

# CONNECTIONS

the newsletter of the Connecticut Romance Writers Association  
Romance Writers of America, Region One, Chapter One

## President's Letter

AS I'M WRITING this, I just got off a ship after a four-day cruise from Miami to Cozumel and back. I had a great time seeing all of my old friends from the Florida Romance Writers. In between workshops, we lounged on the deck, danced in the clubs, gambled in the casino and sang some truly horrendous Karaoke.

And, I wrote.

I'm now staying at a friend's apartment in Miami, where there are wonderful walking trails, a nice pool, and some terrific bars, restaurants and shopping within walking distance.

And, I'm writing.

Next week, I'm going to visit an old critique partner in a different part of the state, for a combination of visiting and plotting. She's planning some boating and hanging out at beachfront bars.

And, I plan to write.

The following weekend, I'm heading over to the Naples/Ft. Meyers area to give a workshop for the South Florida Romance Writers. They're taking me to dinner the night before and a party the night after, and I have plans to watch at least part of the Superbowl on Sunday before heading back.

And, I'm sure I'll write there, too.

I'm sure you've been somewhere on vacation—some little beach town or mountain hamlet—and thought to yourself, "What a great place! I'll bet it would be fun to live here. But what would I do for a living?" Well, I have a suggestion...

I know that not all of you plan to make writing your full time career, but there's still a point to my story. You can always write. You can write anywhere. You can write from a hospital bed, on an airplane, or from the back of a motor home. You can write when you're snowed in or, or while you're sitting on a sunny beach. You can write in the car while your kid's at soccer practice, in the dentist's waiting room, or during your fifteen minute coffee break at work.

You can write when you're broke. It's free.

You can write when no one has bought your last book. They can reject you, but they can't stop you from writing.

What a precious gift it is to have found this vocation—this thing we can do anywhere, anytime, on our own terms. We don't need much: a computer, an alpha-smart, a pen, a crayon, or even a voice recorder. A few minutes a day.

It's absolutely, positively the best job in the world.

~ Toni



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Letter .....	1
Calendar .....	2
Member News .....	2
Member Profile .....	3
Life Building .....	4
Forest or Trees?.....	5
PC or Mac .....	6
Writing the Classic Spin-Off.....	7
Board Members.....	8
Pointless but Fun.....	8
Member Releases this Month.....	8

**NEXT MEETING:**  
**February 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Kristan Higgins**

**12-Step Program for  
Revisions**

**See page 2 for details.**

## CTRWA MEETING SCHEDULE

Critique Group: 9:30  
General Meeting: 10:30  
Speaker: 11:00

Ask a Published Author (APA)  
Craft Corner  
**LUNCH**  
(pay your own way)

## CALENDAR

February 13<sup>th</sup>...Wondering just what to do once you finish that manuscript? Not sure exactly what "revisions" mean? Fear not! Your intrepid newsletter editor and pal Kristan Higgins will go over her 12-step program for revising your manuscript to help bring it up to market-ready levels.

Ask a Published Author...Our own Kate Smith will take questions after the meeting and/or talk briefly about the hero's journey. E-mail Kate questions at [katewriter@gmail.com](mailto:katewriter@gmail.com).

February 13<sup>th</sup>...Book signing Borders in Farmington CT on Feb 13, beginning at 2 pm. Attending authors include our own Jessica Andersen, Stella Price, Isabelle Santiago, Cat Johnson, Tilly Greene, Bianca D'Arc and Emily Bryan.

February 27<sup>th</sup>...Romance Revealed at the Fairfield Public Library. Join Kristan, Toni and Sarah Wendell, the fearless founder of SmartBitchesTrashyBooks.com, and a few other romance writers as they discuss what makes a romance novel great and why readers love that happily ever after.

March 13<sup>th</sup>...Taxes and the Writer. Which expenses can you claim as a writer? Can you deduct some of your home expenses? Car? Conferences? Even before you're published, there are quite a few things you should know. Join our speaker, Bob Verna, CPA, and learn how to make the most of the investment you make on writing.

## CHAPTER NEWS

It's **membership renewal** time! \$30 for the year and well worth it, of course! PayPal donations are preferred...go to our website and click on Membership. Thank you!

**Contest Update**...By now, of COURSE, you've sent in your judged entries...but if not, the deadline is February 1<sup>st</sup>. If you have any issues, please e-mail Cassy or Bob at [cdpickard@mac.com](mailto:cdpickard@mac.com) or [bonitz99@yahoo.com](mailto:bonitz99@yahoo.com). Finalists will be notified by February 15<sup>th</sup>!

**Conference Update**...CTRWA's Connecticut FictionFest 2010 is scheduled for April 24<sup>th</sup>, and registration is open! For more information, visit [www.ctrwa.org](http://www.ctrwa.org) and click on FictionFest. How can you help? Toni is dying to tell you!

We need raffle donations at the conference! Please hit up (er...ask politely) your local businesses and restaurants to donate whatever they can.

## MEMBER NEWS

New member **Jennifer Fusco** and veteran **Lauri Brett** became PRO members of RWA, entitling them to the wealth of information and support of that group...**Toni Andrews** flies south for the Florida RWA Cruise with Your Muse conference (sweet!) and an all-day workshop at the Southwest Florida Romance Writers. We'll be living vicariously, Toni!... **Karen Pinco** finally typed "THE END." 100K words await revision.

...**Shaunee Cole's** website is up and running! [www.shauneecole.com](http://www.shauneecole.com) ...**Cassy Pickard** has finished the synopsis and general outline for her next book, tentatively named, "Pay the Price." As with the last one, this is a mystery/suspense story and is set, again, in Italy...**Rhonda Strand** wrote a synopsis and the outline (at least for the first five chapters) for her new book, *The Ultimate Quest*, an action-adventure suspense romance. She'll be travelling to Tennessee for her grandson's fourth birthday. Very nice! ...**Lindsay Downs** finished his first full-length manuscript! He also has a free e-book, *A Special English Road*, available on his website, [www.lindsaydowns.com](http://www.lindsaydowns.com)... **Paula Sharon** is working with Barbara Gerwien, Jennifer Fusco and Carmen Hines in a spin-off critique group. Paula says, "They are all wonderful critique partners and I'm getting so much out of their feedback. Thanks to CTRWA for creating such a supportive and loving environment, and for giving us writers so many opportunities to improve and grow." Hooray! **Marie Roy** is clearing out her house...she and the dog survived the refinishing of the floors. Hang in there, Marie!...**Kate Smith's** *When Seducing a Duke* sold to a Dutch publisher, and the first three books in the *Brotherhood of Blood* will be published in a special hard cover edition in Spain. Very nice!...**Joy Smith** is heading to the British Virgin Islands (sigh!) and wondering if she should stop revising her current WIP and start something else...**Jess Andersen** will be doing a signing (see Calendar) at Borders in Farmington CT on Feb 13, beginning at 2 pm...And as you all probably know by now, *The Next Best Thing* by **Kristan Higgins** is out, has received great reviews and even hit Bookscan's list for bestselling romances its first week! Boo-yah! Kristan is guest-blogging till her fingertips are bloody and would love to see a familiar name; dates and sites are on her website, [www.kristanhiggins.com](http://www.kristanhiggins.com)

## Member of the Month...Jennifer I.

*The ever-helpful, always friendly Jennifer joined our chapter less than a year ago and was immediately put to work! Always efficient and smiling, Jen loves muscular werewolves and breakfast at any time of day. She writes unconventional heroes and likes a spicy read.*

Tell us about what you're working on now.

I get bored easily so there's a bunch: An elementary school teacher thinks she can fix a war vet; a relief aid worker encounters a burnt out rock star in New Orleans; a young woman gets involved with a client's father — very inappropriate but I love flawed characters — they're so much more relatable.

What's the next major step you need to take in your writing?

Query letters!! My goal is 20 before my birthday in February.

What have been some of the highs of your romance writing thus far?

Honestly, joining CTRWA has been a highlight - you're my peeps! Also, knocking out a romance in 36 hrs (no sleep) after returning home from New Orleans 10 yrs ago, was eye-opening, an epiphany. Anyway, real life sets in and work and yadda yadda yadda. Getting laid off in 2008 was stressful but a blessing in disguise — I've never been happier than when I spend my days in la-la land and fortunately, I'm surrounded by really supportive people — hubby being #1.

What are some good books you've read lately?

*Just One of the Guys* by somebody named Kristan Higgins - ever heard of her? Sweet, funny & I cried at the end! Also, *Nigella Bites* by Nigella Lawson. I'd challenge anybody to READ her cookbooks and not drool all over themselves.

Favorite authors and why?

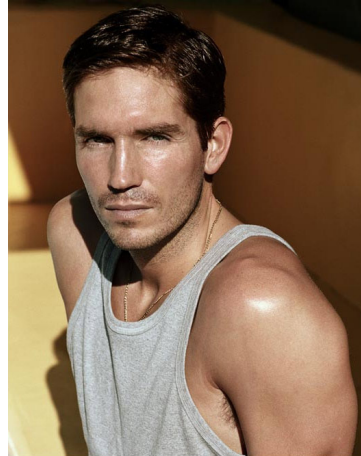
Too many to choose, I think there's room for all of us.

Favorite restaurant?

Again, too many to choose! For upscale, Olives @ the W Hotel in NYC; Pot au Pho for yummy Vietnamese in New Haven; Tony Sparagnas back in upstate NY for old school Italian - the homemade hats with broccoli & garlic are a favorite and you can just imagine Tony Soprano & Paulie Walnuts holding court next to you.

If you could cast your current hero or heroine, who'd get the call?

Since I'm working on several: Jim Caviezel for my Iraq vet, John Slattery for my kinky lawyer and Michael Phelps' abs for my landscaper. Now, I've got to create a story for Gerard Butler - he'll just love me! Hehehe! (*Editor's Note: It felt unfair to pick just one of Jennifer's men for the photo, so...*)



### Quote from Jen's WIP

I continue to bawl, even after the ranting stops as abruptly as it began. Eric looks at me, stupefied, and I want to smack him. "Who are you? My God, I come here because I want to be with you and you treat me like yesterday's garbage!"

— From *My American Hero*

## Life Building in 2010

By Paula Sharon, CTRWA member

AS WRITERS, WE pride ourselves on world building. We create stories and characters and give them a place to live and fall in love. We give them families and friends, a job, a quest—an entire world in which their story is told and we can witness their transformation. In this journey called the writing process, I have learned that I can build a world out of imagination, perseverance and passion. So what better way to approach building my own life?

A new year, a new decade, a new story, why not renew my commitment to creating the best life possible for myself? In my stories, I strive to balance narrative and dialogue, vivid description with catchy prose. In life, I strive to balance work and play, exercise with rest. Making healthy choices and seeking harmony in relationships are my daily quests. My goal is to create balance within the flow of life as I do in my stories. I will motivate myself to rise early, committing myself to exercise before I enjoy my reward of writing. Internal and external conflict will naturally threaten my bliss. But eating nutritious meals to feed my body, and creating an uncluttered, sacred space for my mind and soul to work their magic are the ways I plan to succeed.

Thankfully, inside my mind lies an enormous tool box--the tools of the trade, so to speak. There are many compartments that house all that I need for every part of my life. I even have an entire arsenal dedicated solely to the healer in me. And another that is slowly filling with tools to hone my craft of writing. Although I am continually adding to the tool box, I want never to forget the things that have worked well so far. That which I do well will continue to serve me; that which no longer serves me, I will let go. The tools I gain in writing--as in life--will help me build the best of both worlds.

To practice keeping it simple, I will rely on the basics. Breathe, laugh, sing, love--have an attitude of gratitude every day. Take small steps. Keep my eyes up, always focused on what lies ahead, riding the storms until the next turning point when transformation from identity to essence becomes clear. All the while, being still--appreciating the process and all it has to offer. Learning to show more, tell less, avoiding dangling modifiers while painting a unique landscape with my voice. I want that voice to come to life upon the page, waging a war of words, finding only the best and brightest to articulate my thoughts. Like a heroine in a romance book, I will be a warrior. Like all warriors, I know that the battle is fought and won in the mind. And so I choose my story; build my worlds, live through my characters and them through me. Here's to our journey together. May we all find balance and harmony on our quest for happily ever after.

## A Few Words About Pacing

by Margaret Moore



THERE ARE TWO basic components of a novel: the story events (activities, i.e., what physically happens) and everything else, including your characters' reactions, description, dialogue, back-story. The pace of your story is determined by the ratio between the activity and all the other elements.

If your book is fast-paced, the ratio will be toward more story events (more activity, less thinking or talking about it). If your pace is slower, that means you spend more time on emotions, descriptions, etc. Like so much of writing, however, this ratio up to the individual author, and is very much a part of their style and "voice," which means there is no one ratio correct for all writers.

However, the one thing a writer doesn't want the work to be is "boring." If you're being told your pace is too slow, that generally means the reader got bored waiting for something else to happen. So take a look at the time between your story events, and see what's going on -- or not-- in those pages.

Also examine your story events. Are they interesting, exciting, unique or different? How is that scene or event moving the story forward? If it's not, if it's just a pretty description, think hard about whether you need it. You might -- there is room in the world for "lush descriptions." Just do think about it.

Consider every scene. Is it really necessary? Is it only doing one thing? A scene should move the story forward by adding and intensifying the drama (and by that, I mean the conflicts), it should reveal character and it should also add to the world of your story. If it's only doing one thing, make it do more.

Beware the static scene -- "When the actor sits down, the play sits down." Although dialogue is, by its nature, more fast-paced (unless some boring character is delivering a lecture), try to avoid the "talking head" scene.

We don't need to know everything that happens to your characters. We only need to see the important things. Another bump in the smooth road of your story can be transitions, getting from Point A to Point B, in either time or space. If nothing important happens during that transition, you don't need to spend much story time on it. A short phrase like "Three days later," will do.

USA Today bestselling author Margaret Moore's latest release is *THE WELSH LORD'S MISTRESS*, a Harlequin Historical Undone available at eHarlequin. Visit Margaret at [www.margaretmoore.com](http://www.margaretmoore.com). This article appeared in the January 2010 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers.

## The Forest or the Trees: Knowing When to Cry 'Uncle'

by Cheryl Mansfield

LAST FALL, I was fortunate enough to receive one of the Cheryl Anne Porter scholarships. Even more fortunate, I used the money for three separate writing related events, one of which I'd like to share with you now.

I probably don't need to tell you this, but if you're a writer for any length of time you will get stuck. It's an inevitable part of the process. Part of the craziness that makes you wonder why you ever chose to become a writer in the first place. We accept this and learn to adapt. Sometimes we wait it out. Often finding that by focusing on something unrelated our conscious mind will kick in and show us the way we should go. We try new techniques, write in new places, or use new methods, like writing long hand when we're used to a computer. We take long baths, talk to friends and read how-to books.

Eventually, something will spark an "ah-ha" moment. That glorious moment when you say "I know what's wrong and better yet, I know how to fix it."

Ah, those are wondrous moments indeed. But what happens when those moments don't come? Or worse yet, they do happen but their offered solutions are no better than where you started?

I know all about this first hand. Back in 2003 a character started speaking to me in that way they have, demanding their story is told. Excited, I met with my plot group where we concocted a wonderful adventure for the girl who became known as Gypsy James.

Thrilled with my newly outlined plot I began to write. And then I wrote some more only to realize that the story wasn't working. I tweaked and putzed and still nothing. Skip ahead to 2009 where Gypsy was now in her sixth reincarnation. Over the years she's been a Young Adult heroine, a Tween heroine, and a Middle Grade heroine. She's been a good girl, and a trouble maker. And she's attempted to solve so many mysteries her middle name could be Nancy Drew.

Gypsy has even finaled in contests and won praise from editors and agents. Still, something was very wrong. With all of these attempts came disastrous abandoned manuscripts. Nothing seemed to work.

In the meantime, I worked on many other projects. Some completed, some not. But all the while, Gypsy still talked to me. She'd keep me up at night with her chatter of plot ideas, and filling in details about her life. Telling me "this or that" is what I needed to do. In short, she'd become an old friend. I couldn't abandon her. Actually, I don't think she'd ever allow it.

So early in 2009 I tried one more time. I warned her, this was it, make it or break it time. And yet, once again when I got to the partial stage the project was a wreck.

Feedback was always the same. Love your voice, love the character, but the plot isn't working. So I'd go back to my study of plot how to books, take online classes and generally drive my plot buds crazy.

Gypsy seemed to mock me and say things like "Hey it's not my fault." "I'm a great character" "You could sell my story if you just wrote it right." It's not easy when your characters taunt you. But along with the taunting the one thing Gypsy always seemed to say was "Don't give up on me."

So even after all those failed attempts, I just knew in my heart I had to try one more time. Problem was I didn't know what to do.

By this point I was standing in the forest looking at way too many trees. I knew my issue wasn't Gypsy, but rather plot. I had tried so many things that I had no idea where to go next.

So sometimes, after all else fails (or if you're smart – before all else fails) you have to cry uncle and call in help.

My help came in the form of Rachel Hauck, one of the therapists with MyBookTherapy.com. After Rachel spoke at a TARA meeting a group of us adjourned to Barnes and Noble for coffee, friendship and more book talk. There, I witnessed Rachel in action. Around the table as various people talked about their work Rachel instinctively seemed to know the right questions to ask. In depth questions that made people really think and go deeper. I have to say I was very impressed and in awe.

At the end of the day I realized that someone like her might be the answer to my "What to do with Gypsy" question. I researched Rachel's website and within two days had made the decision to hire her to help me with Gypsy because I could tell, Rachel would see the forest and not the trees.

So how exactly can an independent editor help you? Many offer critiquing services, overview or in depth critiques of partials and synopsis. Some do full manuscripts. Some, like MyBookTherapy.com go further and help you take your premise and turn it into an outline.

After review of my materials, Rachel worked with me to find the core of my story. An event that I had used as a throw away, just to get my story started became the central element. Plot elements that I'd rushed through would now have time to develop. Rachel helped me layout the backbone of my story, from start to finish, finding the real character arc and thereby showing me what I'd been doing wrong all along. In essence she helped me sort out my grouping of scenes and ideas – the trees- so that I now understood the big picture – the forest.

*continued next page*

## PC or Mac?

What a writer should consider before switching  
by Vanessa Kier

OKAY, SO YOU'VE decided it's time for a new computer. You're currently using a PC but you've heard that the Mac is the computers for cool, creative people. Since you're a writer, you're thinking of switching. Should you?

Maybe. Maybe not. The Mac is not perfect and PCs are not evil.

Before you switch, make a list of all the tasks you perform in the course of your writing career. Then write down what programs you're currently using to complete those tasks. Check to see if the same or an equivalent program exists for the Mac. Make certain all the features you like and need are present in the Mac version. If not, you do have the option to run Windows on a Mac.

Here are a few of the key elements to consider before switching:

1. Does your writing software exist for the Mac? Will you easily be able to convert your current manuscript to Mac format? Will the Mac program be able to save your manuscript in a format appropriate for submission?

2. E-mail. If you're using Outlook you'll need to transfer over your data. To save time, I suggest buying one of the inexpensive mail transfer programs to move the contents of Outlook over to your new computer. Or let the folks at the Apple store do this for you. The Mac comes with Mail, which looks and operates differently than Outlook. For example, Mail is just e-mail. Your contacts and calendar get stored in separate programs, so make certain if you transfer the data over yourself that the transfer program can move all three types of data from Outlook. If you don't like Mail, research ahead of time what mail/contact/calendar programs exist for the Mac. If you're not using Outlook, research how to set up your Mac to work with your current program.

3. Do you send out mass mailings that require mail merge from a database or spreadsheet? How will this work on a Mac? If you send mass e-mails, make certain your mailing list transfers over and is compatible with the e-mail program you choose for your Mac.

4. Do you use a program that has hundreds of clip art images for creating book signing flyers, newsletters or thank-you cards? Does a version exist for the Mac?

5. How will you handle updating your website from a Mac?

6. Do you need to be able to track your writing income/expenses separately from your other income/expenses? Can you make do with a personal finance software or do you need a business software? Will you be able to download data directly from your financial institutions into a Mac-based program?

7. What about tax time? Do you use a tax preparation software that is also available on a Mac?

Forest or Trees, *continued from previous page*

After my conference with Rachel there was still plenty of work to do before and while I started writing, but the good thing was I now had a solid foundation to build upon. One that I knew was solid because Gypsy quit keeping me up at night. And as of this writing, I am at the 50% mark with the remaining scenes plotted out. Oh, Gypsy still talks to me, it's just now on the page as we sit down to write each day. I think she's finally happy that I am "writing the story right".

Could I have eventually gotten here myself? I don't think so. As I've said before I was too lost in the trees of my story. It took a professional to see my big picture and show me the way out. Will I cry uncle again and call in professional help? You bet, but next time I plan to do it before I find myself lost in the trees.

*Cheryl Mansfield has been a member of RWA and the Tampa Area Romance Authors writing romance and mystery since 1996. She is currently focusing on the middle grade market. Even though she's often gotten stuck along the way, she now knows when to cry uncle.*

*This article first appeared in the January 2010 issue of The Scarlett Letter, the newsletter of the Tampa Area Romance Authors (TARA)*

8. Are you adaptable? There's a steep learning curve when switching from a PC to a Mac. Something as simple as the keyboard shortcuts being different can take a while to adjust to. If your day job uses PCs and you'll be using a Mac at home, or vice versa, get ready to have moments of brain freeze when you can't remember how to complete the simplest of tasks on the computer you're working on. Four months after I switched I still screw up all the time.

9. Are you patient? Setting up any new computer takes time and patience. Don't switch if you're in a hurry or expect everything to work perfectly from the get go. One option is to take both your PC and your Mac into an Apple store and let them transfer all the data for you.

10. Will your current hardware— keyboard, printer, scanner, etc.— work with a Mac? Check the manufacturer's website for drivers compatible with Mac OS X v 10.6 Snow Leopard.

11. Are you willing to pay the cost? Yes, a Mac still costs more than a PC. And you'll probably need to buy new software on top of that.

*continued next page*



## Working with a Classic Spin-Off

by Rebecca Clayburn-Wright

A QUICK SCAN of the bookshelves in most any part of the fiction section of the bookstore will turn up a surprising array of books based on or partially based on classic works of fiction. This is not a new phenomenon. "Wide Sargasso Sea" by Jean Rhys in 1966 took up the story of the mad wife in the attic from Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre." In this book we learn the story of what brought that tragic character to her fate in "Jane Eyre." Well, we learn Rhys' version of what might have happened. Being a fan of both books I think Rhys blended her tale seamlessly in with Bronte's story.

Today it seems that more and more authors in several genres from romance to mystery are mining the classic literature selections to draw inspiration. The recent blockbuster musical "Wicked" was derived from Gregory Maguire's story of the character of the Wicked Witch of the West from L. Frank Baum's classic "Wizard of Oz." There are a variety of other spin-offs lining the shelves. In the mystery genre there is Mr. and Mrs. Darcy Mystery Series by Carrie Bebris. There is a very romantic spin off of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" called "Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife" from Linda Berdoll and from the horror genre we get, "Mina: the Dracula Story Continues" from Elaine Bergstrom, a much more erotic tale that I believe Mr. Stoker ever envisioned. The list goes on.

So what is the attraction to writing or rewriting classic characters into new and exciting stories? For me it is that when I finished the book, I really didn't want the characters to end. Another reason is using a classic piece of fiction may make it easier to write in a multi-genre format. In these trying times, appealing to as many readers as possible is a great goal. Also, for those of us that love the research part of writing, researching a classic and its time period can be an added excitement to the writing itself. Basing a new story on a classic work also pushes us out of our "comfort zone" so to speak. We are no longer the total masters of our own universe; we now have to learn to work within someone else's vision of the world.

I know there are probably some out there that say "fan fiction" is the same as these potential spin-offs I am describing, but no, there is a difference to consider. Unlike fan fiction, which is more a continuation the original author's work and in their particular voice, classic spin offs tend to use only the characters and perhaps the setting but makes the stories more completely independent of the original work. The work itself tends to be less dependent on "canon" or what is contained only in the original work. For examples of the plethora of fan fiction out there, just Google "Harry Potter fan fiction" and you will be rewarded with hundreds of sites dedicated to fans writing their versions of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. On the other hand, spin-offs may only take one character from a classic piece and place them in a modern setting and see where that takes them. Using classic characters also challenges the writer to stay within the "world" of the original work while at the same time

create something new and unique.

If you are considering writing a spin-off or continuation story, what are a few of the things to consider before getting started?

1. Copyright - you will be much safer staying with truly classic pieces of work that fall in the "public domain" sphere rather than more current works. Using another writer's characters can be illegal if the story is still under copyright.

2. What genre is the original work and what genre do you envision your work falling into?

Some of the books mentioned above cross genre or step completely away from the original work's genre. The Mr. and Mrs. Darcy series is a great example of that. "Pride and Prejudice" is now considered in the romance or literature genre while the spin-off is traditional cozy mystery.

3. Know the original classic work extremely well. Even if you do not intend to pick up where it ended but are just "borrowing" the characters and setting you have to know what you are "borrowing". This is part of the world-building step of writing. Yes, there is a world already established but if you are taking it in a different direction then you still need it to be a believable direction in relationship to the classic work itself.

So, if you are stuck for a new story idea or just want to try something new, check out the classic literature section at your local bookstore and see if you find any character that just won't end for you, and see what new and exciting twists and turns you can take the classic story through.

*This article first appeared in the July/August/September 2009 issue of Romancing the Prairie, newsletter of Prairie Hearts RWA.*

PC or Mac, *continued from previous page*

If you answered yes to most of the above, before you take the plunge find a friend with a Mac and try it out. Go into an Apple store and ask questions. I highly recommend making an appointment with an Apple Personal Shopper. My Shopper answered my questions for an hour and a half!

If you decide to switch to a Mac, congratulations! Welcome to the world of Mac. If not, I commend you for recognizing that what you have works best for you.

*Vanessa Kier is a writer of romantic thrillers currently seeking publication. She loves new technology the way other women love shoes. Visit her at [www.vanessakier.com](http://www.vanessakier.com). This article first appeared in the January 2010 edition of Heart of the Bay, San Francisco Bay Area RWA.*

## Pointless But Fun

### What was your best Valentine as a kid?

Heart-shaped box of chocolates. — Joy Smith

My mother always left a heart-shaped box of chocolates out for my sister and me every Valentine's day morning. — Karen Pinco

My dad used to send me flowers from "A Secret Admirer." I always knew who it was (I have pictures to prove that only a father would send flowers to teenaged me), but it didn't matter. He did that every year, right up until he died. Dear old Dad! — Kristan Higgins

I don't remember Valentines I got as a kid, but Steve once gave me a card with a half-naked guy on it, only he'd glued a picture of his own head over the model's. I still have that somewhere. That's my favorite. — Kate Smith

I was probably in the first or second grade, and our homeroom teacher had made a huge fuss over us making cards for each other, for a big exchange on V-day ... except the day before, I came down with either strep throat or chicken pox (can't remember which, but it was an automatic 'no school for you!' disease). Seeing how bummed I was over missing out on the card exchange, my mom kept me out of daycare and stayed home with me. We baked a cake, and even though ours was usually a pretty minimalist, low-sugar household, she let me decorate it with as much gooey, hot pink icing as I wanted, then stick every kind of candy heart known to mankind all over it. The resulting pink monstrosity was both fugly and inedible (atomic fireball hearts + sugar icing = ewwww), but whenever I think of Valentine's Day, that's the first and best childhood memory that comes to mind :) — Jessica Andersen



## MEMBER RELEASES IN FEBRUARY

*The Next Best Thing* by Kristan Higgins

*Menopause Murders: Hostage* by Eleanor S. Sullo, Wings ePress, available at [www.wings-press.com](http://www.wings-press.com), Amazon or Fictionwise. Congratulations, Ellie, and well deserved! More on Ellie's books next month...



Annie: You're not going to get mushy on me, are you?

Jack: Maybe. I might.

Annie: I hope not, 'cause you know, relationships that start under intense circumstances, they never last.

From *Speed*

*If there is every anything you'd like to discuss with or suggest to the board, our e-mails are listed for a reason! Don't forget that Bob Bonitz, our member-at-large, is available as a liaison between members and the board if you'd like to discuss something privately and have him bring it to the board's attention.*

### CTRWA Board Members

**Toni Andrews, President**  
toni@toniandrews.com

**Shaunee Cole,**  
VP/Programming Director  
shaunee@comcast.com

**Karen Pinco, Secretary/  
Membership Director**  
kpinco@gmail.com

**Jennifer Iszkiewicz, Publicity Director**  
jmp3274@comcast.net

**Janet Messina, Treasurer**  
janmessina@comcast.net

**Kristan Higgins, Media Director**  
k.higgins@snet.net

**Bob Bonitz, Member-at-Large**  
bonitz99@yahoo.com

*Connections is published monthly by CTRWA. Nothing may be reproduced without giving credit to CTRWA and the author*