

connections

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



letter from the board

Hello, gang. As the second-longest serving member of the CTRWA board, I asked President Toni Andrews if I could write this month's letter.

As you may be aware, it's been a tumultuous summer for our chapter. In August, the board voted to remove Janet Messina as Treasurer; the Appeals Committee voted to uphold that decision. Janet was the longest-serving board member and a person whom many members hold in great affection. The reasons for her removal and all documentation related to the process are available for your review, as are all board documents. If any member has a question, please don't hesitate to contact a board member.

Regardless of the proceedings, it is my hope that Janet's legacy as Treasurer will be as the person who warmly greeted members at our monthly meetings, conferences and special workshops and who spent countless hours devoted to the chapter and its members, always doing what she felt was in the best interest of the chapter.

When I first joined CTRWA in February 2007, we had 12 members, 6 of whom were on the board. At current count, we have 100! While we've lost the ability to conduct an entire meeting over lunch, we've gained so much more—writers at every level, new people joining each month, top-notch programs and special events. Members have formed crit groups and blogs. We cross-promote and share resources. We have subsets for PAN authors, PRO authors, self-published authors. We frequently poll the chapter, asking how we can help members get to the next level. Our reputation as a dynamic, supportive chapter is well known throughout the country, and I couldn't be prouder to be a member.

But duties change and evolve, and what worked with a membership of twelve doesn't any more. It's our duty as a board to be meticulous in our governance, exacting with our documentation and absolutely diligent to make sure we never risk our status as Chapter One, Region One, in the largest writers' organization in the world. The board's goal is—and always will be—to support our members as they pursue a professional career in romance writing.

We have a wonderful chapter filled with people who are eager, willing, intelligent, enthusiastic and always ready to help. Recently, when my husband asked (somewhat begrudgingly) why I came to CTRWA meetings so faithfully, my answer was simple. "Because those guys are my people. I need them." This group is my writing family, and I hope you all feel—or will soon feel—the same way.

Cheer, gang.

Kristan Higgins
Media Director, CTRWA

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next meeting: Sept. 17th

Mia Marlowe
The art of writing hooks
throughout your novel

See page 2 for more details

meeting schedule

crit group 9:30
general meeting 11:00
lunch 12:00
speaker 1:00
bonus session after the speaker

Meetings are held at the
Holiday Inn, Washington Ave.,
North Haven, CT

calendar

September 2: CTRWA Board Meeting, 11 a.m., Durham Public Library. All members always welcome.

September 17: Mia Marlowe: My Husband Married a Hooker! (Peppering your prose with reading hooks). "I couldn't put it down!" That's the accolade every writer longs to hear. The trick to writing a page turner is adding hooks in all the right places, not just at the end of chapters. Learn to tease your reader into one more page, one more chapter and they'll run out the next morning to buy one more of your books!

September Bonus Session: Countdown to Launch with Kristan Higgins. Based on the wisdom of Little Bird Publicity, Kim Castillo of Author's Best Friend, the mighty resources of Harlequin's publicity department, as well as her own background in PR, Kristan has devised a highly complicated yet deviously simple plan to shout your book release from the rooftops while still remaining somewhat likable. For PAN, PRO, indie and self-published authors alike, as well as those who are just curious about this other side of writer's life.

October 8th: Legendary Agent Maria Carvainis: What It Take to Succeed—and Last—in Publishing. Sandra Brown. Cindy Gerard. Mary Balogh. Laura Wright. PJ Parrish. Kristan Higgins. Maria's clients regularly land on the New York Times and USA TODAY lists, and she has a reputation for plucking writers from obscurity and making them into stars. Many of her clients have never had another agent. Learn what Maria thinks it takes to make a lasting mark in publishing, and how the right agent can transform and nurture a career.

Advice from the PROs...Anna Malicka

After committing all possible sins in my first manuscript, I find it very helpful to think through the entire story and come up with a complete basic plot, A-Z. It helps me stay focused on where the story is supposed to be going instead of meandering in the dark. The plot can be very basic, but it provides a framework. I add and change details and subplots as I go.

The Margaritas!

December 10, 2011, Mill on the River in South Windsor. CTRWA takes the bold step of celebrating the truth about writing over lunch, beverages and a few solid laughs.

The Rules: Using the honor system, writers will choose those not-so-golden nuggets from their manuscripts. One-two sentences only, please! Send your entry to k.higgins@snet.net for your chance to win in one of the following categories. Please state in the email which category for which you'd like to be considered. Remember, you can only use your own work! One entry per person per category; enter as many categories as you like.

1. Best use of tell, don't show
2. Purplest Prose
3. Meanest line from a rejection
4. Most flamboyant character name
5. Worst opening line
6. Most baffling comment from an agent, editor or critique partner
7. Most entertaining typo
8. Most creative procrastination technique used under guise of research
9. Most use of adverbs
10. Longest run on sentence
11. Bulwer-Litton Award...Okay, this one you get to make up just for fun; doesn't have to be from an actual work-in-progress
12. Dirtiest Sentence
13. Biggest deus ex machina (when something really, really convenient just pops into the character's life, thus solving all woes)
14. Most technically difficult sex scene.
15. Most gratuitous use of small child and/or adorable animal
16. Most gratuitous use of glitter, glue gun, stickers or anything from Michael's Craft Store



Are you bad enough to win a Marga-RITA? Only one way to find out, gang!

Member of the month...Katy Lee



Tell us about what you're working on now. I am currently revising my second manuscript, *Baffled*. This is one of the Maggie Award finalists for the Inspirational category, and I am hoping for a full request

for it, so I'm shining it up real nice. Christina DePalo is a fallen Broadway dancer with a mission to save her friend from making the same mistakes she once made. Doctor Lucca Gregory has a mission of his own, and it doesn't include a fallen Broadway dancer. When Christina's friend lands herself a roll in a twisted magic show, Chris thinks this Off-Broadway production is just a little *off*, but Lucca knows exactly what lurks behind the theatre company's façade and is here to expose it for what it really is. All Chris wanted was to save her friend some heartache. Now she has to save her from a whole lot more. But can Lucca prove to Chris that her friend isn't the only one worth saving?

What's the next major step you need to take in your writing? Find an agent I can trust and who believes in my writing. I have been told my stories don't fit the inspirational market, but I say, why not? Not every Christian wants to read about the Amish and mail-order brides in 19th century Colorado. (Not that there's anything wrong with those) But my stories touch on issues that real people face. They are love stories with hope woven into them.

What's the hardest part of the writing process for you? Finding time. I work as a Children's Ministry Director for my church and I home educate my children. And don't even get me started on how much time my husband requires. I should mention he works from, so I get the pleasure of his company 24/7! Yay! So in order to write, I need to keep a tight schedule of my days and put in writing time as a task.

Any quirks or special talents you'd like to share? I'll let you in on my quirky writing secret. When I read my work, I speak with a British accent. (And just so you know, I don't write regencies.) I think it might have to do with my affinity to Jane Austen. Perhaps if I speak like her, my stories will sound just as romantic. My heroes definitely sound a lot hunkier, at least in my mind. As for talents, I love to knit. Here's a picture of my sock monkey family!

Have you been given any great advice on writing fiction, or do you have any to impart? This past year at CTRWA has flooded me with advice I could impart with, but there's not enough space, so I will just say this: Humble yourself. Don't

think you know everything. Be open and willing to always learn something new.

Who are some of your favorite authors and why? Catherine Anderson – Great lady! Great voice! Great men...er....uh...I mean characters!

Best CT restaurant in your humble opinion? I live up on the northern border, so I go into MA for a lot of my meals, so to be fair, I will say, any of the Max's. Great food, but if you have kids, they do a really good job with their kids' meals.

If you could cast your current hero or heroine, who'd get the call? Casting call! Someone get me Christian Bale and Gwyneth Paltrow on the phone! They would make a great Lucca and Chris.



From Katy's current work-in-progress

They didn't move from their positions. They stood still, foreheads touching; eyes locked. Chris licked her lips, needing to say something in this final moment, just not sure what.

"Lucca," she whispered.

"I know."

"You do?" Her eyebrows rose; her heart hoped.

"Yes." He swallowed deep. "At another place and time, I would have loved you."

member news

Joy Smith FINALLY wrote the ending to her romantic suspense, *Green Fire*. She has enrolled in an editing class offered at www.savvyauthors.com, which she hopes will make the second draft less excruciating....**Paula Sharon**, writing as PJ Sharon, is pleased to announce that her debut contemporary young adult novel, *HEAVEN IS FOR HEROES*, will be released September 24th. The book will be available wherever e-books are sold or on Paula's web site at www.pjsharon.com. Print copies will also be available either on her website or through print on demand from Amazon, B&N, Smashwords or Createspace. She'll also have copies available at October's CTRWA's monthly meeting where she will be happy to sign them. Check out her book trailer on You Tube @ [pjsharon64](https://www.youtube.com/pjsharon64)....

Deb Glazier writes on Tuesday for Nights of Passion Blog, so pop in and visit nightsofpassion.wordpress.com**Susan Hanniford Crowley** has finished her new 95,000 word vampire/supernatural romance novel. While at the Authors After Dark conference, she met with an agent and two editors. All expressed interest in seeing her novel when complete. She is in the middle of editing. Susan is also doing an online mini workshop called "Put Heart into Your Blog" on Sat., Aug. 27, on Savvy Authors Summer Symposium. The workshop is free but registration is required....**Bill Clark** had the pleasure of introducing Kristan Higgins, her husband, McIrish, and Julia Antoine to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I. McIrish was especially interested in the vintage 1893 water closet....

Bob (RC) Bonitz has sold two books in very short order. A *BLANKET FOR HER HEART* just sold quite suddenly and *A LITTLE BIT OF BLACKMAIL* is scheduled for release Nov. 4. He's now discovering the joys of edit deadlines....**Allan Cooper** continues to send his short stories to magazines who might take a chance on an unknown writer (unknown here; well known in Siberia and Antarctica). Submissions have gone to *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, and *Liberty* magazines. Haven't gotten any replies yet....**Julie Griffin**, a freelance paranormal photographer, will be presenting her program "Ghostly Photographs, ghost stories you can see with your own eyes." on Tuesday September 27th at 7pm at the Meriden CT public library. This paranormal investigator will be telling the stories behind her very real "ghost" photographs. Visit the libraries web page at www.meridenlibrary.org for more details and directions. Julie will also be presenting in

October at libraries in Cromwell, New Haven, and Westerly RI. Dates and times will be listed next month.... **Patti Cavaliere** recently returned from a week with Joyce Maynard on Star Island called *Write By The Sea*. She was with some of the most intelligent, interesting women she'd met and found it to be a very enlightening week.... **Anna Malicka** just came back from a little trip to Virginia where she delivered her daughter to her college. Apparently, they drove near the epicenter of the earthquake, but had no idea until they reached her school that anything was going on....

Christine Wunch (writing as Casey Wyatt) completed her draft of *The Undead Space Initiative*. While she waits for feedback from her critique partners and beta readers, she's plotting her next novel - *Devil's Advocate*. To read an excerpt of *USI*, visit Casey at her blog - caseywyatt.com....**Kristan Higgins** will be heading for Virginia later this month for two events: a special workshop about romance at the Newport News Public Library, and the Harlequin Sales Conference. She feels a few y'all's coming on and plans to eat apple pie with a slab of cheddar cheese on the side to make sure she remains a Yankee.

2011 ctrwa board

Toni Andrews, President
toni@toniandrews.com

Jennifer Fusco
VP/Programming Director
jenniferafusco@gmail.com

Jennifer Iszkewicz
Membership Director
jmp3274@gmail.net

Tracy Costa, Publicity Director
tragent@hotmail.com

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

Members at Large
Bob Bonitz
bonitz99@yahoo.com

Barbara Gerwien
gerwienb@yahoo.com

Suing, Begging & Slander: An Alternate Approach to Self Promotion

by Summer Devon, aka Kate Rothwell, CTRWA Member

WHEN LIFE HANDS lemons, sue life's butt, or beg. Or something.

Okay let's say no one's buying your books. In this case, no one's buying mine. Powder of Love sold two copies its first month out. To those two people, thank you! To the rest of you...but hey! How can you make this into a unique selling opportunity?

Emphasize the exclusive nature of this book. It's a small club! It's a chance to discover virgin territory! Be one of the few, the proud, the readers of this book.

Talk about the rocketing growth of future sales. So in the first month two people bought your book. Next month, make sure you've bullied at least four people into buying. Buy the bloody thing yourself if you have to. Your campaign for that month is all about how "my book is taking off!" and "Word of mouth -- means twice the sales!"

Try for the pathetic. Here's your patter: "My dog needs eye surgery and I can't afford it. Hey, you, passing by. Stop and pay attention to wretched me. I want you to pretend that I'm sitting on a street corner with a tin full of change and some really old apples on a tray in front of me. I'm dressed in filthy rags and my hair is a mess. Only instead of the tin of change, it's a pay-pal account. And instead of old apples, it's this book I wrote. And instead of filthy rages I'm in sweatpants and a fleece that says I WRITE SMUT. The thing about the hair is true in real life, by the way."

Lie, a lot. "EVERYONE LOVES THIS BOOK! Here, read these fabulous reviews ~~my mother wrote~~ that so many people have posted!" The only people who really know your sales are pathetic are you and your publisher. And neither of you want to look like loozers so hey. Why not!

Threaten. You could try the "if you don't buy this book I AM NEVER WRITING ANOTHER WORD" but I do not recommend this. I'm certain that if you aren't lying about that threat, you'll end up NEVER WRITING ANOTHER WORD. Maybe you should go for another sort of threat. Hey, they have a career too. You could visit their blog/webpage "Nice place you got here. I'd hate to see anything happen to its code." Right. This one might need some work.

Slander and insult. This is a surprisingly popular option for promo--ridicule the people you want to read your book. They'll be outraged, write about what a jerk YOU are and VOILA! Your name is all over the internet.

Talk about books you love and maybe other authors

will do the same. Actually this one might really work. Useful advice? I'm slipping. But I can put a bad spin on it, don't worry. Because when A writes a glowing review of B's book and then B writes a review of A's book ... well it doesn't look quite right. Even if it is utterly true and you do love each other's work. Life is frustrating like that.

Summer Devon writes spicy historicals with rocketing sales and fantastic buzz. For more information about her books, visit. www.summerdevon.com.

The Ten Commandments of Mediocre Writing

By Gina "Storm" Grant

AND THE DISCIPLE of the Mightiest of the Muses did descend from the heavens (or possibly Mount Olympus, Asgard, New York, or the Scottish Highlands, depending upon thy novel's pantheon or setting) and did present two tablets (an Apple iPad and a Blackberry Playbook), saying unto those who toil at keyboards, with pencils, or upon smartphones, that from this day forward thou shalt treat the following commandments as divine inspiration and follow these precepts to the letter.

One. Thou shalt begin all novels with thy heroine awakening and dwelling upon her life and her lack of future prospects. Thou shalt create great reader empathy if she be aware of her loneliness.

Two. Thy heroine shall, at the earliest opportunity, reflect at length upon her own countenance in any available reflective surface. Her mouth shall be too generous, her nose too cute and upturned, her long hair too wavy, her eyes too cat-like, her cheekbones too defined, her breasts too large and her waist too small, her hips too curvy and her legs too long. She shall remark despairingly upon these shortcomings in soft, breathy tones, or a low, husky voice.

Three. Thy heroine needeth only one brief first glance at thy hero, and no matter how uncouth or cruel he may seem, she shall see past his flaws and knoweth that he can be saved by the love of a good woman and also get for her a really big diamond engagement ring.

Four. Thy heroine shall have a quirky best friend, either gay (if he be male) or overweight (if she be female), but never both.

continued on page 7

Effective Pacing: Rapid Fire is Not Always Best

by Winnie Griggs

PACING IS THE rhythm and momentum, the ebb and flow of your story. It's the speed your reader moves through the story as well as the speed with which your story events unfold. Pacing is not measured in actions or events, but in the emotional investment your reader has in the unfolding of your story.

Well-orchestrated pacing strikes a balance between heart-pounding action scenes and the more thoughtful, cerebral scenes. That's right - even though we've all heard that the faster the pace the better, that today's reader has a shorter attention span, a TV-and-internet-induced thirst for rapid bursts of information and entertainment, that doesn't mean that you need or even want breakneck, adrenaline-pumping action in every scene.

In fact, there are certain scenes, even in the quickest paced stories, that have an enormous emotional payout for your reader and these are scenes you definitely do NOT want to hurry through, that you want to make sure you give depth and texture and sensory richness to.

In a romance these would include, among others:

The First meeting/inciting incident

The First Kiss

The first love scene (if your book includes one)

The realization of being in love (for each the hero and the heroine)

The revelation of the major backstory/motivating event/'big' secret that informs your hero/heroine

The black moment

The happily ever after resolution

These are the scenes that readers anticipate and look forward to. They are the heart and soul of your book, the emotional lynchpins that, when done well, can propel a book to `keeper shelf' status. Make certain you take the time to bathe your reader in whatever emotions are applicable - jubilation, hope, hedonistic sizzle, despair, poignancy, rage, a deep and abiding commitment, etc.

Since these are the scenes your reader looks forward to, she won't mind you slowing the pace a bit here. In fact, be careful not to rush through them, or worse yet, transition over them all together. However, this doesn't mean you want to drag things out unbearably. Take the time to focus on the emotions your characters are feeling, and the details that enhance these emotions, as well as those you want your reader to

feel (not always the same), and then move on. To do this you will need to draw on every tool at your disposal, including craft, instinct, finesse, and your writer's "inner ear."

As for the mechanics, there are a number of ways to control the pacing of your scenes and ultimately your story.

1. You can control the pace through the inclusion or exclusion of detail. Passages that are lush with imagery and description slow the reader down as she tries to visualize and appreciate the picture you are painting. On the other hand, in a high voltage action scene, your detail should be stark and delivered in staccato bursts.

2. Another method is through the use of dialog and the way in which that dialog is delivered. The energy and emotion of the conversation will seep into the reader, subconsciously adding to the tension or calmness of the pace.

3. And then, of course, there is the manipulation of story time itself. To move the story along, compress all those days and weeks when nothing of significance happens into a short transition. Conversely, take your big payoff scenes, such as the ones we discussed above, and really focus in on them.

Just remember, pacing is all about piquing and holding your reader's interest, about making it a keen `page turning' experience for her. As the author, it's your job to manipulate pace and story time in order to keep the reader engaged.

Winnie Griggs has written 12 books for three different lines and is currently hard at work on her 13th. A small town girl herself, Winnie's books focus on family and community and matters of faith.

Visit her website www.winniegriggs.com.

This article first appeared in the July 2011 issue of DARA News, the monthly newsletter of Dallas Area Romance Authors



Secondary Characters: It Takes More than Shrimp to Make Gumbo

by Karen Hall

WHEN I STARTED writing, my secondary characters were in serious danger of taking over the story. They were always funnier and more entertaining than the Hero/Heroine. They were the foils, the prods, the whips. I haven't killed anyone in my books as some multi-published authors have suggested you might need to do, but you can't let these people overwhelm your story.

One way to keep your SC's in place is to know exactly what is going to happen between your H/H. What do they want? Why? Why can't they have it? Once you have this nailed, then defining the SC's gets easier. Of course, we've all seen how goals can change mid-stream. Be prepared to have the SC's change along with the H/H, but keep them in a minor key for now. Your H/H's goals are often fueled by someone or something threatening a person they love. Think of all the novels where the heroine vows to keep her younger sister from marrying a man of less than stellar reputation-and we all know what happens then, right? Fighting off this entity (even if they wind up in each others' arms) shows us the best and sometimes worst aspects of our H/H, making them not only human, but endearing and memorable.

SC's can also drive the story forward. Without Jane and Bingley (and Lydia and Wickham too) there would have been nothing for Lizzie and Darcy to do. (Yes, they'd probably have argued anyway but it would be a very short book.)

Secondary characters can help layer the story, give it a richer dimension. Their behavior may change or challenge the H/H's perception of the world or each other. It may change their goals completely. Point out that their current course of action is going to lead them away from what they need (and what we know they want).

In one of my favorite novels, *Csardas* (by Diane Pearson, a minor character is slowly introduced this lovely epic spanning thirty years in twentieth century Hungary. His introduction is subtle, but you know you will see him again. He continues to appear and becomes a driving force that leads to a very satisfying ending. And never controls the story one minute before he steps up to be a central character.

Secondary characters are like making a good gumbo-the spices, while necessary, should never overwhelm the main event. So, Bon, Appetit and Happy Writing!

This article first appeared in the August 2011 issue of Smoke Signals, newsletter for the Smoky Mountain Romance Writers.

The Ten Commandments, continued from page 5

Five. Should thy heroine awaken to discover a strange man in her dimly lit bedroom, she shall not be so frightened that she does not admire his manly form which shall cause a stirring of lust in her loins.

Six. Should thy heroine arrive at her home to find the door ajar, she shall not use her cell phone to summon the police and await their arrival. Nay, she shall enter the premises unarmed save for the words, "Hello? Is anybody there?" because all malefactors are compelled by those magic words to announce, "Run! 'Tis I, thy evil stalker ex, come to kill thee."

Seven. Should thy heroine be fleeing for her life and such flight taketh her into a room she hath not seen before, even the most fleeting glance shall allow her to describe the room's decor in detail, especially the richness of the drapes.

Eight. Thou shalt not suffer any noun to go unmodified, nor shall any verb want for an adverb. Wherever possible, thou shalt modify adjectives with the adverbs "very" or "extremely".

Nine. Thou shalt describe persons, places, and other items in great detail, though they have no true bearing upon thy story as they shall be deemed to addeth colour. Also, thou shalt insert large portions of backstory into thy opening chapter and include ALL research within thy novel.

Ten. Thou shalt consider every word, even unto the smallest, to be sacred and steel thyself against the temptation to edit that may be held out to thee by false prophets of grammar, character motivation, and story structure. And one final bonus commandment: Immediately upon completion of thy first draft, thou shalt prepare an email addressed "Dear Agent," and send it far and wide throughout the land with thy wondrous novel attached.

Gina "Storm" Grant is a writer of short and long tales, her work spanning both genres and genders. Her stories offer titillation and merriment, and in a few cases, horror. In the last few years, she's published with several small print and electronic presses.

This article first appeared in the August 2011 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers.





Smart and athletic seventeen year-old Jordie Dunn has a bright future planned, but when tragedy turns her life upside down, she begins to question not only her future, but the facts surrounding her brother's death in Iraq. The military's account that his best friend and fellow Marine, Alex Cooper, is at fault, is a notion she refuses to believe.

With no memory of the incident that killed his best friend, nineteen year-old Alex Cooper returns home, shattered and facing a difficult recovery. Determined to go it alone, he pushes Jordie away. No longer the freckle-faced tom-boy who followed him and Levi around as a kid, she has become a beautiful and stubborn young woman who believes in him far more than he deserves.

RWA Perseverance Fund

RWA membership a little steep? Check out the RWA National perseverance fund at the RWA website, Members Only section.

http://www.rwa.org/cs/member_resources/scholarships_and_funds/perseverance_fund.

Erin Bolton knows her former foster sister is a sorceress and a witch, but she wants nothing to do with that world. Fear dictates her life, panic attacks disable her, and only alcohol gives her the freedom she craves. The day before her twenty first birthday, a tall, dark, and terrifying vampire, Marcelo, turns Erin's world upside down. He convinces her that he was sent to escort her to the safety of the Underworld, where her sister is waiting. But she wonders, who will keep her safe from him? www.leiashaw.com.



Tallahassee: You got taken hostage by a 12-year-old?

Columbus: Well, girls mature faster than boys. She's way ahead of where I was at that age.

— *Zombieland*

