel Writing Month! by Pat Hauldren

What is National Novel Writing Month? Well, most of us call it NaNoWriMo, or just NaNo if we're in a hurry. NaNoWriMo is a month long tour de force of writing. It's a "nonprofit literary crusade that encourages aspiring novelists from all over the world to write" a novel in a month. Participants set a goal of 50,000 words and write like the dickens from November 1 to midnight November 30th.

Because of the one month window, quantity is king here, not quality. Quality is editing and that isn't allowed during NaNoWriMo. In November, type as fast as you can, as much as you can, every day. The goal of 50,000 words breaks down into 175 pages, or about 1,667 words a day minimum. It's best not to slack off the minimum and highly recommended to splurge far beyond whenever possible, because there are always "those days" that life intrudes and our focus is diverted. But persevere!

How does one participate in NaNoWriMo?

It's easy. You can do it on your own, or you can register at the official National Novel Writing Month website. Registering is free and allows you to be awarded a "badge" when you complete the 50,000 NaNoWriMo goal.

Starting November 1, you can update your word count in a box at the top of their website and post excerpts of your work for others to read. Watch your word count accumulate and your story take shape. It's really fun not to worry about editing, and just get the words down.

When you finish your 50,000 words by midnight November 30th, you can upload your novel (it may be a partial with only 50,000 words, but that's a lot!) for official verification, and be added to their Winner's Page and receive a handsome winner's certificate and web badge. The website will have step-by-step instructions on uploading your novel by mid-November.

Be sure to start from scratch. No previously written prose allowed. However, you can do some plotting, character sketching, outlining, researching, etc. You can prepare, but save the actual writing for November 1st.

There's even a NaNoWriMo handbook. Founder Chris

Baty wrote *No Plot? No Problem!: A Low-Stress, High-Velocity Guide to Writing a Novel in 30 Days*. Inside this book, he spells out the secrets of writing and finishing a novel. He offers week-by-week overviews, strategies, anecdotes, and success stories from previous NaNoWriMo winners to inspire writers to complete their goal. Even if you aren't doing NaNoWriMo this year, Blaty's book is a fun read.

Who participates in NaNoWriMo?

To be glib, I could say, just about every writer I know. Just about J. This year, I will be participating, trying to finish the first draft of a contemporary fantasy. Last year, I wrote a science fiction dimensional travel. Most of my writer friends are participating and many of them are repeat NaNo-ers like me.

I asked around the web, on Yahoo! Groups I'm on and on Twitter and Facebook for some NaNo stories and author Toni Andrews was kind enough to reply. I know Toni from Twitter and from NYCWriters@Yahoogroups.com. Toni is the author of *Beg for Mercy: Mercy Hollings, Book 1*, *Angel of Mercy: Mercy Hollings, Book 2*, and *Cry Mercy* which was released June 2 this year by Mira.

Toni has been NaNoing enthusiastically since 2005. She says she loves how we use "NaNo" as a verb. She made the goal of 50,000 words 3 out of 4 years. Last year she got caught up in a non-writing project.

When I asked her if she had completed the 50k words, she said, "'My '05, '06 & '07 projects all made it into published works. In fact, my May 2008 Mira Books release, *Angel of Mercy*, was a very lightly revised version of my '06 Nano book. Even though it was never finished, my '08 effort made it into a proposal that is currently making publisher rounds."

Toni says she's not great at rough drafts-she tends to agonize to much over early drafts when she should just be getting it on the page. NaNo helps her with that. She said, "I just got a contract for three (as yet unwritten) books from Silhouette Nocturne, and my first one is due on January 15th. I'm hoping to use Nano to get a draft done, so that I can then spend the rest of the time before the deadline revising."

Toni enjoys the "write ins", where people gather and write their novels in the company of other NaNo-ers. Sometimes, write ins are all night affairs, but

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usually, write ins meet at a local pub, library, or bookstore, socialize and write. NaNoWriMo gatherings are usually conducted by an "ML" or Meeting Liason and you can probably find one in your area on the website.

Toni says, "It's hard to goof off when surrounded by a bunch of other people, all writing like demons." Toni would absolutely recommend NaNoWriMo to other writers.

Who are some other NaNoWriMo authors? There's a whole list on the NaNoWriMo website, but here's a few just to get your interested:

- Sara Gruen-author of *Water for Elephants*
- Kalanya-Nicole Price-*Once Bitten*, No. 1 on the Fictionwise Dark Fantasy list in Feb. 2009
- Catherine Wade-*Another Time Around*
- Lani Diane Rich-*Time Off for Good Behavior*

There's even a Young Writers Program , where participants who are 17 years old or younger have a more reasonable, yet challenging, word count goal they set for themselves. There's a chart provided where suggested word counts are broken down by grade level. These work especially well for teachers who are incorporating creative writing into their curriculum.

Are you ready to join the thousands of participants in NaNoWriMo?

Thousands, yes, thousands. In 2008, 119,301 people participated in NaNoWriMo and 21,683 "won". There are 500 official NaNoWriMo chapters around the world. Even schools got into the act, with over 500 schools K-12 participating. All totaled, over a million and a half words were officially logged in 2008.

The 11th annual National Novel Writing Month starts today. Are you game?

Log onto the National Novel Writing Month website or the Young Writers Program for NaNoWriMo and get started!

<http://ywp.nanowrimo.org/>
<http://www.nanowrimo.org/>
<http://toniandrews.wordpress.com/>

This article first appeared in the Fort Worth Examiner (examiner.com) by Pat Hauldren, editor of the North Texas Romance Writers Newsletter.

The Write Stuff Contest 2009-2010 Sponsored by Connecticut RWA

The Write Stuff Contest promotes the work of unpublished and non-PAN writers (those who have not earned more than \$1000 in royalties or advances).

Entry deadline: December 1, 2009
All entries are to be submitted by email to:
writestuffctrwa@yahoo.com

Entry: The first 20 pages of your manuscript (double spaced) and an optional one-page synopsis (single spaced). The synopsis will not be judged.

Categories: series contemporary, single title, romantic suspense, historical, paranormal, young adult, and mainstream with romantic elements.

Books with erotic content are welcomed, but there is no separate category.

Final judges:

Victoria Curran, Harlequin/Silhouette: Series Contemporary Romance
Karen Solem, Spencerhill Associates, Paranormal Romance
Megan Records, Kensington Books, Historical Romance
Leis Pedersen, Berkley, Single Title Romance
Holly Blanck, St. Martin's Press, Mainstream with Romantic Elements
Jennifer Schober, Spencerhill Associates, Young Adult
Deb Werksman, Sourcebooks, Romantic Suspense

Top prize: \$100.00 in each category.
Winners will be announced at the 2010 Connecticut Fiction Fest Conference in May.

See our website for instructions on how to enter and to download an entry form.

What to Do Before You Hire a Web Designer

by Simone Seguin

Whether you're embarking on your first website, or your fifth, or a redesign, the process can be daunting. Even if you've decided to hire a professional web expert instead of doing the work yourself, it's hard to know where to start.

Before you hire a designer – before you even start researching for quotes – you've got a little work to do. By putting in the time to answer a few questions for yourself, you'll make the entire project flow much easier than you'd think.

So, what should you do before you hire a web designer?

1. Set a budget. This means a true, real-number budget! Don't be vague. "As little as possible" is not a budget! Look realistically at your finances and what you can afford. Your website is an investment that will last you for, at the very minimum, several years. Do the math and set an upper limit of what you are prepared to spend, and keep this number in mind while you research. This will help you set realistic, achievable goals of what you can do with your site.

2. Do some serious Web surfing. Yes, as difficult as it is, you simply **MUST** spend several hours surfing the internet (and you can legitimately tell your family it's research!) Keep a notebook next to you as you surf. Go to every author site you can find, and make notes of what appeals to you and what doesn't. Look at colors, graphics, and fonts – but also look at content. What are other authors putting on their websites? Conversely, what sites look unprofessional to you, take too long to load, or have other characteristics that turn you away as a viewer?

3. Sketch out your content. Make a simple, rough draft. I like to use pen and paper at this point, with a page for every page of my site, and the potential content listed on each. You're not designing looks here; you're just planning what will go on which web page. Will your FAQ go on your bio page, or will it have a page of its own? Will your newsletter signup link go on the front page of your site, or will it go on your extras or contest page? Once you've done this, you'll have a rough idea

of how many pages your finished site will be. It can be changed, of course – but at least you have a draft.

4. Big decision – update or not? Most web designers give the option of doing your site updates for you, or setting the site up so you can update yourself. Knowing which you prefer before starting is helpful. If you do your own updates, it requires a little technical savvy, but it also requires a time commitment away from your writing. Having your designer do your updates for you will cost money, though most will charge reasonably if the updates aren't too big. When you start researching designers, you'll get asked this question – so think of your answer before you start.

Whew. That was a lot of work. How do you put it all together? Start with a few designers you're interested in (look at the credits for sites you like, or get recommendations from author friends) and contact them for quotes. You'll get asked approximately how many pages your site will be – and you'll have an answer. You'll get asked how you want to manage updates, and you'll have an answer. You'll likely get asked to supply the addresses of a few sites you like, so the designer can get a sense of your taste and expectations. Yep – you have a list ready.

Finally, if you've asked for quotes from a variety of designers, you'll get a wide range of prices, from the low to the unbelievably high. Most authors find this range of prices bewildering and overwhelming – but not you, because you're armed with a budget, an amount you can stick to.

Choose a designer who suits your tastes, needs, and personality, and offers you the right price, and you're off to the races. Good luck!

Simone Seguin is Web mistress and Treasurer of Toronto Romance Writers and she is working on her latest historical manuscript. She also helps authors make websites at www.romancewriterwebsite.com.

This article appeared in the October 2009 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor.

CAREER

30 Ways to Guarantee a Rejection Letter

By Julie Rowe

1. Misspell the name of the agent or editor.
2. Email the same query letter to 40 agents all at the same time.
3. Use a strange font/really tiny letters/really big letters.
4. Print your query on brightly colored or black paper.
5. Send chocolates/roses/other gifts with your query or manuscript.
6. Sneeze on your query letter or manuscript.
7. Let your cat walk all over your query letter or manuscript.
8. Sprinkle perfume on your query letter or manuscript.
9. Send your partial or full manuscript in a fiber padded envelope.
10. Don't include an SASE.
11. Don't include any of your contact information.
12. Say in your query that your mother/father/priest/best friend loves your book.
13. Claim to be the next Stephanie Meyer/Dan Brown/J. K. Rowling/Nora Roberts.
14. Don't proofread your query letter.
15. Start your query letter with a rhetorical question.
16. Spend most of your query letter explaining the psychology of ALL the characters in your novel.
17. Don't bother to research editors and agents - they're all the same.
18. Lie.
19. Include photographs, bookmarks, prayer cards or anything else you think might be "cute" to send along with your query or manuscript.
20. Bind your manuscript.
21. Don't follow posted submission guidelines for the agency/publisher.
22. Send a faint photocopy of your manuscript.
23. Wait a week or two then fire off a letter/email/phone call asking if the agent/editor has read your manuscript yet.
24. Print your manuscript on both sides of the page.
25. Single space your manuscript.
26. Send a 40 page synopsis.
27. Spend most of your query letter telling the agent/editor how your book will change their life.
28. Put the words: If you want to know how it ends you have to read my book! In your query letter or synopsis.
29. Say you've been rejected by 25 other agents/editors in your query letter.
30. Send your first draft.

This article first appeared in the February issue of the Writer's Saddle, the newsletter of the Calgary (CaRWA) chapter.

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