

HEART TO HEART



ALLY BLAKE

Soraya Nicholas interviews super star Harlequin Mills & Boon author Ally Blake.



Ally, I am so thrilled to be interviewing you. One of the first category romances I ever read was one of yours, and from there I was hooked! When did you start reading category, have you always been a fan?

Since the day I was born :) . My mother began reading them when having to get up for night feeds. Beside her feeding chair she kept a lamp, a glass of water, and a Mills and Boon.

How long had you been writing for before you got "the call"?

Forever! I was always the kid who when asked to write a one page story in primary school instead wrote five. From the moment I started writing a novel on purpose it probably took 2-3 years. Please keep your rotten tomatoes on hand as I am one of those terrible authors you hope you'll never meet - I sold my first submitted book. That said, I do have another story languishing in a deep dark corner of my computer that I wrote first which will NEVER see the light of day. It's awful. Truly. But invaluable experience that proved to me I could finish a book.

Your home has always been Harlequin Romance, what do you love about the line?

I love the heart, the warmth, the feeling that these are stories that could happen to you.

Fans of yours will know that you now write for Modern Heat as well Romance. Did your editor approach you to write for a second line, or was it something you wanted to do?

I began writing GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS, and knew within a page it wasn't a Sweet Romance. Far too sassy, far too sexy. But I had so much fun writing it I wrote 25,000 words in a week. I've never done that before or since, but it just poured out of me. I sent it into my editor telling her I had no clue it was a sexy Sweet Romance, or a sweet Modern Heat (released in New Zealand as Sexy Sensation), or if it had no home at all. She loved the story, said finish it, make sure the sexual tension is right there on every page and I was in with a good chance. The rest is history!

Continued pg 4

In this issue...

1. Meet the author:
Ally Blake
2. RWNZ contacts
Editors' Desk
3. President Pat
5. E-publishing
Part II by Angela James
7. Conference
Questionnaire
8. Member Successes
9. Jackie Coates –
Sharing Success
10. To agent or not to
agent by Sandra Hyde
11. RWNZ Contest News
12. Interview with Karina
Bliss
14. Voice Part II by Anne
Gracie
15. Harlequin Releases
16. International contest
news
18. International News
19. RWNZ regional news
20. The Naked Writer

ROMANCE WRITERS OF NEW ZEALAND, INC.

President: Pat Snellgrove
email: rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz

Vice president: Gracie Stanners
email: gstanners@xtra.co.nz

Secretary: Karen Browning
email: kmbrowning@gmail.com

Treasurer: Bronwyn Evans
email: bronwene@xtra.co.nz

Membership: Rachel Collins
email: rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz

Publicity: Cathy Sneyd
email: csneyd@xtra.co.nz

Immediate past president:
Joanne Graves
email: joanne.graves@gmail.com

H2H editors:
Soraya Nicholas
sorayanicholas@yahoo.com
Suzanne Perazzini
suzanne.perazzini@orcon.net.nz
Sue Knight
sueknight@ihug.co.nz

Website content coordinator:
Kamy Chetty
email: kamychetty@yahoo.com

Principal contest coordinator:
Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com

Founder: Jean Drew
(RWNZ was founded in Sept 1990)

Contact details: Romance Writers of New Zealand, Inc., P O Box 10264, Dominion Road, Auckland

Heart to Heart (H2H) is the official publication of Romance Writers of New Zealand (RWNZ) and is published eleven times a year.

No part may be reproduced or used for profit by RWNZ or others without prior permission from the editor. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of RWNZ, its executive, or its editor. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, no responsibility will be taken by RWNZ or the editor for inaccurate information.

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.

To join RWNZ's critique partner register, run jointly with RW Australia, email the coordinator Rachel Robinson on rachelrobinson@dodo.com.au

EDITORS' DESK

When we willingly offered to take over responsibilities as editors of H2H, we honestly had no idea how much work was involved. How any one person has managed to put this newsletter together alone . . . we have no idea!

We all welcome comments and feedback on our respective roles, as this is after all a newsletter for everyone to enjoy, and we want to make sure it's as great as can be. If you would like to make a contribution by way of interviewing someone or writing an article, our deadline for material is the 15th of each month. Likewise, if you have a new release you would like us to feature (M&B or other) please email before the 15th to guarantee inclusion.

If you would like to submit an article, have a release published, or comment on features, please contact Soraya. Any design queries can be directed to Suzanne, and Sue is in charge of collating regional news and receiving competition information.

We will not be publishing a January issue, so it's au revoir from us until February.

Have a great Xmas,
Soraya, Suzanne & Sue.



ROMANCE ON THE CURVES

Exclusive limited edition T-shirts for sale

Most of you have seen our unique t-shirts, which help decipher computer jargon to make it relevant to romance writers. They would make great Christmas presents for anyone with a sense of humour.

They are black with silver writing with the blue/green RWNZ logo.

To order, please email Bronwen Evans on bronwene@slingshot.co.nz. Send a cheque to Bronwyn Evans, 85 Chelmsford St, Ngaio, Wellington 6035. Or deposit directly into the RWNZ bank account 12-3070-00099767-003 using your name and word t-shirt for reference.

Available in sizes: small 48cm (across from under armpit to the other armpit), medium 52cm, large 56cm, XL 60cm, 2XL 64cm, 3XL 68cm.

\$25.00 + \$5.00 postage and packaging.
(Please see the August H2H for more details.)

PRESIDENT PAT



Welcome to everyone and especially all our new members.

As this is the last newsletter for the year I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from your Executive and Conference Committees.

Both committees have been working really hard on your behalf since our last newsletter and I would like to issue a personal thank you to them all. Without their help over the last year I would have been floundering.

Clendon

You will find a Clendon entry form enclosed with this newsletter. This is a reminder to “finish the damn book” and get that entry into the coordinator. The closing date may seem a long way away but in truth when you take into account Christmas and New Year and school holidays time is slipping away.

Conference

Your conference committee is working extremely hard to obtain keynote speakers. This is not an easy task and can be very time consuming and frustrating at times. To date we have had three potential authors turn us down, which means we have to start again.

Giovanna and I checked out our conference venue – Brentwood – a couple of weeks ago and we are sure that it will be very suitable for the 2009 Capital Affair Conference. Like Waipuna it has outdoor space where you can go and sit, is only a few minutes walk from shops and if you really must go into the city, buses stop right outside the hotel. The accommodation is bright and airy and should suit everyone. **Don't forget once you decide that you are coming to Wellington- book your accommodation straight away. It is not too early to do it. Quote this booking number when ringing 69723. The cost for a twin room is \$132 inclusive of GST which is really reasonable. Phone numbers are: 0508 BRENTWOOD or 04 9200400.**

Alternatively, for International calls you will need to call +64 4 920 0400.

We will be having a special conference section on the website, so keep checking that to see how we are progressing with our keynote speakers and for more information on what is going to be happening at your conference. Your committee has some exciting prospects lined up, and once we have confirmation that they are willing to join us in 2009 then you will be the first to know.

We are currently working through the type workshops that we would like to have- if you are interested in presenting please do not hesitate to contact me. When the time comes for us to decide on these I will email you and get you to send in details of your presentation.

Congratulations

I would like to congratulate Waikato Member Michelle Holman on her successful book launch at the Waihi Library. From all accounts it went really well with a good crowd of people attending. Her book is called “Divine” so look out for it in your library and on the bookshelves.

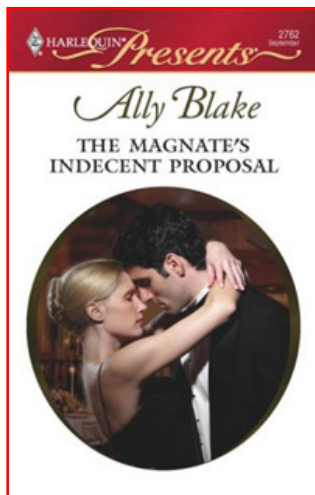
Well that is all from me for this year. Take care on the roads, don't eat too much and come back bright and cheerful and ready to make your mark in the publishing world. See you in 2009.

Regards,

Pat Snellgrove

RWNZ President

Ally Blake cont.



How do you juggle writing for two lines? You must have to plan out deadlines carefully!

I adore it. Thankfully both lines suit my natural voice, as my Sweet Romances have always been a bit younger, a bit more textured with the hero and heroines friends and family making common appearances. But they do using different creative muscles which is so nice. After leaving an emotional Sweet Romance behind, I

can jump into a fun, sexy romp of a Sexy Sensation, and then next up I can sink my teeth into a warm, moving story again.

How does an idea turn into a story for you? Do you start with characters or plot, and what is your process for planning, or do you write by the seat of your pants?

I am a definite pantsner. I usually begin with a small idea; a character's occupation, a one-line opening, or the way the characters might meet. I then find pictures that match as close as possible to the images in my head, then just go! Things like conflict, and plot and the like evolve from the characters as they spill onto the page.

As a regular visitor to you blog, I often wonder how you have time to create such fabulous posts, you obviously put a lot of time into it! Do you set aside time each day to blog, on your own or on other sites?

I'm afraid my blogging has trickled to a mere dribble nowadays, what with writing for two lines and a one year old keeping me happily busy. But I make sure my website is always up to date.

Now that you are a Mum, do you find it harder to write? For all the other new Mums out there, tell us how you make it work!

Um, absolutely harder to write. All those lovely long hours in which to google and tinker and watch *Gilmore Girls* reruns in order to clear my mind ;) are now history. Oftentimes my poor husband gets a kiss at the door, helps me bath my little girl, we play for a bit then she goes to bed then I drag myself onto the computer to write. I'm kinda amazed I can come up with coherent sentences at that time of night after chasing a mad crawler around the house all day. I have come to terms with the fact that I won't be writing four books a year until my little angel is at school, but truly being a mum is a happy excuse.

Time management is imperative. I on the other hand

have no willpower at all, and once I'm on that couch at 7:30 at night it's really hard to pry me off it ;).

Tell us about your latest releases.

HIRED: THE BOSS'S BRIDE is, I think, my most fun Sweet Romance ever. And for that I blame the heroine, Veronica, who appeared on the page driving a pink Corvette, and wearing a black sleeveless T-shirt with the Rolling Stones red lips tour logo splashed upon it. This was for a job interview at a venerable auction house in Melbourne. From there she kept me on my toes throughout. Great fun to write!

A NIGHT WITH THE SOCIETY PLAYBOY is the follow up to my last Sexy Sensation **THE MAGNATE'S INDECENT PROPOSAL** which was a Romantic Times top pick and Waldenbooks Bestseller in North America. The setting, the classy yet suffocating inner eastern suburbs of Melbourne, gave me such tension, and such a unique setting which I'd never seen before in a Modern Heat, a lot of the plot spilled from that. You certainly don't need to have read the earlier book at all, but if you had it's always nice to revisit old characters.

Thank you so much Ally for taking the time to talk to us. For those of you who don't go there already, visit Ally's fabulous blog at www.allyblake.blogspot.com, or go to her website, www.allyblake.com.

Ally has two releases out this month, HIRED: THE BOSS'S BRIDE is a Sweet Romance, while A NIGHT WITH THE SOCIETY PLAYBOY is a Sexy Sensation.



E-Publishing Part II

by Angela James of Samhain Publishing

E-Publishing Part II (Part I published in September/October issue) by Angela James of Samhain Publishing.

Now that my first article has convinced you of the joys of e-publishing, your next step is choosing an e-publisher. The fact is, there are no guarantees that you'll get the right publisher, or that the publisher will be a good fit for you or you for them, no matter how much research you do. But doing some research beforehand can cut out a lot of the risk. The main thing, to start, is make sure you're looking at publishers that publish what you're writing. Sounds silly, I know, but you wouldn't believe how many submissions publishers (and agents) get that don't fit their guidelines. Something that simply looking at the submissions page would usually tell an aspiring author. So first things first, read the submissions page.

Then visit their About Us page. Do the principals in the company have experience in publishing and business? Are they authors starting a company to publish their own work (to some, this isn't an issue) and is it predominantly their work on the website—this can be tricky to know if the authors take on various pen names, however. Is there a physical address for the company where you could potentially reach them (and track them down if they absconded with your royalties)? You might want to research whether it's an incorporated company or a sole proprietorship—does everything hinge on the health and mental well-being of one person?—and who the true owners are. We're not done with the company's website yet, but let's detour for a minute.

My next suggestion might be another obvious one: Google them. Well, any search engine will do, but you get the picture. Type in different variations of the company name, of the editors' names, the publisher's name and other key operators in the company. You have a couple of goals here: to see what kind of web presence they have—this is important in a company whose majority of business is done online. Do they have a web presence and is it negative or positive? Are they promoting their company? What are people saying about the employees and the company? And when you Google the company, do they come up in review sites, contest judging, conferences, or others? Are they out there and do people know who they are—and think mostly favorably about them? You don't want to submit to a company no one's heard of because, well, you don't want to be responsible for bringing all the customers to the book.

While you're Googling, you might pick out the name of several books you know the company publishes and

Google those. What are you looking for? Retail outlets. Where is the book for sale and is it easy to find via search engine? You don't want readers to have a hard time getting hold of your book, and the wider the distribution net, the more opportunities for authors to hit a wider audience online. Are the books available at any of the larger online bookstores: Amazon, Fictionwise, All Romance Ebooks, Books on Board, Diesel Books, Mobipocket and other online vendors?

From Google, hit some of the blogs and websites that discuss e-publishers: Absolute Write, Dear Author, Karen Knows Best, Piers Anthony, Erotic Romance E-pubbers Comparison site (EREC) and Predators and Editors. These places feature reports from authors both anonymous and not, about different companies and their experiences with them.

Now that you've done some basic research into the company's structure, personnel, distribution and reputation, get to know the company the second best way to actually being an author—be a customer. Just as important as how a company treats you as an author is how a company treats its customers. You know, the people who will buy your book and be essentially responsible for you getting your paycheck. Most e-publishers both publish and sell their books on their website, and revenue from selling books themselves is often the bulk of the income.

When on the website, start from the beginning. How pleasing is the site to the eye? Does it draw you in, make you want to browse? Or make you want to click away as quickly as possible? Look at how easy or difficult the site is to navigate. Does the publisher make it easy to browse books in a variety of ways—by title, author, genre, length or some other means? Think about how professional the site looks—are there glaring typos, formatting problems or slow server. Would *you* want to come back to purchase and buy books?

Spend some time browsing the books. Is the cover art well done and would it sway you to want to find out more about the book(s)? If it doesn't, why would it one of your readers? Look to see if the publisher provides blurbs and excerpts for the books. How about information on upcoming titles? Read those to see if they have typos and errors.

Go on and become a real customer. Purchase a book or two. I think this is one of the most important—and

often overlooked—steps. It truly shocks me how often I hear authors say they've never read books published by their publisher—or don't like what their publisher is producing. If you don't respect a publisher for the book choices they've made, why would you want to sell your hard work to them? Even worse, why sell it to a publisher about whom you have no real knowledge of the quality of their product?

As you become a customer, think about these things: How easy or difficult the ordering process was, whether the publisher offers various methods of *secure* payment, how long it takes your book to be delivered—is it instant or does it take days? Email customer service and ask a question about the website, your download or upcoming books. Hopefully there wasn't a problem with your order, but these things do happen on the internet, so it wouldn't be reason to dismiss the publisher. If there was a problem, or if you've emailed customer service to ask a question, track how long it takes them to respond. Remember, epublishers are businesses, small businesses, and just because the company is online 24 hours a day/7 days a week, it doesn't mean the employees are. Give a reasonable timeframe for response, depending on the urgency of your question—24 to 72 business hours seems reasonable for most things, the shorter time being for more urgent matters—like the company got your money but you didn't get your books.

Once you receive your downloads, read them--so make sure you buy something you want to read. If the publisher doesn't have anything you want to read, it's time to move on. Remember, you're trying to experience this like your potential readership would. If you don't want to be a customer, others will probably feel the same. Things to notice about the book: did the blurb and cover represent the book well? Was the book formatted in a way that was easy to read and pleasing to the eye? Did the book seem well-edited or was it filled with errors, typos, consistency errors and plot holes? Remember, no book is perfect, but neither should it be so noticeable that it intrudes on your reading experience.

Among all this, while you're checking out the company and the website, pay attention to who some of the company's authors are. Are there names you recognize or is it authors who are unfamiliar to you? Now is a good time to choose a few authors to email. Not just well-known or high-selling authors, but the authors who might not seem as well-known. Choose from both ends of the spectrum to see if the authors report similar experiences, or if there's a disparity. Also, keeping in mind that things change, be sure to talk to authors with not just past experience, but recent experience as well. Most authors tell me that they're happy to answer questions about their experience with a publisher, especially in today's climate of unstable publishers. As well as authors with the company, you might also ask people you know what they've heard

(just remember, you're dealing with hearsay and rumors at that point).

Some things you can ask: Does the company pay on time and do authors receive royalty statements showing sales and where they were made. What are sales numbers like? In house, are the chief operators and editors accessible if there's a problem with edits, royalties, cover art, etc. This doesn't mean bending over backward to meet the author's every whim and wish, but instead dealing professionally with reasonable requests or providing answers for questions, concerns and complaints. Are the company executives professional?

Ask about promotion, and find out whether the company participates in marketing and promotion—though this is something you can also tell from your online research—or if the author is expected to do all marketing and promotion.

Find out if the company is supportive of the author writing for other publishers, if they allow authors to write in different genres, if there's a certain amount of sex required, or if there are themes, storylines and genres that are taboo at the publisher.

Last, but definitely not least, inquire about the editing process. Is there a process at all or are you expected to turn in your book as clean as possible? Is there more than one person looking at it, what types of edits (copy edits, content edits, etc) are the books given and are the edits a partnership or did the author feel they lost control of their book and their voice to the editor?

By now, you're probably thinking that this has been a lot of work and in reality, good research of companies is work. But as an author, you're a small business. Certainly you wouldn't enter into a business partnership with another business without first researching them and being familiar with their business practices and neither should you do this as an author signing with a publisher. Remember, once you sign a contract, you're bound to them until that contract expires. Protect yourself and your business by doing the best research possible.

Next month: YMMV (Your mileage may vary).

NEW MEMBERS

Sally Cassell, Wellington
Annika Ohlson-Smith, Nelson
Kathryn Strawbridge, Paraparaumu
Helen Lacey, Australia

Conference Questionnaire

So what did you tell us? Kris Pearson

At the end of each conference, questionnaires are handed out so your committee can see what you enjoyed...what you thought could have been better... or different... or whatever.

This year 61 questionnaires arrived in the box. As always, the answers were mixed – and interesting.

Bear in mind that the conference committee does its utmost to keep costs down for you. Times are tight, and accommodation and travel eat up a lot of dollars if you live some distance from the venue. Therefore economies were made to keep the registration fee as low as possible.

Some of the expenses were none-the-less horrendous. For instance, hiring the sound systems, whiteboards etc cost RWNZ \$3939 over the three days. The food bill was nearly \$16,000, with wine just over \$1000 on top of that. We opted for a buffet Awards Dinner this year to save you \$10. However, this didn't go down all that well, so maybe it's back to sit-down next year.

Wherever possible expenses were shared with Australia. Margie Lawson and Cindy Hwang were present at both conferences so their travel could be split, although their fees and accommodation were still substantial.

Biscuits and cheese instead of the pastries and scones for morning tea were suggested by someone. (But with those very early workshops, a decent morning tea can make up for a missed breakfast.) A cup of tea or coffee to start each day was requested. At the quoted cost of \$4 a cup, that would add \$12 to your registration fee. Still want it?

Waipuna met with almost universal approval, and the special conference room-rate was definitely popular. The slightly chilly temperature of the main room each morning was not! Several people mentioned this, so maybe wearing a jacket at the beginning of the day is a good idea.

As always, opinions varied. Some people said it was the best conference ever. Others were disappointed that there weren't more of our published authors attending or speaking. You can blame the big RWA San Francisco conference for this. A lot of our authors were there – and either stayed on for some North American sightseeing, or decided they'd already blown their conference budget for the year. Hopefully more of them can attend in Wellington.

There was excellent feedback on Fiona Brand's and Anne Gracie's workshops – and on

Gracie Stanners' "Writing with a Global Voice", Yvonne Lindsay's "Writing on Demand", and Sally and Amanda's "Release Your Inner Teen".

Margie Lawson was greatly appreciated by almost everyone. And some people would have liked to have an acquiring agent as well as our three editors to pitch to.

Suggestions for next year's workshops ranged from plotting, to improving your beginnings, to sentence structure. Plainly you'd like more 'nuts and bolts' craft sessions.

Several people mentioned that name-tags on lanyards were hard to read – they swivelled backwards and hung so low that you had to crouch to waist level to find out who people were.

One section of the questionnaire pointed out that RWNZ subsidises the conference most years. For instance last year it was by more than \$6000. This was mainly from bringing Jennie Cruisie and Anne Stuart from the USA to speak to us. This year we've got that down to \$1,589, thanks in part to the raffles and the second-hand book table. Harlequin have given us generous sponsorship of \$4000 for each of the last two years, which helps immensely.

We asked if you'd be willing to accept a lower standard of conference or a higher registration fee if need be. This drew several comments along the lines of "we have plenty of money – let's have it out of the RWNZ surplus". Assumptions seem to have been made on the total shown in the annual financial accounts – but there were conference expenses to pay from that, so the 'surplus' is now a great deal slimmer. If we nibble away at what's left by subsidising the conference each year it will swiftly evaporate - not great economics. Obviously we'll have to find some middle ground here.

The solution lies in building up our membership. More members equal more membership fees – and more conference attendees to spread the expenses over. Enrol your sister for her birthday! Shout your mum for Christmas! Persuade a friend. Interest your local book group. See if you can display RWNZ details on your library's notice board. The \$NZ50 annual subscription fee is a steal – and there's a one-time payment of \$20 for new members.

Just for your interest, the conference registration figures told us that about 10% of you travelled from the South Island. About 27% lived between Wellington and Hamilton. Another 6% were from north of Auckland. Around 39% were from Auckland itself. And 18% (including our visiting editors) were from overseas.

Thanks for your answers and comments – they'll all help with future planning.

MEMBER SUCCESSES

Sold

Christina Phillips sold her second Scarlet Rosette, Touch of the Demon, to The Wild Rose Press. Release date tba.

News

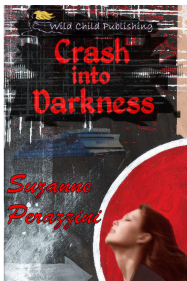
Louise Groarke is a finalist in Romance Australia's High 5 contest

Maree Anderson recently placed 2nd in the paranormal category of the From The Heart Romance Writers Golden Gateway competition.

Susan MacKay placed 2nd in the short contemporary category of the From The Heart Romance Writers Golden Gateway competition.

Christina Phillips' debut Scarlet Rosette, Foretaste of Forever, hit the #1 spot on The Wild Rose Press Bestsellers List in November.

Officially Released



Suzanne Perazzini - **Crash into Darkness** ([Wild Child Publishing](#)).

Amber, a counsellor, and Jaden, a sailor, who both possess extra-sensory skills, are thrown together on a prison ship when the inmates rebel and an explosion breaches the hull of the ship during a storm. Together they battle the elements, a new, cold-eyed prisoner who has Amber in his sights and their traumatic pasts which sent them to the ship in the first place.

"A darkly compelling story--Suzanne Perazzini takes us on an emotional, action-filled journey into a unique new world." – Nalini Singh



Shelley Munro - **Cat Burglar** ([Ellora's Cave – ebook](#)).

Laura Adams is a cop with ambition, and a job in Middlemarch isn't what she wants for her future. Hooking up with the wrong man is responsible for the wrong turning, and she refuses to repeat the mistake, especially with a sexy thief.

Leopard shifter Jonno Campbell takes one look at Laura and desires her as his mate. He's enthralled with the fiery cop, and when she arrests him, he's ready for a strip search.



Yvonne Walus - **Witch Hunts on the Internet** (Echelon Press)



JACKIE COATES – SHARING SUCCESS

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas

Plenty of hopefuls from New Zealand entered the Instant Seduction contest earlier this year, and more recently the Feel the Heat competition, both on the I Heart Presents website. Contestants were asked to enter the first chapter of a Modern Heat style manuscript, plus a synopsis. One of two runners-up was New Zealander Jackie Coates.

Jackie, first of all, a huge congratulations on your placing in the Feel the Heat contest. You must be ecstatic! Tell us what being a runner-up means – what was your prize?

Thanks, Soraya. I was pretty pleased about it! I actually entered the Instant Seduction contest earlier this year too and was lucky enough to get a request for more work from it. But being a runner up this time is a massive boost. My prize is an editorial consultation about the chapter and synopsis I submitted. A pretty fabulous opportunity in other words.

Have you spoken to a real life M&B editor yet?

Does pitching a story idea at conference count?? I pitched to Jenny Hutton in August and I have to say she was really lovely. But as far as my prize for the contest goes, not yet. I have received a three page revision report from Anna Boatman, an editorial assistant for Modern Heat, about my chapter though and will eventually get a phone call to discuss it. A good thing since they basically want me to change everything!

Have you already completed the full manuscript, or only the first chapter?

It's a full manuscript – kind of. I wrote this particular story six months ago and have rewritten it about three times since. It's still not really completed properly but given the kind of revisions they want to see with it, I'm not going to finish it until I have my phone consultation. Just when you think you have a handle on what they want, you realise you don't...

How long have you been writing for? Have you always targeted 'Sexy' style lines?

I've been writing since I was eleven years old. A friend and I used to write romance stories when we were around fourteen and would swap them with each other. We kind of went on doing that for the next twenty-five years! I consider that my romance writing apprenticeship.

As to targeting a 'sexy' line, yes, I have. I originally entered the Instant Seduction contest with a rather full-on first chapter (even if I got anywhere with that contest, I'm not sure they could have put my chapter on the web for everyone to read!) and got a very nice note from an editor in response to say that they thought my voice suited Modern Heat (or Sexy Sensation as it is here). And when an editor suggests a line that might suit you, you go for it!

Where to from here? Do you have a direct line to an editor now?

Actually, I'm not sure – it would be good if having a direct line were true! At the moment I'm revising my contest entry along the lines that they've suggested and then I'll talk to them about it when I have my phone consultation. I also have another partial under consideration with them at present (one I pitched at conference) and I'm participating in NaNoWriMo with a new project that's already half done – yay!

Anyway my chapter, as well as those of the winner and other runners-up, will be up on the I Heart Presents site sometime in the New Year, along with excerpts of the editorial reports – advice that is hugely valuable for would-be writers, so if you're wanting to write for Modern Heat, don't forget to check it out.

Thank you so much for answering our questions, and good luck for working on your entry. We all have our fingers crossed for a sale!

If you haven't heard of I Heart Presents, go to www.iheartpresents.com & see what all the fuss is about. It's a great place to go if you are targeting either M&B Presents or Sexy Sensation.

To agent, or not to agent, when selling to category

By Sandra Hyde ©



You don't need an agent when selling to a category romance publisher. Unlike single title publishers whose editors won't even consider unagented material, Harlequin Silhouette and Mills & Boon will most definitely look at your unagented manuscript. Many authors who've broken into category romance and

continue to sell within it, don't have an agent. On the other hand, many authors do.

Leaving aside the difficulty in actually hooking an agent, why might you chose to have an agent? Why give someone else fifteen (yes, fifteen) percent of your earnings?

To answer this you need to consider what an agent can and cannot do and weigh up the pros and cons as they relate to you.

Bottom line, what an agent can't do is get you more money on your contract. Unlike with single title, the category contracts are largely nonnegotiable, you'll get the six percent of your sales and that's that.

Nalini Singh, who has sold in both category and single title, didn't have an agent when she was selling to category primarily, she says, because the contracts are boiler-plate—there's not that much room for negotiation. But she adds that, "having now got an agent, I do very much like the fact that I can have a creative relationship with my editor, while my agent takes care of the business aspects in terms of contracts etc. So if that's more your comfort zone, then having an agent while writing for category might be a choice to think about."

Desire author Bronwyn Jameson also chose not to get an agent for similar reasons. "I think the question of whether to agent or not is a very individual one. I couldn't see the value in paying the commission on a boilerplate contract. I enjoy the business side of the business and am happy to look after my contracts. If I was more prolific, writing for more than one line or setting up a solid career plan, then my decision would have been different. But for the moment I am happy representing myself and using that money for promotion and to fund my conference and research trips."

So why does any category author have an agent? What can an agent do to earn their share?

For an unpublished author, one of the big things an agent can do is push to get a manuscript read sooner. Horror stories abound of busy editors taking many, many months (if not occasionally years) to read a manuscript. And while an author is perfectly entitled to follow up on the progress of his or her work, knowing how often to follow up or how hard to push can be a delicate balance. An agent, with an already established professional relationship with editors is in a much better position to push for a read of your manuscript.

Karina Bliss, who writes for Superromance got an agent on the advice of Avon editor Lucia Macro when she rejected a partial, along with the suggestion that it would make a good Superromance or Special Edition. Lucia said an agent would speed up the submission process, recommended two and told Karina she could use her name as a referral. From this opportunity Karina signed with Karen Solem of Spencerhill & Associates.

One of the first things Karen was able to do for Karina was to get Superromance to read a single title length manuscript. (Just try doing that without an agent). Her idea being that if the editors liked it they would tell Karina where to make the cuts. "Victoria Curren came back with revisions (and not the ones I would have made), I resubmitted and got my first sale."

However, Karina says she wouldn't necessarily advise an unpublished author to set about trying to get an agent. "I still think inexperienced writers should concentrate on writing the best book they can. But if you're getting revision letters or positive feedback from editors, then absolutely look for an agent. They can hurry editors along in a way you can't. For category, where advances are largely nonnegotiable, speeding up the submission process and casting an expert eye over the contract is where they earn their keep."

Roberta Brown of the Brown Literary Agency adds that an agent can push for payments if they're slow in arriving, and are good to have when going over royalty statements, in case there are mistakes. An agent can also defend an author's project, if the editor and author have a different vision for a story line. An agent is the author's biggest advocate and cheerleader."

Agents support an author's career and can advise

on questions such as should you focus on just one line, or perhaps write for two? An agent can also handle aspects of contract discussions such as whether your next contract is for one book, or two or three, they can push for earlier scheduling of your books, or even push for your inclusion in continuity series.

What about the editor's perspective? Silhouette Desire editor Diana Ventimiglia is a fan of agents. She says, "From my experience, I think it is always helpful to have an agent. Agents are knowledgeable about various publishers and the criteria each is seeking to fill. Because of this knowledge, I think agents are able to evaluate and position a manuscript properly. Usually, when I receive material from an agent, I know that it's been assessed and perhaps gone through a revision or two before submission."

A word of caution. If you do decide you want an agent, Desire author Tessa Radley suggests researching the market and checking that the agent you're considering sells actively in the line you're targeting. "A bad agent can be worse than no agent. Pick an agent who has a good reputation."

In summary, on the con side of the argument, an agent can't get you more money for your category book, and they will take a commission from your sales.

On the pro side, an agent can get you read faster, he or she can handle the business side of things, and they can negotiate certain other aspects of your contracts. They can also help manage your career.

In short, there's no right or wrong answer to question of whether or not to get an agent. It is a personal decision for you as an author to make.

RWNZ CONTEST NEWS

For all contest queries, please contact Ellie Huse,
RWNZ Principal Contests Coordinator - elliehuse@yahoo.com

RWNZ Contest Schedule 2009

The Clendon Award
Closing Date: 27 February 2009 ***

Chapter Short Story
Closing Date: 27 March 2009

Great Beginnings Contest
Closing Date: 24 April 2009

Strictly Single Contest
Closing Date: 25 September 2009

The official 2009 Clendon Entry Form is enclosed with this newsletter.



INTERVIEW with KARINA BLISS

By Soraya Nicholas



One of our most successful New Zealand authors is Super Romance star Karina Bliss. Soraya talks to her about deadlines, inspiration and her latest release.

Karina, you've been a busy girl this year with two releases. Tell us about your latest - . . .

Second-Chance Family is about a guy who inherits custody of three children with his ex wife, the woman he divorced because he blamed himself for the cot death of their son.

I wanted to do two things with this book. Write a reunion story that compelled the reader to believe that even though a happy-ever-after didn't work the first time, these two belong together. And to write kids who weren't just cute little plot devices.

What is your daily writing routine? Do you try to write every single day?

I do, because this is my day job and I don't feel I can reasonably expect my husband to subsidise my meagre earnings unless my butt's in the chair. ☺ So I'm working seven hours weekdays, and often a couple more than that in the last six weeks before a deadline.

In addition to actually writing, that working day might include plotting, agonising over a new synopsis, updating my website, labouring over scene charts to try and find out where I'm going wrong, researching, writing a 'fun' book between Superromance deadlines or doing interviews like this!

Are there days where you still pinch yourself that you're a real, bona fide author?

They're getting fewer. After three years this really feels like my job now and knowing so many other people whose job it is, (thanks to RWNZ), makes it seem perfectly normal to be a romance author. Helen Kirkman lives down the road and all my critique partners are now published – Abby Gaines, Tessa Radley and Sandra Hyde/Hyatt. When I started writing, NO-ONE was getting picked up from NZ or Australia; now it seems every other week there's a first sale. Long may it continue!

What are you working on at the moment? What can your loyal readers expect from you in the future?

You mean my mum? I'm currently working on a Superromance mini-series - **The Diamond Legacy** - to celebrate Harlequin's sixtieth anniversary. Fellow authors in the four-book, three-generation saga are: Tara Taylor Quinn, Kathleen O'Brien and Janice Kay Johnson. The books will be released monthly with the first, (Tara's) off the block in September 2009. My book (number 3) will be out November 09. It's a fascinating exercise, brainstorming a plot with three other writers and very weird to read your hero in someone else's book.

I'm also on a final draft of **Bad Influence**, which is about an ex rock star hero looking for a quiet life and a 'good girl' librarian heroine who can't commit. The catalyst for these two misfits coming together is the son the heroine adopted out when she was very young. Unfortunately that's had to be put aside for the continuity book so it's unlikely to hit the shelves until early 2010.

My favourite book of yours features the best hero I have ever read in a novel! Jordan King from Mr Irresistible. How do you create such great 3-dimensional characters? Where does your inspiration for these heroic men come from?

I wanted to write linked books around three heroes who were business partners and friends. Jordan King was the first written and the hero in my Clendon-winning ms, Courting Kate, which was ultimately rejected. Then I wrote Venus Rising with Luke Carter (the hero of Mr. Unforgettable) which won a Golden Heart and was ultimately rejected. Building up a picture here? ☺ Finally I wrote book three, with Christian Kelly which eventually sold to Superromance and was published as Mr. Imperfect. I then changed the chronology and rewrote the two earlier books (and by re-wrote I mean maybe ten percent of the original manuscripts survived). They were published as Mr. Irresistible and Mr. Unforgettable respectively. So, in answer to your question, Soraya, if these guys are three-dimensional it's because I lived with those contrary, intractable bastards in my head for around a total of four years. ☺

Actually those guys were the only things I got right in the early versions. As for hero inspiration - other writers' books, movies and my partner, Trevor.

Jordan King is the only hero I ever had a visual for...he's Brad Pitt in Legends of the Fall.

What do you love about Super Romance? What makes it such a great line to write for?

Superromance gives its authors freedom of plot, tone, style and even sensuality levels. The line expects subplots and you can even write scenes in a secondary character's point of view. The only 'rule' is that family relationships complicate the hero and heroine's life and are obstacles to their happy-ever-after. That creative freedom makes it a great line to write for and my editor, Victoria Curran, is a wonderful mentor.

How tight are your deadlines and how many books each year do you aim to write?

This year I've written two 65,000 word Supers in twelve months because of the opportunity presented by the continuity. Prior to that I was writing one book every nine months. The people I know who are making a commercial success of writing category are producing three or four books a year so I still have a way to go. ☺ Generally I set my own deadlines but the continuity deadline was set by my editor to meet pre-existing release dates.

From planning to writing 'the end', how long is the process of completing a book for you?

As indicated above, I'm getting faster, the interesting thing will be whether I can sustain it. My ideal is still

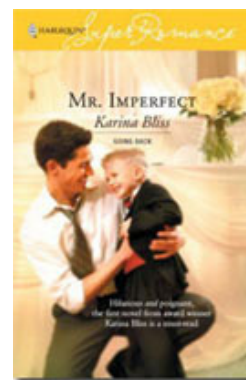
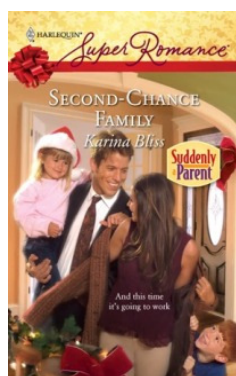
three months to let the idea gestate and write a partial and synopsis; four months writing a draft at four or five pages a day; and two months revision (helped by exhaustive and fabulous advice from my critique partners).

But now I've shaved two months off the process, can I go back to that delicious complacency? While it's important for me to challenge my boundaries, if the quality drops (of either my life or my writing) then I'll review. My agent says 'one great book is worth four good books' in progressing a writer's career. And because I'm a relatively slow writer I have no choice but to embrace that philosophy. ☺

How long did you write for, seriously, before you sold your first book? Was all the hard work worth it, now that you're published?

I wrote seriously for five years before getting published, ie: I admitted I wanted to be published and wrote consistently, as well as invested in craft books and courses. The best thing I ever did for my writing was attend the writer's weekend at Kara with Daphne Clair and Robyn Donald. I can't recommend them highly enough. And then it took another three years. ☺ The bottom line is that it's really, really, really hard work getting good enough to be published. But yes, it's worth it. As Sir Edmund Hilary put it so brilliantly, 'I knocked the bastard off.'

Thank you so much Karina for giving us an insight into your writing life. Visit Karina on-line at www.karinabliss.com. Her latest release, Second Chance Family, is available now.



A Capital Affair

2009 RWNZ Conference

The 2009 Conference will be held in Wellington on 21-23rd August, 2009 at the Brentwood Hotel and Conference Centre, Kilbirnie, Wellington.

Your conference committee are current working hard to source a wide range of speakers for this conference. We will confirm these as soon as we have more details.

VOICE - PART TWO

By Anne Gracie ©

Using the YOU in your writing to take it from the generic to the particular.

A couple of years ago, a friend and I went to see Paul Kelly perform. (Paul Kelly is a brilliant Australian singer songwriter & a living treasure. I love his songs and have listened to his music since he was a Dot <G>. (more details below)

The venue was — as usual — packed out. There was a band on before him and I listened to them with interest. Their songs were all original, the music snappy and well performed, the musicians clearly talented. On a checklist of skills, they would have done well, but somehow, their songs failed to grab me.

I listened and tried to work out why. It wasn't until much later, when Paul Kelly was performing, that the reason suddenly clicked in my mind. It was to do with being generic, and being particular.

One of the songs the first band had sung was about the singer being away from home, interstate, and how he was missing his girlfriend. He was wondering what she was doing now, and telling us how happy he'd be when they got home and he could be with her again.

Paul Kelly sang a very simple but evocative little song called The Midnight Rain. Something wakes him in the middle of the night — must be the midnight rain. She's inside his head again. He knows he won't go back to sleep, so he gets up and wanders around in his dressing gown, puts the kettle on, turns on some music — not too loud, because the neighbours complain. And he thinks about what he and she talked about last. He wonders what coast she's on, what country, what she's wearing, who she's with. Is she alone or with someone, talking soft and low under the sound of the midnight rain...

Basically the two songs were about that same thing — about a guy missing a girl who's far away. But Paul Kelly's was full of fine evocative detail and it made the song completely personal, completely intimate and softly emotional.

The ordinary small details of him wandering around in his dressing gown, in a mood, putting the kettle on, and all the while the soft sound of the midnight rain — they painted a picture we could all identify with. We've all woken to the sound of rain in

www.romancewriters.co.nz

the night, we've felt that sleepless restlessness, felt melancholy and pensive and alone in the middle of the night, listening to the rain. We've all gone over old conversations and wondered about the absent one — so we enter into the mood of the singer so easily.

Those small, very individual personal details invite the listener in — they evoke the moment, evoke the mood. They make the song come alive and have an intimacy for everyone — not just the singer.

He never once said "I'm missing you," or "I'll be happy to see you again" etc. He didn't explain how he felt, or what their relationship was — he didn't have to. We knew enough to feel. It was a wonderful example of "show, don't tell".

The song of the first band told us all about this feeling (rather than evoking it), and worse, told it generically. The girl in the song was "my girlfriend" — not a unique individual. There was no complexity, no subtlety: there was no entry point though which the listener's emotions could connect because the generic nature of the song was too broad and bland to contain any invitation to intimacy.

Paul Kelly's song showed the complexity of how he felt in subtle nuances and though it was completely personal to his own experience and life, every small detail contained an invitation to intimacy - a bridge though which the audience could connect — and feel.

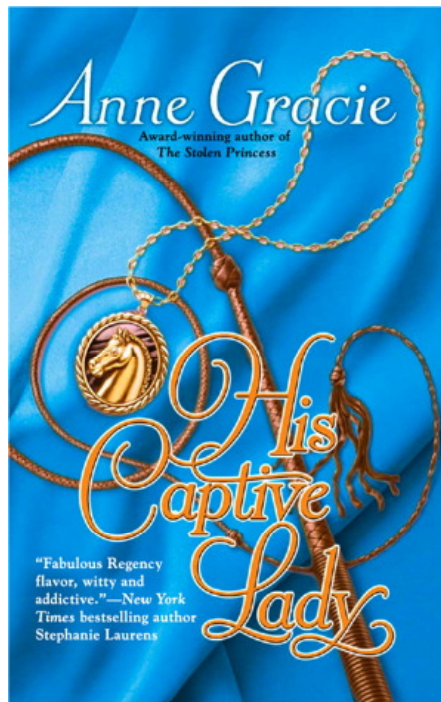
Sometimes small particular moments can evoke a much more powerful response than "big" moments with "big" descriptions. Try to move away from the generic; use

details of your own experiences to build small particular worlds into which you can invite your readers.*****

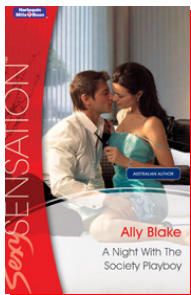
PS. This song is by no means the finest of Paul Kelly's songs. It was just a good example for my purpose — it's exactly how it happened.

Visit Anne at her website www.annegracie.com or at www.wordwenches.typepad.com.

Anne's latest release is *His Captive Lady*, published by Berkley Sensation, USA.



HARLEQUIN DECEMBER RELEASES



Sexy **A Night With The Society Playboy** Ally Blake

Once, Ava Halliburton shared a tender night of passion with Caleb Gilchrist. Next day she hopped on a plane to Boston, and didn't return for ten years. Now she's home for her brother's wedding. And Caleb's the best man...

Caleb's richer than ever, sexier than ever, and has earned a reputation for fast cars and even faster women. He still wants the woman who deserted him all those years ago. But it was her who walked out on him, and he's no gentleman. This time it will be one night, and then he'll be the one to walk away!



Sexy **The Billionaire's Bought Mistress** Annie West

Billionaire businessman Rafe Benton sees beautiful Antonia as a pawn in his plans for revenge. He will stop at nothing to get the woman he wants in his bed - he'll use wealth, devastating sex appeal, even blackmail.

But her unexpected pregnancy has the power to change everything...



Desire **Spaniard's Seduction** Tessa Radley

The white-hot desire for revenge had driven Rafaelo Carreras, Marques de Las Carreras, for years. Now, at last, the ruthless Spanish aristocrat had come to New Zealand to take what was rightfully his from the wealthy, powerful, and hated Saxon family.

Seducing Caitlyn Ross, the Saxons' beautiful young winemaker, was child's play for a man like him - and the perfect way to get what he wanted. But as he came to know this woman, to taste her beguiling blend of innocence and passion, he had to wonder if he was the one being seduced...



Medical **Marrying The Millionaire Doctor** Alison Roberts

Perfect father...and husband? Susie Jackson has come to Crocodile Creek kids' camp to work, not to fall in love. And even if she were looking for love, it wouldn't be with brooding Dr Alex Vavunis. No, it's one of the young kids that catches Susie's eye - a girl desperately trying to reach out to her father... who happens to be Alex! Susie realises that the single father needs help to bond with his daughter, and as she grows closer to the good looking millionaire doctor she realises she was wrong about him - underneath the surface is a perfect father... and husband?



Sexy **The Desert King's Pregnant Bride** Annie West

Sheikh Khalid Bin Shareef always vowed not to get entangled with virgins, but innocent Maggie Lewis proved too hard to resist... Then, unexpectedly, Maggie disappeared the morning after their first

passionate encounter...

For the sheikh, though, Maggie was definitely unfinished business! He had her found and sent to his kingdom, only to discover the consequence of their impetuous night! Marriage was the only answer - but with no emotions, no expectations of love. Maggie would take her rightful place by the sheikh's side... and in his bed... but nothing more!



Superromance **Second Chance Family** Karina Bliss

Just when he has accepted that he'll never be a father, Jack Galloway inherits not one, but three kids. Then he gets the knockout punch. He's supposed to raise this family with his ex! And his ex-wife, Rosalind, has her own ideas about parenting. She's

already doling out domestic duties, as if he had all the time in the world away from his office. She's also got some crazy notion that, thanks to their unexpected "family," the two of them have been handed a second chance. As if he'll let his heart get broken again. But the real knockout punch? That part of him that thinks he and Rosalind could fall back in love.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

Submitted by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner, aka Lisa Whitefern

This month's contests are mostly for published authors with a book published in 2008 - so if that's YOU get set to enter your book in some great contests.

For those "pre-published authors" there's the **Duel on the Delta Contest**

Colorado Romance Writer's Award of Excellence

Published Author Contest

Entry Deadline: JANUARY 9, 2009 Colorado Romance Writers' Award of Excellence

Eligibility- All published novels [no anthologies or novellas] entered must have an original copyright date of 2008.

Categories

Short Contemporary ~ Romantic novels under 60,000 words

Long Contemporary ~ Romantic novels over 60,000 words, including Category Suspense.

Single Title Contemporary Releases ~ Romantic novels not printed as part of a series.

Romantic Suspense ~ Romantic novels with a mystery/suspense element.

Historical ~ Historical romance novels, including Regencies, Series and Single Title Historical

Paranormal/Time Travel/Futuristic/Fantasy Inspirational Mainstream With Romantic Elements

Spicy Romance ~ Romantic novels featuring sexual content and language that is explicit and leaves nothing to the imagination.

Entry Fee- \$20 US

<http://coloradoromancewriters.org/aoe.html>

Orange County RWA 2009 Book Buyer's Best Contest

A contest for published RWA authors judged by industry book buyers.

Entry Deadline- Must be received by January 10th.2009

Eligibility- Published RWA members with novel with 2008 copyright date.

Categories

- Series Short Contemporary: (Under 70,000 Words)
- Series Long Contemporary: (Over 70,000 Words)
- Single Title Romance with Romantic Elements: (Over 70,000 Words)
- Romantic suspense/Mystery with romantic elements: (Over 70,000 Words)
- Historical & Regency: (Both Series and Single Title Over 70,000 Words)
- Paranormal/Time Travel/Fantasy: (Both Series and Single Title)

Entry Fee is \$25.00 per entry for OCC/RWA members; \$35.00 for other RWA members.

<http://www.occrwa.org/bbb.html>

Virginia Romance Writers – The HOLT Medallion

Entry Deadline January 10th 2009

Eligibility-Published Novels with copyright date in 2008. Need not be RWA approved.

www.romancewriters.co.nz

December 2008

16

Pewter Medallions are awarded to the authors whose books are selected by a panel of romance readers as the best in each of twelve categories.

Historical

Mainstream/Single Title Contemporary

Long Contemporary

Short Contemporary

Long Inspirational

Short Inspirational

Paranormal/Time Travel/Futuristic/Fantasy

Romantic Comedy

Romantic Suspense

Extra Spicy/Erotic

Best First Book

Southern Theme

<http://www.virginiaromancewriters.com/Contests/holthistory.html>

Entry Fee - info not available at this time.

The Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence

Deadline- Postmark by Jan 15, 2009

Eligibility- Participation is open to all published authors of novel-length or novella-length romance fiction.

Books must have a copyright date of 2008. Entries must be received by January 15, 2009. Electronic books may be entered provided they are printed and bound with a copyright page produced by the publisher.

Categories

Contemporary Series

Historical

Single Title Romantic Suspense

Series Romantic Suspense

Paranormal/Fantasy/ Futuristic/Time Travel

Contemporary Single Title

Young Adult

Inspirational

Novella (20,000 - 40,000 Words)

Entry fee: \$20 US for first book; \$15 US for subsequent books.

<http://southernmagic.org/gaylewilsoncontest.html>

River City Romance Writers – 18th Annual Duel on the Delta Contest

Deadline- February 14, 2009.

Eligibility- Writers not published in book-length fiction in the last 5 years.

Last Year's Final Round Judges were

Contemporary (series) Harlequin Enterprises/Silhouette

Historical-The Berkley Publishing Group

Mainstream/Single Title-Avon Books

Inspirational- Steeple Hill

Mystery/Romantic Suspense-HQN Books & LUNA Books

Paranormal- HQN Books & LUNA Books

Young Adult- Random House

No addition information available on this contest at this time. Please keep checking the website.

<http://rivercityromancewriters.org/duel.html>

www.romancewriters.co.nz

December 2008

International News

Tor Books

At the RWA conference earlier this year, Heather Osborn, Editor for Tor Romance talked about what she was looking for. They primarily publish paranormal romance, all sorts and types. The list is diverse. Heather likes a strong paranormal theme throughout the entire book, and time travel does not usually fall within this category, unless actual paranormal elements are incorporated. Heather is also looking for urban fantasy with strong romantic elements, but the romance is not the focus of the story. She'd like to see some "old fashioned futuristic romance" with aliens and space. She is also looking for some light-hearted paranormal stories.

Editorial assistant Jozelle Dyer edits romantic suspense for Tor. These stories should be equal parts romance and suspense. She would like to see stories where ordinary people are put in jeopardy, rather than cops, FBI and CIA types.

www.tor.com

Steeple Hill Books

Former editor Krista Stroeve spoke at the RWA conference, but the line has now been taken over by Melissa Endlich (formerly editor of Love Inspired Historicals). They now publish ten books a month for Love Inspired, with single title for Steeple Hill imprints also. Steeple Hill publishes inspirational Christian romance, including historical fiction and romance, contemporary category romance, contemporary single title romance and romantic suspense. They also publish Chick Lit and Women's fiction. These books should appeal to all ages, from teenage daughters to their mothers and grandmothers. Please check the eharlequin website for more details.

www.eharlequin.com

Bantam Dell Books (Bantam Dell Publishing Group – a division of Random House)

20-30 books are published each month in hardcover, trade paper and mass market. Senior Editor Shauna Summers comments that they publish "almost any kind of book you can imagine", and this includes commercial and literary fiction, plus genre fiction. In romance they publish brand new authors and established authors, in historical, contemporary, romantic suspense as well as some erotica. They are not too interested in paranormal, as they already have a strong science fiction/fantasy list. For unagented authors, Bantam Dell will take query letters via snail mail only. Please note: Shauna is the only editor taking romance and women's fiction query letters.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell>

Love Stories Magazine / Grass Roots Publishing Co., Inc.

PAY: \$50 - \$75

POEMS: Multiple submissions are permitted. Please allow up to 10-12 weeks for us to review your poem. If your poem is accepted, pending originality verification, we will send you a release which states that this is your original work and it has never been published before. We will buy global, electronic and internet rights in all languages as well as future anthology rights. You may not resell your story before it is published in Love Stories Magazine. After you sign the release we will issue a payment of \$50.00US - \$75.00US to you ON PUBLICATION along with complementary copies of the magazine. For consideration send to: <mailto:submit@grassrootsmag.com> Enter Poem - Name, Poem Name - into the Comment line. or All hard copy submissions should include a SASE.

Grass Roots Publishing Co., Inc
C/O Hochman Associates Co., Inc
Love Stories Magazine - Editor
908 Oaktree Ave. - Suite H
South Plainfield, New Jersey 07080
908-222-0990

Information compiled by Soraya & derived from the Cynthia Sterling Digest (aka Cindi Myers), with a contribution made by Patrika Salmon.

RWNZ 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 – Cherie Skinner & Sally Astridge
email: bruceastridge@aol.com or
cheriesk@hotmail.com

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING
COUNTRY – Liz Heywood
email: liz.heywood@gmail.com
phone: (09) 2351404

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com



Don't see your region listed here? If you're interested in helping to start a local RWNZ group in your area, please contact RWNZ president Pat Snellgrove via email rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz or our membership secretary Rachel Collins on rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz

Christchurch

We plan to celebrate New Year at the end of January with a bumper Editing Workshop and festive goodies. 2008 has been a great year. We are an enthusiastic bunch and the noise level soon rises when we all start talking writing! The combined energy put into our writing is awesome with some of our members doing well in competitions. Several have had requests for full manuscripts and others are completing courses and finishing whole novels. Some of us also nanowrimo'd our way through November. Roll on 2009 for another year of great writing friendships.

Sue

Waikato

We will be having our final meeting for the year from Friday December 5th to Sunday December 7th at Gaylene Atkins' home in Matiere. All the beds are taken, but there is plenty of room for day visitors. We will be having a dialogue workshop, and other workshops yet to be arranged. Our Christmas fare will consist of a plate of Christmas food, plus a \$5 - \$10 secret Santa. We trust it will once again be a most enjoyable experience for all. Safe driving everyone, and have a lovely Christmas and a productive New Year. The date and venue for our February meeting will be announced in the January Newsletter. Happy writing and happy holidays everyone!

Liz

Wellington

Saturday November 1st saw a lively gathering at Rachel's home. We were lucky to have three guests – Sally who arrived from the USA only five days previously, journalist Catherine, and Zana Bell visiting from Whangarei. Seeing that Rachel is the membership secretary we signed Sally up very fast. Zana shared some insights as a newly-published author – particularly in regard to getting her book publicised and reviewed. Bron talked about contests in the USA – easy to enter on-line. Some of us brought the first page (or more) of proposed new books, so these were read out and comments passed. Mig and Bron are taking part in the current NaNoWriMo. Bron and Rachel are both starting new jobs. The Christmas lunch will be at the earlier time of noon on Saturday December 6th, at 135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu. Ellie will be in touch about the food to bring, and Cathy has agreed to repeat her synopsis workshop from conference. All welcome.

Kris Pearson

Nelson

Nelson's group is firing on all four cylinders. Loren's novel, *True Deception* has been published by Robert Hale, Sally's short story, *The Proposal*, is in this month's *Woman's Day*, Cherie is in the final stages of editing her *French Kiss* for her editor. Other members are feeling equally gung-ho. This month we continued our editing workshops, this time firing up our writing with the selective use of figures of speech. We all thought this valuable. La Verne has had a baby girl, Gabrielle, and everyone contributed to a basket of goodies for her. Next month we shall be meeting at Annika's place for our Christmas lunch. The cards have again come in handy (many thanks, Conference organisers) and everyone is charged to bring to the luncheon the outline of a tale inspired by the cards she's been allocated. Should be fun. Contact Sally at 545 2244, or Cherie at 548 6070 if you're in the area and can join us on Saturday, 6th December.

Sally Astridge

Hawkes Bay

The group isn't meeting again this year but members hope to catch up in the New Year. For details please feel free to contact Ginny at ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz

Ginny

Auckland

Our Christmas and end of year meeting was held early this year at Jane Beckenham's house so we could take advantage of Laura Lee Guhrke's visit to New Zealand. The New York Times bestselling author and RITA winner was very generous with her time and information about her writing procedure, willingly answering all our questions. Everyone had a lovely afternoon tea and everyone won a prize in our Christmas raffle. Our next meeting will be the first Saturday in February, further details to be announced in the next Auckland Chapter e-newsletter.

Frances Housden

THE NAKED WRITER

Baring all in the world of romance and writing

Should you be in the unfortunate position of facing rejection, or a rotten critique, or getting bottom in a contest, or the book you're working on you've realised sucks and you thought it was so good – I hear you, Nakettes, I hear you big time – then should you have a few grand to spare, I've just read about the perfect place to go and drown your sorrows. It's the Black Bull pub in Haworth, England – the pub where writer Branwell Bronte, the brother of the Bronte sisters, supposedly went to console himself for the lack of recognition of his writing genius. In a fascinating travel article in the NZ Herald, (November 4th) the article writer went on a bit of a tiki tour of Bronte Country and had this to say of the pub. "...a very pleasant place to sit in front of a roaring fire on a cold Yorkshire day, sup on an excellent pint of Nettle Thrasher Ale, and muse on the extraordinary Bronte story." Charlotte, Bran, Emily and Anne were born 10km away in the village of Thornton, then moved with their preacher Papa to the village of Haworth. The parsonage where the sisters cared for Papa is today the museum and centre of "the Bronte industry." The Society has preserved the buildings and furnishings, and you can wander through bedrooms, Pa's study, and even the dining room where the Bronte gals sat around and did their writing.

Sad news about Michael Crichton (born in 1942) passing away November 4 from cancer. I've read several of his books and found them real page turners. Always a good read, and politically relevant. Not only was he really tall and really good looking but he was also really smart. On his website was posted this: "While the world knew him as a great story teller that challenged our preconceived notions about the world around us -- and entertained us all while doing so -- his wife Sherri, daughter Taylor, family and friends knew Michael Crichton as a devoted husband, loving father and generous friend who inspired each of us to strive to see the wonders of our world through new eyes. He did this with a wry sense of humour that those who were privileged to know him personally will never forget. Through his books, Michael Crichton served as an inspiration to students of all ages, challenged scientists in many fields, and illuminated the mysteries of the world in a way we could all understand."

Did you know that Laura Bush, "W"'s wife, is passionate about literacy and has a Masters degree in Library? This is of interest to Nakettes why? I hear you ask? What is the relevance here? Well, the relevance is that as I write this exemplary 'piece,' ie the column you are now reading, I should in fact be writing a four page essay about myself in application for a place at University to begin my own journey towards a Masters in Library and Information Management. Yes, Nake is

www.romancewriters.co.nz

entering the realms of higher education, yet again, and along with forms and certified photocopies of relevant stuff, a small novella is required on why I think they should accept me. It is sure to be a riveting read. So riveting, in fact, I'm requiring much coffee and concentration just to get half way through the darned essay without nodding off. But back to the (nearly former) First Lady of that great nation that many of us hope will one day make an offer to buy our manuscripts ... Besides a couple of degrees, and having worked as a teacher and librarian, she has a foundation. The Laura Bush Foundation fundraises to give grants to libraries. Last month it gave over a million dollars to Gulf Coast school libraries – ie the southern area of the USA affected by the hurricanes, and total grants to that area are in excess of \$4 million since Katrina.

Chapter Book Café was mentioned in the latest Metro in the list of Auckland's 50 Best Café's as a great place to have coffee. Some folk are partial to the cakes, too!! Chapter also received an honourable mention in 2007 – damned good going thinking of all the cafes there are in Mt Eden. Chapter Book Café, of course, sponsors our annual Short Story Contest.

And finally, the state of the publishing biz in the US. An article in the November 11 New York Times mentioned how some publishers are taking a second look at their ("famously generous") travel and entertainment budgets. "Steve Ross, publisher of Collins, a division of HarperCollins, said he recently took a job candidate for a drink at a Midtown hotel and was shocked by the \$22 price for cocktails. "I think it will be awhile before I will have the pleasure of meeting anybody there," Mr. Ross said." And should you be looking for the seven-figure book deal, you may still be in luck. "Although some might be cautious about signing a debut novelist, most publishers said they were still aggressively pursuing deals for celebrity books and others with natural best-seller prospects. Last month Little, Brown & Company signed a deal with the comedian Tina Fey for a sum reported as more than \$5 million, and Jerry Seinfeld was out with a book proposal this week that some publishers suggested could go for a high seven-figure advance." For the mid list though things aren't looking hot. "Christy Fletcher, a literary agent in Manhattan, said royalty advances for so-called midlist authors could come under pressure. "Something may sell for \$50,000 that would have sold for \$100,000 a year ago," she said." However, here's a quote to put it all in perspective. There may indeed be a silver lining of the downturn. "Because many books are not selling as well as they might have in a better economy, it does not take nearly as many copies to have bragging rights about being a best seller."