

Happy Holidays!

Connections

the official newsletter of the Connecticut Romance Writers Association

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

President's Letter

WELL, THE THEME of this note was suggested to be gratitude and good cheer as the holidays approach. Being a writer, it's nice to have a theme given to me so I have a jumping off point...otherwise I'd have to use my imagination.

We all have things to be grateful for, including families, health, happiness, money to live on, etc. I'm very grateful for my career and the ability to be a writer—something not taken lightly. I think we all have a wonderful, natural gift, which we learn to grow and develop as we write more and more.

We're fortunate to be in a profession where we can create whatever we want—and to share that with the world. I'm thankful that I can entertain someone. Not sure if I'd make a good actress, but maybe a decent comedian. But being able to reach thousands through my work seems a heck of a better deal, I don't have to get dressed, and no sweaty palms.

I'm so thankful that I can make someone laugh, and I'm thankful when I get feedback from fans. Once a woman told me she read my books to her thirty-six year old brother during his chemotherapy—and he laughed. I've had a woman tell me she's never read an entire book in her life until she read the third in my series, *One Dead Under the Cuckoo's Nest*. Then she went out and bought all the others. Like many other authors, I've had the fan letters from those who have lost a loved one and found some solace in my books—a temporary escape, if you will. What a fantastic thing to know that I touched someone like that!

The holiday season borders on the magical, and writing our fantasies, hopes, dreams and creations *has* to be magical! So to cover the cheer aspect, I wish you all the happiness and good health in the world. I wish that this holiday season brings more joy to you and yours than ever before. And I wish the Grinch of Rejection would move to the North Pole and leave his address book behind.

Have a wonderful, magical holiday season!

Lori Avocato



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HOLIDAY PARTY: DECEMBER 8th

Festivities & Fun
11 a.m.
All are welcome!

MONTHLY MEETINGS of the CTRWA are held at the Holiday Inn in North Haven. Non-members are welcome to observe a meeting before joining. Meetings begin at 11:00 a.m. with a speaker or workshop at 12:00. PYOW lunch follows at Houlihan's. Take I-91 to exit 12 and bear right at the end of the exit ramp. The Holiday Inn is 2 blocks north on the left.

CALENDAR

DECEMBER 8...CHRISTMAS PARTY

Come for our annual holiday party, fundraising raffle and good cheer. Bring new and used books for our traditional donation to a battered women's shelter...help raise funds so we can donate to Literacy Volunteers of America...bid on lovely gift baskets (an important fundraiser for our chapter)...and see your chums before the holiday crush.

JANUARY 12...LORI AVOCATO ANSWERS ALL

Or at least she'll try, so bring your questions. From the craft of writing to what happens after the call to questions about the business end of writing fiction, Lori will do her best to shed light on any subject you have. Take advantage of Lori's long career in writing and find out what lies ahead for you.

FEBRUARY 9...THE RETURN OF JESSICA SPEART

Back by popular demand, the fascinating and brilliant Jessica Speart will discuss how she took what she knew, faked the rest and ended up with a dazzling career as a fiction writer. The author of the acclaimed Rachel Porter series, Jessica's career spans a stint on *One Life to Live* as an evil nurse, writer for *Omni Magazine*, the *New York Times* and many other publications. Don't miss this one, guys!

CHAPTER NOTES

For Those In Search of Critiques/Feedback/Opinions

A reminder that our meeting room is available to CTRWA members until 6 p.m. each month. Anyone interested in getting some feedback on their WIPs is strongly encouraged to contact other members, exchange excerpts and use the room to discuss your writing.

The Votes Are In!

The 2008 CTRWA board was voted upon and, by a margin of 18-0, is as listed on page 9. Thanks to all our officers for their willingness to donate their time, energy and wisdom to our chapter.

Book Donations for December Meeting

Please bring your used or new books to donate to a local battered women's shelter.

2007 saw the publication of 4 novels, a novella and a short story by CTRWA members. To celebrate, excerpts are scattered throughout the newsletter. In January, look for excerpts from our as-yet published authors.

MEMBER NEWS

Terry Diaz received some very encouraging feedback from an agent, who requested that she make some changes and resubmit. Yee-hah, Terry!...**Lindsay Downs** has been asked to send his paranormal/suspense to Cerridwen...alas, a rejection from Samhain Press for Lindsay...**Lori Avocato** finished her proposal for a humorous essay book that Lori would very much like to run with. Lori also participated in a Connecticut writers panel at Norwalk State University...“Snow Blind” by **Toni Andrews** is part of a 4 ½ star anthology just out called *A Red Hot Christmas*. Congratulations on being part of a great book, Toni! **Cassy Pickard** managed to fill the requests of her guests and came up with a non-fat, non-veal/beef/lamb/lobster/crab/eggplant completely organic Thanksgiving meal... *without killing a single person!* Well done, Cassy! Welcome to new member **Bob Bonitz**, father of five, grandfather of eleven, a whose been writing romantic suspense for a few years. Good to have you with us, Bob! Also attending last month's meeting was **Sylvia Brown**, who writes African-American romance, an incredibly hot market right now. Welcome, Sylvia! As always, it was great to see our Rhode Island member, **Sandra Cutting**, who drove all the way down to spend the afternoon with us. Thanks, Sandra!



She returned her gaze to his eyes. “We’re both adults. We both have needs.”

Suddenly, he realized he didn't have this woman completely figured out.

Canterville: The Dead Speak,
Marie Roy

MEMBER PROFILE: Lori Avocato

Lori is not only CTRWA president, she is our most published author with 15 books under her belt (yet somehow looks so trim...). An Air Force veteran, Lori is perhaps more famous for 96 dates in three months, taking her research above and beyond the call of duty. We salute her!

Lori, you've written 15 books now...how has your writing changed in that time, and where do you see it going now?

Well, I hope the heck my writing has gotten better! If I look back to the earlier books, it has. That's what makes it nice about writing and writing and writing. It's like anything else, we get better and better at it. I've developed my voice, which is humorous, and now I can write any story I want since I've learned my craft. The point is, don't give up. Keep writing and one day it will all work for you.

Anything you'd like to try that you haven't yet (writing, that is)?

Damn. Only to do with writing? Guess I'll cancel my sky-diving course. Okay. In writing. What I've always wanted to do is write a humor book a la the late Erma Bombeck. I love humor about everyday life and that's what she wrote about. Humor has to be universal. Something we can all relate to. As a matter of fact, one of my favorite lines from my Pauline Sokol Series is when she says, "I weighed 10lbs 5 ozs when I was born, but in my defense, the nurses told my mother I looked much thinner." That usually gets a laugh because it's relatable and just absurd enough to be funny. I love the absurd and a dry sense of humor! (what the heck is a wet sense of humor? I'm guessing it comes from alcohol) So, in all honesty, I just finished a humor proposal of a book like this. My agent calls it "Nora Ephron meets the late Erma Bombeck." Works for me.

Did you get any advice when you were first starting out that really made a difference?

Wow. I got so much advice and nowhere along the line was it "you'll never work in this business!" Thank goodness! I received a great deal of advice from RWA members from the first day I joined the CTRWA group back in '96. Geez. That makes me sound so old, but with the advent of Restylne and Botox, I don't look it. What was the advice? There's way too much about the craft of writing and the business aspect to list but what sticks out in my mind is the penname issue. I wanted to call myself Morgan Lane Taylor. I thought it sounded so perfect for a romance writer. But one of our multi-published author's whose last name started with a "W" said not to. She said stick with Avocato cause you'll be shelved up higher in the bookstores. That never would have occurred to me, but she was right. Readers won't get down on their hands and knees to look for my books no matter how much I'd like to think they would.

Aside from the obvious "soulful eyes/wicked smile," why are you so fascinated with Johnny Depp?

Fascinated? You must have me confused with someone else! Okay. Okay. And this is the *truth*. It all started with seeing him in that pirate movie--then subsequently every one he's ever made before and after. You don't see Johnny Depp. You believe he is the character who he portrays. Guess I had the hots for Captain Jack.



If Lori could cast her Pauline Sokol series, she'd have Johnny play the parts of both Goldie, the cross-dressing best friend, and Jagger, the mysterious hunk. Clearly, a visit to the set would be necessary.

What food can't you live without?

Well, the obvious for a woman, any woman and a writer, a romance writer has to be chocolate, but crunchy potatoe chips are a fast second. My favorite? Cape Cod--40% less fat.

Where would you go on your next vacation, assuming time and money weren't an issue?

Normally I'd say Disney World--the happiest place on earth. Actually, I am going there in December. I love it there. No problems. No worries. BUT, since recently returning from Alaska, now I'm in a quandrum. I'd love to go back there and I will someday. The cleanest air on earth and the most impressive, cold, delicious tap water!

What do you want for Christmas?

Oh, how sweet you are! You really shouldn't. Wait, oh, I get it. I suppose I should say peace on earth, but that's a given. I'm hard to buy for cause I really don't need anything and if I do, I get it myself. Very indepent gal am I. I actually love getting presents jsut for the fact of seeing what my kids will get me. It's like going into thier POV about me--which could at times be rather disturbing! However, last year I did get coal in my stocking from my oldest since I didn't put up the Christmas tree. It made it to the back deck and lived there until the season ended. So, I'd say to anyone who feels the need to buy me something, "Surprise me!" (P.S. I do not do written thank you notes).

Harlequin Editor-at-Large at CTRWA Annual Conference

WICKED EXCITING NEWS... Leslie Waigner, Editor at Large at Harlequin's single title division (including HQN, Luna and Mira Books) will be a guest at our annual conference. She is the author of *Writing a Romance Novel for Dummies*, and acclaimed Book Doctor to hundreds of grateful clients.

Leslie will critique a writing sample and meet individually with a limited number of attendees. Leslie has: has almost 30 years of experience editing fiction in every major genre, having placed numerous books on national bestseller lists, including the *New York Times* and *USA Today*. She has edited numerous award-winning novels and has won multiple editorial awards, including the Romance Writers of America Industry Award. More information will be forthcoming, but keep your eyes open for more information. In the meantime, visit Leslie's website at www.lesliewainger-bookdoctor.com.

She could smile, could make herself seem more feminine and approachable, but that was stupid and would undermine her very nature.

Night of the Huntress, Kathryn Smith

Checklist for Revisions

1. The outer goal must be immediately revealed in the first chapter.
2. No cliché characters...everyone has depth, dimension, soul, even if they're meanies.
3. Secondary plot lines reflect main conflict. If your heroine is struggling to get a contractor to finish renovating her kitchen, this is to showcase how she's struggling to take control of her life, right?
4. A *really good reason* that the hero and heroine can't get together right away. What inner insecurity is just too big for the character to overcome in order to risk love? Make sure it's big enough.
5. All the plot lines — romance, work, family, secondary relationships — build in tension throughout the book and resolve satisfactorily before the romance is settled.
6. Delete the "dead zones." What crucial information is given in these dead zones, and how could you impart that information in another, more vibrant way?
7. No description just for the sake of describing. Whether it's how a character's looks or a setting, description needs to happen in the context of the action.
8. Every scene between hero and heroine should escalate the sense of intimacy. Do we learn something new each time they interact? Sure, those snarky fights are fun, but if they don't bring something new to the table, delete them.
9. Make sure every point of view is absolutely essential. Little is worse than everyone having an opinion. Limit your POVs to a few critical characters, and make sure their POV shows a dimension that just can't be given by someone else.
10. Consistent voice in every single scene, every single page.

"Never tell anyone where you've gone. Flush all your heroin and any other drugs you have hanging around down the toilet, gas up your car and leave. You understand me?"

Beg for Mercy, Toni Andrews

Enter CTRWA's Contest for Unpublished Writers!

ONCE AGAIN, CTRWA will be hosting a contests for unpublished writers. Every single entry will be critiqued, and winners will be sent to an editor at a major publishing house. Members are strongly encouraged to submit and help judge (though obviously, you wouldn't judge in the category you entered).

We take this contest very seriously — winners have gone on to have full manuscripts requested from the judging editors, and we take pride in the thorough, thoughtful and encouraging critiques we provide.

The entry fee is \$30 for authors not yet published in the category entered. Categories are series contemporary, single title, romantic suspense, historical and paranormal. Send the first thirty pages and an optional one-page synopsis.

We also have a CTRWA-member only contest: Best First Meeting Between Hero and Heroine. The top prize is \$30, and the winner will be decided by editors and agents, announced at our annual Ignite Your Muse conference.

For an entry form and more information, email Marie Roy at marie-roy@sbcglobal.net or Lori Avocato, CTRWA president: LAvocato@cox.net

We hope you'll enter and volunteer to judge. So much can be learned by reading the best efforts of other writers!



A Reader's Guide: Choosing a Book to Read

By Hilda Lindner Knepp



THIS MONTH I'M discussing what readers like and don't like and how they choose what to read, along with a few insights into current favorite authors.

For those of you who don't already know, I work in a medium-sized library in one of the fastest growing counties in southern Ohio. We still have a rural element to our county, yet we are close to an urban area so I think I can safely speculate that our patrons' tastes reflect a good percentage of the reading public in the U.S.

First, here are some of the more popular authors whose books cross our circulation desk at regular intervals: James Patterson, Nora Roberts (J.D. Robb), Karen Kingsbury, Jan Karon, Janet Evanovich, Linda Howard, Sandra Brown, Alexander McCall Smith, Debbie Macomber, Michael Connelly, Tim LaHaye and John Grisham.

Based on this group, our typical patron wants to be romanced by an alpha male minister who makes her laugh and inspires her while she is being stalked by a serial killer. (This is actually the plot for my current W.I.P.)

My next observation may burst a few bubbles. A goodly number of patrons judge a book by its cover. I've actually asked this question of our library users and most of them say yes, they are attracted first by a cover if the author is unfamiliar to them. After the cover passes their test, they read the blurb on the front flap or back of the book.

However, if the author is one of their favorites, patrons don't care what the cover looks like. They trust the author to write what they want to read.

I have two suggestions, based upon these observations. Publishers need to spend less on the covers of books by their best-selling authors and pass that savings on to the bookish consumer. Also, publishers need to allow new authors more

input into their cover design. After all, the author knows best the premise of her book and is intimate with the physical aspects of her characters. Involving the new author is, in my opinion, an option that produces a cover that is truer to the story and therefore more honestly represented to the buyer/reader. At the very least, if characters are portrayed on the cover, they're more likely to have the right hair color.

And that brings me to titles. Patrons pay much more attention to titles than you may think. Generally, if a title is bad and the author is unfamiliar, a patron will not pick up a book, no matter how pretty the cover. I've had patrons remark "who thinks up these titles?" or "I can't read that book. The title is too embarrassing."

Examples of bad titles: *Lint*, *The Body in the Cornflakes*, *Smile Now Die Later*

Examples of embarrassing titles: *The Quickie*, *Hard Eight*, *Do Me* (no, I didn't make this one up)

Example of a really great title: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*

Last, and this may really surprise you, most patrons won't keep reading a favorite author indefinitely if the author lets them down. On a similar note, patrons notice if an author becomes lazy and writes the same story with every book. While it's probably true every story has been written at least once, readers want original thoughts, characters, or approaches, even with a series....unless you write sexy. If you write sexy and do it well, forget everything I've just said.

After finishing her day job as a librarian, Hilda stalks the corridors of her own odd mind in search of words for the romances she writes. She remains confident publication is in her future, no doubt posthumously.

This article first appeared in the November 2007 issue of UnderCover, the newsletter of the Ohio Valley Romance Writers.

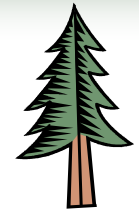
CTRWA Authors on Their Covers

I'm very happy with the covers, and I am especially pleased with the continuity theme being used in the covers and the titles, all of which have the word "Mercy" in them. — Toni Andrews

The colors of my books have help sell them from day one. I've had shocking pink, iridescent orange and lime green to name a few. I actually asked for the green since I thought it would look good with the other colors. The cartoon character hot nurse, with the fantastic legs(based on mine!) has also been a topic of conversation. — Lori Avocato

I feel especially with e-pubs...we have a chance give our input and let the artist get more of a feel for the storyline, the covers usually will end up reflecting a truer image of the story. — Marie Roy

I love my covers! I think the dogs are very engaging and friendly, and so are my books. I'm not quite so happy with the titles, which are a little generic (and not mine, by the way). But overall, yes, I've had fan letters from people who say they bought the book based on the cover and were really happy with what they got.— Kristan Higgins



Secondary Characters

By Susan Heino

AT THE RECENT Central Ohio Fiction Writers conference Susan Schmock enlightened us with a detailed look at the many uses of secondary characters. Serving practically every purpose from comedy relief to set dressing, these busy little secondary characters are pure gold for us as writers. Ms. Schmock walked us through the long list of their varied and valuable uses.

First she discussed the purposes for secondary characters, listing ten possibilities:

1. Aid the hero/heroine in achieving their story goal
2. Help define the role of hero/heroine in the story
3. Provide obstacles that prevent the hero/heroine from reaching their goal
4. Prove the hero/heroine are worthy of reaching the story goal
5. Force character growth of the hero/heroine
6. Provide contrast and comparison with the hero/heroine-physically, emotionally and mentally
7. Provide drama-conflict doesn't happen in a vacuum
8. Add dimension to the story with texture and variety
9. Expand the story's theme
10. Develop subplots that add dimension to the main plot

To do all this, the secondary characters must take on specific roles. Throughout the course of the novel, a secondary character may take on one or more of these roles, depending on what's needed. These various roles are broken into seven categories.

One of the most common roles is that of Sidekick/Confidante. This is generally a friend; sometimes a long-time pal, sometimes an instant bond. This character is present to act as sounding board and companion. A familiar example from literature (and Hollywood) is Samwise Gamgee in *Lord of the Rings*.

Another frequently used role is that of Comic Relief. This character is usually present to shine a new light on the situation, and is not always strictly comic. Often this character fulfills another role, as well. A good example of this is Ron Weasley from the *Harry Potter* series.

We also commonly see characters in the Competitor/Rival role. Sometimes this character is an actual enemy, but often he simply represents the voice of reason that adds to the hero's growth and arc. A familiar Competitor/Rival would be Jack Sparrow from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies. (No, he's not the hero-he's got no arc. Got a lot of other things going for him, though, so that makes up for it.)

Also, we see the role of Obstacle commonly used by secondary characters. This person is the constant thorn in the flesh, or perhaps just a momentary interruption or distraction.

A character in this role can be an enemy or someone as sympathetic as an overly-concerned grandmother. Whatever, this character brings something to the story that our hero or heroine must overcome. *Star Wars'* Han Solo is a character frequently in the role of Obstacle.

Informant/Mentor is a well-known role. It's almost a must for every hero to have one. This character acts as the catalyst to get our hero to move forward and make decisions. Examples are plentiful; Yoda, Prof. Dumbledore, and even Friar Tuck.

We also see secondary characters playing Cameo roles. These are the dependents, protégés, and expendable victims. Often these characters do not have a major part in our story, but they are necessary to meet the ten purposes above.

Last but not least, there is the often forgotten role of Setting. Sometimes a character is present merely to set the stage, and sometimes the setting itself becomes a secondary character. Never forget that the environment acts on our hero and heroine and will play an important role in the story arc.

Now, most secondary characters will play more than one role. There are different character levels. A Level Four character would be a main character, such as hero or heroine. Level Three would be a secondary character with two main roles, such as that of Sidekick as well as Obstacle. A Level One character would probably fulfill several small roles throughout the story. Our Cameo characters would be down in the basement somewhere.

The more roles your characters play the more valuable they are to your story. The more impact they have on your hero and heroine, the more impact they'll have on your reader. That's what we want, isn't it? Memorable characters create memorable stories.

So invest in your characters and use them at all the different levels. Don't just drop new characters in here and there when you can make full use of the ones you've got, giving them more depth and more value to your story. That, after all, is the main purpose of these Secondary Characters.

When Susan Heino isn't writing comedies or the occasional musical, Susan leads a dull life wrangling 2 kids, 1 husband, 20 cats, a couple of noisy sheep, a really big dog, and a fuzzy goat who likes car rides.

This article first appeared in the October 2007 issue of "Write From The Heart," the newsletter of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers.

Writing a Powerful First Chapter

by Susan Gaspar

"SEND ME THE first three chapters." Conference goers hear these words, and once they've congratulated themselves for a pitch well done, reality sets in. The first three chapters. The first chance to prove your skill and talent. The first chance to hook your readers. How is your opening? Is your first chapter editor and agent ready? Dare to write a powerful chapter one, one so interesting and gripping the reader reads on...

Take a close look at your Chapter one. Is it bogged down with backstory? Did you lay the groundwork of your story with the history of the character or setting? Get rid of it. Biography is boring. In chapter one, you should hit the ground running. Grab your readers' attention with action. Action? Action doesn't necessary have to be physical action. A shoot-'em-up scene is interesting, but delve deeper. Action can also be a dilemma or predicament, challenge, or decision. And put this in line one, or on the first page if possible. Grip that reader! Have your character interacting with at least one other person. Show them in action and keep the dialogue sharp and witty. Your plot should be solid enough to have momentum to last. Do you have enough sustenance to your character to have believable goals, challenges and motivations to last beyond the first chapter?

Give your main character a worthy adversary. The sea? A whale? The environment? Or something even deeper. Have your character face their fears. Put them in a vulnerable situation in which the opponent has a good chance to defeat our hero or heroine. The reader will want to root for the "good" guys and read on to find out how (or if) the character will overcome.

Think of a good movie, book, or play you've read recently. Does the main character have an interesting companion, best friend, or partner? Have someone whom your main character can talk to, someone to share experiences with. In *Step-by-Step Fiction*, Sam Carver suggests that this "sidekick" should possess contrasting character traits from the main character. Remember all those stories with the goofy friend, the comic relief character on the side? How about the instructor and the trainee? Or an older character paired with a younger one?

Real characters are believable ones. We all have commonalities that are inherent to human life. We all have a desire to live. We all have a birthplace, parents, aspirations, faults, and good qualities. Make your characters human and relatable. Give your character a personality, an attitude. Through action, show what makes your character tick. Emotions are universal. Hate, fear, shock, rage, love. There are hundreds of ways to tie emotion into the action of the chapter.

Begin the romance right away. Has your hero loved his whole life and has yet to find the woman of his dreams? Is your heroine in a rocky relationship? How about sexual tension between a man and woman meeting for the first time? In *HeartSong*, my hero and heroine reunite after many years. By putting the love interest into your first chapter, you've already sparked interest. Think of the possibilities, the countless scenarios to bring them together in the end. But of course, after facing complications and insurmountable obstacles to that love. What obstacles? Read on to find out...

Subplots. When you tie in a subplot into the first few pages, the reader will get a glimpse into the treat they are in for by reading the next page and the next. There is the promise that the remainder of the story will be interesting.

By following these rules, incorporating each point into the first chapter (or first three) and you will soon hear those eager editors and agents requesting: "Please send me the full manuscript."

Susan Gaspar is a member of the New England Chapter of RWA and is currently serving as Treasurer for the Maine Chapter. Writing for four years, she is an RWA PRO who has completed five manuscripts.

This article first appeared in the December 2007 issue of Mainely Romance, the newsletter of the Maine chapter of RWA.



Okay, I'd be the first to admit I was no Mario Andretti, and, okay again, I admitted to closing my eyes when driving but only if something bad was about to happen.

Dead on Arrival, Lori Avocato

The View from the Agent's Chair: Conference Behavior

by Pattie Steele-Perkins

IN HER BOOK *The Literary Life*, Carolyn See suggests that authors hang out in the reception areas of publishers until they find an opportunity to sneak into an editor's office. This will most likely get you arrested...the upside of which is you'll have plenty of time to write.

Conferences are a great way to get the creative juices flowing and an opportunity to meet editors and agents. Making a good impression on an editor or agent at a conference can be the first step to getting them to read your manuscript.

If your chapter assigns you to pick up an editor or agent at the airport, make sure you know their flight number and be on time. Being on time shows you'll deliver your manuscript on time. Exchange cell phone numbers in case there is a problem. Have a sign with their name on it. Do not bring your dog, cat or boa constrictor. The editor or agent could be allergic. Feel free to discuss your manuscript on the way to the hotel, but keep your eyes on the road.

Explaining you need to sell this book so you can divorce your husband or solve you debt issues is inappropriate.

If you have the opportunity to have lunch at the conference with an editor or agent, feel free to discuss what you write. If they say they aren't really looking for your type of work, don't argue with them. Give the other authors at the table a chance to pitch their work.

If at the next conference, you have sold your book and made the *New York Times* list, don't go up to the editor and say, "I told you so!" Maybe they couldn't buy what you wrote the year before. Editors move frequently. The editor who passed on you the first time may be your editor next week.

Use your appointment to discuss your manuscript and your writing goals, not your personal life. Explaining you need to sell this book so you can divorce your husband or solve you debt issues is inappropriate.

If an editor or agent wants to see your work, send it to them after the conference. Do not plan to give the editor or agent your manuscript at the conference. RWA legend has it that an author passed a manuscript under the stall to an editor/agent. Doing that today may get you arrested.

Making a conscious effort to be wherever an editor or agent is at a conference is not considered assertive but STALKING! I've had an author wait outside my hotel room most of the day while I was in meetings. *Creepy* is not the

impression you are trying to create.

Offer editors and agents assistance by giving them directions to where they will be speaking or where they can find the nearest Starbucks. They'll be your friends for life!

The most common place to meet at a conference is in the lobby or bar area. While it may seem they are having a casual conversation, editors and agents are working. If they are talking with authors or each other, do not interrupt their conversation. Only join them if you are asked to do so.

Respect editors' and agents' private time. At one conference, my husband and I were having dinner when an author came up to our table, knelt down beside me and started pitching her book. Many of us like to use the gym while at a conference. If you happen to be on the next treadmill or swimming in the next lane, ignore us. We'll appreciate it when we meet you at our appointment.

Always be a professional. Dress for a conference is business casual even if the conference is at a beachfront resort. Be careful not to be over-served at the bar. Lambasting an editor or agent or announcing all the deal points of your last contract to everyone who has gathered there is unprofessional. Remember that this is where editors and agents generally meet.

Remember that finishing your manuscript, making contacts at a conference may be the next step to getting published.

Pattie Steele-Perkins has spent her entire professional career guiding and nurturing creative talent — first as a creative director of a major television production house and for the past 15 years as a literary agent, where negotiating equitable contracts is equally as important as developing a career path that meets the creative needs of the author.

This article was first published in the November 2007 issue of The Jasmine, the newsletter of the Lowcountry Chapter Romance Writers.

"What kind of guy are you looking for, Maggie?"

"Someone who's not married to Holy Mother Church," I say. "Let's start with the basics. No priests, no married men, no alcoholics, drug addicts or prison inmates."

Jonah laughs. "Well, crap, Maggie, that rules out everyone I know."

Catch of the Day, Kristan Higgins

Congratulations to the CTRWA members who saw publication in 2007!

Toni Andrews

Beg for Mercy (MIRA)
Snow Blind
(part of *A Red Hot New Year*, Avon)

Lori Avocato

Dead on Arrival (Avon)

Kristan Higgins

Catch of the Day (HQN)

Marie Roy

Appetite for Lust (Dark Eden Press)
Canterville: The Dead Speak (Loose ID)

Kathryn Smith

Taken in the Night (Avon)

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Pointless But Fun

What was the worst present your sweetheart ever gave you?

My ex was always buying me "train sets." You know, like when Daddy buys a gift for his kid so he can play with it himself? In my ex's case, it was sexy lingerie and various other clothing that would have been more appropriate on a hooker. A younger, thinner hooker. — Toni Andrews

From a romantic standpoint, I'd have to say my worst gift was the toolbox Santa Hubby put under the Christmas tree for me one year. From a practical standpoint, it does come in handy. — Kristan Higgins

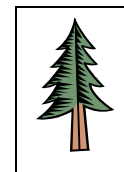
I can't recall any my wife gave me, but one I gave her fits the bill. I was working with a guy who was a trapper. He and I went to all the fur shops and picked out a very high quality fur piece. Unfortunately, I had no idea what was in style. My wife could barely keep from turning up her nose when I gave it to her. Needless to say, it was never worn. — Bob Bonitz

I will always remember an olive green sweater, longish with a matching belt that my late husband gave me for Christmas. I am never one to say to someone "I don't like it." I really, really tried wearing that sweater. For one thing the color made ME look greenish and it itched like crazy no matter what I wore beneath it. — Marie Roy



Scrooge was better than his word.
He did it all, and infinitely more;
and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he
was a second father. He became
as good a friend, as good a
master, and as good a man as the
good old city knew.

A Christmas Carol
by Charles Dickens



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