

The Mid-Michigan Mirror...A Reflection of Romance

Winner of the 1999 RWA® Mid-size chapter newsletter contest

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Post Office Box 1044, Coloma, Michigan 49038-1044
<http://wwwmidmichiganrwa.org/> and mirror@midmichiganrwa.org

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of Romance Writers of America is to promote excellence in romantic fiction, to help writers publish and establish careers, and to provide continuing support for writers within the Romance publishing industry.



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Happy Birthday Wishes to:

Leah Kalis-Denda	January 1
Roseanne Bittner	January 14
Dana Corbit Nussio	January 17
Aileen Hyne	January 18
Joyce Soule	January 20
Dawn Bartley	January 25
Lana Miersen	February 4
Catherine McClain	February 6
Marianne Evans	February 12





The President's Message

By Florence Price

This year for our MMRWA Retreat From Harsh Reality, we're going to try on-line registration, in addition to the downloadable form. The site address for the on-line registration is: <http://www.RetreatFromHarshReality.com>.

Feedback on this site and the process/procedure is very welcome. You can send your comments to me at florence_price@sbcglobal.net.

You may also, if you prefer, register for Retreat by downloading, filling out and mailing (by snail-mail) the Registration Form on our MMRWA Website at: <http://www.midmichiganrwa.org/retreat-regis.pdf>.

Our myRWA Chapter Website application has been approved by RWA®. I'm currently going through training via Webinars to set up and design the website. Once the site is up and running, everyone will be invited to subscribe to the site.

I'd also like to encourage everyone who has not yet subscribed to your personal myRWA Page, to please do so at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions about how to use the myRWA Page, please contact me at florence_price@sbcglobal.net, and I'll walk you through the process.

And the program in March that was originally scheduled as a Members Critique will now be a training program for the myRWA Website and myRWA Page. More information about this program will be forthcoming.

I believe, based on correspondence I've recently received, that RWA® will be making some changes to the rules for posting on our MMRWA Loops sometime in the near future, so please watch your emails for updates.

I hope to see many of you at the February 18th meeting, which will be held at the Delhi Café, 4625 Willoughby Road, Holt, MI (Lansing). Our program this month is: ***Income Tax Information for Writers***, presented by Bruce Meyers, Certified Public Accountant with the Hantz Financial Group.

Happy Writing!
Florence



MMRWA 2012 Monthly Meeting Schedule

February 18, 2012: Holt (Lansing)-Income Tax Information for Writers – Bruce Meyers, CPA, MBA, Tax Planning Specialist with Hantz Financial Group.

April 15th – Tax Day- will be here before we know it. (However, this year, I believe we get a day or two extra.) For authors and artists, allowable deductions and rules, particularly as they pertain to the IRS hobby versus business rules can be confusing. What can be deducted and what can't? Or should you even 'go there' as a beginning writer?

As he has in the past, Bruce will fill us in on new developments in the Income Tax Code and allow plenty of opportunities for questions.

Bruce Meyers is a graduate of Michigan State University with both a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and a Master of Business Administration. Bruce began his career in 1995 as a tax consultant with Ernst & Young LLP and became a Certified Public Accountant in 1997. Bruce's professional experience also includes time as a management consultant helping Fortune 500 companies install and/or upgrade their accounting systems.

March 17, 2012	Jackson-Training on myRWA and myRWA page-Florence Price
April, 2012	Retreat From Harsh Reality
May 19, 2012	Kalamazoo-Passion for Writers – Rosanne Bittner
June 16, 2012	Grandville-The Life of a Virtual Assistant – Florence Price
August 18, 2012	Lansing-Self-Publishing and E-Publishing – Diane Burton
September 15, 2012	Jackson-Member Critique



October 20, 2012

Kalamazoo-My Life As A Book
Merchandiser – Lucy Kubash

November 17, 2012

Grandville-Member Critique

December 8, 2012

TBA-Christmas Party

This Month's Meeting

February 18th at 11:30

The Delhi Café
4625 Willoughby Road
Holt, MI 48842
517-694-8655

Directions to The Delhi Café:

From Grand Rapids: Merge onto I-196 E via the ramp on the left toward Lansing. I-196 E becomes I-96 E. Take EXIT 104 toward Cedar St/Holt. Turn left onto S Pennsylvania Ave. (If you are on E Edgewood Blvd and reach S Cedar St you've gone about 0.1 miles too far). Turn left onto S Cedar St. (S Cedar St is just past Pierpont St. KFC - Kentucky Fried Chicken is on the corner. If you are on American Rd and reach Amwood Dr you've gone about 0.1 miles too far). Take the 2nd left onto Willoughby Rd. (Willoughby Rd is 0.2 miles past Just A Mere Ave. If you are on Cedar St and reach Cedar Park Dr you've gone a little too far). 4625 WILLOUGHBY RD is on the right. Your destination is just past Helman Blvd. (If you reach Kingdon Ave you've gone a little too far).

From Kalamazoo: Turn right onto I-94-BR E/M-96 E. Continue to follow I-94-BR E. (I-94-BR E is 0.1 miles past Harrison St. If you are on E Michigan Ave and reach Mills St you've gone about 0.1 miles too far). Merge onto I-94 E. Merge onto I-69 N via EXIT 108 toward Lansing. Merge onto I-96 E via EXIT 72 toward Detroit. Take EXIT 104 toward Cedar St/Holt. Turn left onto S Pennsylvania Ave. (If you are on E Edgewood Blvd and reach S Cedar St you've gone about 0.1 miles too far). Turn left onto S Cedar St. (S Cedar St is just past Pierpont St. KFC - Kentucky Fried Chicken is on the corner. If you are on American Rd and reach Amwood Dr you've gone about 0.1 miles too far). Take the 2nd left onto Willoughby Rd. (Willoughby Rd is 0.2 miles past Just A Mere Ave. (If you are on Cedar St and reach Cedar Park Dr you've gone a little too far). 4625 WILLOUGHBY RD is on the right. Your destination is just past Helman Blvd. (If you reach Kingdon Ave you've gone a little too far).



From Lansing: Merge onto I-496 E via the ramp on the left. Merge onto I-96 W via EXIT 73B toward GD Rapids. Take EXIT 104 toward I-96-BL/Cedar St/Holt. Turn left onto S Pennsylvania Ave. (If you are on E Edgewood Blvd and reach S Cedar St you've gone about 0.1 miles too far). Turn left onto S Cedar St. (S Cedar St is just past Pierpont St. KFC - Kentucky Fried Chicken is on the corner. If you are on American Rd and reach Amwood Dr you've gone about 0.1 miles too far). Take the 2nd left onto Willoughby Rd. (Willoughby Rd is 0.2 miles past Just A Mere Ave. If you are on Cedar St and reach Cedar Park Dr you've gone a little too far). 4625 WILLOUGHBY RD is on the right. Your destination is just past Helman Blvd. (If you reach Kingdon Ave you've gone a little too far).

Member News and Recent Sales

From Diane: Santa was really good to Nancy Gideon this year. An actual Santa chose her last page out of the seven finalists. No favoritism there. Or was there??? She must have been awfully nice this year.

Congrats, Nancy.

Congratulations to all who entered the challenge. You were all winners if your story is farther along than it was back in June when you signed up. We'll pick this up again after the first of the year for a new challenge.

Marianne Evans: I'm thrilled to announce my participation in a Valentines anthology with Mary Manners, Delia Latham & Tanya Stowe. Heart's Haven will be a mid-February release from White Rose Publishing. I also recently contracted with White Rose Publishing for a three book series revolving around a historic diner located in downtown Detroit. Search & Rescue, book 1 of the Sal's Place series, debuts in mid-2012. Devotion, my Christian fiction debut, releases in November of 2012 with Harbourlight Books.

Alyssa Marble: Despite the hustle and bustle of the holidays, I managed to finish the edits on my manuscript and send it off to my agent. Hopefully, it will be deemed ready to submit. Now I get to start 2012 with a clean slate and can finish the first draft of the WIP I had to set aside for revisions.



Loralee Lillibridge: I'm looking forward to an exciting and very busy writing year. My second contemporary romance for Tell-Tale Publishing, HILL COUNTRY MAN, has been re-scheduled for May 2012 release. A third is completed and waiting in the wings. A new website for my mystery series for Bell Bridge Books, www.joyfulnoisemysteries.com, is up and more content will be added soon. My bio has been added to the Authors list on Bell Bridge Books website. Currently working with My Girl Friday to get promo material ready for MMRWA Retreat and RWA Anaheim. Looking forward to both events. Continuing to write my (mostly) weekly blog, ACROSS THE BACK FENCE.

Sue Charnley: Off Limits, my erotic romance novella with military elements will be released from Red Sage Publishing on April 1, 2012.

Tereasa Bellew: My member news is that I got a release date of May 2, 2012 for the novella Night Bird. The cover is attached and I just love it! I'll be updating my blog and hope to get a website. Writing wise, I'm five chapters into a brand new story.

Diane Burton: Goals for 2012 and a plan of action on how to accomplish them (now, I just have to follow the plan); polishing *Switched, Too*; writing my blog every Monday.

Lana Miersen: Spent Christmas in NC with firstborn & family. Winter vacationing in FL. DH began golfing today and will golf two or three days a week. I have all morning & most of the afternoon to myself to write! WOOT!!

Nancy Gideon: Avon/Harper Collins re-released my Men of Pride County historical series written as Rosalyn West along with the two previous books (just in print, not in e-book). The best price is at bn.com if you don't have them.

Florence Price: I've been busy with the myRWA website training via webinar and also designing the 2012 Retreat From Harsh Reality's online registration site. See everyone at the February meeting!

Lana Miersen: Still in Florida. Please add to my member news that I finished rewriting 3 chapters in my WIP while my dh golfed and when he watched sports on TV.



Tracy Brogan: My Scottish historical, HIGHLAND PROMISE, scored 2nd place in the Silicon Valley RWA GOTCHA contest and is being reviewed by The Wild Rose Press. The partial for this book was also requested by Berkley. My latest contemporary, MISSING YOU, came in 1st place in the Florida RWA Golden Palm contest, with a full request from TOR. It's a finalist in the RWA Emily contest with final placement pending. I'm hard at work, polishing my current WIP and plan to have it done this month. "Plan" being the operative word here...

Rohn Alice Federbush: **ForeWord Clarion Review.** FICTION: HISTORICAL.
Salome's Conversion
CreateSpace. *Five Stars (out of Five)*

Salome has long been viewed as one of the bad girls of the Bible. The seductive dance she performs before her stepfather, Herod Antipas, resulted in his pronouncement that she could have anything she wanted. At the urging of her mother, Herodias, Salome requested the head of John the Baptist on a platter, and Herod gave the command to have him beheaded.

In *Salome's Conversion*, Rohn Alice Federbush presents Salome in a much different light. According to his story, Salome is deceived about the true purpose of the dance, and she is given alcohol before she begins. Herodias had also forced her to wear a costume that would slash her legs and inflict pain with every movement. Decius Invictus, the Roman soldier assigned to guard Salome, rescues her and they escape into the night with her maid. The story then focuses primarily on the physical and spiritual journeys of Decius and Salome.

As a royal runaway, Salome finds refuge at the home of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Decius encounters Jesus and soon becomes a follower, but Salome struggles to believe in Jesus as the Christ. As Decius becomes more involved with Jesus' inner circle, he and Salome witness many of the scenes readers may recognize from the Bible. Even after the crucifixion of Jesus, Salome remains uncommitted in her belief.

Federbush weaves a credible narrative. Though the author does take liberties with biblical accounts, this does not detract from a story that is, after all, intended as fiction. Two aspects of the book become somewhat annoying, however. First, Federbush always puts the name of Jesus in red type. This does not add any substance to the text; it only creates an awkward break in the flow of the words. Readers are sure to be puzzled at the author's purpose.

The second problematic aspect of the book, one that's even more distracting than the first, is Federbush's insertion of biblical passages into the dialogue. Characters who have been speaking in modern English are



suddenly speaking the English of the King James Bible. Paraphrasing the passages into modern language would have conveyed the intent more effectively.

In spite of these minor flaws, *Salome's Conversion* introduces an interesting twist on a familiar biblical story. The author uses strong dialogue, solid character development, and a well-structured plotline to produce an intriguing and entertaining novel.

Jeff Friend

Between the Covers with Patty Gordon w/a Patricia Kiyono

By Nancy Gideon, MMRWA PAN Liaison

Meet Patty Gordon, retired elementary school teacher, grandmother, crafter, and recent published author. Writing under the name Patricia Kiyono, Patty's sold three novellas to new e-publisher Astaea Press and is completing a full length historical set in a samuri's world in Japan. Here's her view of writing, publishing with an e-press and taking a proactive jump into self-promotion on a budget.

BTC: Author/crafter/seamstress/procrastinator. That's quite a rep. At least you have them in the right order. Now that you're retired from teaching, do you have tons of time to devote to those things or are you still scrambling against the clock?

Patty: I wouldn't say I have *tons* of time, but I definitely have *more* time. I still teach part time at GVSU, and I work two or three days a week in the bakery at Meijer.

And on Fridays I take care of my youngest granddaughter, who will celebrate her first birthday this month!



BTC: Tell us a bit about your writer's journey? How long have you been writing?
Writing toward publication?

Patty: That's a hard question. I wrote a lot when I was young, but then concentrated on my musical training, followed by teacher training, and then mommy training. I joined MMRWA a long time ago (twelve years, maybe?) and tried to write but came up with a lot of excuses. When I retired from full time teaching in 2005 I realized I had no more excuses – the kids were on their own and I had bigger chunks of time in the day. So I got to work. But I was all over the place as far as genre and style. It took a specific short term goal (writing a novella for Astraea Press' Japan Relief series) that gave me the impetus to get things finished and submitted.

BTW: What types of books do you enjoy writing/reading?

Patty: I enjoy reading romances of almost every kind and cozy mysteries. As far as writing, I guess I'm more comfortable writing romances, both contemporary and historical. Right now I'm reading mysteries by Donna Andrews and Joann Fluke, and romances by Robyn Carr, as well as book by authors in my writing groups!

BTW: You've recently published two novellas (Yay, You!) and have a third on the way. Astraea Press is a new e-publisher that launched in February, 2011 with a platform as a "clean romance company." How important was that to you in placing your books with them and how are you liking them so far? They're only a year old. Does that concern you?

Patty: I wasn't necessarily looking for a "clean romance" company, but I think it's a great fit for me. I read sensual romance, but I'm really not that comfortable writing it. And in my corner of West Michigan, I have a lot of friends and neighbors who wouldn't approve if I didn't write clean romance. Another advantage is I could ask my step-grandkids (aged 9 through 20) to "like" my facebook author page without having to be secretive about what I write!

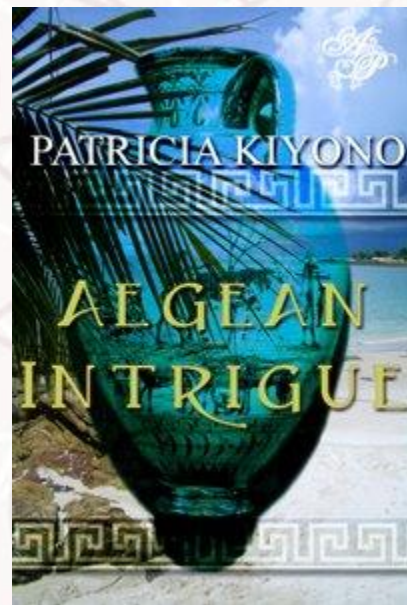
No, I'm not concerned about Astraea Press being such a new publisher. It was probably easier to get "in the door" because of that. I do know that the company is growing very quickly. They are putting out several new releases every month, and the owner has put out more than one call for additional editors and proofreaders. She also announced she has received three agented submissions in the last few months, so New York is starting to take notice!



Another thing I really like about Astraea Press is the support from fellow authors. We "like" each others' books on Amazon, we have each other as guests on our blogs in addition to the blog hops, and we bolster each other up when there's a bad review. It's also been a great resource for articles and trends, as well as another place to share ideas.

BTC: I love that your first novella, *The Legacy* incorporates your own Japanese heritage. It also came with a wonderful helping hand reaching out to that nation. Tell us about that and how it came about?

Patty: Joselyn Vaughn, a fellow member of the Grand Rapids Region Writers Group, was one of the first authors to be published at Astraea Press with her romance *Sucker for a Hot Rod*. She found out about the company's plan to publish a group of novellas for which all proceeds would go to help victims of Japan's earthquake/tsunami/nuclear disaster last March. She knew I was working on a historical novel about a samurai soldier and gave me the information. Of course I was interested, but since the samurai story was at 50K I didn't want to cut it down to the 10K-15K length they were looking for. So I wrote a shorter story about the samurai's modern day descendant and sent it in on the very last day of submissions for that line! Thankfully it was accepted, and I've been thrilled with the response. My family has been very supportive of the effort as well.



BTC: *Christmas Phoenix*, your second novella, takes place in northern Michigan. Your next release is *Aegean Intrigue* (gorgeous cover, BTW!). How do you pick the settings for your stories?

Patty: I originally set *Christmas Phoenix* in Grand Rapids, but decided northern Michigan was a better place for a guy trying to "get away from it all". I've been up there in the winter and it's pretty, but the snow is brutal, and the heavy snow is pretty central to the story. *Aegean Intrigue* is set on the Greek island of Paros, which I visited when my younger daughter did a semester abroad there during her junior year at Grand Valley. Of course I had to go and make sure she was all right! So a friend and I spent two beautiful weeks there. But I noticed very few Greek women out and about. Robyn told me that the local women



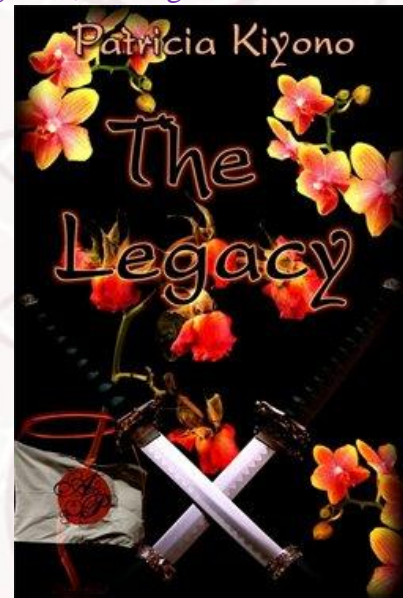
(other than the younger women who are working in the stores and restaurants) stay at home, and that the men are very dominant in that culture. I read more about it when I got home and decided that would be a great conflict for a story.

So to answer your question, I guess I pick the settings based on what's happening in the story, and what I know about the place. *The Legacy* takes place in northern California because so many Japanese immigrants settled there and it was a logical place for my samurai's descendants to live.

As for the covers, Astraea Press has a couple of very talented cover artists who also write! Elaina Lee designed the covers for *The Legacy* and *The Christmas Phoenix*, and Ginny Glass designed the cover for *Aegean Intrigue*.

BTC: Any plans to expand out of e-only to a traditional house? What's on your publishing wish list? Full length novels, different genres, the Big Six?

Patty: Right now I don't have any plans to look for a traditional publisher. I'm very happy at Astraea Press. I'm not sure I'd have the patience needed for print publishing. With both my novellas, I had an acceptance email within two days of submitting it, a cover within two weeks, and the books were available online one day after submitting the galleys. By contrast, I have a story coming out in a *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book that was submitted two years ago, accepted in August, proofed in November, and will be available in March. To me, that's a long time, though I know some have to wait a lot longer for their books!



Another reason I'm not planning to look elsewhere is my full-length historical novels feature characters mentioned in *The Legacy*, so Astraea Press has right of first refusal on them. I'm hoping they like the samurai story too, but if it happens they don't, I'll cross that bridge when I get to it.

BTC: You've been very busy establishing your author platform. You've got a website, a blog, a FB author page, and you're on Twitter. How did you come up with the overall look and did you do the work yourself?

Patty: I designed my own blog and website, with help from my youngest daughter. I took advantage of that degree I paid for in professional writing (which included a course on web design) as well as a few calls to tech support.



As far as the overall look, I wanted something that was Asian inspired. VistaPrint had a template that had the look I wanted, and I can use that same design on my business cards, my bookmarks, and all my other "SWAG". My blog has a different design, though I think it still has a calm feeling to it. And the blog isn't entirely about writing.

BTC: How important do you think these forums are for getting your books onto the electronic devices of readers? And how much time do you devote to them?

Patty: Since my family isn't very large, and since the books aren't very expensive, it's important for me to "get the word out" about what I'm writing. I'm not ready to spend big bucks on advertising, but I'm willing to spend time on an internet presence. If I were to guess how much time I spend, I'd say it takes an hour a day, but it's spread out over time – five minutes here, five minutes there. I don't Tweet much except to announce a new book or blog post, and to "retweet" stuff my fellow authors put out.

BTC: You also participate in "Sweet Saturday Samples." How did you get involved, what's entailed, and who are your fellow group members? Published, unpublished?

Patty: "Sweet Saturday Samples" began though a discussion on the Astraea Press Author page on facebook. Several authors liked the idea of offering short excerpts of our writing on a weekly basis and having our blogs linked together. Other authors were encouraged to join in, but since Astraea Press publishes only sweet fiction, we made the stipulation that all excerpts had to be at a PG-13 or less in violence and sensuality. Anyone, published or unpublished, who wants to join in for the next Saturday Sample can sign up at sweetsatsample.wordpress.com – the sign up is posted there from 11:30 am Wednesday through midnight Friday each week. Jennifer Lowery Kamptner is a regular there, too!

BTC: Two novellas out and you're already on the Blog Hop bandwagon! How do these work and are they working for you?

Patty: In addition to the Sweet Saturday Blog Hop, I've taken part in another monthly hop put together by another Astraea Press author. She created a website to which all our blogs are connected. Each month she chooses a theme and a blog hop picture, which we all feature. We each offer prizes, such as free downloads of our books or other things (jewelry, bookmarks, etc. – I offered a 30 page critique, since I didn't have as many books to offer as others did) in exchange for things such as "liking" our facebook page, or following our blog and leaving a comment. And then we all invite our friends to check out our blogs as



well as those of the rest of the people on the hop. I've had a great time doing the November and December hops. It's certainly increased traffic to my blog, and hopefully a few new readers!

BTC: Where do you go for your writing support system? Loops, groups, critique partner?

Patty: All of the above! In addition to MMRWA I belong to GRRWG (Grand Rapids Region Writers Group), and I have two excellent critique partners who read everything I write, as well as two very well-read, intelligent daughters who are wonderful for helping me avoid pitfalls like making my characters sound too old. My husband and son-in-law have been wonderful for answering my male POV questions. And Astraea Press has an email loop in addition to a facebook group.

BTC: How cool are those great reviews you've gotten?

Patty: I'm blown away! My first review on Goodreads was written by my son-in-law (he's a librarian) and others were by one of my critique partners. Then I found a few bloggers who did reviews in exchange for free copies and sent requests to them. I also got a few reviews from people who won free copies in my blog hops. I think the greatest compliment anyone could give me is that my characters and story are believable. Since I'm not writing fantasy, that's important to me.

BTC: How did you pick your pen name?

Patty: I kept my own first name because I think it would be too confusing to have someone call me something else. Kiyono is actually another way of reading the kanji (Chinese characters) for my maiden name, Seino. My grandfather was from the northern part of Japan, but if you go to other parts of the country, the same characters are read Kiyono. So if I sign something in Japanese, I don't have to learn any new characters!

BTC: You're a self-confessed crafty lady: writing, sewing, quilting. If you find an extra hour in the day, what do you spend it doing?

Patty: I always have at least one project within reach, and one in the car. Right now I have an afghan and a cross-stitch project in the basket next to me. My sewing machine and serger are always set up and have a couple of projects next to them. One of my goals for 2012 is to complete at least one craft/sewing project per week using the stuff I already have in my house!



BTC: We share that procrastination thing. How do you keep yourself focused? Do you have scheduled times you write, daily, weekly goals or deadlines?

Patty: I use a website called 750 Words (750words.com) to get me started each day. It's like a private online journal. Sometimes I wrote blog posts, sometimes I write dialogue or scenes, and sometimes I use it to brainstorm. But at least it gets me writing. I like it because it keeps me accountable. If I haven't done it by a certain time each morning it sends me an email reminder. And a bar across the top of the screen lets me know if I've missed a day that month. There are monthly challenges you can sign up for where you choose your rewards and/or consequences.

I haven't really given myself specific daily or weekly goals except when I decide to accept a challenge. For example, when Stephanie Taylor (owner of Astraea Press) announced in October that she would accept Christmas novellas until November 15, I made myself write a chapter a day until the story was done. And the Grand Rapids group has a yearly challenge that we call Winter NaNo – from our February meeting to our March meeting, we resolve to write 32K on a WIP. Challenges like that really motivate me.

BTC: What's next for Patricia Kiyono?

Patty: I'm working on finishing a full length historical romance set in nineteenth century Japan. The hero is the great-great-great grandfather of Andy Tanaka, the main character of *The Legacy*. I'm hoping to have that submitted soon, so I can concentrate on the sequel. I'm also working on a series of novellas about a group of quilters. My writing goal for 2012 is to complete two novels and at least two novellas.

BTC: Where can we get updates on you and your career?

Patty: My website: patriciakiyono.com
My blog: creative-hodgepodge.blogspot.com
My facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Patricia-Kiyono/149294485148710>
Twitter: @PatriciaKiyono



Confessions of a How-To-Write-Romance Junkie

By Tereasa Bellew

Pssst. I've got a confession. I've had a life-long affair with pens and paper, books and...well, men.


So the day I combined them was like emerging from a fog. I remember the moment when the desire to become a writer first hit me. No, it wasn't during a snowstorm, but a rather dull, quiet time in my life. A time when the voices in my head grew louder and refused to be ignored.

Imagine my relief when I discovered I wasn't psychotic at all. Nor were the men I dreamed about a subconscious sign of an unhappy marriage.

Sharing the characters that lived in my imagination however, required a lot more nerve. These were fictionalized people that I'd conceived in my head and painstakingly attempted to paint on paper.

Not soon after submitting, the rejections started to fill my mailbox and with them came a growing uncertainty. Maybe I couldn't write after all, at least not well enough to interest outsiders. So I turned to books, but not for pleasure. This time I was searching for power, for kernels of knowledge, guidance I could use to spin that golden yarn.






Anyone who's ever searched this topic knows there are literally hundreds of books available on how to write a romance. Intense classes are taught everyday on ways to create three dimensional story people. 'Dig deeper' became a common phrase. Find the bones. Give your characters flaws. Develop personalities and conflicts that tug at a reader's heartstrings.

I explored hundreds of blog universities and websites all dedicated to the aspiring writer. I discovered- not mastered, mind you- how to write a strong opening and the importance of ending every chapter with a hook. I became pretty good at identifying POV and whose voice I should be listening to in any given scene. Notes covered my computer screen, *'less is more'* and *'use strong verbs'* *'patrol for repeat offenders'* and *'cliché alert!'*

The first three to five years into this journey I devoured one 'How-To' book after another. Every time I'd hear someone recommend the easiest way to plot your novel, or how to revise and edit the current one, I'd get fidgety. I just knew my manuscript would sell if only I learned what such & such was demonstrating.

But all this research took time. Not to mention the number it did to my self-esteem realizing there was still so much I didn't know. Ten years and I was no closer to learning how to write than when I started. Rarely did I send manuscripts out anymore. I critically judged every line. The word count wasn't exact, the characters were too edgy. Or worse, the requesting editor was no longer there.





The sands of time were piling up and sadly, my fire to write for publication had started to fade. I knew a manuscript needed to be fresh...original, capable of blowing some unsuspecting editor away with a WOW! A novel needed to grab the throat of a reader in the first paragraph, better - in the first sentence. All of this left me feeling very small. My manuscript was far from perfect, not to mention in line with many established authors all competing for a contract. I felt defeated before even starting. In essence, I had become an old horse simply standing on the mark.

So what exactly was this article about and how does it relate to the title? Well, only that I've come to believe sometimes we can use research or the pretense of fine-tuning our craft as an excuse not to fail. And it occurred to me...has anyone *ever* learned to swim without getting in the water? You simply have to get wet. Why didn't I realize that before now?

Bio: Tereasa Bellew joined MidMichRWA in 1999 and has completed four full length novels and a several short stories. The novella, Night Bird, is scheduled to be released in May 2012 by The Wild Rose Press under the pen name Teresa Blue.



Retreat From Harsh Reality Information

OUR GUEST SPEAKER:

EILEEN DREYER



NY Times Bestselling, Award-winning Eileen Dreyer and her evil twin Kathleen Korbel have, between them, published 38 novels and 9 short stories in romance, romantic-suspense, fantasy-romance, fantasy, medico-forensic suspense, and historical romantic adventure. Along the way she's picked up more than half dozen RT awards for excellence and enough Ritas to place her in the Romance Writers of America Hall of Fame.

She is currently continuing her award-winning Drake's Rakes series about a group of gentleman spies in post-Waterloo Britain. The second trilogy of the series, The Last Chance Academy, will premier with an e-novella this summer.

A native of St. Louis, Dreyer is an inveterate traveler, sometimes gardener, and passionate baseball fan (Go, Cards!). She has also learned to love research...especially if she has to travel to do it.



THE SESSIONS:

HIS BRAIN/HER BRAIN: It isn't your imagination. He does think/perceive and problem-solve differently than you do, and there are biological reasons. Learn how to use these differences to your advantage in your writing and your daily life!

I'M EVIL TWINS. . . TWICE: Eileen admits to not being able to sit still for more than ten minutes so it is quite logical that she would find herself at home in multiple genres. She will discuss her genre-hopping experiences and how the fundamental story-telling process still remains the same.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, APRIL 27

5-7:00 p.m.	Registration
6:30-7:30	Dinner
7:30-8:00	Dessert - Chocolate Anyone?
8:00-9:00	Official Welcome & Ice Breaker
9:00 - ?	Bed, relaxation, private critiques...

SATURDAY, APRIL 28

7-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00-9:00	Registration
9:00-9:15	Welcome
9:15-10:30	Eileen Dreyer - "His Brain/Her Brain"
10:45-12:00	Mini-Session/Writing Session
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Book Sale & Author Signing
2:00-3:00	Eileen Dryer: "I'm Evil Twins. . . Twice"
3:00-4:00	Writing Session



- 4:00-4:30 Champagne Celebration: Angel Award, First Sales, PRO Pin Recognition, Toot Your Own Horn
- 4:30-6:00 Book Basket Raffle, Silent & Live Auctions (proceeds benefit the YWCA Domestic Assault Program)
- 6:00-7:00 Dinner
- 7:00-9:00 Muse Sessions or Time on your own

SUNDAY, APRIL 29

- 7-9:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00-9:30 Chapter Meeting
- 9:30-11:00 Romance/Biz Round Table with **Eileen Dreyer**
- 11:00-12:00 Retreat Wrap-Up
- 12:00 Adjournment

***All activities are slated to be held in the Main Lodge in the Dogwood Room. Meals will be held in the Evergreen Dining Room, also at the Main Lodge.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- **Registration will be open through April 9, 2012.** You may make a **minimum deposit of \$50 to hold your spot with the balance due by April 9.** Final room arrangements are due by April 9th. Registrations for weekend or day only packages may be accepted after April 9th if space remains. Please contact retreat@midmichiganrwa.org to verify availability and pricing.
- **Published Author Critiques:** MMRWA's published writers are again offering one-on-one critiques for only \$15.00. For this amount, you will receive an in-depth critique of your first fifty pages and your synopsis, either in person at the Retreat, by phone or by mail. *Make arrangements early – last year we sold out!*

Contact **Dawn** at members@midmichiganrwa.org or see our website for more information. *Deadline to register for critiques is March 20, 2012.*



- **Muse Sessions:** Bring your work in progress to share with other writers and get great feedback and suggestions for improvement. We suggest you focus on your main characters, your plot/timeline or your 5-page synopsis and/or query letter for a small group brainstorming session. Detailed information will be e-mailed with your pre-Retreat packet.
- **Desserts and goodies:** Bring your favorite dessert to share Friday night!
- **Book Basket Auction:** Bring your money (cash or checks only) for the book basket auction. There will also be tickets to win a blogsite/website design package; a Kindle Fire; handmade quilt; books; luggage; and a one-year membership to MMRWA.

Confirmation via email will be sent upon receipt of your registration. Directions and additional pre-Retreat information will be sent two weeks before Retreat. To reserve a space, you may send a *partial payment* but **full payment must be received by April 9**. One night stays can be arranged. **Please notify us if you require special room arrangements or have special dietary needs.** Questions? Contact Julie at retreat@midmichiganrwa.org or visit our website at www.midmichiganrwa.org.

**MID-MICHIGAN
ROMANCE WRITERS OF AMERICA®**
proudly presents

**RETREAT FROM
HARSH REALITY 2012**

April 27-29, 2012
Yarrow Golf & Conference Resort
10499 North 48th St.
Augusta, MI 49012
1-800-563-4397





*Featuring Best
Selling Author
Eileen Dreyer!*

New York Times best-selling award-winning author Eileen Dreyer, known as Kathleen Korbel to her Silhouette readers, is returning for an encore performance as our 2012 Retreat From Harsh Reality speaker. She has had 38 novels and 9 short stories published in romance, romantic suspense, fantasy-romance, medico-forensic suspense, and historical romantic adventure. She is currently continuing her award-winning Drake's Rakes series about a group of gentleman spies in post-Waterloo Britain. The second trilogy of the series, The Last Chance Academy, will premier with an e-novella this summer.

Dreyer won her first publishing award in 1987, when she was named the best new Contemporary Romance Author by RT Bookclub. Along the way, she's picked up more than half dozen RT awards for excellence and enough Ritas to place her in the Romance Writers of America Hall of Fame. Since extending her reach to suspense, she has also earned a coveted Anthony Award nomination.

Eileen is an addicted traveler, having sung in some of the best Irish pubs in the world, and admits she sees research as a handy way to salve her insatiable curiosity. She counts film producers, police detectives and Olympic athletes as some of her sources and friends. She's also trained in forensic nursing and death investigation. Her most recent trips included visits to England and Italy as well as India for research for her Drake's Rakes series.

A retired trauma nurse, Eileen lives in her native St. Louis with her husband, children, and large and noisy Irish family, of which she is the reluctant matriarch.

For more information about Eileen, please visit her website at www.EileenDreyer.com.





***TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS
OF WRITING MAGIC!***

The Retreat

An annual event since 1985, the Retreat begins Friday evening and ends Sunday at noon. Who can resist a weekend in a beautiful setting, away from spouses, kids, traffic, and the rigors of day-to-day life in the "Real World," coupled with the chance to talk "shop" with other authors and aspiring authors? Attire is sweatshirts-and-jeans casual, and one-on-one conversation with the featured speaker is not only allowed, it's encouraged! Attendees welcome this rare opportunity to relax and talk writing, to learn and to share.

The Site - A fabulous place to relax and be inspired!

The Yarrow Golf & Conference Resort in Augusta, Michigan is the perfect setting to kick back, open your mind, and reconnect with your muse. Magnificent scenery and unparalleled hospitality make Yarrow the place to rest, relax and renew your creativity.



A Great Cause & Promotional Opportunity



Retreat from Harsh Reality April 27-29, 2012



Help Us Support the Kalamazoo YWCA's Domestic Violence Program. The proceeds from the BOOK BASKET RAFFLE & AUCTION held at our retreat will benefit this worthy cause. The theme baskets have included books, gift certificates and lots of other romantic goodies, such as bath oils, candy (CHOCOLATE), candles, specialty coffees & teas and much more.

If you have a surplus of gently used books we would be delighted to have them. If not a book, what about other indulgent items women would love to have and which might just give us a wonderful bidding war on that basket?

In addition, if you would like us to distribute your PR materials in the retreat "goodie bags", we would be happy to do so. Please plan on 60 participants.

Not able to go to retreat this year? You can still help support our cause or get your PR information distributed. If you are interested in donating or wish to send PR materials, please send the items to:



Anne Stone
MMRWA's Retreat from Harsh Reality
2745 Bird Rock Street
Portage, MI 49024

If you have questions please feel free to email me at:
anneelizabethstone@yahoo.com.

We are so excited about our retreat this year. It promises to be another great one. As always, thank you for your continued support.



*** Permission granted to forward this to any other authors, publishers, book stores or lists where there may be interest or support.*

Help Us Support the Kalamazoo YWCA's Domestic Violence Program.



Attention! Calling all members!
Volunteers Needed for Retreat From Harsh Reality 2012!

Please consider volunteering your time and talents to help Retreat From Harsh Reality 2012 become an actuality. The following committees need either chairs and/or additional members to ensure that everything runs smoothly. Even if you don't plan to attend Retreat, there are positions behind the scenes that could use your help!

BASKET COMMITTEE – This group organizes the baskets for the book raffle and live & silent auctions prior to the start of Retreat. We plan to start assembling baskets about 1:00 pm on Friday, April 27 and will work until we are done. You may join us at any time. We can never have too many hands for this committee.

REGISTRATION COMMITTEE – This committee is usually composed of 2-4 persons who pass out the goodie bags and Retreat information on Friday evening and Saturday morning to Retreat attendees and registers any on-site guests.

BOOK SALE & AUTHOR SIGNING COMMITTEE – This event runs from 12:00 to 2:00 on Saturday. Two or three people are needed to coordinate the Book Sale with Kazoo Books and compile a list of requested books and references from members prior to Retreat. You also find out which published authors plan to participate and make sure that Kazoo Books orders their books. Name cards and a book sale flyer (I have a template) will also need to be made. During the sale one or two people will collect money from the sale of their books. A simple table decoration such as a plant that each author gets to take home is a special touch.

DONATION COMMITTEE – This committee sends out requests for author promo material and auction donations and sends out thank you cards to donors. Anne Stone is heading up this committee. Lucy Kubash has offered to help write thank you cards. I'm sure they would appreciate additional assistance.

MUSE SESSIONS – We need 1-2 people to organize the muse sessions and provide sign-up sheets. There will be two main sessions as well as small breakaway sessions on Saturday evening.

FOOD COMMITTEE – This group of 2-3 individuals organizes the Friday night dessert table. Dreamy decadent chocolate is always a popular treat!



RECOGNITION COMMITTEE – This committee of 2-3 persons organizes the Toot Your Own Horn segment, First Sales, PRO pin recognition. Information is collected prior to Retreat, compiled and announced Saturday afternoon.

ICEBREAKER -- On Friday night we have a 30-60 minute icebreaker where we get to know one another in a relaxed and humorous way. Generally, the committee consists of a chair person and a few helpers. In the past we've had scavenger hunts, plays and impromptu skits, writing exercises, boot camp, Jeopardy style trivia games, and Survivor-themed icebreakers. One year, we even "killed off" our speaker, Eileen Dreyer! Fortunately, Eileen was resuscitated and is returning this year as our 2012 Speaker!

PUBLISHED AUTHOR CRITIQUES: Dawn Bartley, chair

SPEAKER COMMITTEE: Laurie Kuna

AUCTIONEER EXTRAORDINAIRE (position is for life!): Laurie Kuna

RETREAT PROMOTION - involves writing press releases and getting the word out to local papers, bookstores, libraries about Retreat. Lana Miersen has graciously agreed to write our press releases. We also need people to post flyers in their local communities advertising our Retreat and Book Sale.

Please email me at [juliamasters29 @ gmail.com](mailto:juliamasters29@gmail.com) (without the spaces) if you are interested or if you need more information. All hands are welcome!

Julie McMullen
Retreat Co-Director

We need you!!!

At the 2012 Retreat From Harsh Reality at Yarrow Golf & Conference Resort!!!

Retreat From Harsh Reality 2012 is scheduled for April 27-29th at the Yarrow Golf & Conference Resort in Augusta, Michigan between Battle Creek and Kalamazoo. It's an inspirational, motivational fun-filled weekend with friends both old and new. But we need YOU there to make it a success!!! Come for the whole weekend or come just for Saturday. Or come for whatever time frame works for you. And if you post to the loop, we bet there

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are other members who just might be able to come with you to share the ride, the price of gas and the camaraderie.

Don't be shy; come be inspired! This weekend is the perfect opportunity to refill your writer's creative well and rejuvenate your writer's spirit. Meet our terrific speaker, Eileen Dreyer, as she shares her wealth of knowledge! (And hopefully a ghost story or two!) Stock up on romance writing how-to books or just find another romance to read for pleasure at our book sale! Or come to support our raffle and auction that benefits the Kalamazoo YWCA's Domestic Violence Program! In addition to the two speaker sessions, we'll have one mini-session and several blocks of writing time and Muse Sessions.

This year there will be chances to win a website/blogsite package, a handmade quilt, a Kindle Fire, luggage, and a one-year membership to MMRWA. Terrific giveaways in our goodie bags are always a guarantee. Post an email to our chapter loop or call another member to hear just how great this event is. And how you just can't afford to miss it!

Priority registration for MMRWA members is open until February 29th. After that date, registration is open to anyone, members and non-members alike. We are able to accommodate 60 guests this year. Registrations may be accepted after April 9th if space remains.

Registration for overnight packages closes on Monday, April 9th. You may make a minimum deposit of \$50 to hold your spot with the balance due by April 9. A deposit will also hold your room selection, which is important too if you're planning to spend the weekend. If you need a custom package (other than the ones listed on the registration form), please contact Julie privately for pricing. Brochures may be downloaded from this newsletter or from our website at www.midmichiganrwa.org. If you would prefer to have the forms mailed to you, please contact retreat@midmichiganrwa.org

NEW THIS YEAR: We have online registration and payment available. Please visit <http://www.RetreatFromHarshReality.com> to register and pay. There is also the option to make a down payment via this link.

So call your friends and fellow writers, get set with a roommate (no more than two to a room please) and send in your payment! This year promises to be another stellar retreat!



See you in April!
Julie McMullen and Anne Stone
Retreat Directors
Retreat@midmichiganrwa.org

Final Reflections

By Jennifer Kamptner

Why I Love 'The Sagging Middle'


Hello and welcome! This month I am reflecting about one of my favorite parts of writing. I'm sure most of you have heard of 'the sagging middle'. It's where most writers lose their story. They get stuck in the transition between beginning and end.

The beginning is always fun. It's when the story is fresh and new and we have yet to really meet our characters and plot. I consider it the 'fireworks' stage of my writing. Before everything gets complacent and known. The beginning of the relationship, if you will.

The end is almost as exciting as the beginning because you get to tie up all those loose ends, go through the Big Black Moment when everything is lost, and pull it back together. How exciting is it to blow the story to pieces and put it back together?

Then there's the middle. The characters now know each other, the plot is moving along, it's too early to tie up loose ends or break it apart. So where does that leave you? For me, the most exciting part of the book! I tend to suck at beginnings. I begin writing with a scene, a character, and not much planning. Usually, I write three chapters then go back and take notes on who my characters are, where the plot is going. Most often I end up rewriting the beginning many, many times. In my current WIP I rewrote the beginning seven times before I got it right. But, I'm okay with that.





As for endings, equally as bad for me. I can tie things up, blow things apart, but just seem to lose steam in the end. So, I'm not good at beginnings and I'm even worse at endings. But, I love the middle. For me that is a time of discovery. That is the fireworks stage for me. It's when I really dig into character GMC's — Goal, Motivation, Conflict. The part where my characters are learning each other, keeping secrets, revealing secrets, and tension is high. It's where the plot begins to come clear and the villain starts to put the screws to my hero/heroine. For me, the middle is all about the characters. Where they must face their biggest fears and risk their goals, where the reader gets to really know the people they are investing time in.

So, that's why I love 'the sagging middle'. How about you? What is your favorite part? The beginning, middle, or end?

I leave you with this quote for inspiration on getting through the middle:

It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end.

~Ursula K. LeGuin

Jennifer Kamptner
Mid-Michigan Mirror Editor

