

HEART TO HEART

MELISSA JEGLENSKI

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



We are thrilled to introduce super agent Melissa Jeglinski of the Knight Agency (USA), who will be attending our conference in August. Welcome Melissa and thanks so much for stopping by to talk with us!

Tell us about your background . . . is it correct that you spent many years with Harlequin as an editor in New York?

Yes. I graduated from Clarion University of Pennsylvania with a degree in English and moved to New York City soon after to be an editorial assistant for Silhouette Romance. I continued to work within Harlequin Enterprises for the next seventeen years, eventually becoming the senior editor of the Silhouette Desire series.

What made you decide to be a literary agent rather than an editor?

Becoming a literary agent was a new, exciting endeavour that I had wanted to pursue for some time. It has given me the opportunity to work with a wide variety of writers and genres. Although romance was and will always be my first love, I now get to work with all types of romance projects: contemporary, historical, paranormal, erotic, as well as other genres.

Tell us about the Knight Agency . . .

We are a full service agency really dedicated to giving a client all the support they need through every stage of their career. We have six agents who handle a wide range of projects from non-fiction to literary fiction, category romance to historical fiction, young adult to women's fiction, inspirational to erotica. We really enjoy having such a vast array of clientele and we really strive to grow their careers both quickly and carefully.

Are you actively looking for new authors at the moment? And if so, what types of stories are you seeking?

I am most definitely looking for new clients. I'd love to find a great young adult novel, paranormal or not. I'm also interested in historical fiction and women's fiction—something that is going to make me cry. And, of course, romance of any kind.

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www.romancewriters.co.nz

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

EDITORS' DESK

The conference countdown has well and truly begun! So . . . this issue and the next two leading up to conference we are introducing you to as many speakers and authors as possible. This month, we have interviews with super agent Melissa Jeglinski, and authors Jenny Yates and Sandra Hyatt. We have also put together a mini e-publishing special, with e-published authors Jane Beckenham and Yvonne Eve Walus sharing their experiences with us. To top it all off, The Wild Rose Press Senior Editor Leanne Morgena has also stopped by to say hello, talking about publishing guidelines and their submission process.

Hopefully you will find this a jam-packed issue full of information and interviews. We certainly hope you enjoy it! Also, don't forget to check out our new monthly feature – Web Surfing – devised and compiled by Nalini Singh.

Until next time – stay warm and keep writing!

Soraya & Suzanne

June Web-Surfing

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

- * Dorchester Publishing now accepting electronic submissions. From Dorchester editor Leah Hultenschmidt's blog: <http://tinyurl.com/d48uy7>
- * Interview with Sue Grimshaw, romance buyer for Borders and Waldenbooks, at The Knight Agency blog: <http://tinyurl.com/cv8epv>
- * Reality of a NY Times Bestseller. Author Lynn Viehl discusses the numbers, including sharing her royalty statement, at Genreality: <http://tinyurl.com/c59e9s>
- * RWAmerica approves new special interest chapter for GLBT writers: <http://www.rainbowromancewriters.com/> Leadership of chapter interviewed at The Knight Agency blog: <http://tinyurl.com/qdkijh>
- * Marianne de Pierres presents a roundup of news relating to down under authors for Orbit Books: <http://tinyurl.com/opleln>
- * Donald Maass talks about "Protagonists vs. Heroes" at Writer Unboxed: <http://tinyurl.com/r44hko>

PRESIDENT PAT



Greetings from a wet and windy Carterton.

This article is going to be short and sweet this month. We have so much information and many articles in this month's H2H, that I have offered to cut back my page so we can fit it all in.

Conference

Don't forget that early bird registration finishes on the 30th June. If you don't get your form in before that date then you will be paying extra. As we are all readers as well as writers every cent counts to pay for our daily fix of books. So get those pens out, fill in the form and mail it off to Diana Holmes.

Kris has done an absolutely fantastic job of keeping everyone up to date with conference news on the loop. Thank you, Kris, for taking on this task. Kris is also in charge of finding volunteers to help with small jobs at conference. This is a great way to meet new members or if you are a new member a great way meet other members. If you are willing to help out, please contact Kris at kris.p@paradise.net.nz.

Photos

At last year's conference, Clare took 168 photos. These are now available postage included, for the tiny sum of \$10, cash or cheque, from Diana Holmes, 145 Rawhiti Road, Pukerua Bay, Wellington.

Executive

By the time you read this, nominations will have closed for the executive positions. Details of any changes or whether we need an election will be in an upcoming newsletter.

Well that's all from me for this month.

Regards,

Pat Snellgrove, RWNZ President

rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz

Notice to Members

01 June 2009

In accordance with section 3.4.1 of the Rules of Romance Writers of New Zealand Incorporated, the Executive hereby gives notice to its members of the following proposed fee structure applicable to all fee paying members, from 01 August 2009:

New Zealand members	Annual fee \$ 55 Liaison Magazine \$ 10 New member fee \$ 20
Australian members	Annual fee AU\$ 75 Liaison Magazine AU\$ 10 New member fee AU\$ 25
Overseas members	Annual fee \$100 Liaison Magazine \$12 New member fee \$30

Should any current financial member of Romance Writers of New Zealand Incorporated wish to comment, please do so to the Membership Secretary by email to rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz or by mail to 10 Redwood Close, Paraparaumu 5032, New Zealand.

Dates for renewal of membership fees

The Executive has agreed to a change in the payment dates. In previous years fees have fallen due on 01 September but this is to be extended to 01 October. Renewals will be accepted from 01 August and all renewals must be accompanied by a completed form. Forms will be available in H2H in July/August and at conference. Please note that under sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 of the Rules any member who has not renewed by 01 October will be required to rejoin and pay a new member fee in addition to the annual renewal.

Fees increase

The Executive has tried to keep the proposed increase in fees to a minimum.

The proposed increase to annual fees, which have not risen for five years, reflect the increased running costs of RWNZ. The proposed increase to the joining fee for Australia and rest of the world reflect increased postal charges which we reluctantly have to pass on.

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Are you interested in representing category romance authors?

Yes, I am interested in representing category romance authors. Category romance is my first love and I think I'm well equipped to be an advocate for such clients. I particularly enjoy alpha heroes with cool international settings as well as family-centric romances with a more small-town feel.

Are there any story elements you are seeing way too much of?

I am seeing tons, tons, tons of young adult paranormal a little too much in the vein of the Twilight series. I know everyone has enjoyed those books and seen what a phenomenon they've become. But I would like to see something fresh, with a new approach, rather than just a weaker imitation.

As a former editor, do you work with your clients on editing their projects before you send them out to publishers?

I do work with my clients' projects before sending them out—as do most agents, I would imagine. I may have bit more insight into editorial guidance because of my background, but I don't edit the work as much as I give feedback. I know the work should be as strong as possible before it reaches the editor's desk; you only have that one chance to make a first impression.

Many of us will be hoping to pitch to you at the conference. Any tips for a smooth pitch?

If you are unpublished, it's best to have a project that is complete before pitching. I can't shop around a partial by an unpublished author. And if you're pitching to me, you should really be serious about wanting an agent. You can bring a "cheat sheet" to the pitch if you don't feel comfortable speaking about your project off the top of your head. But just be at ease, don't worry because I'm very easy to talk to—though I will be giving you my honest opinion. Feel free to give me your card if you have one, but not your project. If I request your work I'll have you email it to me.

The pitch time is relatively quick, so be concise in your pitch: name of project, genre, word length, a short but intriguing synopsis. Let me know if you have any previous publishing experience, what groups you belong to, how long you've been writing—anything you feel would be interesting and relevant about you as a writer. And then, if we have time, you'll be able to ask me questions.

If you request a partial or full following a pitch, how long should a writer expect to wait for a response? And in the best case scenario, if you decide to sign a client, what happens then? Could you outline the process from your acquiring an author and her project, to actually sending the project out to publishers?

After a conference, I'll most likely be reading a lot of requested projects, so my response time will be up to about eight weeks. That's because I honestly do read the submissions I ask for.

If I do take on a client, they'll be asked to sign our agency agreement, after which I will walk them through the entire submission process. Perhaps the work will need to undergo some revisions beforehand, and we'll work on that first. Once the project is ready to submit, I go through my list of editors who are acquiring that type of project, create a pitch for the project and then follow up with the submission once it's requested. I let my client know everything I am doing on their behalf, through each and every stage.

If you were to describe the novel you would love to see cross your desk from a new author, what would it be?

Oh, that's such a hard question. I don't know for sure. I'd have to be honest and just say I'd know it when I saw it. You never know what's going to knock your socks off. But I do know it needs to be fresh, fast-moving and thought provoking.

What do you expect from your authors after you sign them?

I expect a client to be open and honest with me. This is a very serious relationship so it's imperative the communication be open...both ways. I expect a client to be committed to their work, meet deadlines and voice any concerns.

And finally, in your spare time, what authors/books do you like to read?

When I have time to read for pleasure, I'm usually enjoying a historical romance by Julia Quinn or Lisa Kleypas.

Thanks so much Melissa for taking the time to chat. I'm sure I speak on behalf of everyone when I say we are so looking forward to meeting you in August.

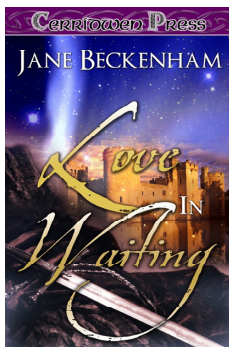
JANE BECKENHAM

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Tell us about yourself . . . what type of romance do you write and who are you published by?

Well, I've been writing for about ten years and write time/travel romance and contemporary romance (category length). I'm published by Red Rose Publishing (books – The Sheikh's Proposal, Desperately Seeking Santa, No Sex Necessary, To Kiss an Angel Linden Bay Romance (books – He's the One, Hiring Cupid) Cerridwen Press (books – Love In Waiting) Treble Heart Romance (books – Woman of Valor, Be My Valentine, Always A Bridesmaid).



What's the best thing about being e-published?

There really isn't any difference with being e-published as against any other type of publishing. All my books are in print, or going to print too. The process is the same in that I have an editor, we work together on edits, there's line editing, cover art sheets etc. But I think the one advantage that an e-pub author has over other published authors is that by the nature of the type of business we learn the ropes of marketing/promotion and know how to work the game to our advantage.

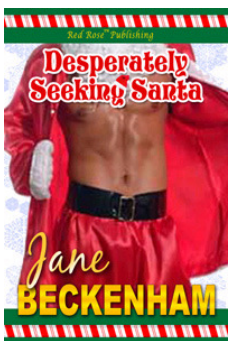


What is your response to people who "talk down" e-publishing?

I ignore it. I'm an author, I write hard, work hard, and I'm published. Nothing less than any other author. To say that my work is not as credible as any other author's is quite frankly an insult.

Do you write every day?

Pretty much. I'm travelling in the USA at the moment and have written about 3 out of 5 days – mind you I worked it that I would be editing at the moment which is easier on the brain after a day of travelling. We're away nearly 7 weeks and I couldn't handle not writing all of that time. I think I would go nuts! When home I do try and work every day, though must admit this year has been a bit hit and miss, time being taken up getting this trip organised.



Pantser or plotter?

A bit of both. I am trying to be more structured, but must admit that my current WIP – the one I'm editing - was a pain to write, because of that structure! I like to know the characters and their GMC, and then it's a bit more pantser like.

What are you working on at the moment?

Well just after we arrived in the USA I wrote the last chapter of my current WIP – it's also the book I used to enter the Great Beginnings contest. I've also got a Regency I'm working on, and hope to get some more of that done while we're travelling around. Like they say – no rest for the wicked.

You can find out more about Jane and her books at her website www.janebeckenham.com. Also, she is keeping a fun travel blog that is definitely worth following . . . www.writing-around-america.blogspot.com

SANDRA HYATT

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Hi Sandra! Well, I can't believe it's been months since H2H interviewed you about your first sale to Harlequin . . . how does it feel to be so close to seeing your book on the shelves here?

Hi Soraya. It's been a blindingly fast ten months. When I first sold in August '08 the then publication date of Oct '09 seemed a lifetime away. But with time doing what it does, and the publication date being brought forward to July '09 (August in New Zealand and Australia) all of a sudden it's almost upon me.

And actually, it's a little scary. For so long I've fiercely controlled who read my work and now it'll be out there for anyone to read. And not just anyone, but my mother as well. People I know keep coming up to me and saying they can't wait to read my book – people who don't normally read romance. I smile and try to look excited while thinking, 'but what if you hate it?'

But putting that aside – I'm mad keen for all the romance lovers out there, and fortunately there are swags of us, who want to, to read it. That part is very exciting. And I can't wait to walk into a store and see something I've written sitting on the shelves.

For those of us still dreaming of the call, tell us about the process after the sale. What happens in that time from when you receive the call to when your book is actually published?

After the call there were things like:

-Signing of a **contract** (yay, they couldn't back out after that)

-Choosing of a **pen name** (though I'd pretty much done that on one of those days when I wanted to pretend to myself that I was working while not actually doing any writing)

-**Revisions** – story suggestions from my editor.

-**Line edits** – the revised manuscript came back with more changes my editor wanted—not as big as revisions, but not, I thought, insignificant either

- **Author alterations** - the manuscript came back again, this time with the line edits implemented. This was my last chance to check that the changes had been made correctly and that there wasn't anything else glaring that I'd missed. And if I missed them there, they'll be on display for all the world to see shortly.

-**Art fact sheets** – forms to be filled out for the Harlequin art department, for use in cover design. I suggested a couple of scenes they might like to use, and also specified details about my hero and heroine, hair colour, eye colour etc. Incidentally, the art

department didn't go for my scene suggestions and picked something else. But hey, I was happy.

You've already sold book number two to Desire, what are you working on next?

I'm working on number three. I usually only have one idea in my head at a time. It's not until I finish a book that

another idea pops up. So far it always has, but I'm definitely jealous of those writers who have oodles of stories floating around in their heads waiting to be written.

Has your approach to writing changed now that you are published? Are you spending more time writing, or did you treat writing like a job prior to publication anyway?

So far being published is a lot like that joke about heaven and hell, where hell is filled with writers sitting with their word processors, gnashing their teeth and tearing at their hair. And heaven is just the same. The only difference being the ones in heaven are published.

Which is my way of saying my approach hasn't changed. I was trying to treat writing like a regular job before I sold. I'm still trying to treat it like a regular job. So, I write every week day with a word count target to meet. Once I meet it I give myself permission to go play, or do the business side of writing, interviews, blogging, website stuff, or the washing and the vacuuming and the groceries etc etc. And of course reading. Actually, playing doesn't happen all that often. Maybe tomorrow? If I don't meet my daily targets during the week I make it up on the weekend.

Give us the back cover blurb on your latest release!

In bed with her client?

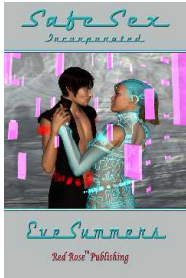
That business card couldn't be right. Callie Jamieson had just spent one impulsive, passionate night in the arms of the most irresistible stranger she'd ever met. And morning's light revealed her lover to be new PR client, billionaire Nick Brunicadi....

One sizzling night of passion, then she was gone. Undaunted, Nick was determined to find and have his fill of his mysterious seductress...a seductress, he discovered, who was carrying his heir!

Sandra will be co-presenting a workshop at A Romantic Retreat, along with her long-time critique partners Abby Gaines, Karina Bliss & Tessa Radley. You can find out more about Sandra at www.sandrahyatt.com

YVONNE WALUS

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Yvonne, for those of us who don't know you, give us the low down . . . what types of books do you write and who are you published by?

Hi, I'm Yvonne Walus (not to be confused with Yvonne Lindsay, who was interviewed in the May 2009 issue of H2H). As myself, I

write cosy murder mysteries set in South Africa, as well as mainstream fiction. My two main publishers are *Echelon Press* in USA and *Pipers' Ash* in England. (Yes, that' paperbacks.)

I came to Romance Writing relatively late in my career. Sure, I attended a few RWNZ conferences (griping that there's too much of a *romance* focus, LOL), and I eventually became a member of RWNZ because of the fabulous vibe our Auckland meetings had... but I never dreamt of actually writing romance. You see, I had always imagined there was this formula you had to adhere to, like: *the heroine is 23 and blonde, the hero 30 and rich, they have sex on p56 and again on p83 and then either on p120 or p132....* And every time I asked what the formula was, I heard: "there is no formula, just write". So I didn't.

Fortunately, all the years spent at the conferences and monthly meetings must have taught me something by osmosis, because two years ago all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place and out came a romance novella, "A slave of my own desire".

My pen name for romantic fiction is Eve Summers, and I'm e-published by *Red Rose Publishing* and *The Wild Rose Press*. Eve Summers books tend to be hot... ok, sizzling hot... ok, bordering on the type of fiction Anne Rice wrote as A. N. Roquelaure, which is why I decided not to use my own name. Most employers google potential candidates before signing the contract, and I thought it would be more prudent if the first hit for Yvonne Walus did not read "erotica writer specialising in inter-racial love stories".... ;-)

How long have you been writing for, and how long was it until you received "the call"?

I started with poems at the age 4, followed by short stories in my 'tween'age years. But I studied mathematics at uni, and I never thought seriously about writing a novel until I was in my mid-twenties.

My first full-length fiction was "Murder @ Work" (Echelon Press, 2004) and I didn't get "the call": instead, the contract arrived by snail-mail. Talk about unusual!

So I guess my first call was as Eve Summers, when Wendi from Red Rose left a message on my voicemail just before dinnertime: "Hi," it said. "Guess who? I'll call back in an hour. I wonder what time it's there, but here it's 3 in the morning." *Guess who? GUESS WHO?* I didn't dare. But just in case, I put the family in front of the TV with their favourite fish fingers and chips, and with stern instructions *to stay downstairs and not bother me even if the house was on fire.*

Pantser or plotter?

Both.

Sometimes a scene comes out of nowhere, and I write it down, and the voice sounds good, and the scene leads to a novel.

Other times I think up the setting and the characters and no scene comes, so I sit down and try to pin down - in one sentence - what the book is about:

- A woman who wants a baby.
- No, a medical doctor who wants a baby.
- But it's 1970 and in vitro is still in its experimental stages.
- And the only man with whom she could imagine being intimate, is married to her sister.

Still not much of a plot, but at least I know it's going to be something about motherhood and marriage and betrayal, not an adventure quest on Planet Klingon.

Tell us about your latest release?

"Safe Sex Incorporated" is a romance story set in the future, in a society where love is considered a disease of the mind. The heroine works for a conglomerate producing Love Condoms. Love Condoms protect people from falling in love... and the hero doesn't like that one bit!

It's not nearly as "hot" as my other Eve Summers titles, and can safely be described as "sensuous" rather than "erotic".

"Safe Sex Incorporated" by Eve Summers (April 2009) is available from www.redrosepublishing.com. from an adult character's. Which is why what seems like a small thing to us might be a big deal to them.

IN MY DEFENCE

Why it's OK to e-publish by Yvonne Walus

Paperbacks...

I still have more paper books than e-books published. And - for some reason - it matters.

It shouldn't, really. Unlike hardcover books, cheap paperbacks were designed to be read and thrown away. They did not command respect. 150 years ago, paperbacks were called "dime novels" in America and "penny dreadfuls" in England.

Although paperbacks were not respected, "respectable" writers such as Louisa May Alcott, Longfellow, Robert Louis Stevenson and Alfred Tennyson succumbed to the trend (or was it to the money?) and allowed their worthy words to be published in such a worthless manner.

The first reputable publisher to produce paperbacks was Penguin (1935). One of its first 10 titles included "The Mysterious Affair at Styles" by Agatha Christie.

... Versus E-books

Speaking of celebrated authors, did you know that Stephen King wrote a book exclusively for Kindle?

(I could end the article here, having made my allegoric point. But wait, there's more!)

A Small Matter of Quality

In the past, many e-books were of a lesser quality than their printed equivalents, sometimes having gone into the marketplace with only the most cursory of edits, if that. For some reason, "cheap and easy" meant "inferior" back then.

All that has changed. At Red Rose Publishing, for example, the process is highly professional:

1. Submit a completed story to your editor.
2. If she likes it, she passes it on to the Big Boss (owner and final decision maker).
3. If the Big Boss likes it, you get the contract.
4. Your editor does the initial edits. That done, the manuscript goes for line edits.
5. The line editor sends you her suggestions, and once you've negotiated the changes and submitted (what you thought was) the final version...
6. ... the manuscript is read again to catch any gremlins.

The result? A well-edited book, as close to error-free as you can get.

In contrast, reading some of the bestseller paper-and-hardbacks lately, I've been aghast at the poor quality of editing (it must be because they fired all those copy editors a few years ago). Mary Higgins Clark's books, for example, are full of unintended echo-words and fact repetitions, and I've caught at least two dangling participles, not to mention long passages of "walking the

dog" (Margie Lawson's pet peeve). Even Terry Pratchett's hardcover bestsellers have typos!

What determines the quality nowadays, is not the medium (e or paper). It's the publisher's track record.

Obvious Benefits for E-book Readers

- E-books are much cheaper than paper books
- They take up less room.
- You can read an e-book on your computer in the office and still look conscientious. ☺
- If you have an e-book reader, you can take a hundred e-books with you on holiday and not be over the luggage limit.

Obvious Benefits for E-book Writers

- There is a demand for e-books throughout the publishing industry.
- Many houses will accept shorter works of fiction, like 10,000 words or even 2,000 words. As you well know, some brilliant ideas need a trilogy, while others (equally brilliant) need only 10 pages.
- The response time is on average 3 months from submission to contract, and another 6-9 months before you see the book in print... er... in pixel form, as a new release.
- All edits happen online, usually with Word and Track Changes, so you don't have to worry about notation on messy typescripts, postage, etc.
- Although there is often no advance, the royalties are in the order of 50%, payable quarterly.
- No messy bookstore return policies and the accompanying money claw-back. Once an e-book is sold, it's sold, and you get paid.
- No pulping, no "out of print" problems, and none of the annoying "out of stock but more on the way" online bookstore messages. Your book is always available for sale and your readers can part with their money 24/7.
- Because the cost of making an e-book is lower than making a paper book print run, many e-book publishers are in good financial shape despite the recession.
- Promoting e-books usually happens online (it makes sense to advertise where the reader can do a spur-of-the-moment click), and it's all free unless you want to pay for adverts on specialised high-volume websites.
- And - best of all for those of us who still need to touch our books - many e-publishers release their bestselling e-books in print.

Yvonne Eve Walus writes bestselling romances as Eve Summers for Red Rose Publishing. She also writes paper books. Please visit her on <http://yewalus.kiwiwebhost.net.nz/>.

QUERYING AN AGENT

by Soraya Nicholas

At the recent Christchurch Writer's Workshop, Steve Malley talked about the common pitfalls a writer can make when querying an agent. Having gone down the tricky path of acquiring a New York editor himself, Steve had plenty of great tips about what to do, and more importantly what not to do!

- Keep it simple – most agents want an email query letter, and this means no more than 250 words. Seriously!

- The email query letter should consist of three parts.

- The first paragraph should contain vital information about your novel. Title, word count, and the magic word – that the manuscript is COMPLETED.

- The second paragraph should be a brief synopsis of the novel. Think of it like a back cover blurb. Say who the main characters are, what happens to them, what their choices are, and the consequences of those choices.

- The final paragraph is for your personal information. Only tell an agent information that will make you stand out – as in any published writings.

- You need to send out at least 5-10 query letters to agents per week. Make sure you put the agent's name at the top of the letter, but you can cut and paste the body of your query so they are all essentially the same.

- You should expect to have perhaps a couple of requests for partial manuscripts from each 10 queries. If you have sent out in excess of 50 queries and had little or no requests, you need to change your query! Likewise, if you receive little or no requests from agents once they have read your partial, your writing probably isn't up to scratch ☺ Rewrite and try again!

- Don't tell the agent that you seek representation for a fictional novel. Novels are by definition fiction!

- Don't say you have written the next Harry Potter/Twilight . . . if your writing is good it will speak for itself.

- Get on-line! Go to the following websites and blogs to find out more about writing good queries, and also to find an agent that represents your genre.

- <http://www.agentquery.com>
 - Preditors and Editors - <http://www.anotherealm.com/prededitors/>
 - Agent tracking software - <http://www.spacejock.com/index.html>
 - <http://www.passionatepen.com/>
 - <http://queryshark.blogspot.com/>
 - <http://evileditor.blogspot.com/>
 - <http://www.misssnark.blogspot.com/>

Above all else, Steve stressed that querying an agent is a numbers game, and you need to get used to rejection, even up to 100+ rejections before you find the right agent who wants to represent you. Be brave and get your work out there, and remember to keep assessing your query letter and your writing if you're not getting results.

You can find Steve on-line at his website www.stevemalley.com or his blog – Full Throttle & F**K It www.steve-malley.blogspot.com

Steve currently writes thrillers, and in the past has written and illustrated comics.

www.romancewriters.co.nz

June 2009

CONFERENCE

What is the fuss all about?

When I first joined RWNZ a few years ago, I was astounded to find out that each and every year a conference dedicated to romance was organised. In my ignorance, I wondered how a whole three days could be filled, who would be there, and whether it would be any good. Then when I received the programme, my thought pattern started to change. I read that real life international editors and authors were going to be there, not to mention some of my favourite Mills & Boon authors.

Still nervous, a little sceptical, and in denial to the general public that I wrote romance, I dragged my husband to Auckland under the pretence of visiting his family, and attended my first ever conference. Thankfully my husband has always been very supportive, so when I told him he had to come to the cocktail party and Saturday night dinner he groaned but said yes. That was until he realised there was a great rugby game on that Friday night and he was given tickets to go. Hmmm. I smiled and told him of course he should go, no need to baby sit me, and off I went.

When I arrived at the cocktail party my confidence was gone – I mean, I'm a writer who spends almost every day alone with only a computer for company, so walking into a room full of anyone is hard! In fact, I took one look in, then one step in, and didn't think I could do it. So many women, so many wonderful authors . . . eek! That was until the delightful Nalini Singh appeared in front of me, introduced herself and made me feel completely at ease. I can honestly say that if it hadn't been for her friendly face in those first few seconds I may have left. It would have been wrong, as it turns out that everybody is there to talk romance and make you feel welcome, but as a first timer it was daunting. I know plenty of other people have felt the same, but the nice thing is that there's always someone friendly ready to say hi and introduce you around.

Anyway, the outcome of my first conference was that I vowed to attend every year that I could. Yes, flying from Christchurch, staying in Auckland and attending all three days is expensive, but when you factor in how much you learn, what a great time you have, and the incredible writers you meet, it is worth every penny.

Each year I look forward to pitching my work, learning about the craft of writing and knowing that for once in my life there are people around me who understand what it's like to be a writer.

Another wonderful thing about attending the conference is realising that it is 100% okay to write romance. I came away from my first conference with a refreshed feeling about my work, and with a new outlook on romance. From that day on, even if I felt a little embarrassed, I told people that I wrote romance, not caring what they thought. I write romance, I'm proud of it, and I'm proud of the women I meet every August who feel the same way.

I recently emailed a handful of romance authors who I know attend the conference most years. I asked them why they go, and what the benefits for them personally are. Here's what they said:

"For me, being around a big group that's excited about writing, and about writing romance in particular, is just fantastic. It's also a once-in-a-year chance to catch up with writing friends from around the country, and of course, to listen and learn. I always come away from conference buzzing with energy."

-Nalini Singh, New York Times Best Selling Author

"I joined RWNZ about five years ago. At our Wellington-area meetings I didn't really understand what the fuss was about at first. They were going all the way to Auckland for a CONFERENCE???"

Well, once I heard the stories after the girls had come back I was raring to go to the next one. Meeting the authors whose names I'd only seen on the books... hearing enthusiastic speakers who knew a heap more than me (but were prepared to share)... seeing the faces that matched the names on the loop... being able to talk all day (and half the night) with people on the same wave-length... it was just amazing. I came home super-enthused, and haven't missed a conference since. It's wonderful having

the opportunity to browse through Barbara's huge selection of books without having to leave the hotel. It's great to re-meet friends each year - and make new ones. It's fun to dress up for the cocktail party and dinner, and applaud the contest winners. And every year I write better because of what I learn there."

Not go to conference? Unthinkable!

-Kris Pearson, RWNZ Loop Moderator

"Whether it's listening to speakers, browsing through Peter and Barbara Clendon's books or catching up with other RWNZers through the breaks, it's a wonderful weekend of total immersion in my favourite subject - romance writing."

-Karina Bliss, Harlequin Superromance Author

"Aside from the great speakers and learning about craft, there's the camaraderie and understanding of like minded people and there's the luxury of spending a whole weekend on yourself and your writing."

-Sandra Hyatt, Silhouette Desire Author

"So, why I attend the conference and what are the benefits? It's simple. You never stop learning in this business and the opportunity to learn from our homegrown and visiting romance authors is priceless. Plus there's the opportunity to meet, in a concentrated bunch, so many of our members, who we often only get to see on the email loops. For me conference is a shot in the arm that keeps me going all year."

-Yvonne Lindsay, Silhouette Desire Author

I think that all of these wonderful ladies sum it up – the conference is an amazing experience, and from the first time you go, you will want to attend every year thereafter.

FAQ's – What I Wish I'd Known

•Fiction: Yes, there is a theme each year for the cocktail party and dinner, but you do not need to dress up. Those who want to have lots of fun, but if you want to wear normal clothes then do just that ☺

•Fact: Be prepared to spend \$\$\$ - Barbara's Books present a very tempting array of romance novels and there are great raffle prizes.

•Fiction: Editors/agents are scary. They are just people like you and I, and they are wonderful to chat to and pitch to!

•Fiction: You need to be a published/contest winning author to attend . . . no way! It doesn't matter whether you are working on your first novel or are multi-published, you will learn heaps and have a wonderful time.

One other thing I would like to share is a quick snippet about the Friday . . . my one regret was the year I didn't attend the Friday workshop. It is often my favourite day, and you learn so much, so if you can take an extra day off work - attend! Also, whilst I often stay with family who live in Auckland, I can't wait to stay on-site this year. Being immersed in romance and writing is what the conference weekend is all about, so make the most of it.

If you do have any questions or are nervous/unsure about attending, just remember that we've all been first timers once and most of us are happy to share advice and help out.

So hopefully I'll see you there at Waipuna in August . . . I don't know about you but I can't wait!

JENNY YATES

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas



Romance author Jenny Yates is presenting a workshop at the Conference this year, and we thought this was a great opportunity to introduce her to everyone. Welcome Jenny!

Tell us a little about yourself Jenny . . . How long have you been writing for, what types of stories do you write, and who are you published by?

Writing was all I ever wanted to do even when I was at school though I never thought it could be a career choice! Teaching was much more practical. I wrote my first novel in the early 70's when I was widowed and had long evenings to fill in after the children were in bed. It's probably quite fortunate that MS was destroyed in a house fire in 1981! Found another man and of course had no time for my 'hobby' then! Eventually the kids grew up and I had time to think about writing again. The stories never went away out of my head in all that time. They were just waiting. I'd had a couple of rejections before I discovered Kara School of Writing and then RWNZ. At last I'd found somewhere to teach me what I needed to know about EVERYTHING to do with writing.

I've had competition successes in NZ, Australia and USA, short stories published in New Zealand by JADE (a small monthly magazine which appeared for a short while in 1997), and short erotica published in Australia by Wild Child Publications and in 'For Women' magazine published in the UK. Was still getting rejections for category though. In 1997 I had a meltdown and retired from teaching. I lost a year or two after that and then my focus changed. I began writing historical/paranormal and have one completed and five more in note form. Then I went into business and because I couldn't not write at all, I returned to category, which was not quite so demanding in the area of research. Finally got back on track this year with two entries in the Clendon.

What do you love most about being a writer?

The wonderful heroes and heroines I meet who share their lives with me so gratuitously!

Did you always want to write romance?

Always. I'm also one of those 'shallow' people who only want to read romance.

The workshop you are presenting at A Romantic Retreat in August is entitled Writing Romantic Love Scenes. What can attendees expect to learn?

I'm hoping to show them how to get over themselves when it comes to writing that love scene so they can really do it justice, how to know when to write it, what triggers it, what makes it romantic. And hopefully we'll have fun doing it. (Writing, that is !)

What are you currently working on?

I've begun another category since completing the Clendon entries, am still focused on getting the historical series published, so those stories are always in the wings bubbling away – but of course they entail research - - -
Thanks Jenny for taking the time to talk to H2H.

NEW MEMBERS

Veronica Gasparini
Jan Titus
Vicky English

Australia
Christchurch
Thames

A TWO-MINUTE PEP TALK

Don't buy into the "Writer's Block" myth

by Jenny Yates

"Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you are right."

Henry Ford is attributed with saying something like this. But whoever said it understood the power of the human mind. Which means, if you THINK you have writer's block, you do.

So change what you THINK. Change the way you think about why you aren't writing or can't progress a scene. Build the Bridge and get over it.

Find the problem. If I'm not writing at all it's because my 'Other Life' is getting in the way. We all have that 'Other Life' and it will intrude into our Writer's Perfect World. Husbands wanting our time, lovers with whom we've fallen out of step, overseas holidays, sick relatives who need our care and love, weddings, funerals, and kids (oh, that's a huge one – if we haven't managed to convince them they're grown up and able to look after themselves and let us have a life of our own!) And we're probably going to suffer some degree of mental and emotional burnout after all of the above. Yes, it's called LIFE and it steals time and energy from the Muse.

If your heart/gut gives a resounding YES! when you ask whether you still want to write, then the first building block of your bridge is in place, a bridge, which like all constructions, is built one block at a time.

If you heard any other answer to your question you probably should give up writing and go walk in step with the lover who's marched off and deserted you, or spend time getting to know your kids!

A writer writes *because they can't not write*. A writer writes because they can't imagine life without writing. If Life interferes in an on-going way, then your bridge requires a Strategy Building Block. Find what works for you. Claim for yourself one hour a day or one day a week - or one hour a week. You'd be amazed how much you can write in an hour if you just sit down and write instead of telling yourself it's a waste of time trying to write because you've only got one hour. Most of us live busy 'Other Lives' and it just goes on getting busier.

So – the POINT of all this ramble:-

You can write anywhere, any time, in five minute blocks if that's all you can spare. You just need strategy.

Strategy and not conditions.

You'll recognize them when I spell them out for you. I can't write until I've done the dishes, swept the floor, paid the accounts, got peace and quiet, got the right kind of music on. It's called making excuses and the list just grows.

Got to do the shopping? Steal half an hour for a nice coffee in a trendy little café, get your shopping pad out and ask your characters a question. Put them in a scene and let them play it out while you drink delicious coffee and scribble everything they're saying. You won't notice the traffic, noisy patrons or squealing kids because your characters are talking too loud and fast. Waiting for someone at the dentist or doctor? You know the drill. Forget about those months old, well-thumbed magazines that rarely tell you anything new. Get out that trusty shopping pad . . .

There are countless moments in our busy days when we are sitting and waiting for something. Write snippets of your story or just let the characters introduce themselves to you and show you who they are. Put them in an impossible situation and let them talk it out. You might use the scene later and you might not but you are getting a real insight into their characters. Or let them work their way through a scene that has been bugging you.

My message is – don't fence yourself off from your writing with imaginary barriers. Toss out the barriers, build the bridge and just write – something, anywhere, whenever you have a moment – like – in the spa!

CONFERENCE NEWS

by Kris Pearson

Booked your airmiles? Booked your accommodation? Sent back your registration form for A Romantic Retreat? Remember, Early Bird Registration ends by June 30th, and that's getting close now. There are other very good reasons to register early, too. If you want to pitch a finished book to agent Melissa Jeglinski, you'll need to be in fast. Melissa has had to change her travel plans to depart on Sunday morning, so this has reduced the number of pitch-slots available. Once they're gone, they're gone...

Same goes for the breakout workshops. The first thirty names get the workshop of their choice; after that you might be allocated something else. All great choices though! I won't repeat the whole conference programme here – you'll have it from a previous Heart to Heart, and in Sue's promotional emails and my loop updates as well. We're bombarding you – because we don't want you to miss out on this great event.

So what will you need to bring?

*Raffle money – because we have some wonderful prizes, including a one-on-one breakfast pitch with Melissa on Sunday morning. She's definitely staying here for that.

*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 Jeglinski's early Saturday morning workshop. (One for Gracie to read out, and one for Melissa to comment on.)

*Questions for the panel discussion on Sunday afternoon. What would you like to ask Mary Jo Putney, Fiona Brand, Nalini Singh, Sara Hantz, Amanda Ashby, Robyn Donald, Daphne Clair, Susan Napier or our visiting Australian HM&B rep? 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 9 – 10 Published Authors Workshop with Mary Jo Putney. She says "We'll keep it relaxed and informal – that is, we'll gather our chairs in a circle and talk." Email questions to Pat Snellgrove - rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz

*A ten dollar note, or your chequebook, so you can order a disk of conference photos.

*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. If you'd like to share accommodation, pop a message on the loop and find a roomie. Waipuna's rooms have two queen-size beds – and it's also possible to ask for an extra rollaway bed so you can share the cost three ways.

We truly have the greatest line-up of speakers, including seventeen published authors.

Warning: also bring throat lozenges. We talk and talk and talk...

RWNZ Posters: see below to the organisation's official posters.

- 1) General conference poster
- 2) Conference poster with a fantasy/paranormal spin
- 3) Recruitment poster

Please use these to help publicize the conference and grow our organisation. We need to increase our membership and these will be a great tool for doing so.

To receive high res versions, please email suzanne.perazzini@orcon.net.nz or download from the Loop under Files/RWNZ Posters.



MEMBER SUCCESSES

Compiled by Tyree Bidgood

Official Releases

Pretend Mistress, Bona Fide Boss by **Yvonne Lindsay**

The Untamed Sheik by **Tessa Radley**

The Venaducci Marriage Vengeance by **Melanie Milburne**

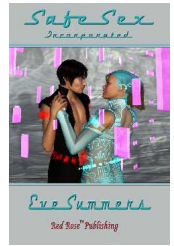
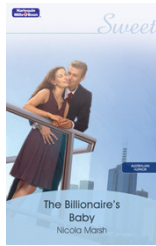
Blackmailed Bride, Innocent Wife by **Annie West**

The Billionaire's Baby by **Nicola Marsh**

The Surgeon's Special Delivery by **Fiona Lowe**

A Mother for His Twins by **Lucy Clark**

Safe Sex Incorporated (Red Roses Publishing) by **Eve Summers (aka Yvonne Walus)**



Member Successes

Sold

Kendra Delugar has just sold a short story to People's Friend.

Competitions

RWA Ruby Awards

Suzanne Perazzini - double finalist in the Romantic Elements category with *Crash into Darkness* and *Beneath the Surface*

Karina Bliss - finalist in the Long Romance category with *Second Chance Family*

Anna Campbell – finalist in the Long Romance category with *Untouched*

Trish Morey – finalist in the Short Sexy category with *The Italian Boss's Mistress of Revenge*

Lisa Chaplin – finalist in the Short Sweet section with *A Mother in a Million*

RWNZ 2009 Short Story Competition finalists are: **Lisa Anderson, Rachel Collins, Cathryn Hein, Kris Pearson, Kris Pearson, Virginia Suckling**

Susana Rogers was a winner in the **Knight Agency's Book in a Nutshell contest**. Over 1,200 entries were received, and only 20 winners announced. As a result The Knight Agency has requested Susana's full manuscript!

Kamy Chetty has finalled in the **WISRWA Fab Five-** category section.

Sandii Manning finalled in the **Dixie First Chapter contest** in the contemporary section. Her entry goes to the final judge, Wanda Ottewell

Kylie Short has placed 3rd and 4th in the **RWA 2009 First Kiss competition**.

"Great Beginnings Contest Update - 38 entries received. The First round of judging should be completed by early June".

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

www.romancewriters.co.nz

June 2009

WILD ROSE PRESS

Leanne Morgena

Interviewed by Soraya Nicholas

H2H is excited to have Senior Editor at The Wild Rose Press, Leanne Morgena, stop by to chat with us. Many of you will remember The Wild Rose Press from our conference last year, where we had the opportunity to pitch to Cheryl Wright . . .

Leanne, thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us. For those members who don't know about The Wild Rose Press, can you give a brief overview of what you publish?

The Wild Rose Press publishes romance—stories of the developing relationship between two complex personalities within various settings and various time periods. Because of this variety, there are 13 different lines in which the stories fit. In addition to the different lines, there are 4 distinct lengths in which stories are produced: Rosette (7500-20,000 words), Miniature (20,001-40,000), Rosebud (40,000-65,000 words) and Rose (65,001+). Only the Rose-length stories go to print.

Are you actively seeking new authors at the moment?

The Sweetheart line (for which Leanne is Senior Editor) is open to all stories appropriate for our line, meaning ones where the sensual level is implied, not shown. The editorial staff is always on the lookout for new authors who provide a twist on favorite plots of women finding love at the absolutely wrong time or with the wrong person.

What is your submission process, and how long should writers expect to wait on a query or submission?

Submissions go through a central email (queryus@thewildrosepress.com) and are disseminated to the appropriate Senior Editor. Each editor has 30 days to request a partial or full manuscript (depending on the story's length). Once the requested material is received, the waiting time is 60 days on a partial and 90 days on a full manuscript. We want sufficient time to review the project, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, how the story fits with what is currently in the production stage and then compose the appropriate letter.

After an author is contracted, a relationship is born and future submissions are sent directly to the original editor.

Now for the fun questions! Who are your favourite authors when you are in non-work mode?

I read a wide variety of authors, depending on my mood. Jim Butcher, Teresa Medeiros, Linda Lael Miller, Janet Evanovich, Jennifer Crusie, Sharon Sala, in addition to friends who are published—Elle James, Delilah Devlin, Shayla Kersten, Delores Fossen, Jo-Ann Power, MJ Frederick. Lately, I've been reading a lot of westerns, because they are so different in plot and tone than Sweetheart-type stories.

If I'm not editing, you can find me . . .

Watching movies. I love analyzing story structure and seeing how directors emphasize (or de-emphasize) emotion within a scene and the movements made by the actors. These actions are key, because authors have the same task—of showing what the character feels.

Reading. Who doesn't love getting lost in another world and experiencing life through someone else's eyes for a while?

And finally, if you were to describe your dream submission, what would it be? What would you like to see crossing your desk this year?

A story that starts off by pitting two well-developed personalities against each other and then keeps them together, but at odds, for the majority of the rest of the page count. Something from their individual pasts makes them hesitant to view the other as a potential mate. Through the course of the story, events take place that cause them to look at each other in a new way. Experiencing these events together allows them to create a relationship that moves from attraction to respect to trust to love. At the end of the story, I look for both main characters to make a choice that they couldn't have made at the beginning. They do it because they are stronger people for having known the other or because they choose to put another's interests above theirs. In a line that doesn't contain other plot elements (paranormal, suspense, sensuality), character growth and emotion are the keys that hold the story together and have to be its focus.

I personally love reunion stories because when characters have a past, they have to get over whatever broke them apart and whatever is keeping them apart now. Stories that involve competent people thrown into situations for which they have no training are also favorites. (big city girl on a farm, scientist put into the public eye, adult with no siblings taking care of friend's small child, injured cop accepting help) Urban or rural, humorous or emotional, be sure to develop your setting so the reader has the tools to create mental images for your characters and where they live and work.

Don't forget—Sweetheart is currently seeking submissions to The Flower Basket series set in a small town in central California. Some element in your story has to include contact (in person, phone or email) with the shop for a flower delivery.

Thanks again Leanne for chatting with us!

Leanne Morgena is Senior Editor of the "Sweetheart" line for the Wild Rose Press.

The Wild Rose Press are actively seeking new authors – head to www.thewildrosepress.com to find out more!

The Wild Rose Press – Line Descriptions/Categories

Crimson Rose - Mystery & Suspense

Scarlet Rose - Erotic

Faery Rose - Light Paranormal (elves, fairies, good witches, etc.) & Fantasy/Futuristic

Black Rose -Dark Paranormal (werewolves, shapeshifters, vampires, etc.)

English Tea Rose - Non-American Historical

American Rose - American Historical

Vintage Rose - Classic Romance from Days Gone By: 1900 to 1990

Cactus Rose - Western Historical

Yellow Rose - Contemporary Western

Champagne Rose - Contemporary

Last Rose of Summer - Contemporary with a more mature heroine

Sweetheart Rose - Contemporary Sweet Traditional

White Rose - Inspiration

Climbing Rose - Young Adult

Category Lengths (determined by computer word count)

Rosette 7,500 to 20,000 words (ebook only)

Miniature Rose 20,001 to 40,000 words (ebook only)

Rosebud 40,001 to 65,000 words (ebook only)

Bouquet (anthology) 65,001 to 100,000 words (ebook only)

Rose 65,001 to 100,000 words (ebook & print)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Compiled by PDR Lindsay-Salmon, aka Patricia Salmon

'A Cup of Comfort' Anthologies

A steady market for writers of 'narrative essays'. <http://www.cupofcomfort.com>

Guidelines: <http://www.cupofcomfort.com/WritersGuidelines>

'Unsent Letters'

An annual print anthology collection of the best Unsent Letters and 'a weblog of Unsent Letters sent in by our favourite readers.' <http://ourunsentletters.com/node/2> **Guidelines -**

<http://ourunsentletters.com/node/3>

'The Terrible Wizard of Oz: Shadows of the Emerald City'

'The Terrible Wizard of Oz: Shadows of the Emerald City' is the title of an anthology of short stories to be published later this year. **Details: website:** <http://www.freewebs.com/jwschnarr>;

e-mail submissions to: ozhorror@gmail.com

'Heroic Fantasy Quarterly'

A new paying zine, first issue out in July 2009, looking for high quality stories and poetry set in heroic fantasy lands.

<http://www.heroicfantasyquarterly.com>; **guidelines**

'Noctober'

Another new zine, first issue, February 25, 2009, specialising in speculative fiction.

<http://noctober.wordpress.com>; **Guidelines -**<http://noctober.wordpress.com/submission-guidelines>

'Expanded Horizons'

'Expanded Horizons' - Promoting Diversity in Speculative Fiction. <http://www.expandedhorizons.net>;

Guidelines - <http://www.expandedhorizons.net/submission.html#ratehead>

'Dog Oil Press'

'Dog Oil Press' publishes a short dark humour piece once a week. <http://www.dogoilpress.com>

Guidelines - <http://www.dogoilpress.com/2009/01/faq-dog-oil-press.html>;

Samples of work - <http://www.dogoilpress.com/dop-weekly-installments>

'The Long and the Short of It' and 'Whipped Cream'

Two Romance zines sharing one website. Every Thursday they publish short shorts of up to 1,000 words, for their readers. <http://www.longandshortreviews.com>

Guidelines - <http://www.longandshortreviews.com/submissions.htm>.

'Ruthless People'

'Ruthless People' is a new fiction zine, the editors describe it 'a cross-genre fiction magazine, published in PDF format on the 14th of every month.'

<http://www.ruthlesspeoples.com>; **Guidelines -** <http://www.ruthlesspeoples.com/node/11>

Samhain Publishing

Currently accepting submissions for a Space Opera Anthology.

<http://www.samhainpublishing.com/submissions>

Ellora's Cave

Seeking submissions for popular Caveman anthologies <http://www.ellorascave.com/authorinfo.pdf>

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 – 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 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

Auckland

Last month the attendance was quite low, 10 members, but it is a surprise anyone attended as we had our first sharp cold blast of winter. However the workshop by Norah Hansen hill was excellent and the discussion got top marks. Next meeting, 6th of June is our mid-winter meeting and we will be celebrating with hot chocolate and marshmallows. And not to worry, we've been promised a heater. To go with the hot chocolate, our team for the day, Abby Gaines, Susan Napier and Barbara Clendon will be answering questions on everything you ever wanted to know about writing romance. Should be a great meeting.

As usual, we will meet at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion, corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads. Time: 12.30 p.m. on the 6th of June. Please bring a small plate for a shared lunch.

Frances Housden
Auckland Chapter Convener.

Wellington

Our May meeting drew a cheerful crowd of ten – and the discussion was energetic, to say the least!

Topics ranged widely – from querying agents to the new NZ/Aust critiquing scheme... from clit-lit to burlesque dancing... from Hugh Jackman to the snowflake technique... from Shannon Donnelley's online courses to writing horror stories. Re the latter, Rachel assured us that "Gracie's voice is so dark you need a special light to read her work."

Joan now has three different film producers interested in the story of her father's pioneering aviation, and has sold a Kiwi Cookery article to an American magazine. Kris has a poem coming out in an international anthology in September. Several members are awaiting contest results.

Some of us brought and read out excerpts which featured descriptions of our heroes or heroines, and it was interesting to hear how different people introduced their characters. Giovanna suggested worthwhile websites to explore. And the possibility of the group writing a series of linked short stories was discussed.

Next time we're to bring the start of a synopsis; one para on hero, one on heroine, one on the major conflict between them.

The meeting will be at 1 pm, Saturday June 6th at Ellie's, 135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu. All welcome.

Christchurch

This month we had a fantastic meeting, with a full workshop day held on Sunday 17th May. Almost 20 people attended, and we had lots of fun! First up was Kathryn Taylor, presenting a workshop on the openings of books, and how to hook your first reader – an editor. Kathryn also critique the first two pages of our manuscripts. Next up was an informal chat with author Jan Colley, who talked about being published, sales and contracts, and writing in general.

After lunch there were two additional workshops. Steve Malley talked about how to successfully query an overseas agent, and gave us plenty of tips about what not to do! Then Gwen Reekie talked us through psychodrama – how to get into a character, and how to understand their inner conflicts that have developed from their life's path.

All in all it was a fabulous day, with great speakers and a relaxed atmosphere. Almost a mini-conference experience!

Nelson

This month we were reduced in number by members involvement in family matters, and by Loren's continuing therapy in Christchurch. We're all rooting for you, Loren!

Sheree continually delights us with the scope of her workshops. This month she produced five assorted smells, ranging from armpits (!) to mildly apricot. We had to analyse them, then write a short piece inspired by our good or bad reactions. As usual, we had an eclectic selection of work, all valuable.

Annika put us all to shame by using Anna's plot-line to advance her current novel to great effect, but we had all managed to use these plot-lines to some extent. For our next meeting we shall be looking at that notoriously difficult topic - emotional punch. Cherie will be leading our research. Next month we shall be meeting on Saturday, 20th June, at 10 Mana Heights. Should you be able to join us, contact Sally at 545 2244, or Cherie, at 548 6070. **Time:** 9.15am – 4pm. **Cost:** \$10 - includes lunch.

All welcome. To RSVP please contact Sue by 1st May - sueknight@ihug.co.nz

THE NAKED WRITER

Baring all in the world of romance and writing



Fun abounds, vain nakettes, at one of the most wonderful websites known to woman. www.dailymakeover.com. You load a digital pic of your face on to the site – preferably one with your hair tied back as much as poss – and you then spend inappropriate amounts of time playing around with all sorts of looks for yourself – black hair, short hair, hats, curly hair, long blonde hair, glasses, whatever you want until the pic looks nothing like you. Highly recommended for when looking at blogs and tweets gets too much or you're on hold to Inland Revenue. Could make for a good, kind of anonymous, blog or tweet pic.

I recently bought a stupid new printer which was dirt cheap and reasonably good to use, but oh my gosh, the cost of the cartridge and the appalling lack of ink it contains means it costs a fortune to print anything out. I can not believe that in upgrading to the new improved model the ink contained therein, truly appears to have been reduced – by about half. What a freaking rip off. I'm spewing, I tell you. I was talking to an author recently who said that when she has to print out a whole manuscript, she now emails it to her local Warehouse Stationery and goes and picks it up the next day. It saves tons of time and at around 7c a page plus a few bucks for a download fee, it's worth its weight. Our time is precious, after all. Many's the time I have cursed printing out a manuscript – generally the day the Clendon is due, when you can almost guarantee the paper will jam, or it'll get stuck and you'll end up printing half the page on one piece of paper and the second half on the other, or some other such soul destroying stuff up. And it takes so much time to print out 250 pages. I've been doing my printing out at work at 10c a page which, while it isn't Warehouse Stationery cheap, is bliss none-the-less. Press 'print' and ten minutes later it was all printed out. The complete lack of stress and the amazing speed with which it spits out of the printer is worth the fee for that all important perfect looking manuscript to submit.

This from the New York Times May 13th: *"When Jim and Andrew Grant show up in public, as they did two weeks ago at the Mystery Writers of America's annual Edgar Awards ceremony, the family resemblance between these striking blue-eyed 6-foot-4 British-born thriller writers is unmistakable. But how are they related? Who's who? Jim loves being asked which Grant is older, since at 55 he is Andrew's senior by 14 years. But Jim doesn't much like being told, "Oh yes, I met your son." So, just who are these guys? In fact, Jim Grant, the older, is superstar novelist, Lee Child, who btw is the current President of Mystery Writers of America. But the fuss is that the younger brother, Andrew Grant, is a first time novelist too with a debut thriller novel, "Even" just out. I can't resist this opening line from older bro Lee's new book, *Gone Tomorrow*. "Suicide bombers are easy to spot. They give out all kinds of tell-tale signs. Mostly because they're nervous. By definition they're all first-timers. "Ha!"*

And finally - this is the last Naked Writer column for a wee while, as there is tons of exciting other stuff coming up to put in the newsletter. The column will return some time post A Romantic Retreat.