

HEART TO HEART



LAURA BRADFORD

Interviewed by Tessa Radley



Laura Bradford of the Bradford Literary Agency is recognized as one of the most exciting and talented literary agents in North America, and she specializes in representing romance authors! She has recently sold her clients' books to publishing houses such as Harlequin, Dorchester, Kensington and Berkley, and best of all, she's still looking for new writers to join her client list. Tessa Radley talks to Laura about her work as an agent, what she is specifically looking for, and her trip to New Zealand to attend our conference in August!

Q: Laura, what made you decide to become an agent? Was it something you'd always wanted to do?

Growing up, I had actually wanted to be a doctor and I was originally a pre-med major in college. About midway through I switched to English which had always been my biggest love. When I graduated, to be honest, I didn't have a career plan picked out. I had considered going into publishing, but I didn't want to move to New York. I didn't really know about other, non-editing options if I was interested in that field. I loathed my first job out of college and after about 6 months I thought I would give writing a chance. I joined RWA and at the very first meeting I attended, the guest speaker was an agent. I didn't even know such a job existed but when I learned what it was about, I pretty much fell in love with the idea of being an agent. I found out how to become an agent (start as an intern and work your way up), I did some research, found some agencies hiring interns and applied at several. I got an internship about 500 miles away from where I was living at the time, near where I had grown up, so I moved and took the unpaid job. I supported myself by working as a bookstore manager and spent all my extra time reading slush and putting in intern hours. Eventually I convinced them to hire me as an assistant and then they began letting me acquire. I really wanted to work with romance and the agency was not open to that genre, so I left to form my own agency after about 2 years. This has been my dream job since I discovered such a career even existed.

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To subscribe to the RWNZ online loop, which is dedicated to the support of its writers by and for members, send a blank email to NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or contact giovanna@xtra.co.nz for information about the loop.

Conference buzz is already beginning, with many members booking rooms and flights for August. It's hard not to get excited with the prospect of so many wonderful guest speakers hitting Auckland! This issue Tessa Radley interviews agent, Laura Bradford, and we have details hot off the press of what has been confirmed for the conference so far.

We also have great non-conference reading in this issue of Heart to Heart. Regular contributor Kylie Griffin interviews best-selling author Rebecca York and debut author Helene Young, and Joanne Graves is full of information in part II of her series on "Making this Year Your Writing Year."

We are always appreciative of articles submitted by both published and non-published members, so if you would like to contribute to one of our future issues, please email Soraya.

Until next time.

Soraya & Suzanne

RWNZ & RWAustralia Critique Partner Scheme

To join RWNZ's critique partner register, run jointly with RWAustralia, go to <http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/members/critique-partner-register.php>. Fill out the online application form and send to applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com. Alternatively, email applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com and ask for an application form.

PRESIDENT ABBY



Fabulous news!! RWNZ has lined up two extraordinary speakers for *An Affair to Remember*, our 20th anniversary conference, which will be held at Rydges Hotel in downtown Auckland, August 20-22.

First, let me introduce you to our Friday workshop speaker. For many of you, he will in fact need no introduction:

Christopher Vogler, author of *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, and one of Hollywood's top story consultants (recent movie projects include *Hancock*, *I Am Legend*, Helen Hunt's *Then She Found Me*, and others). He's been a hero of mine and many other writers for years, so the chance to learn from him in a live environment is a dream come true!

Vogler is most famous for his work based around American scholar Joseph Campbell's concept of the Hero's Journey, which provides a common framework for pretty much all successful commercial novels and movies. Vogler teaches the Hero's Journey, as his website puts it, as "creative principles, a set of reliable building blocks for constructing stories, a set of tools for troubleshooting story problems." Just what we all need!

Christopher Vogler will teach an all-day Hero's Journey workshop for us on Friday August 20, and will also give a one-hour talk during the weekend conference. We're expecting the Friday workshop to be popular with writers across all genres, not just romance, and for the sake of our budget, we'll be promoting the event to other writer organizations (at a higher price than RWNZ members will pay). However, we'll be making sure that our members have the chance to register first for this amazing workshop.

The next issue of *Heart to Heart* will include an interview with the man himself.

But wait...there's more! We're also delighted to announce that **literary agent Laura Bradford** will attend our conference, where she will give talks and workshops, as well as hearing pitches over the course of the three days. Bradford Literary Agency is in the publishing industry news often, with reports of deals Laura has negotiated for her clients across a broad range of romance-related genres, including historical, romantic suspense, paranormal, category, contemporary, and erotic. She also represents urban fantasy, women's fiction, mystery, thrillers, and young adult fiction.

I won't tell you more about Laura here, because she's interviewed in this issue of *Heart to Heart* – check out Tessa Radley's interview with this knowledgeable, efficient and charming lady– I know you'll be dying to meet her when she comes to our conference!

Don't forget, last month we also announced our keynote speaker, **New York Times-bestselling author Stephanie Laurens**, and **Dianne Moggie, VP Overseas Editorial Strategy & development for Harlequin Enterprises**. Look out for more announcements next month.

As you all know, nothing happens around RWNZ without the dedicated input of our volunteers. This month I'd in particular like to thank Tessa Radley, who's had months of legwork in securing our speakers for us. Thanks, Tessa!

Can you afford to attend the RWNZ conference?

A key focus of this year's conference planning has been keeping it affordable for all our members, including those who aren't yet published or writing enough to treat the conference as a business expense (though after you've learned from the likes of Chris Vogler, anything could happen!).

We've crunched the numbers every which way (kudos to Kate Gordon here!) and have decided there will be no increase in cost in delegates' fees to attend this year's Friday workshop and weekend conference. In fact, the total cost of the weekend will go down for most of you, as all weekend conference attendees will be invited to attend our Friday night cocktail party free of charge. We're working hard to make the cocktail party an especially exciting event this year, BTW.

If you're coming from out of town, or you're an Aucklander who wants the full conference experience, you'll be delighted to hear about the room rates at Rydges Hotel. No one attending the conference will pay more than \$129 for a standard double-double or king room (and there are other reasonably priced options for fancier rooms or for breakfast included, etc.). That's a wonderful room rate in itself...but the great news is, there's every chance you might find an even lower rate. Right now, the three-night rate at Rydges in August is around \$98 per night per room – brilliant! By the time you split that with a friend, you're practically making money!!

We know members worry about car parking costs when we hold our conference in the city, so we're hoping to tell you about a great parking deal very soon.

So...can you afford to attend the RWNZ conference? I'm hoping the answer is a resounding Yes! More importantly...can you afford **not** to?

As soon as the conference registration form is available, we'll be loading it onto the RWNZ website, and we'll email all members to let them know it's there. You'll receive a printed copy of the form in the next issue of *Heart to Heart*.

And one last word (for now!) on conference: A sincere thank you to **Harlequin Mills & Boon**, our primary conference sponsor, for their design of our gorgeous conference logo and graphics – you'll see a sneak preview on page 15.

There's more to life than conference, of course...there are also our **mini-conferences!** Our one-day regional workshop programme is well underway – on March 27, Hamilton City Library played host to a sell-out workshop taught by RWNZ authors Sophia James and Sandra Hyatt. In April, we have our Wellington area workshop, and in May, it's Christchurch's turn. If you're in one of those areas, you should have received details from your regional coordinator. These events are designed to be great-value education for RWNZ members and also for the wider public – we're keen to attract new members, and going by the success of the Hamilton session, these workshops will help us achieve that.

Phew, that's it for me from now! Time to do some writing...or maybe I'll just sit here and daydream about conference....

Abby Gaines - President, RWNZ

Continued from page 1

Q: What genres do you represent? What are you currently seeking?

I mainly represent commercial genre fiction. Romance (all subgenres except for inspirational), mystery, thrillers, urban fantasy, women's fiction and young adult. I have been known to handle some select non-fiction as well. I am currently seeking all those genres.

Q: What 3 tips would you give to a writer pitching to you for the first time?

Do you mean a verbal pitch in a pitch appt? I am pretty gentle. I really just want to know what the book is about. It helps if you can show that you have done your research. It would be nice if you are aware of what I handle...it can be disappointing on both sides if an author sits down with me at an appointment only to tell me she has an inspirational romance, an epic fantasy or a middle grade chapter book--none of which I represent. The best I will be able to do is offer a bit of advice as a non-expert in those genres. It is also important that you exhibit some knowledge about the market you are proposing to enter. Have an idea about what your work might be similar to in terms of voice. Have an idea about a publisher you think would be the right fit for your work. Know about the general guidelines associated with the imprints you are targeting. There isn't a ton I can do with a 69k word single title romantic suspense (too short) or a 85k word ms targeting a category imprint (too long).

Q: What do you offer to writers who you decide to represent?

A partner, a helpmate, an advocate. It is quite literally my job to have your back. I do my best to arm my authors with as much information as I can get for them so together we can make the best, informed career decisions. I tend to be an editorial-focused agent, so I am prepared to roll up my sleeves with the material if that is what is required.

Q: What do you expect from writers who you represent?

Professionalism, flexibility, a sense of being career focused. I will be as serious as a heart attack about your career as a witer, so I expect you to be as well.

Q: Laura, describe your dream submission...?

I couldn't possibly. I depend on you guys to dream up something fabulous I could never have imagined. I love to be surprised by submissions...whether they make me fall in love with something I had not expected to like, or deliver a totally unique and compelling mashup of themes I have never seen before. I like material that pushes the envelope. I even like long shots. If I read a ms and can't get to the phone fast enough to call the author, that is a great feeling. At the end of the day, the best submissions are the ones that make me feel PANIC when I finish reading them. If, as I am reading the material, I start to worry: what if someone already snatched this up? What if I AM ALREADY TOO LATE?!?! This is so wonderful and anyone who reads this will know and darn it, it MUST BE MINE or else I will cry bitter, bitter tears, THAT is the best response I can have to a submission.

Q: What is the most memorable movie you've seen in the past year? And why did it stick in your mind?

I rarely have time for movies anymore and to be honest, most of the ones I have seen in the last year were not the stick-with-me kind. I have to say that I liked The Proposal. It is pretty fluffy, but any film that depicts a book editor as a character kind of tickles me. And hello? Ryan Reynold's abs. I watch movies for pure entertainment and diversion and I don't really gravitate towards anything overly heavy.

Q: Tell us what made you decide to cross the ocean to come to our conference?

I have actually been here before and I have fond memories. Years ago I was in the US Antarctic Program and worked in Antarctica. The departure point was Christchurch. I worked at McMurdo Station and the New Zealand research station, Scott Base was our closest neighbour. I have spent my fair share of time with Kiwis. Why WOULDN'T I want to come here?

And here's a final question from our President, Abby Gaines:

Q: Laura, your tweets (on Twitter) give the impression you're that elusive, rumoured-to-exist super-agent – you read queries efficiently, and also seem to request quite a few partials. Can this be true?!

I AM pretty efficient. I have to be. I am a one-woman operation and it just doesn't work unless I can keep an awful lot of balls in the air. The good news is I actually get more efficient--out of necessity--the busier I am and that is how I like it. While it is true I work a whole lot more than 40 hours a week, it is pretty joyful work. I like reading queries. I like finding a ms to fall in love with. I like working with my authors.

CONTESTS by Ellie Huse

HM&B GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST 2010

RWNZ's annual contest for category manuscripts.

Final Judge: Kimberley Young, Senior Editor, Mills & Boon, London

- * Open to published and unpublished RWNZ members
- * Submit 20 pages plus 2-page synopsis
- * Up to 2 entries by same author accepted
- * Prizes: 1st \$300 2nd \$150 3rd \$50
- * Entry fee (per entry): \$NZ20
- * Electronic entry only in 2010
- * Entry forms available on RWNZ website: www.romancewriters.co.nz
- *** Opens 17 March—Closes 17 April ***

If you have any questions, contact Ellie Huse, Contests Coordinator at elliehuse@yahoo.com

CHCH Writing Workshop



Speakers:

Natalie Anderson natalieanderson.com

Zana Bell zanabell.com

Sandra Hyatt sandrahhyatt.com

Date: Sunday 30 May 2010

Time: 9.30am – 4.00pm **Cost:** \$50 non-members \$40 members

Venue: Cashmere Club

88 Hunter Tce, CHCH

carpark entrance also Colombo St south

Food: BYO lunch – tea & coffee provided

RUTH GLICK AKA REBECCA YORK

Interviewed by Kylie Griffin



Ruth Glick (aka Rebecca York), a stay-at-home-mum with small children, followed her dream to become a writer by enrolling in a seminar at a local community college designed to help women select a career. It was no surprise she had an aptitude to write but, as a self-confessed bad speller, she never thought she'd be able to make it.

Determined to face her fear (much like the characters in her books), she wrote an article about the course and sold it to a local newspaper for \$10. Ruth's writing career was launched.

Thirty years later, Rebecca has published over 100 books. Intrigue, suspense, romance are her passion, closely followed by science fiction and fantasy, but she's also written young adult and children's books, several cookbooks and a craft book on dollhouses.

Her romance books have won numerous awards - she's a two-times RITA finalist and multi-winner of the PRISM and GOLDEN LEAF Awards, Publishers Weekly QUILL Award

www.romancewriters.co.nz

nomination and most recently the TELLY Award.

Although she has written under a variety of pseudonyms, the name Rebecca York is synonymous with successful romantic paranormal suspense.

It's great to have you as our feature author, Rebecca!

You've written romance books under a number of pseudonyms. Could you share with us a little about the diverse career you've had as a romance writer?

In the 80's, I'd already written and sold a kids' science fiction novel called THE INVASION OF THE BLUE LIGHTS. At that time, the romance market was heating up, so to speak, and a friend asked me if I wanted to try and write a romance with her. I told her I'd never read one. She brought me shopping bags full of Harlequin Presents, and I loved the books. I'd always enjoyed the romance subplots in the books I read, and these stories focused on the romance. But I thought I didn't know enough about the genre, so I invited two other writers to work on a story with us. We split into teams of two, wrote chapters and edited each other's work. The group wrote and sold two romance novels under the name Alyssa Howard before we broke up.

I wrote straight romances for a number of years, but I really did want to include other elements I loved in the stories. So I tried romantic suspense. At the time, there had been older writers of romantic suspense like Mary Stewart and Victoria Holt. But it wasn't established in the paperback romance market. When I wrote a proposal for a book that had a lot of suspense as well as romance, Silhouette (my major publisher back then) told me it had "too much plot." I worked up another proposal, and my agent sent it to a number of publishers. Some said, "We like this. Include more romance, and we might buy it." Others said, "We like this. Include more suspense, and we might buy it."

Luckily, Dell was looking for the balance I had in my story, and they bought the three-book Peregrine Connection series. That launched Rebecca York into the romantic suspense field. Harlequin Intrigue had also started up by then. At first, the editors were afraid to deal with edgy

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suspense themes, and I thought the books were tepid. Then they became more adventurous. My agent sold Rebecca York to them, and I've been writing for them ever since. I also began writing paranormal romantic suspense for Berkley, chiefly with a werewolf series. But I've branched out into other paranormal themes such as dragon-shifters (DRAGON MOON and DAY OF THE DRAGON, to be published August 2010 in the US) and sexually-linked telepaths (BEYOND CONTROL and BEYOND FEARLESS). And I'm about to submit a proposal for another series.

What does a typical writing day consist of for you?

I get up around eight, drink coffee, feed the birds and squirrels, read e-mail, read the paper, read Twitter, and tweet. Finally, around eleven thirty, I realize I haven't written anything and get down to work. I try to write ten pages every day. I might do that in four hours, or it might take me longer. Sometimes I produce more, but if I try for too many pages, I'm likely to do a whole lot less the next day.

I should say that it would be impossible to write that fast if I hadn't first slaved over a ten- to 20-page outline which tells me where the book is going.

What's the most challenging part of writing any book? I hate the blank page. I used to write slowly, then edit a lot. Now I write as fast as I can, THEN edit a lot. Every book goes through an edit on-screen, then three or four edits on paper.

One of the first books of yours that I remember reading (and it's one I love rereading) is NOWHERE MAN from your 43 Light Street series. Your heroine, Kathryn, finds herself helping a soldier who has no memory of who he is. Without giving away the plot, it's a powerful, emotionally intriguing situation they both find themselves in. Do you start with a theme/idea or characters for your stories and how do you develop them from there? What themes do you find appearing in your work?

Thanks. I also love NOWHERE MAN. The man who doesn't know who he is and is being held captive by sinister forces appears in other books of mine. SOLDIER CAGED is another example. Actually, so is my first Peregrine Connection book, TALONS OF THE FALCON.

I generally start with a "cool idea." What if a man with a twisted mind thought he had reason to torture a bunch of victims who wronged him. So he sets up a "funhouse," a spooky place where

they'll encounter frightening perils as they try to escape. Only he has no intention of letting them go. He plans to kill them after he's had his fun with them. That's the Intrigue I'm writing now. Called FUNHOUSE. It will be out in the States next January.

After I come up with my cool idea, I try to develop the plot and characters at the same time because they each must inform the other. I always make myself create an outline before I write the book. That helps keep me pointed in the right direction. If I think of something better, I can always change it.

In NOWHERE MAN, the heroine's a psychologist, hired to socialize the soldier. She takes a job on the isolated military base because he's been stalked by one of her former patients. Once she's on the base, she realizes she can't get away. She also realizes that there's something tragic and remarkable about the man she's been hired to work with. I developed both characters as I came up with points in the plot where they'd be in danger and have to rely on each other.

Now that you write for the single title market will you continue to write for the Intrigue line?

I love writing both long and short books, so I'd like to keep writing for Intrigue as well as for the single title market. I also like doing novellas and short stories.

What advice would you offer for writers targeting the Intrigue line?

My best advice is to read a ton of Intrigues to get a feel for what they want. Also read the guidelines that Harlequin puts out. These are shorter books, so the focus must be on the h/h. And they must meet early in the story (preferably in chapter one) and be on the page together as much as possible. On my Web site at www.rebeccayork.com (Under "Tips for Writers" at www.rebeccayork.com/letstalk.htm), I've got more advice.

You mention on your website that some of your ideas for your books come from real life. Where did the idea for your paranormal MOON series originate? Did you originally plan to feature an alternate universe and for so many characters to have their own book in the series?

I didn't PLAN anything. I had read DARKER THAN YOU THINK, by Jack Williamson, which totally captured my imagination when I was fifteen. Later I read THE WOLF'S HOUR, by Robert McCammon, and he kindled my interest in

werewolves again. I wanted to write my own werewolf story, but I honestly didn't think anyone would buy it from me. Still, I couldn't stop thinking about it, and I came up with the idea of a werewolf detective who uses his wolf senses to solve crimes. I also needed to figure out a reason why the hero was a werewolf and needed to understand his family background. For the heroine, I needed a woman who could help him solve his major problems. Because his werewolf trait is from a sex-linked genetic abnormality, I made her a doctor who works in a genetics lab. That book became KILLING MOON. I didn't know I was writing a series, but Berkley wanted more werewolf books, so I gave them EDGE OF THE MOON (where the hero's the police detective from KILLING MOON). Then I came up with more ideas. I wanted to keep the series fresh, so I kept adding new elements, which is how I came up with my alternate universe.

You've had a diverse and incredible career in the romance publishing industry. What experiences have helped shape or had the most potential career impact for you – attending conferences, workshops, conventions, critique groups etc? Or do you have any advice you could share with our readers?

I think there's an element of luck in being a successful writer. Some of that is being in the right place at the right time. Like selling my first RS series to Dell. And you also have to be persistent, which means not giving up when you get rejected and being on the lookout for ways to advance your career. I sold to Berkley because I went up to Gail Fortune of Berkley at the Washington Romance Writers Retreat and asked if she'd like to see a werewolf book from me. I've done a lot of weird things in my time. Such as getting my local writer friends to form a literary agency when we couldn't get an agent. One of us was very into agenting, and she was the agent for most of us until she retired after about 15 years in the business.

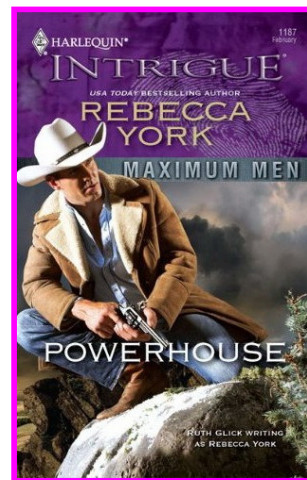
My critique group has been a very important part of my career. I can bounce ideas off of them and also go to them for advice and support. I was very influenced by a Donald Maass workshop I attended. I felt that he knew how to up the ante for the characters in genre fiction. I've also made friends with authors from around the country. I've become close to some, and we bounce ideas off each other and discuss our plots and proposals.

My best advice to writers is to write. The first article I wrote probably took me twenty-five hours, and I cried a lot. Writing's a lot easier for me now. The more you do it, the easier it becomes. I think of it as a writing muscle. You make it stronger by exercising it.

What does the future hold for Rebecca York? A change of direction? A new release or the continuation of a series?

I've got a book called DAY OF THE DRAGON coming out from Berkley in August in the States. Ramsey Gallagher is the hero. I became fascinated with him when I was writing DRAGON MOON and wanted to give him his own book. I'd like to go on with more dragon books, so fingers crossed that it sells well. I'm also working on a new idea loosely based on Greek mythology. That's in the proposal stage now. And I just turned in a proposal to Intrigue. Fingers crossed on that one, too. My next Intrigue is GUARDING GRACE, which will be out in July in the States. The heroine's got something in common with the hero of NOWHERE MAN, Hunter Kelley. Because my Light Street characters stay around to help each other out of dangerous situations, Grace gets to meet Hunter.

From H2H and its readers, we'd like to thank you for this interview, Rebecca. You can find out more about Rebecca York and her books at her website www.rebeccayork.com



THE KARA SCHOOL OF WRITING

The Kara School of Writing is thrilled to be offering weekend romance writing courses again! Please contact Lesley at editline@xtra.co.nz for further details. The Kara School of Writing has been instrumental in the success of many published authors. A dozen past students are now writing for Harlequin, and other world-wide and New Zealand publishers.

CLENDON AWARD UPDATE

Compiled by Maree Anderson - Clendon Co-ordinator
(with the permission of Peter & Barbara Clendon)

We had 44 entries in total: including 1 from the UK and 1 from the USA.

36% of the total entries this year came from Australia.

By far the most numerous entries were for the Short Category section, which for the purposes of The Clendon Award are category manuscripts of 65,000 words and under.

Next were Historical, Romantic Suspense and SFFP entries, which all had approximately even numbers, with YA entries very close behind. Other entries this year included Comedy, Long Category, and then the Romance Category, which is for any other entry which doesn't fit into our core section categories.

It's worth noting why it's so important that you get your target market correct on your entry form. Here's why:

All entries are boxed up with their title, section code, and then their target market or category — exactly as you noted on your entry form. This is so that Clendon readers will be able to read within their preference. For example, a manuscript where the entrant has noted Mills & Boon Medical for target market or category might be allocated the reference ShCat 3, i.e. Short Category entry #3 for identification purposes. On its box I'll write: ShCat 3, MANUSCRIPT TITLE, M&B Medical.

So if a category reader only reads Medicals, they'll be readily identifiable. If she doesn't like explicit sex scenes, she'll be able to choose to read and judge a Sweet short category. SFFP, for example, will be broken down into Science Fiction, Futuristic, Fantasy, Paranormal Romance etc, and readers of that section will be able to choose which one they wish to read and judge. It might be all four. Or maybe only Paranormals that she reads, because she can't abide SciFi and the other genres.

Our aim is to minimize the chances that a reader will be given something she dislikes.

Next up in the process will be noting all the details in database, and sending the manuscripts out to the readers. The number of reads will depend on how quickly each reader get the manuscripts back to the shop, and even more importantly, how much help RWNZ volunteers are willing to give. The shop is very short staffed at the moment, and any help that anyone can give will be very much appreciated!

Previous entrants will already know that score-sheets are incredibly detailed and three pages long. Each section and the entire score-sheet must be checked and re-added by three different people, because we know how upset entrants will be if adding mistakes are made.

Once all the manuscripts have been read, and the scoresheets checked, and all the data has been input into the database, the scores are tallied and averaged and the finalists are determined. This will probably be around late June, early July... if all goes to schedule. Then it's into the courier bag and off to the final judge and fingers crossed for no nasty surprises — like the year the courier company took two weeks to deliver the manuscripts to the U.S.!

And then it's a nerve-wracking wait until the final judge notifies us of the placegetters!

NEWBIE AUTHOR

Helene Young (Hachette Australia)

interviewed by Kylie Griffin



Share a little bit about yourself and your writing.

I live near a beach north of Cairns with my wonderful husband and neurotic Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Zeus. It's my own tiny slice of paradise. My day job is flying for QantasLink, the regional operation for Qantas, as a Captain on the Dash 8. Any of you from rural areas (in Australia) will know those aircraft well. My role as a Check and Training Captain means I spend a lot of time in Sydney in the simulator ensuring all our pilots are operating at the highest skill level. I miss home when I'm in Sydney, but the streets around the hotel provide plenty of inspiration for secondary characters. I write Romantic Suspense, though the suspense slightly outweighs the romance, and have the good fortune to be published by Hachette Australia.

Our readers love a good story - please tell us how you received THE CALL.

My call story has its beginnings in the Emma Darcy Award 2004. My very first attempt at a book managed to come second that year behind the

wonderful Anna Campbell. It gave me the confidence to keep writing. Four years later and after several placings in RWNZ and RWA contests (and many more near misses...) my fifth manuscript finalised in the Golden Heart Contest in RWAmerica.

I managed to wangle enough time off work and with fellow finalist, Tracey O'Hara, went to San Francisco for the conference. Border Watch didn't win, but I met Bronwyn Parry who was very supportive and encouraging. She introduced me to Bernadette Foley from Hachette Australia at the 2008 RWA conference in Melbourne. Bernadette was taking pitches at that conference and she asked to see my full manuscript.

In a relatively short time she got back to me and, while her response was positive, it was clear I still had work to do. I spent another five months pulling it apart and rewriting before I sent it off again.

Four weeks later I got an email asking for a brief bio and a short synopsis. Unfortunately I got that email at 8.30 pm just after landing in Sydney for a week's work and Bernadette needed them the next day. I was supposed to start work at 7.00 am... I had a frantic night writing, re-writing and grappling with the concept of a bio. Rescued again by great advice from Anna Campbell and my sister in France, I still had to take a lot of deep breaths before I managed to hit the send key.

Two weeks went by and no word. We were going on holiday - sailing in the Whitsundays - and I knew we'd be mostly out of phone or email range. Darn...

We dropped anchor on our first night, had a quick swim and I (obsessive compulsive pilot personality) turned the phone on one more time hoping Telstra would co-operate. Voila, we had service! Five minutes later it rang and as my husband's ripping the wrapper off a bottle of champagne to celebrate holidays, I hear Bernadette's lovely voice telling me they'd like to offer me a two-book contract.

I did manage not to scream - at least until I'd got off the phone - and then spent the next ten days sailing round the Whitsunday's with a smile stuck across my face. I swear I have smile lines tanned round my eyes...

I'm just another example of the power of contests and the value of the fabulous insights from judges. The RWOz Emerald and The RWNZ Clendon, awards for completed manuscripts, are brilliant training grounds. I loved the feel good affirmation of high marks and compliments, but invariably I learnt more from those who judged me more severely and provided detailed critiques. The balance between the two kept me writing!

I just have to ask the-chicken-or-the-egg question. What happened first – agent or an editor? How

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did you go about finding one/both? For me the editor came first. I pitched to Bernadette Foley at the RWA conference in 2008 and she asked to see the complete manuscript for *Border Watch*. I was also fortunate enough to meet her at the wonderful Bronwyn Parry's book launch at the same conference. It probably looked like I was stalking her – and I was, in the nicest possible way... I elected to sign the contract without an agent, but did get informed advice before doing that. I still don't have an agent, although I have one who'll hopefully work with me once I've had these first two books published. I made contact with her in the most convoluted route via my brother-in-laws sister's friend, who is a well know Australian author.

Can you tell us about your debut/current book up for release?

Border Watch is due for release in Australia in March 2010. It's a suspense novel set in North Queensland. *High above the crystal-blue waters of North Queensland, Captain Morgan Pentland patrols the vast Australian coastline. When Customs Agent Rafe Daniels joins her crew, she is immediately suspicious. Why is he boarding her plane when she isn't there? And why is he asking so many questions? What Morgan doesn't know is that Rafe has her under surveillance. Critical information about their Border Watch operations is being leaked and she is the main suspect. Morgan's ex, elite police officer Carl Wiseman, is back on the scene after she finally found the courage to throw him out. Is he trying to regain Morgan's affections or are his intentions more sinister? When Morgan and Rafe are shot down in a tragic midair attack, they realise they have to start working together – and quickly. One of Australia's most loved icons is the next target and they have only nine days to stop it. Will they uncover details of the plot in time, or will the tension that is growing between them jeopardise everything?*

Writers' tend to have strengths and weaknesses. Can you identify them? What's the most challenging thing about writing process for you and how do you strive to overcome it?

The most challenging aspect for me is staying on task. I have a tendency to let the characters rule the world, me included... That means by the time I reach the end of the manuscript significant culling is required. I think my strength is dialogue and that may be because I listen in on conversations all the time (and maybe I shouldn't admit to that...). The patterns, the rhythm of speech, as much as the words themselves, are important for making it realistic.

Is it fair to say being published takes you on a steep learning curve in the next stage of your career as a writer? What's something you've learnt since getting THE CALL?

Is it fair to say? Oh my goodness! The learning curve is vertical. In fact it's Space Shuttle vertical! Next stop the moon...

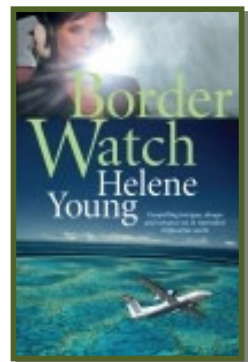
The first thing I discovered was just how many people work on the book before it's published - there's an army of them. The next thing is the detail in the editing. The structural editing had already been addressed by Bernadette in the initial submission process, so I only had to contend with the detailed editing. Here I was fortunate to have the wonderful Ali Lavau working on *Border Watch*. Her corrections were insightful, accurate and gentle. I never felt as though the book was being taken over by someone else. I could only be grateful that a skilled professional was polishing my work until it shone.

Then there are more proofs, cover art, backcover blurbs and titles... Daunting? Yep. Exhilarating? Definitely! One of the really good things I learnt from editing was using the search function in Word to seek out and destroy all the overused words in my manuscript. My heroine would have had whiplash from flicking her hair over her shoulder one more time....

Is there any other advice, "lightbulb" moments or comments, you'd like to share about getting/being published?

The light bulb moment would be "write what you know." *Border Watch* is set in North Queensland where I live. The heroine flies the same aircraft type as I do in my day job. I work with many pilots who have flown the coastal surveillance operations around Australia. I'd hesitating writing this in case I couldn't do it justice. Instead, once I started writing (and that was in NaNoWriMo 2007) it just came flooding out. The details that are crucial in making the work more believable will hopefully colour the story without intruding just because they are so familiar to me.

Thanks, Helene, for sharing your story & insights with us!



TIME

by Joanne Graves



This month in *Make This Year Your Writing Year* we focus on the matter of time and how to get more of it. There are only 24 hours in a day – so how do you scrounge up those precious hours to write your books, and move yourself closer towards

publication?

First up...KNOW YOUR WORD COUNT

Before you figure out how to get more time, can you answer this question: How many words or pages can you produce in an hour? If you can't answer it, you need to find out, says author Stephanie Bond, because it's the key to your productivity. Can you write two pages in an hour, three pages, even four? If you have no idea, grab a timer and see how many pages (or word count, given some publishers now use computer word count only) you can do in one hour. Maybe it's 500 words, maybe it's a thousand. For the sake of easy maths, let's say you write 1000 words an hour - around four pages. That's fast, but if you're not dithering and editing as you go, it's doable. Remember, this is first draft only. That one thousand words a day means you can write 6000 words a week, with a day off to recover from the taxing work load! That's 26,000 words a month. That means in two months, you have completed the first draft of a short category romance novel. And it only took you... (drum roll)..... six hours a week!! Yep, only six hours a week to get that first draft down. Imagine if you gave yourself an extra hour or two in the week to revise those pages so you got a decent first draft. Imagine if you devoted two hours a day to serious writing - that's a single title book to first draft in only eight weeks.

ANALYSE WHERE YOUR TIMES GOES

Harlequin author Cindi Myers suggests that, much as one would on a diet write down everything you eat to discover exactly what is piling on the weight, so you should try tracking what you do over the course of several days. That way you can figure out if there are any blocks of time you

could use for writing. Volunteer work can be a huge time consumer, especially if its accompanied by lots of emailing and phone calls. Maybe it's time to call something quits for a while for the sake of your writing. TV time can also be a biggie. Cindi says the worst shows for her are the series dramas that hook you in (a la Greys Anatomy) but as she writes between four to six books a year, she now makes it a policy not to watch these shows at all. Identify blocks of time at the beginning and the end of each day that you could use, and other odd times. For example, if you have a day job, can you spend your lunch hour writing in the car with the laptop and get a couple of pages done, or on Saturdays waiting for the kids at sports?

EARLY TO BED, EARLY TO RISE

Chances are you can train yourself to be an early riser to get some writing time. Naturally, this begs the question, why on earth would you want to drag yourself out of bed when its nearly winter, and what's so great about the morning anyway? Well, surprisingly, there are more pros than cons to this seemingly draconian practice.

For a start, you generally have peace and quiet when no one else is awake, and thus you will be able to work undisturbed. Thriller writer, Wendy Corsi Staub is very prolific – she writes around six novels a year (adult and YA), - and cottoned on to the benefit of writing early when one of her sons was a baby. She was getting up at 4.30 am for a feeding anyway and because she was awake and found it hard to go back to sleep (admittedly a condition some of us are not at all familiar with!) she decided to start her writing day then. Ten years on that has been her pattern. True, the woman is an Energizer Bunny – she will work at a fierce pace and write a novel in around six weeks, working eight or ten hour days until the book is finished. But she is adamant that getting up early (and drinking coffee) is the secret. The morning hours work, because for that time, the business world isn't awake yet, so she's not having to deal with all the other stuff of writing, and the inevitable interruptions she will get later in the day. These hours are gold for a busy person.

Creativity Coach, Eric Maisel (www.ericmaisel.com) says that starting your day

with writing has another advantage - it puts meaning into your day. If you can write for an hour in the morning, then the rest of the day can be half meaningless (you head off to the job you don't like, clean the house etc) but you have added some meaning, and it makes you feel good to know your book is churning along. Likewise the day can turn into a disaster by dinnertime, and nothing on your To Do List got done, but you have a thousand words tucked away! No one can take that away. And at the end of the week you'll have a chapter or two written. Maisel also suggests that you can actually improve your creative thought by writing upon waking up after sleep. When we sleep, we are either dreaming or thinking. So if you can fall asleep thinking about the scene you have to write tomorrow, your brain will think about it in between the dream sequences. Thus when you wake up and head to the computer that is what will come to you in your still sleepy state. As soon as you get involved with the day – start the breakfast, turn on the radio, etc, then what you have thought about overnight will vanish from your mind as you let the daily clutter back in. Maisel goes so far as to suggest that getting up an hour earlier to write may be the most important thing you can do for your creativity, even if it takes weeks or months to get comfortable with the new practice.

CHUNKS OF TIME

How many of us have ever looked forward to a few hours interrupted writing time and then got frustrated because the baby woke up, or the neighbour called in, and we then took it as sign from above that clearly, no pages were meant to see the light that day. Fear not! If you can get a page down in fifteen or twenty minutes, then all you need are a few quarter hour blocks of time here and there and you're in business. Writing piecemeal like that may not be your ideal process, but it can work and some writers are quite successful using the method. Stephanie Bond says writers should get used to writing in increments because often when you are published, you don't have long stretches of time between the agent/editor and business side of things; ditto if you have a day job or a young family to care for. Desire author, Emily McKay, who wrote to a deadline when she was pregnant AND had a toddler, had no choice but to learn to write in increments, because she didn't want to say 'no' to the contract, even though it was the worst possible timing. You need to get over that "I planned to write for an hour but I only got in ten minutes worth, therefore it was a waste of my

time!" mentality. It is a different way of looking at it but short bursts can be productive. Cindy Myers says that much of her work is accomplished in twenty and thirty minute spurts between loads of laundry, telephone calls, errands, and an addiction to email. Yet, using this patchwork fashion, she somehow writes four to six books a year.

BEWARE THE TIME SUCK

Time sucks are those things that do take away from your time and you may not be aware of them. Ten years ago it probably was watching the box all evening. Nowadays, it might still be TV, but odds are your time is being lost somewhere in the vicinity of your internet connection. A TV programme will finish after thirty or sixty minutes. But surfing the net can go on and on and on.... . Historical author Elizabeth Boyle said that in an effort to be more productive, she resigned from all the on line lists and special groups of RWA that she belonged to, and joined one out of state chapter group because, she confessed, they couldn't ask her to do too much volunteer work since she lived miles away! Jane Porter said that at one point she used to put her computer modem in her son's bag and send him off to school with it so she couldn't go on line when she was on deadline. If your discipline in this area isn't so good, maybe you need to consider such drastic measures to keep yourself off the net and on the page.

SO, TO RECAP-

- Work out how many words you can write in an hour and how many hours a day you need to write your book.
- Try and get up an hour earlier to write. Maybe start with just half an hour and increase it. In my experience, as long as you try and get to sleep a bit earlier to account for that time, your body will adjust to writing early and unless you are exceptionally tired, you will eventually get used to it and wake up early anyway. As long as you get enough sleep, it should work fine.
- Get over the idea you have to write in long stretches. Try writing in 15 minute increments, whenever you've got that quarter of an hour.
- Set the timer when you go on the internet so it's loud and clear when your time is up.

Author comments from Eric Maisel, Emily McKay, Cindy Myers, Wendy Corsi Staub, Jane Porter, Elizabeth Boyle and Stephanie Bond were taken from workshops presented at the RWA 2008 Conference

YOU KNOW YOU'RE A PARANORMAL AUTHOR

You know you're a paranormal author when...you can reel off the meanings of acronyms such as DUF, F&F, UF, SF/F/P, HF, EF, PR, BPS, FU and varying combinations with alacrity

- * ...you hear a strange sound and immediately reach for your backpack (which, incidentally, contains a wooden stake, holy water, a hand gun with silver bullets, a spell book for all occasions, a variety of amulets and lucky charms, an almanac of alternate realities, a handy pocket sized dictionary of demonic languages, a crystal ball with matching tarot cards and a ring of magic keys) and you head straight for the location you last heard it shouting, "Go ahead, make my day, hell-spawn!"

- * ...you think it's normal to open conversations about demons/vampires/shapeshifters/psi-powers in mixed company

- * ...you understand that "succubus/incubus" have plurals and that they're "succubi/incubi"

- * ...all the clothes you own are variations in the colour black

- * ...you've made weapons out of your garden implements...just in case, because the next door neighbour's kid gives new meaning to the word holy terror

- * ...when you hear the words "Exorcizamus te, omnis immundus spiritus, omnis satanica potestas, omnis incursio infernalis adversarii, omnis legio, omnis congregatio et secta diabolica, in nomine et virtute Domini Nostri Jesu + Christi..." and realize you aren't at a baptism or partaking in holy communion

- * ...you realise the danger of shouting the expletive phrase "suck me!" in a nightclub with people with palid skin and who claim pointed canine teeth are the latest "vamp" trend

- * ...the newest release of Keri Arthur/Laurell K.Hamilton/Sherrilyn Kenyon/(insert other fav.author) excites you more than sex does

- * ...you wear steel-capped boots, a long leather jacket, and an array of hidden weapons on your person when you step outside your house

- * ...the saying "his/her eyes turned red" can hold so many different meanings, not all of them good

- * ...your significant other plays the opening tunes to Star Trek/The Twilight Zone/Blood Ties/(insert other favourite program here) just to get your attention

- * ...you believe it makes perfect sense to decorate you house with necklaces of garlic, hang mirrors in every room, install fonts of holy water at every entrance, and burn twists of sacred herbs 24/7

- * ...the phrase "trust no one" isn't just an X-Files quote

- * ...the word "World Con" has you salivating in 3 seconds flat

- * ...an earthquake shakes your house and you dive for cover shouting, "Take cover! The Hellmouth is opening, the Hordes of Baccus begin the Reclamation!" and everyone else looks at you as if you've gone mad

- * ...you understand exactly what the phrase 'seduced by an succubus' means and that it may be less alluring than it sounds

- * ...you find yourself translating magazine articles in waiting rooms (outloud) in fluently Elvish, Pernese or Ancient Runic script just to pass the time

- * ...you think it's normal to name your child Buffy, Angel, Acheron or after various pantheon deities

- * You know you're a paranormal author when...you immediately forward this list to other paranormal authors, here and overseas, realising that only they will understand!

Supplied by Kylie Griffin . . . clearly a paranormal author!!

I am a proofreader/copy editor with 6 years experience. I can offer a professional service which takes into account your time limits and unique style. My rates are competitive. I would love to copy edit/proofread your romance manuscript and my skills will enhance your opportunities for being published. Please contact me at: helen.vicary@xtra.co.nz.



*An Affair
to Remember*

ROMANCE WRITERS OF NEW ZEALAND
**20TH ANNIVERSARY
CONFERENCE**

AUGUST 20TH - 22ND 2010

**RYDGES HOTEL
CNR FEDERAL & KINGSTON STREETS, AUCKLAND**



RWNZ RULE CHANGE

RWNZ is currently in the process of amending its Rules of Incorporation to meet the organisation's changing administration needs and to clarify points that may have been subject to differing interpretations.

The proposed amendments are on display in the Members Only section of the RWNZ website: www.romancewriters.co.nz (username=romance, password=rwnz345). Members will be invited to vote on the amendments at the AGM in August, but for now we'd like to get your feedback on the changes and take the opportunity to answer questions / discuss issues, so that we're in the best possible shape for the AGM.

If you'd like to have your say, please check out the amendments, and email your questions and comments to RWNZrulechanges@gmail.com by May 5, 2010.

NEW MEMBERS

Beppie Harrison, USA
Rebecca Skrabl, Australia
Jennifer St George, Australia
Judith Nolan, Levin
Kerri Lane, Australia
Serena Clarke, Auckland
Vanessa Johnson, Auckland
Barbara Arnold, Christchurch
Thiloshini Govender, East Tamaki
Janet Heads, Wellington

LaVerne Clark, Nelson
Tracey Turner, Western Australia
Leeann Morgan, Paraparaumu
Winsome Buchanan, Australia
Cally Edgar, Christchurch
Khushi Usmani, Rotorua
Lynette Leong, Auckland
Janette Radevski, Australia
Margaretha Western-Brount, Auckland

Reproduced from the Jokes About Writers website. For more, head to
<http://sites.google.com/site/writersjokes/>

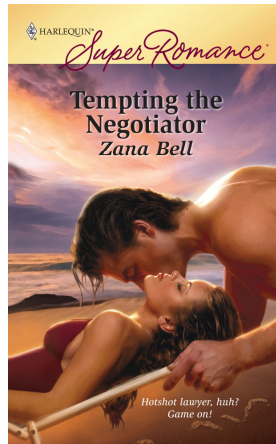
- There was once a young man who, in his youth, professed his desire to become a great writer. When asked to define great, he said, "I want to write stuff that the whole world will read, stuff that people will react to on a truly emotional level, stuff that will make them scream, cry, howl in pain and anger!"
He now works for Microsoft writing error messages.
- A writer died and was given the option of going to heaven or hell.
She decided to check out each place first. As the writer descended into the fiery pits, she saw row upon row of writers chained to their desks in a steaming sweatshop. As they worked, they were repeatedly whipped with thorny lashes.
"Oh my," said the writer. "Let me see heaven now."
A few moments later, as she ascended into heaven, she saw rows of writers, chained to their desks in a steaming sweatshop. As they worked, they, too, were whipped with thorny lashes.
"Wait a minute," said the writer. "This is just as bad as hell!"
"Oh no, it's not," replied an unseen voice. "Here, your work gets published."

OFFICIAL RELEASES & MEMBER SUCCESSES

Official March Releases

To Love, Honour And Disobey
by **Natalie Anderson** (Harlequin)

Tempting the Negotiator
by **Zana Bell** (Harlequin)



Member Successes - Competitions and Accolades

The Sales

Lyn Rasmussen (writing as Leigh D'Ansey) has sold her debut romance, **Kincaid's Call**, to The Wild Rose Press. Lyn is guest blogging on Lucy Monroe's blog <http://lucymonroeblog.blogspot.com> during a Romantic Times Conference in April, and she would love to connect with other TWRP published authors.

Harlequin author **Yvonne Lindsay** has been offered another continuity contract for a book to be released in April 2011.

Competitions

Sandi Manning finalled in the contemporary section of **The Marlene** run by **Washington Romance Writers**. Patience Smith is the final editor. (Sandi also made the second round of the RWA Emerald)

CAPTIVE OF SIN by **Anna Campbell** has finalled in the historical category of the **Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence**.

Kylie Griffin placed 1st in the Paranormal section of **The West Houston Emily Contest**. Chris Keeslar from Dorchester has requested the full ms. As we went to print Kylie also had extra good news . . . her manuscript **BLOODBORN** was a finalist in the RWA Golden Heart contest!!!!!!

Nalini Singh is all through the **Pearl** nominations with **BLAZE OF MEMORY (2)**, **ANGEL'S BLOOD**, **BRANDED BY FIRE**, **MUST LOVE HELLHOUNDS**

Jane Beckenham won an on-line sales pitch with **Silhouette Desire** – go Jane!

The Lists

Karina Bliss reached **No.1 selling e-book** on **Harlequin** with **WHAT THE LIBRARIAN DID** – Wow!

Nalini Singh has hit in the top dozen in the **New York Times Best Sellers list** again for **ARCHANGEL'S KISS**

INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

Compiled by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner

Tampa Area Romance Writers of America

Enter: prologue / first chapter (4,000 words max)

Deadline: May 1, 2010 **Eligibility:** unpublished or not published during past 3 yrs.

Fee: \$25 US **Prizes:** Top prize Sterling Silver TARA pendant, certificate.

<http://www.tararwa.com/contest.php>

Heart and Scroll Romance Writers of America presents The Magic Moments Contest

Enter: the first ten (10) pages of your manuscript (either the first chapter or the prologue)

Deadline: May 1, 2010 **Fee:** \$30 US **Eligibility:** Unpublished in last 5 yrs. **Prizes:** The Magic Moments Contest specializes in detailed personal critiques. All contestants get three detailed critiques. First Place Winner will receive \$100 and a certificate; Second and Third Place winners will receive certificates. <http://www.heartandscroll.com/contest> [MagicMoment rules.htm](http://www.heartandscroll.com/contest/MagicMoment_rules.htm)

Writers Digest International Self Published Book Awards

Enter: Your self published book, published between 2005 and 2010 **Deadline:** Postmark by May 3, 2010. **Eligibility:** Book must be self published and in English **Fee:** \$125 for 1st entry; \$75 each additional entry. Any genre including fiction, non fiction and YA. **Prizes:** Grand Prize is \$3,000 US cash plus promotion in Writer's Digest and Publishers Weekly. 10 First Place Winners receive \$1000 cash and promotion in Writer's Digest (plus more prizes, see site)

<http://www.writersdigest.com/selfpublished>

Central Ohio Fiction Writers Ignite the Flame

Enter: hero and heroine's first meeting, 15 pg max. **Eligibility:** Unpublished in book length fiction including ebooks. **Deadline:** May 8, 2010 **Fee:** \$27 US

Prizes: First place winner in each category receives \$25 US. Agents and editors judge the finalists.

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

Writers Digest Annual Writing Competition

Enter: Short Stories (any genre) under 4000 words **Eligibility:** Your story must be unpublished.

Deadline: Postmark by May 14, 2010 **Fee:** \$20 US. **Prizes:** Grand Prize: \$3,000 cash and a 3 day / 2 night trip to New York City to meet with editors or agents. Plus many other prizes.

<http://writersdigest.com/annual>

INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Compiled by Soraya Nicholas

New publishers actively seeking novels.

1. **Hearts of Fire:** e and print books. Romance - all sub-genres.

www.heartsonfirebooks.com

2. **E-Scape Press:** P.O.D. Escapist fiction, all types of romance.

www.escapewithabook.com

3. **Choc Lit:** e and print books. Contemporary romance.

www.choc-lit.co.uk

www.romancewriters.co.nz

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RWENZ NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

Regional convenor contacts

AUCKLAND – Frances Housden
email: fhousden@xtra.co.nz

CHRISTCHURCH – Sue Knight
email: sueknight@ihug.co.nz

HAWKE'S BAY – Ginny Suckling
email: ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz

NELSON – Annika Ohlson-Smith
email: allan-annika@xtra.co.nz

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING
COUNTRY – Sarah Saunders
email:
rainbowpt@vodafone.co.nz

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com

OTAGO – Viv Adams, email:
whitecliffodge@xtra.co.nz



Auckland

Last month's meeting was a great success with over 20 attendees to hear Tessa Rallis speak on Dialogue. This month's meeting will be held on Saturday 6th of April. It's Easter Saturday, I'm afraid, but for those of you not leaving town for Easter we promise you a great workshop. Yvonne Lindsay will our speaker, talking about WRITING ON DEMAND. As usual the meeting will be held in the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion, corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads at 12.30 p.m. Bring a small plate for the shared lunch and a gold coin for the collection. See you there.

Wellington

Our March meeting was at Meryl's lovely home. We discussed final details for our April 17th full-day seminar. We have great speakers booked – Yvonne, Zana, Victoria and Pat – and we hope to attract new members from the lower North Island. Joan, with all her community volunteer knowledge, came up with excellent ideas for chasing funding etc. Diana read out several pages of Ellie's new paranormal rom-com, and we talked about up-coming contests. Sharon has been asked for revisions by The Wild Rose Press, so we all have our fingers crossed. Next meeting, Easter Sat, 1pm, at Meryl's.

Christchurch

Workshop reminder – Sunday 30th May, 9:30am-4pm at the Cashmere Club. Contact Sue Knight for more details – sueknight@ihug.co.nz

Nelson

We welcomed into our circle a new prospective member, who we look forward to see again as well as another new member, who unfortunately couldn't make it to this meeting. However seven of us fully enjoyed the afternoon together with a lot of laughter and insightful discussions about how to approach research, the importance of competitions and some of us also decided to travel together to the mini-Conference Workshop in Christchurch at the end of May. We admired Cherie Skinner's just released first novel "French Kiss" and look forward to support her at the launch on April 24th. LaVerne Clark has almost finished the first draft of her first novel and Sally Astridge is busy researching for her new romantic 'who done it' novel. We finished the meeting with cups of tea and Annika's home baked shortbread. Next meeting will be 10 April; on the agenda will be a workshop in 'how to judge in short story competitions'. Cherie and Sally will be our tutors.

Otago

This month we meet at Rosalie's home on Thursday 18th of March at 7pm and host another Dunedin writer's group. These writers want to know how we romance writers deliver "What Editors Want." First up, using the Woman's Day magazine's story brief as my starting point I discuss the evolution of my entry in this month's Short Story Competition. Then Rosalie offers the first chapter of her current WIP and discusses how the genre requirements for Medical Romance influence her creativity and how she shapes her story. We will also offer a taste of our group's close critiquing process as it's from here real editor satisfaction comes. You're always welcome to join us. For info phone Viv on 034822685, or email whitecliffodge@xtra.co.nz.

WEB SURFING

Compiled by Nalini Singh

- **The Millions** on "Resources to Get Started in Publishing": <http://tinyurl.com/yz5o6vu> (via @Nephele Tempest's LJ)
- Want to know about steampunk? **The Book Smugglers** held a week long steampunk special starting March 8th, so check out their archives: <http://tinyurl.com/yhdcuoz>
- This is a really cool video that shows the evolution of the cover for "**Blameless**" by **Gail Carriger** in 1min 55secs (@ the Orbit Books blog): <http://tinyurl.com/y8vzhh7>
- If you need a moment of peace and beauty, drop by the blog of environmental artist **Sally J Smith**: <http://greenspiritarts.blogspot.com>
- A fun letter from "your heroine" at **The Galaxy Express** that makes several good points: <http://tinyurl.com/ygn3bys>
- Roxanne St. Claire has an interesting post up at **Murder She Writes**, asking "Is there a double standard in romance?" in terms of how we judge heroes vs heroines: <http://tinyurl.com/ybk56uq>
- **Romance University** holds a number of free "lectures" every week (for the week of the 15th, it covered everything from creating a "dynamic press kit" to the "Anatomy of the Male Mind"): <http://romanceuniversity.org>

Nalini Singh, New York Times bestselling author and web junkie: www.nalinisingh.com

BITS AND PIECES

Compiled by Soraya Nicholas

Frustrated that you've received a "form" rejection letter? Head to <http://carinapress.com/2010/02/personalized-rejections-why-not> for an interesting post by Carina Press editor Angela James. She talks about why an editor sends a personalised rejection versus a form rejection. Angela also did a great post about Reasons for Rejection, which can be found at <http://carinapress.com/2010/02/reasons-for-rejection>

Why do publishers give away free books and does it boost sales? According to Samhain editor Christine Brashears, author Lauren Dane sold over 6000 copies of her books in the months of her free giveaways. For more head to <http://tinurl.com/ve5mvea>.

Dorchester Books has a new Editorial Director - Leah Hulten-Schmidt. She takes over for Alicia Condon, who is now working for Kensington Books.

Fancy a crime novel? Former international model turned author Tara Moss has become a best-seller all over the world. Her novel Hit will be released in the UK as the lead title for the new MaxCrime imprint from John Blake Publishing. Her latest book, Siren, is out now in Australia and New Zealand. Find out more about Tara online, www.taramoss.com.au

Harlequin Executive Editor of LUNA and HQN, Tracy Farrell, has resigned after 25-years with the company. Her replacement is Tara Parsons.

Former senior editor for Harlequin Romance, Kimberly Young, has been appointed Executive Editor at Harlequin Mills & Boon London. Joanne Grant has taken her place as senior editor for Harlequin Romance.

Searching for an agent? To find the right agents to query, head to www.agentquery.com.