

HEART TO HEART



MARY JO PUTNEY

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Q) All un-published writers love to hear about paths to publication . . . tell us your story. When did you start writing and how long had you been writing for when you received "the call"?

A) My "how I got published" story is apt to invite a storm of bread rolls being thrown at me! But bear in mind that this was in the '80s, when the romance market was still growing and editors were hungry for new voices. I'd always had stories in my head, and vaguely thought it would be lovely to be a writer, by which I meant novelist, though I never defined it to myself.

But I was a lousy typist with beastly handwriting, so the basic requirement of getting words down on paper made professional writing seem to be unattainable.

And then—I bought a computer. It was for my graphic design business, so I could do billing and occasional copywriting, but as soon as I mastered the word processing program, I realized that I'd found the ultimate writing tool because once I fixed an error, it stayed fixed! This one simple difference changed everything.

I'd been reading a lot of traditional Regencies, so when I sat down to write a novel, it was a traditional Regency. After that, everything fell into place with amazing speed. I got The Call (this is where the bread rolls start flying) three months after I started my first book. I was totally shocked—still haven't entirely recovered from that.

I'm not the only romance writer who was contracted after three months back in the Roaring '80s, but it was unusual even then. What I eventually figured out was that I was a good natural storyteller, and that I had good voice for traditional Regency because I'd lived in England and had a degree in 18th century British literature.

Of course I had a lot to learn. I still do. But I was very, very fortunate at the beginning.

Q) What is writing routine like? Do you set aside a certain number of hours per day or have a weekly writing tally? Talk us through an average day for you?

A) Asking about my writing routine is one of the most common questions, yet one of the hardest to answer. I feel like an amoeba who has to explain order and discipline. I'm lazy and unfocused and it takes me most of the day to get to the point of writing. But since you ask—after breakfast, I amble upstairs to the computer and check the e-mail. This can take hours, since I like to chat back.

Since morning isn't a creative time for me, I run errands, exercise at Curves, whatever needs to be done. After lunch, I go back to the computer. Oh, look, more e-mail! (E-mail is the invention of the devil, but that's a rant for another day.)

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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.

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

EDITORS' DESK

This month we are celebrating the fast approach of the conference. We have key note speaker Mary Jo Putney talking to us about being a best-selling international author; Mills & Boon author Susan Napier has joined us to talk about her long career writing category romance; and the gorgeous romance gals Yvonne Lindsay and Trish Morey have also stopped by to tell us about their workshop and their writing lives.

As always we have updates from around the country, market and contest news, and plenty of updated information about the conference. Woman's Day editor Julie Redlich has also been kind enough to talk at length about the recent Chapter Short Story contest.

Don't forget to check out our new Web Surfing column compiled by Nalini Singh, and also our new author profile, this month on Tracey O'Hara.

We would love your feedback, and submissions are more than welcome. We are actively seeking "craft" articles so please make contact if you can help!

Soraya & Suzanne

CONTEST

Harlequin Mills & Boon are running a great new competition for writers targeting Harlequin Presents (Sexy) and Modern Heat (Sexy Sensation). Head to www.iheartpresents.com to find out more!

NEW MEMBERS

Rachel McBeth - North Shore City
Angela Silverwood - Napier
Rosemary Ayers - Auckland
Sharon Blaikie - Wellington

PRESIDENT PAT

Welcome

A Romantic Retreat

If you haven't booked for the conference now is the time to get those pens out and fill in the registration form which is available online at www.romancewriters.co.nz. The early bird date has been extended to the 10 July, 2009 so that gives you a little more time to get those registrations in, get the workshops that you really want to attend, and if you are lucky get an email pitch with Harlequin Mills and Boon. Remember, if you want to attend the cocktail party or dinner, you don't need to book for the conference. Everyone is welcome to attend these events including partners. The more the merrier.

Conference Committee 2010

I am pleased to announce that the following people have put their names forward to help with the organisation of our conference in 2010:

Frances Housden, Miriam Paxie, Joanne Graves, Tessa Rallis, Jean Drew, Annie Featherstone and Pat Snellgrove.

As next year is the 20th anniversary of RWNZ the committee have already started work putting together ideas for this very special conference.

Your New Executive

As there were enough nominations to fill positions on the Executive we do not need to have an election. Your new executive is:

President - Abby Gaines

Vice President - Sara Hantz

Treasurer - Pat Snellgrove

Secretary - Sandra Hyatt

Membership Secretary - Kris Pearson

Publicity - Sue Knight

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those members of the executive who have stood down. Gracie Stanners as VP, Bronwen Evans as Treasurer, Karen Browning as Secretary, Rachel Collins as Membership Secretary, Cathy Sneyd as Publicity (due to pressure of work Cathy had to stand down early this year and Sue Knight came into this position). Thank you for your amazing work both on the executive and as members of the conference committee.

Web Building 101

At the moment several members are doing a web building workshop with Gracie and Jem Stanners. I would like to thank them both for the concise and easy lessons that they have prepared. Several times I have tried to prepare a website for myself to no avail, but now I really feel that I am getting somewhere. I have a website and a blog and it is all due to Gracie and Jem. For someone who is really challenged when it comes to something like this I thank you sincerely for the time and effort that you have put into this project. Without your help and guidance, I am sure everyone else doing the workshop would not have been able to achieve what we have now.

One final word, register now for conference and, besides listening to and learning from some fabulous speakers, you get to meet up with old friends, meet new ones and NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK.

Until next time

Kind regards,
Pat Snellgrove
President, RWNZ

Depending on where I am in a writing cycle, I might get to editing yesterday's writing during the afternoon. New text is apt to be delayed until after supper. Generally I'll work until 11:30 or so.

In an effort to break this cycle, sometimes in the morning before I get to the computer, I'll pull out my trusty Dana, an electronic keyboard with no internet access. I can often generate two or three pages of draft text fairly quickly. Later I'll upload it with a USB cable, and then I can edit and move on.

This is not a brilliantly efficient system. It amazes me that I ever finish a book!

Q) You have been a successful author now for many years, and yet you appeal to new readers now, and those readers who have followed you for over 20 years. How have you stayed "current", and have you had to change your writing style at all to stay so popular in such an ever-changing industry?

A) One of the advantages of writing mostly historical romance is that it doesn't date in the same way contemporary settings do, but there have still been changes in emphasis and length. Reading what's out there is essential. A writer has to pay attention to the market, and shape her work to those realities to the extent she can.

Most of us have a certain spectrum of things we can do well, and often we can work within that and still keep up with the market. Luckily, I have a romantic heart, so I can usually make stories work even if the parameters change.

But sometimes the market changes too much. When the traditional Regency market died in the US, some writers had to leave the business because they really didn't want to write the longer, sexier historical romances. We are what we are.

Q) What keeps you motivated when writing gets hard?

A) Let's see, motivation.... Yes, there's the mortgage bill! Seriously, being a novelist is my ultimate career choice, which means I have to keep showing up for work. That's true whether one is a ditch digger, an engineer, a nurse, or a novelist. We all have good days and bad days. But I have learned that when I run into a difficult place with a book, I'll always figure out how to resolve it eventually. And I do. The trick is to keep working.

Q) Many authors talk about the constant worry of being a writer, as in worrying about whether their editor/readers will like their next book. Is that something that you still worry about?

A) Writing is an anxiety producing profession, no question! And of course we have to worry about how our editors will like our work. Luckily, I'm not by nature a great worrier, so I get by with low level fretfulness. I don't generally think about the ultimate readers at all—I think about the story. Up until now, that's been enough.

Q) Is life as a published writer how you imagined it would be or have there been some surprises? Are there things you'd do differently given the chance to go back and do it again?

A) I changed my whole life by becoming a writer, and I did it with less thought and research than I put into buying a new hand mixer for my kitchen. It happened so quickly that I went from "Gee, I wonder if I can do this?" to "author" before I had time to think about what it all meant. Since I had no expectations, I had no disappointments. Once I found out I could write, my one goal was to be successful enough to write full-time, and that happened after I shifted from traditional Regency to full-length historical romance.

I had always thought it would be wonderful to be my own boss, and by the time I started writing, I'd already supported myself for several years as a freelance graphic designer, so I suppose I have a natural tolerance for the ups and downs of self-employment. It's very Biblical—there are fat years, lean years, and years of plagues and locusts. It helps not to have a high need for predictability and security.

If I had to do it over—I might have left different publishers sooner than I did. I tend to be better at loyalty than at being a cold-blooded businesswoman. But generally I don't second-guess myself. I tried to make the best choice at the time, which is the most we can ever do. If things don't work out, I move on.

Q) Do you use blogs to promote your writing? If so, where do you blog most often?

A) Since 2006, I've blogged as part of WordWenches.com, a group of historical romance writers. Blogging with a compatible group is much easier than blogging by oneself. Fewer posts need to be done, and since we all write historicals, we can often grow our audiences. Someone who likes Jo Beverley's work may like mine, and vice versa.

I'm very proud of the Word Wenches—we deliver quality content, and while we've had some changes in personnel over time as people's situations change, we're still a group of quality writers. And we're from four different countries, which I think is particularly cool: the US, Canada, Australia, and England. We cover the empire!

I've also blogged as a guest on other sites, which is fun, and perhaps useful when a new book is released. Since my most recent book was a return to classical historical romance, I did a virtual blog tour just to get the word out.

Q) What do you enjoy writing the most – straight historicals (like *Bartered Bride*) or your fantasy/paranormal historicals? And did you want to write more paranormal, or was it suggested by your editor?

A) The three areas I most love are romance, history, and fantasy. They blend together well, and two out of three is good. The downside of writing only straight historical romance was that after years of doing that, I felt on the edge of burn-out. I mean, when I started one book with the hero dead and the next with the heroine dead, that's a definite sign of stress! (Those books were *The China Bride* and *The Bartered Bride* respectively.)

This is why I turned my hand to writing contemporary romance, and then fantasy historical. I love writing the fantasy, but it turned out that commercially, contemporaries with paranormal elements do better than historicals with paranormal, since most historical readers seem to like to get their fantasy fix from the setting rather than woo woo elements.

So when I changed publishers, I was fine with returning to straight historical romance (see “mortgage,” above). But I was worrying about the burn-out factor, which is why I was delighted in May to sell a young adult historical fantasy trilogy. The only downside is that I have to work harder!

Q) Changing publishing companies/agents is something a writer is likely to face during their career. What factors or sorts of issues should one consider if faced with this decision? And is this something you have experienced personally?

A) In the Good Old Days, there were some writers who spent an entire long career with one publisher, but that’s vanishingly unlikely now. With mergers and acquisitions, publishers keep changing. Editors often hop like bunny rabbits, and sometimes your publisher stops putting out the kinds of books you write. A whole lot of things can change in ways that are not to our benefit, which is why moving elsewhere is always a possibility.

I’m by no means volatile career-wise—I spent 10 years with my first publisher and 10 years with my second, though I’ve also had secondary publishers and small project publishers. I’ve left voluntarily, and I’ve been dumped. So I do have experience. I guess the decision whether to stay or leave comes down to two factors:

What are your prospects at your current publisher? Do you have a supportive editor who is excited by your work and promotes it in-house? Or do you feel like the red-headed stepchild while other writers get all the attention? Are you getting good covers and good support? Are your books selling well? Or are there so many authors higher on the list that you’re unlikely to get a chance to build? Do you write something that your current publisher isn’t terribly interested in? (Janet Evanovich wrote humorous category romance for a line that wasn’t big on humour. When she had to reinvent herself, she came up with Stephanie Plum and is now one of the bestselling authors in America.)

What are your prospects if you leave? It’s very scary to leave one other publisher without an alternative in hand, even scarier when you’re dropped. It’s lovely when an editor at another house wants to charm you away, but it’s good to talk to other authors there to find out how good they are at keeping their promises, and whether they’ll make a serious effort to build you. Do they understand your work? Do they seem committed to your kind of story?

Sometimes it’s necessary to move to a new place that’s excited about you and your work. Sometimes you can feel the ice cracking beneath your feet and you need to move before you’re swimming in ice water. Sometimes you might want to make a lateral move to a house where you won’t necessarily be making more money or be higher on the list, but there’s an editor whom you really want to work with.

It’s good to talk big decisions like this over with others who understand the playing field, like an agent or trusted friends. But it’s also worth remembering that you’ll never have all the data you need to make a completely informed decision, so you just have to do your best with imperfect information.

And trust your instincts. If you feel really bad about accepting a particular offer, it may not be the best place for you.

Q) What types of books do you enjoy reading for pleasure? Are there any authors who inspire you as a writer?

A) Because I’ve spent so long writing romance, I often read outside the genre, especially in fantasy and science fiction. I still like a romance and a happy ending, though!

Writers who influenced me greatly are Mary Stewart, Dorothy Dunnett, and of course Georgette Heyer.

Q) Do you have any advice for unpublished authors?

A) Read, read, read. Write, write, write. And remember that if it was easy, everyone would do it.

Q) Have you ever been to New Zealand before? Is there anything you want to do while you are here?

Yes, we visited way back in the ‘80s, flying into Auckland and driving down to Wellington, then flying to Christchurch and driving all the way down to Milford Sound. It was gorgeous, and felt like the end of the world - in a good way. The whole country is stunning—you’re very lucky to live where you do! On this visit, our time will be divided by the conference, plus it’s deep winter, so with regret, we won’t go to the South Island. But we’ll find plenty to amuse ourselves on the North Island. We’ll spend about three days around Rotorua, and two or three more in the Coromandel area.

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. Mary Jo! We look forward to meeting you in August.

And I’m looking forward to meeting all of you, too!

Mary Jo

You can find out more about Mary Jo Putney at her website www.maryjoputney.com

CHAPTER SHORT STORY CONTEST 2009

An Overview by Final Judge, Julie Redlich

Fiction Editor, Woman's Day

Once again I have had a delightful collection of short stories to read and comment on. Thanks to all those who sent stories for consideration and congratulations to those who made the final cut.

I'm often asked what I look for in short stories and that is often even harder to answer. However, in a recent interview for the UK magazine "Writers' Forum" I said I always like stories in which people had to face situations that most of us meet in life. And I think that the 2009 RWNZ finalists have proved that writers like to do that too. Finding out that we're not alone in facing problems, major or minor, is a relief, and finding out how others cope with them can be helpful and entertaining.

I'm sure that RWNZ, and your own individual writing groups, give great advice regarding the craft of writing fiction, so I'll just mention a few points from "the other side"—from a fiction editor's desk—that might be useful.

When submitting a manuscript for consideration:

- a) Read your chosen publication first to gauge the contents. This will give you an idea of readers' interests and their potential enjoyment of your story.
- b) Check the publication's guidelines on its website or write for a copy. This will give you the length preferred and the subject matter preferred or not wanted. Some magazines ask that you send submissions only at certain times of year.
- c) Make sure your story is near the preferred length. My heart sinks when I am sent a 5,000 word story because it is way beyond Woman's Day requirements and, however good it is, the author has obviously not bothered to check the guidelines or even read the magazine for lengths.
- d) Give the story an appealing title (intros or sells are not necessary because they are usually determined by the space on the layout). A book title can be more flexible, but for a magazine, especially a weekly one, the title should immediately attract the reader's attention. Many readers are "flipper-throughs" at a hair salon or dentist's waiting room.
- e) Keep the title short. Three words or four words are great. Remember that the type size for headings is considerably larger than the text and too many words in the title might mean some of your immortal prose will have to be cut. But, if your story is to be included in an anthology, you have more leeway. The book reader will be happy to read on and find out what it (the title) means; the magazine reader wants instant information as to what lies ahead. You might like to consider the comment that in the USA the words Bride, Baby or Cowboy in a title mean success in acceptance!

I don't like to guess endings. Please remember that I read about 50 stories a week from all around the world and, as I have been involved with Woman's Day fiction for years, there is hardly a plot I don't know! And this is why I can never write short stories myself as I would be bound to be accused of plagiarism if I were lucky enough to have it published! So I shall never be a rival to any of the New Zealand Romance Writers, just envious of all their opportunities and talent

SUSAN NAPIER

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Susan, you are one of New Zealand's most recognisable names in romance writing. Are you still as passionate about writing romance as you were at the start of your career?

I suppose you could call it a more mature

kind of passion, but, yes, I still love the romance genre, and particularly the short contemporary which is my fort . Sometimes looming deadlines can send me into a creative panic, but I still find it fun and exciting to create new characters and throw them into difficult situations. I am a voracious reader and I have always been a sucker for happy endings, so I am naturally attracted to writing stories about people falling madly in love. I don't think you can have any longevity as a series romance writer unless you genuinely love the style and content of the genre. Writing any kind of book is hard work, and after 25 years behind the keyboard, I can confidently state that if I wasn't passionate about my work I would have been driven completely crazy by now!

Take us back in time. How did you become an author?

I was a huge fan of Mills & Boon romances before I tried my hand at writing them myself, and I still get an enormous kick out of seeing my name in print, and sharing the bookstore shelves with wonderful Harlequin authors like Penny Jordan, Carole Mortimer, Robyn Donald and Daphne Clair - whose books inspired me to write in the hope of emulating their success.

I had previously been a newspaper journalist and then a script-writer for an Auckland film company, and after the second of my two sons was born I decided that rather than continuing with my

freelance writing I would have a go at writing a book. Because I wanted to build a professional career as an author, I chose popular fiction as the field most likely to produce a decent income and because I loved reading M&B romances it seemed an obvious place to start, as I was already steeped in the style and conventions of the genre. Around that time I read a Woman's Weekly story about NZ M&B writers Robyn and Daphne, and thought that if they could do it, so could I. Up until that time, other than Essie Summers, I hadn't been aware of any other Kiwi romance writers.

Since I had a husband cheerfully supporting me, I gave myself until the boys went to school to see if I could make a go of romance writing as a career. It took me around 18 months to finish The Damned Book (unfortunately there was no Clendon Award in those days to provide added incentive to fledgling authors) working on it in the evenings or while the children were napping or at kindergarten.

The response I had to that first manuscript I sent to M&B in London was that the editor loved the writing but didn't like the plot structure. Over the next year I made the required changes and it was finally published in 1983 as "Sweet Vixen", by which time I had had a second book accepted and was at work on a third.

Have you had to change your style at all to keep up with trends?

I don't think I have consciously changed my style, more that I have probably grown along with a rapidly-expanding genre, and adapted to changing societal standards and the greater freedoms that come with being a multi-published author. My first book was consciously derivative, reflecting the influences of my favourite romance writers, but once I had a few books under my belt I gained the confidence to rely on my own instincts on how to push the envelope without alienating readers - or editors. Over the years I have had some very fine editors, whom I relied on to guide me in building on my strengths (humour, surprise plot twists, sexy love scenes), as well as reigning me in when I go a bit over the top. There are occasions where I have had to tone down a love scene which is too explicit (because sometimes a gal can get swept

away by her passion - as every romantic heroine knows!) but usually this is a choice I make myself. If I feel uncomfortable about something I have written, whether it be in language or description, I generally cut it out before I submit it to an editor. I rely on long-honed instincts about what is and is not acceptable to the modern reader.

What keeps you writing? Do you have a daily/weekly pattern?

The passion, Baby, the passion! The need to have a romantic fantasy exactly tailored to my own desires is what drives me to write. I do have a daily work-pattern. My optimal scenario approaching a deadline is to write all day five days a week. Mostly, it doesn't work out – life does have a way of interfering and some characters and plots elude you for hours, days, weeks, months.!!! Writing is a very solitary task which takes intense concentration – it can be both exhausting and exhilarating at the same time. However, the discipline of writing every day, for at least part of the day is a necessity for self-employed writers, as is setting goals, particularly if you are squeezing in your writing between other jobs or family responsibilities. Setting personal deadlines of number of words or pages completed in a day can also be a good way of keeping yourself on track for finishing a book.

Do you have a favourite story or characters that you still think about from any of your earlier novels?

My virgin hero from “**Secret Admirer**” is a favourite of mine, as is the first scene of the book with the hero and heroine in a lift. I don't think I have yet come up with a more startling opening scenario, unless it is the punch in the face in “**Mistress of the Groom**” or the ‘I think I'm in love’ opening line from husband to wife in “**Fortune's Mistress**”. As you might gather from this, I love creating opening scenes. Frequently they are the whole basis on which I build a plot. I am also very fond of the various members of the Marlow family who have appeared in several of my books – and I still have two unmarried Marlows up my sleeve.

At the upcoming conference, you are presenting a workshop entitled ‘Romance words readers love to hate’. What can conference goers expect?

I'm actually giving a talk, not a workshop – so conference-goers should be on the look-out for a laugh rather than interactive involvement.

Romance authors (and readers) come in for some very acid criticism from the literary mainstream but within the genre we know not to take ourselves too seriously. This will be a tongue-in-cheek look at our favourite genre which might also help aspiring writers avoid obvious pitfalls. I love reading romances but there are certain words and phrases that drive me crazy, and thanks to the internet I know that I'm not alone! It's not only words, but plots, character types and settings - all sorts of things that get up collective noses. As well as the obvious, there are a ton of romance fans out there who have some very specific and bizarre pet hates. Fortunately our readers seem to be a very tolerant lot – they can hate the phrase but love the author. Some even like to hunt out their favourite hated words. Some will grit their teeth and read books with plots or characters they hate because they love the author's style of writing.

Warning: This talk contains some sexual references and incredibly embarrassing euphemisms. Excessively Gentle Readers may wish to bring a fan to cool their blushes.

What are you busy working on at the moment?

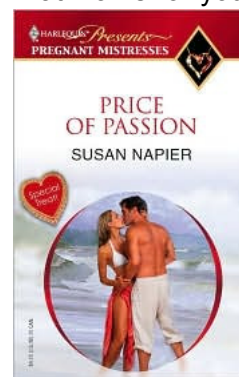
I am currently at work on a Sexy Sensation due out next year.

Any magical words of wisdom for unpublished writers salivating over your wonderfully successful career?

Write what you love to read. Choose the themes and characters that appeal particularly to your own tastes. In popular fiction there is no substitute for personal enjoyment of your chosen genre. And there is no “right way” to write a book. Writers come at stories from every angle – some start at the beginning, some in the middle, some write the last chapter first; some work with a plot outline, others are inspired by characters – or opening situations. You must discover for yourself through trial and error what works for you and allows you to write fluently.

Thank you so much Susan . . . we'll all see you at the conference!

Susan can be found on-line at www.harlequinpresents.com, and a free download of her book, *Price of Passion*, is available at www.harlequincelebrates.com.



YVONNE LINDSAY & TRISH MOREY

by Soraya Nicholas



For those who maybe don't know, tell us who you are and what you write . . .

Y: I write for Silhouette Desire, which is one of the Harlequin series lines published out of New York.

T: And I write for the Harlequin Presents line, published out of London, and that we see on the shelves Downunder as HM&B Sexy.



You both worked hard in your pre-published years, determined to find success as Mills & Boon authors. How did you keep writing through those long years?

Y: I think what kept me writing, in the thirteen years it took for me to sell, was the fear that if I stopped I'd have stopped just too soon. You know, like the people lost in the desert whose bones are found only metres from a road or a stream that might have saved their lives if they could have just taken a few more steps. That's not to say that I didn't feel like quitting, and just 12 weeks before I sold to Silhouette Books that's exactly what I did. I quit. For about two weeks.

T: LOL, I can vouch for that very restful two weeks. Then, just a few short weeks later, there was this peace shattering early morning call from NZ. My four kids (who hibernate in the caves downstairs) remember my intelligent response that cracked wide open the early morning silence that fateful sale morn. "Oh my God, oh my God, Yvonne, Yvonne, oh my God!" Strangely enough, it was no surprise to them to hear at breakfast a couple of hours later that Yvonne had sold. Go figure.

As for my apprenticeship, I only took 11 years to sell, (we're so not competitive at all ☺) and while it was frustrating and even heartbreaking at times, I just knew it was going to happen and there was no way I was going to give up. And maybe it's just as well I didn't know in the beginning just how long it would take, or I might just have settled for a Bex and a good lie down. As it turns out, that long apprenticeship has been a boon for my published career, so don't feel down if it takes you a good while to sell!

So yes, it's true what they say. There are no guarantees you'll ever be published, but giving up is the quickest way to *never* get published.

Ladies, you both entertained those who attended your workshop at the 2006 conference with your "Truth, Lies and Getting Published" workshop. What can we expect to learn this year?

Y: Undoubtedly more entertainment but also a great deal of soul searching and a need to be totally honest with yourself. Too often we are taught not to talk up what we do well. This workshop will give our attendees the opportunity to appreciate and celebrate what they're great at, while identifying areas they're not so strong in. Through this we hope to help writers figure out how their strengths can bolster and eventually neutralise their weaknesses, making their writing stronger than ever.

T: Gosh yes, what Yvonne said. It has to be entertaining or it wouldn't be a session with Yvonne Lindsay and Trish Morey. But we will get you to dig deep, and if you still leave our session uncertain about what your strengths and weaknesses are, you will be going away with the tools to find out exactly what they are and how to get to work on them.

You've both been published a few years now. Is life as a published author what either of you expected it would be?

Y: I had absolutely no idea of what to expect after actually reaching that goal of 'selling!' I think it's a bit like a first time mum, coming home from hospital with her baby and then thinking "what the...?" Or the new bride coming home from honeymoon to settle into married life without having planned ahead. While we have a heck of a lot of information at our fingertips regarding craft and business etc., in the lead up to selling, there actually isn't a huge amount of information available on what comes next and, depending on which publisher you sell to, what comes next can be quite challenging.

For myself I've learned to allow time between books for the additional work that comes with selling your book, i.e. from the production side—the line edits, then copy edits, both of which can be time consuming if there have been a lot of changes or if those changes haven't been keyed correctly, and from the promotion side—the interviews (whether they be television or print media,) blogs, website updates etc. And then there's the day to day business of writing, meeting your contracted deadlines, making sure your accounts are up to date and GST returns filed on time etc. I suppose in many ways it's no different to running your own business.

And, of course, there's always the next idea to sell. Just because you've sold one or even fifteen books, doesn't guarantee that your next idea will be welcomed by your publisher, so there's still always a degree of uncertainty in the air. Certainly keeps you on your toes ☺.

T: Is life as a published author what I expected it to be? That's a toughie. It's like Yvonne says, you concentrate so much on getting published, that when it finally happens - kapow! - it's like blasting through a wall that as an unpublished writer, you can't see past, you can't get over, you can't see through. And then with one phone call, suddenly it's gone and the landscape before you is different. The mountains are higher, the valleys deeper and those rivers don't always run with gold:-) There are different demands, different needs and it's stuff you have little or no concept of before you sell.

It's simultaneously harder (was that first time just a fluke?) and yet easier (you have an editor's ear), more challenging (you have to do this again, and again, and again), more gut wrenching (why did my sales tank?) and yet more rewarding (just ask any RITA or RBY finalist) and in more ways than you can imagine.

It's probably a little different to what I imagined (I'm still the one running the kids around because I work from home), but it's better too (because I work from home). But it's a dream job. That doesn't make it easy, but it does make it pretty damn special. I wouldn't change it for quids.

What are you working on? What exciting new books can we expect to see out from you in the next year?

Y: My next book is due out in the US in December 2009 (Aus/NZ January 2010.) **Defiant Mistress, Ruthless Millionaire** is loosely linked to my Rogue Diamonds trilogy (Aus/NZ Mar/Apr/May 2009) and is an office romance with a twist—there's always a twist, isn't there? In 2010, I will have a new trilogy out in the US mid year, with another anticipated title for a project yet to be confirmed. More details and sneak previews at www.yvonne.lindsay.com

T: Watch out for **The Ruthless Greek's Virgin Princess** in September, a story linked to June's **Forced Wife, Royal Love-Child, and His Mistress for a Million** in March 2010. Plus I'm currently working on a book for a very sexy sheikh continuity that should be out mid year. Check out www.trishmorey.com for more details.

TRACEY O'HARA

Interviewed by Kylie Short



**Boldly Going ...
where we all want to go!**

Have you ever had a conversation with friends about what life would be like once you receive THE CALL? Have you wondered what happens next? What lies beyond that magical moment?

I thought it was time to ask some of our newly

published about their experiences and see if they can shed some light on what to expect and how they've begun to build their careers now that they're published.

Please share a little bit about yourself and your writing.

I'm a full-time Urban Fantasy author writing for the HarperCollins Sci-Fi/Fantasy imprint Eos Books in the US and have another full time job as an IT consultant. Seriously - I work 36-40 a week at my day job and just as many - if not more at my "other" job as I call it now. You can't be part time, not if you want to succeed. Besides my family, and even they have to take a back seat at times, writing is the most important thing.

How authors are "discovered" is as diverse as the brands of chocolate we consume. Please tell us your CALL story.

I've had many contest finals and placings over the last few years with *Night's Cold Kiss* (or *NCK* as it has become known amongst my writing friends), including a third in the RWAustralia Emerald Single Title and the being a finalist in the RWAmerica's Golden Heart Award for paranormal romance.

After finalling in the Golden Heart, I sold a short erotic Spice Brief to Harlequin in a 2 story deal, so I actually have had two "calls". After attending the San Francisco conference for the Golden Heart, I returned home with no gold locket, but still rather pumped as I had talked to an editor interested in my story.

However 2 weeks later, while attending the Australian conference in Melbourne I woke up to several excited emails from my agent, Jennifer Schober saying "ring me". The news - the executive editor at Eos wanted to buy *NCK*, and not only that, she wanted a three-book deal. Lots of squealing and celebrating ensued but I had to keep it under wraps until the deal was accepted. The hardest thing ever - wanting to tell everyone and having to keep it quiet. The following day I got the nod from my agent and Anne Gracie announced it to a room full of fellow romance writers. I

www.romancewriters.co.nz

got to accept my first sale ribbon. Best place ever to

be when you receive the call story.

One of the best things though is my good friend Erica Hayes sold a month after me and we have been able to share this journey of ups and downs together.

At the moment I have my husband and a dear friend, Cathy, as my critique givers. They actually got me through the bulk of the first book, so I have gone back to the formula that works.

I just have to ask the-chicken-or-the-egg question. What happened first - agent or an editor? How did you go about finding one/both?

I do have an agent, the BESTEST in the world. Jennifer Schober of Spencerhill Associates. I am a slush pile success I guess you can say. I had a list of agents that I was querying - Spencerhill was number 17 on the list. I queried Spencerhill on a Tuesday and by Friday I had been accepted. Jenn and her associate Karen Solem offered representation on the strength of my first three chapters. I had had several requests for fulls with other agents, it was weird and quite satisfying to have to write to the others and say, "sorry I'd like to withdraw my manuscript from consideration."

What's the name of your book scheduled for release and can you tell us something about it?

My book is called, *Night's Cold Kiss: A Dark Brethren Novel* and is due to be released August 25th in the US. Here is what my publisher has to say about it:-

For centuries war raged between the humans and Aeternus vampires—until courageous efforts on both sides forged a fragile peace.

But the rogue Necrodreniacs will never be controlled—addicted as they are to the death-high . . . and bloody chaos.

Since witnessing the murder of her mother, Antoinette Petrescu has burned with fiery hatred for the vampire race—even for Christian Laroque, the noble, dangerously handsome Aeternus who rescued her. Now an elite Venator, Antoinette must reluctantly accept Christian's help to achieve her vengeance—even as he plots to use the beautiful, unsuspecting warrior as bait to draw out the bloodthirsty dreniacs.

What's the most exciting thing about writing for you? The most boring?

The most exciting is seeing a page of utter first draft crap (and I do write a real dirty first draft) start to really shine after some re-writing. Honestly - I LOVE doing edits. The most boring is reading through your ms for the hundredth time looking for grammatical and punctuation errors when you are as grammatically

challenged as I am.

At the chat sessions during conferences we hear favourite authors telling us that things really change once you publish. What differences, good or OMG (oh my goodness), have you experienced since getting THE CALL?

Life gets crazy. If you were busy with writing before – times that by 10. I had an email from one of my fellow Eos authors Vicki Pettersson who basically said enjoy life as you know it now because can't you hear the train coming through the tunnel. I thought my life was insane enough as it was since selling, but I don't have my first book yet.

No matter how much you think you are prepared for selling, you're not. And selling is the easy part. I used to listen to published authors say this, and think "Yeah right, but you're sold, you've made it." But it really is like jumping on the back of a tiger. You have to work hard to stay on his back, because one slip and you could fall off and be devoured by the beast.

One of the worst things is the lack of time you have for others, well at the moment it is for me because I still

work full time. My support group the go-gos, full of wonderful and inspirational women, goes on without me because I just have nothing left. I miss them terribly and get to see them once a month at the Canberra Romance Writer's meeting. But I miss the fabulous times we used to have.

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

Once I sold my story it was no longer mine alone. It now belongs to me, my editor, my publishing house and my (future) readers. I've had to learn to be flexible within limits and to trust my editor. It's no good saying "I can't possible change that – it's integral to the story," especially when your editor is the Executive Editor of the line and has multiple New York Bestsellers like Kim Harrison and Vicki Pettersson under her belt.

Tracey, thanks for your time.

You can find out more about Tracey and her books at her website www.traceyohara.com

July Web-Surfing

Fantastic research source - British History Online (includes maps and primary sources such as assize records etc): <http://tinyurl.com/bx3lpx>

Writing Contests: The Good, the Bad and the Waste of Time at Wheatmark: <http://tinyurl.com/pfo6n3>

The Eroticization of Equality and Social Justice: an article by Hillary Rettig for The Huffington Post on why "romance itself is a fundamentally progressive activity": <http://tinyurl.com/pkglgu>

Agent Nathan Bransford talks about the final results of his Be An Agent for a Day contest: <http://tinyurl.com/c9ntkw> (This was all about queries). He also did a post on re-querying the same agent: <http://tinyurl.com/oxle9k>

Writer and P.I. Colleen Collins gives tips on how a character might check out a suspicious person, investigate an incident, or research a piece of evidence: <http://tinyurl.com/r48c8l>

Julie Ann Dawson talks about "First Person Narrative Pitfalls": <http://tinyurl.com/pnrkgv>

Great NYT profile on the author of the Sookie Stackhouse series – "Vampire-Loving Barmaid Hits Jackpot for Charlaine Harris": <http://tinyurl.com/owg4vd>

Article on how publishers are changing the way they do business in the current economy: <http://tinyurl.com/qgd3q6>

Publisher's Weekly Article - "When Love is Strange: Romance Continues its Affair with the Supernatural": <http://tinyurl.com/omcar5>

Executive Editor Marsha Zinberg talks about Harlequin's Famous Firsts releases: <http://tinyurl.com/kqy9h3>

"Blogging Do's and Don'ts" - advice for authors from agent Lucienne Diver: <http://tinyurl.com/o8ogag>

Editor Leah Hultenschmidt gives tips on what questions you should be asking if you get The Call: <http://tinyurl.com/lwub8c>

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

A ROMANTIC RETREAT JUST GOT BETTER

By Kris Pearson

(with techie info from Gracie Stanners)

By now I'm sure you've visited romancewriters.co.nz and printed off the conference programme and your registration forms. The programme looks great, doesn't it? But it was even better to see it emailed in technicolour with photos and much more comprehensive descriptions of all the workshops and speakers. Have you read the copy in your inbox?

A Romantic Retreat gives you the opportunity to hone your writing skills, talk with like-minded people, and take part in workshops by many of our best published authors. You'll learn from (and really enjoy) top international speakers - author Mary Jo Putney and agent Melissa Jeglinski. You'll meet old friends and make new ones. So have you booked your accommodation and fares yet?

Early Bird Extension

To make it more attractive we've extended the Early Bird deadline out by another ten days. This means you can still get the big Early Bird Savings until July 10th, and that means \$50 saved on the two-day conference, and another \$20 saved on the Friday workshop and cocktail party combo. Book now to get the full three days, plus Cocktail Party and Awards Dinner for \$485, or the two-day conference for \$250. That's right – just \$250 for a two-day world-quality writing master class! These prices include the Waipuna's famous morning and afternoon teas and lunches.

Harlequin Pitches

When the programme was finalised, Harlequin had still not confirmed they'd be sending an acquiring editor to A Romantic Retreat. Eventually they advised us that they weren't able to send anyone this year. That certainly set the cat among the pigeons!

But subsequently we've been able to negotiate something even better. Instead of attendees pitching their finished novel face-to-face, forty of them now have the opportunity to take part in an email pitch. No airmail postage, and no long wait. Sue has publicised this in her mailings to the whole membership, and I've put it on the loop. As registrations have rolled in, Diana has offered the pitches to each attendee, and after the 20th of July forty partials will be sliding through cyberspace to the London Editorial office.

If you've been allocated one of these pitches, here's what you need to know:

- You must be attending at least the 2-day conference.
- You must have a finished novel suitable for one of the Harlequin category lines.

Harlequin wants a one-page synopsis and your first chapter of up to 25 pages. In your word processor this is usually laid out as 12pt Courier New font, with 3cm margins all round, and a line spacing of 25 lines per page. Your synopsis should be same font and margins, but single-spaced.

Do not send attachments. Follow the directions below to embed your pitch in the body of your email.

Gracie is co-ordinating this, so between July 15th and 20th:

- Open a new email
- Under Options or Format or similar—depending on your email program—do not select the choice to send the email as **Plain Text**.
- Type in:
 - the title of the book,
 - your name,
 - the targeted line, and
 - the completed manuscript word count.
- Press ENTER twice
- Copy your one page synopsis from your document
- Paste it into the email.
- Press ENTER twice
- Type the title of the book again

- Copy the first chapter (maximum twenty-five pages) from your formatted manuscript
- Paste it underneath the second title.
 - NOTE: The formatting (single and double spacing) SHOULD come across to the email. If it doesn't, then use your email formatting options (under Paragraph or similar, depending on your email program) to correct the line spacing.
- At the end of the manuscript, please add your details:
 - name,
 - address,
 - telephone, and
 - an email address that works so Harlequin can get hold of you.
- Check the whole thing.
- In the email's subject line, put **Harlequin Conference Pitch**.
- Check it again ☺
- Email it to gracieoneil@xtra.co.nz

If you've gone through the above procedure and still have problems, contact Gracie at the gracieoneil@xtra.co.nz address. She **will** let you know when your baby arrives at her place. She will **also** let you know when your babies have gone to London.

All these valuable pitches will be forwarded as one very impressive email to Kimberley Young. The London editorial team will read all the pitches before conference, supply a standard 3-point editorial response for everyone, and request three full manuscripts from among the forty. These three lucky writers will be announced at A Romantic Retreat.

If you've not yet registered for conference, but would like the opportunity to pitch, do ask. The absolute cut-off date is July 10th, but Harlequin restricted their offer to forty, so if the pitches are all gone by the time you register, very sorry but it had to be first in, first served.

Remember, if you want to pitch a finished book to agent Melissa Jeglinski, you'll need to be in fast, too. Same goes for the breakout workshops. The first thirty names get the workshop of their choice; after that you might be allocated something else (unless of course so many of you want to attend the conference that we have to extend the size of the workshops! What a great prospect...)

Raffles

Conference Raffles are fantastic. Our sponsors donate very generous prizes. This year Star Educational have provided an Alphasmart Intelligent Keyboard, and Lesley Marshall of Editline has again offered one of her valuable critiques – your choice of up to 80,000 words or five chapters and a synopsis.

Individual members and our local branches also provide wonderful goodies. A reminder here: if you're bringing something to raffle, please bring the wrapping and make it look nice yourself. The poor old committee can't produce cellophane and ribbons and baskets out of thin air at the last minute...

The most intriguing raffle prize of all is breakfast with agent Melissa Jeglinski. We'll sell the tickets on Saturday and draw the lucky winner at 5.30. Melissa has offered to buy early Sunday breakfast and provide an extended one-on-one pitch. Will you be the lucky winner?

It goes without saying that a collection of gold coins will be very handy to buy your raffle tickets with.

What else to bring -

*Books to donate to the second-hand stall – a nice extra fund-raiser for RWNZ.

*Something lacy or leathery to wear to the Friday night cocktail party.

*Something with a touch of fantasy to wear to the Awards Dinner.

*Two copies of the first page of your current book for Melissa's early Saturday-morning workshop. (One for Gracie to read out to everyone, and one for Melissa to comment from.)

*Questions for the panel discussion on Sunday afternoon. Written questions will be easier to hear, and speed things up. Email them to kris.p@paradise.net.nz.

*Questions from published authors for the Sunday Published Authors Workshop with Mary Jo Putney. Email questions to Pat Snellgrove rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz

*A ten dollar note, or your chequebook, so you can order a disk of the latest conference photos. Clare will be everywhere again, happily snapping. We're aiming to put last year's photos on the big screen as happy memories.

*Muesli bars or pottles of yoghurt to make an instant breakfast on early-start days – and to save money that you could spend at Barbara's On-site Books.

If you've not attended conference before, make this the year that you do. We'd love to see you – and can guarantee you an enjoyable and inspiring time.

MEMBER SUCCESSES

Compiled by Tyree Bidgood

Official Releases - July New Releases

Single Title

Branded by Fire by Nalini Singh (Berkley Sensation). Part of Nalini's Psy/Changeling series

E-Books

Make That Man Mine by Shelley Munro (Ellora's Cave)

Lynx to the Pharaoh by Shelley Munro (Ellora's Cave) Released 1st July

Fiji on Fire, Fiji on Ice by Eve Summers (Red Rose Publishing)

The Seventh Taboo by Eve Summers (he Wild Rose Press)

Mills & Boon

Having the Billionaire's Baby by Sandra Hyatt

Valente's Baby by Maxine Sullivan



Member Successes

Competitions

Kamy Chetty finished 2nd place for the **WISRWA series contemporary** (long/Short) – way to go Kamy!

Emerald – Kylie Short has 3 entries in the Single Title final and 2 entries in the finale of the **Valerie Parv Award**.

Please email submissions to this page to, Tyree at rocker.t@xtra.co.nz. by 13th of each month.

ROMANCE WRITERS OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

Agenda

For the eighth Annual General Meeting of **Romance Writers of New Zealand Incorporated** (RWNZ Inc.) to be held at 4.45 p.m., on Saturday, 22nd August, 2009, at the Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre, 58 Waipuna Rd, Mt Wellington, Auckland.

Business:

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the seventh Annual General Meeting of RWNZ Inc. held on Saturday 16th August, 2008.
2. Presentation and adoption of the President's Report.
3. Presentation and adoption of the Treasurer's Report for the year ended June 30th 2009.
4. Special Resolution:
That two signatures be required on all Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc cheques and other forms authorising payments on behalf of RWNZ. To do this the phrase "where the amount to be paid exceeds \$200" should be deleted from Article 12.4 of the Rules of Incorporation.
5. Remits:
Remit 1: That the treasurer's report be circulated to the entire RWNZ membership PRIOR to the AGM, either in the conference registration packs or with the issue of Heart to Heart sent to members in the month prior to AGM.

Remit 2: That the membership secretary be required to give a short report on the status of membership at the AGM each year and to report to members on what steps have been taken during the year to promote membership of the organisation.

Remit 3: That the Treasurer's report presented at AGM should, each year, include a separate report giving a more detailed position in respect to conference income and expenditure including previous year's actual conference costs and current year's projected conference costs.
6. Introduction of the new Executive Committee.

Pat Snellgrove
President
July 2009

SPECIAL RESOLUTION:

That two signatures be required on all Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc cheques and other forms authorising payments on behalf of RWNZ. To do this the phrase "where the amount to be paid exceeds \$200" should be deleted from Article 12.4 of the Rules of Incorporation.

Proposed: Yvonne Lindsay

Seconded: Peta Mobberley

Argument: At present, while it's two signatures for amounts over \$200, banks don't monitor this. It's either one signatory for all cheques or two (or more) for all cheques. Two signatures is standard practice for not for profits and provides protection for the organisation and its members.
By deleting the above phrase Article 12.4 will read as follows:

Opening and Operating Bank Accounts. The Treasurer, President and Secretary may open RWNZ bank accounts as determined by a majority of the Executive. The Treasurer, President and Secretary are to be signatories on all accounts. Two of these must jointly sign cheques and make payments on behalf of RWNZ.

REMIT 1: That the treasurer's report be circulated to the entire RWNZ membership PRIOR to the AGM, either in the conference registration packs or with the issue of Heart to Heart sent to members in the month prior to AGM.

Proposed: Yvonne Lindsay

Seconded: Peta Mobberley

Argument: To allow members time to effectively peruse and understand the financial position of the organisation and to have time to formulate proper questions to the treasurer at the AGM regarding the accounts, should any member feel that to be necessary.
Over past years the report has been read out at the AGM, with swift summaries given of the information therein, however there are not usually sufficient copies circulated at the meeting to ensure each member can read the report thoroughly, nor are they given the time and opportunity to query figures. For example, in the 2008 Treasurer's report, the Bank Fees in 2007 were in the sum of \$3,237.32 and in 2008 were in the sum of \$697.54. Why were the bank fees so high in 2007 and so much lower in 2008?

REMIT 2: That the membership secretary be required to give a short report on the status of membership at the AGM each year and to report to members on what steps have been taken during the year to promote membership of the organisation.

Proposed: Yvonne Lindsay

Seconded: Peta Mobberley

Argument: To give all members a clearer perspective on the position of membership numbers each year and to actively encourage members to invite and introduce new members and keep the organisation fresh and growing. It may be that the Executive could consider an incentive for members, e.g. that for every five new** members that an existing member introduces and who join RWNZ, the existing member will receive one year's free membership as a reward. This system is effectively used by other professional writing organisations (not solely confined to romance writers) to very great effect and could definitely help to boost our membership numbers and continue to grow and improve the organisation as a whole.

** New members being defined as not returning within 6 months of expiry of an existing or previous membership.

REMIT 3: That the Treasurer's report presented at AGM should, each year, include a separate report giving a more detailed position in respect to conference income and expenditure including previous year's actual conference costs and current year's projected conference costs.

Proposed: Yvonne Lindsay

Seconded: Peta Mobberley

Argument: This is necessary to provide a clear position to the membership as to what costs are actually involved in putting on a world class conference, with respect to speakers, venue, etc., and the extent to which these costs are broken down and factored into conference cost per member, as well as to give some idea of how much money can be brought forward to the next year's conference costs.

With a clearer picture of what is involved financially and how much money is available for future conference expenditure this should serve as an encouragement to volunteers for incoming conference committees.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Compiled by PDR Lindsay-Salmon, aka Patricia Salmon

'Next 2 Eden' - one of the many websites which combine being an online zine with an informative, constantly updated website. <http://www.next2eden.com>

GoNOMAD.com - a useful website/zine for travellers.

<http://www.gonomad.com>; Guidelines: <http://www.gonomad.com/corp/writerguidelines.html>;

'Short Story Library' - a free online magazine publishing poetry, micro fiction, flash fiction and short stories. <http://shortstory.us.com>; Guidelines: <http://shortstory.us.com/submit>

'Tweet the Meat' - Using Twitter and Tweet yet? No, not birds, the quick form of blogging catching on everywhere. <http://www.twitter.com/tweetthemeat>

'The Life Without...' Anthology Series. <http://www.thelifewithout.com>

Guidelines: <http://www.thelifewithout.com/writersguidelines.html>

HCI Books, the Life Issues Publisher, publishes self-help books and considers anthologies a core pillar of their publishing program. <http://ultimatehcibooks.com>

INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

Compiled by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner

Romance Writers Ink- Where the Magic Begins

First twenty five pages plus synopsis, deadline August 12 2009 Fee \$27 US via paypal.

<http://rwimagiccontests.wordpress.com/>

The Golden Pen

Synopsis plus manuscript pages, together totalling not more than 55 pages, deadline August 15th 2009 Fee \$30 entry fee

<http://www.thegoldennetwork.com/goldenpen.html>

Romance Writers of Australia- Single Title and Loving It!

First 18p max. of your single title manuscript in ARC format ONLY, deadline - entries postmarked by Friday, September 25, 200 Fee \$20.00 (Aus) for entrants outside Australia

<http://www.romanceaustralia.com/stali.html>

Romance Writers of Australia- High Five Harlequin Contest

First five pages of a category manuscript. The judge is a Harlequin editor, deadline- 25 September 2009 Fee \$20.00 (Aus) for entrants outside Australia

<http://www.romanceaustralia.com/hi5.html>

Florida Spacecoast's Launching a Star Contest

First 25 pages of your manuscript, deadline September 12th Fee- \$30 US

<http://www.authorsofromance.com/contest.htm>

(Lisa's Pick: This is a really cool contest, the first I finalled in back in 2007. You get a sparkly certificate and a critique from both an editor and an agent if you final ☺)

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF PUBLISHING?

•Dorchester Publishing is now accepting submissions via email. Find all the guidelines at <http://www.dorchesterpub.com/Dorch/SubmissionGuidelines.cfm>

•Want to share your writing with the world? Join Harper Collins (UK) at www.authonomy.com. Chat with other writers, post your work and get feedback from a great on-line community.

•Stuck on conflict? Head to <http://community.eharlequin.com/content/conflict-questions-presents-editors> to be part of a Q&A session on internal conflict with real life Harlequin Presents editors!

•Harlequin Mills & Boon are updating some of the podcasts at www.eharlequin.com. If you want to write for one of the M&B lines log on and listen.

RWNZ CONTEST NEWS

RWNZ Great Beginnings Contest 2009

Congratulations to the finalists in the Great Beginnings Contest!

Rachel Blair

Kamy Chetty

Rachel Collins

Kendra Delugar

Bronwen Evans

Barbara Jeffcott Geris

These entries will go to Kimberley Young at HMB, London.

Chapter Short Story Contest 2009

Congratulations also to the finalists in the Chapter Short Story Contest. 38 entries in total were received.

1st – Cathryn Hein

2nd – Lisa Anderson

3rd – Kris Pearson

Other finalists:

Rachel Collins

Kris Pearson

Virginia Suckling

The six top short stories were sent to Julie Redlich of Woman's Day for final judging.

Many thanks to Julie Redlich for her time in judging our finalist entries and preparing the report on page 6 along with comments on individual stories.

Strictly Single Contest

Closing Date: 25 September 2009

Final Judge: Meredith Giordan, Berkley Publishing

Agent Judge: TBA

Enter: Up to first 50 pages plus 4-page synopsis of a single title or YA manuscript

Eligibility: Entrants must be unpublished in, and unaccepted or uncontracted for, a work of fiction (print or electronic format) of more than 30,000 words in the past 5 years.

Open only to current financial members of RWNZ

Entry forms will be available on the website in July.

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: gabby.suckling@xtra.co.nz

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

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING COUNTRY – Sarah Hamilton:
craigandsarah@clear.net.nz or Lynne Rasmussen: lyn@lynrasmussen.com

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com



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

Waikato/BOP/King Country

We had a fabulous May meeting at Angela Bethell's home. We welcomed two new friends, Vicky and Catherine, who fitted in like they'd always been there. Gracie Stanners wowed us with her critiquing workshop, providing us with the tools to constructively critique each other's work so that we can enhance and improve our writing and still be friends at the end of it! Again, thank you Gracie for being so prepared to share your extensive knowledge in such a user friendly way!

Next month's meeting will be held on Saturday the 20th of June, 12pm, at Sarah Hamilton's home in Hamilton. All welcome.

Wellington Meeting

Our June meeting welcomed Julie Ann Miskell from Dunedin – currently homeless, but soon to be a citizen of our area.

Much home cooking was on offer – so we happily chomped as we chatted. Topics included self-publishing, and Kris passed around a friend's book for inspection. Bron and Rachel recommended Patricia Kay's on-line "Scene and Sequel" course - a lesson every second day for a month, and it's only \$30US.

We also discussed the make-up of scenes. Each one needs a goal, some conflict, and a disaster or complication. Plainly we'll now all be reviewing our scenes...

For the July meeting we'll be "Enhancing the first line" as per Donald Maas. What's the intrigue factor in your first line? What puzzle does it pose? Why would anyone want to read further? We're to bring along several of our past first lines next time – and if we don't like them we must improve them.

We ended with a short story reading.

The next meeting will be at 1 pm, Saturday July 4th at Ellie's, 135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu. All welcome.

Christchurch

Our next critique meeting is the third Thursday in July. The weather will determine our timing and venue but not our enthusiasm. For details contact: sueknight@ihug.co.nz

Nelson

Our June meeting focused on emotional impact in stories - what it is and how to use it to lift a book from good to saleable.

Everyone brought along examples either from their own writing or from books they've enjoyed. This produced a nice variety.

The workshop covered: Building the cumulative effect of emotion, source of tension, discovering our own emotional triggers, using the right words in the right place, avoiding cliches and writing fresh, use of subtext and why it's so hard to write emotion!

Thanks to those who attended and I hope that you all gained something which you can use to give your writing the emotional depth editors and readers look for. The next meeting will be at Cherie's, 248H Annesbrook Drive, 2pm, Saturday, 11th July. Thank you to Sally for hosting the meetings up till now. We look forward to your return from overseas in October.

Auckland

Our June mid-winter meeting went off exceptionally well with over thirty members attending to listen to Susan Napier, Abby Gaines and Barbara Clendon. Next month's workshop is by Kevin Findlater, who will speak on Name Branding, a very important subject for writers in this electronic age.

The meeting will take place on July 4th. It will be held in the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion, corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads at 12.30 p.m. out of Auckland members welcome. Please bring a small plate for a shared lunch.

