

# The Mid-Michigan Mirror

...A Reflection of Romance

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## 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.



## —THE BOARD ROOM—

### A Writer's 7 Steps to Positivity

by Margo Hoornstra  
Vice President/Publicity Chair

Adversity is a part of life. People get ill, our friends and family don't always act the way we'd like them to, projects fail. As the old song goes - Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans. How we deal with the twists and turns of life is what makes all the difference. Join us on Saturday, May 15th in Jackson at the Belle Notte Restaurant, 137 West Michigan Avenue, to find out one woman's method.

Connie Smith grew up in the Detroit area. She has a biology degree from Hillsdale College. When Connie started dental school at the University of Michigan, she fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a dentist. During freshman gross anatomy class, she met her future husband, Walter, over a dead body. It was the classic, high-octane instructor/student romance, but the two did not date until after the class was over.

After graduation, Connie and Walter married and moved to Jackson to begin their individual practices, Connie in general dentistry and Walter in oral surgery. Early married life was easy and, with the addition of two children, the young couple thought their lives couldn't get any better.

Then, in 1994, Walter came down with Parkinson's disease and was forced to retire. Over the last five years, his health has steadily declined to the point that he could hardly walk and spent most days sitting in a chair at the computer. As the couple sustained continued losses (Walter's loss of career, his lost identity and health, and even the identity of their marriage) Connie was repeatedly drawn to the theme of how to process grief, pick yourself up and reinvent your life.

Connie has been a long time member of the RWA® and MMRWA and has written several romantic suspense novels. She is currently working on The Caregiver's Survival Guide: Road to Reinvention. She continues to practice dentistry full time in Jackson and loves writing and meeting with her critique partners. Last summer, her husband had an experimental brain surgery where a gene was implanted into his deep brain, and thankfully, he is doing much better.

She is looking forward to presenting A Writer's 7 Steps to Positivity, which will cover such topics as self-awareness, setting your writing intentions, staying balanced, and learning to trust your personal creative process.

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## The President's Corner

*By Lucy Kubash*

Considering the generosity of spirit that exists among writers of romance, I wasn't a bit surprised at the outpouring of support that went out from the RWA® chapters to the Nashville chapter and all those enduring the tragedy of the flooding in Tennessee. Comments of "what can we do to help?" and "we are here if you need anything" popped up on Chaplink as soon as the extent of the damage became apparent. That is one thing we have to say is so true about the members of RWA®—we are an organization of writers but we are also a huge group of caring people who are always ready and willing to step up and help wherever help is needed. Within our own chapter, this is evident every year when, thanks to the generosity of the writers who donate their books and those who buy the baskets at our auction, we are able to give a sizeable check to the Kalamazoo YWCA Domestic Assault program, to help women and children who have been victims of domestic assault to find a better life. Although our group at retreat was not as large as other years, we still had a very successful book basket raffle and auction, and we will be giving a check for over a thousand dollars to the Y. Thanks to everyone who donated and bid and bought baskets. I can't remember for sure what year we started this tradition, but it must be at least fifteen years since we first held the auction at retreat. So thanks again. And thanks to Julie and everyone who worked on retreat for making it happen. It was a wonderful weekend.



I would like to add here that while we sometimes like to complain about RWA® and all the rules and regulations that we must comply with, you have to give the board and staff credit for moving incredibly fast to find a new place to hold this year's national conference. It couldn't have been easy but they managed to pull it off in a very short amount of time. I hope all those who were planning to attend will still be able to do so and that the 30<sup>th</sup> year celebration will be a memorable one.

In this issue of the Mirror you will find a short survey about how we should plan for retreat going forward. I will also post it on the Rom loop and I encourage everyone, whether you attend retreat or not, to please read it and give us your thoughts and comments. Retreat should be an evolving event and we would like to know what would make it more meaningful and helpful to you. We will plan to discuss it further at the June meeting but let's start now to think about how we want to fund and plan for next year.

Thanks for your continuing support to make our chapter one of the best in RWA®!!

Happy Writing!

*Lucy*

## Special Announcement

As most of members are aware, the RWA® National Conference scheduled for July 28, 2010 through August 1, 2010 in Nashville, Tennessee, was relocated due to the disastrous flooding in the area and significant damage of the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. The National Board moved quickly to find a new conference location. The latest press release is available on the RWA® National website: [www.rwanational.org/cs/conferences\\_and\\_events](http://www.rwanational.org/cs/conferences_and_events). It is reproduced here for the convenience of MMRWA members.

### RWA® Announces New Conference Location

We at RWA® are deeply saddened by the events in Nashville and the mid-Tennessee region, and we wish a speedy recovery to friends and businesses in the area. It is our hope that RWA® will have an opportunity to return to the Gaylord Opryland for a future conference. RWA® has made arrangements to contribute a portion of our charitable donations from the 2010 Literacy Autographing event to Nashville Adult Literacy Council.

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the 30th Annual RWA® Conference will be held at [The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort](#) in Orlando, Florida, July 28–31.

The RWA® Conference registration rate remains \$425 for members/\$500 for nonmembers through July 1. After July 1, the registration rate goes up to \$475 for members/\$550 for nonmembers.

Hotel rooms for RWA® Conference attendees are available at the fantastic rate of \$149 per night, single or double if booked by July 10, 2010. If more than two guests share a room, the cost will increase by \$25 per person per night. Children under 18 may stay for free in their parents' room using existing bedding. Room tax is 12.5 percent. Included in the room rate is a hotel service package that includes the following:

- In-room high-speed Internet access
- Two bottles of water daily
- Up to 60 minutes of free local telephone calls, toll-free and credit card access calls (10 cents per minute after 60 minutes)
- 20 minutes of domestic long distance calls per day
- Unlimited access to the hotel's health clubs

For the convenience of our registrants, individuals who had previously registered to attend the conference in Nashville do not need to contact RWA® to re-register for the conference in Orlando. Individuals who are unable to come to Orlando will be given a full refund. Details are included in the Conference [FAQ](#).

**Please do not call the hotel to book a reservation.** The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort will set up an online link for reservations. As soon as the link has been established, RWA® will send hotel reservation instructions to all registrants. As before, the e-mail will include a link to reserve your hotel room(s) at the group rate.

RWA® regrets the need to move our conference to a new location, and we appreciate your patience and understanding while we work to make the 30th Annual Conference a memorable event. As more information becomes available, it will be posted on the [RWA® website](#).

### 2010 Officers

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## MMRWA 2010 MEETING SCHEDULE

- January** – No chapter meeting.
- February 20**  
Grand Rapids – Member critique
- March 20**  
Lansing – Tax Strategies for Writers  
Speaker: Bruce Meyers  
Hantz Financial Group
- April 16 – 18**  
Kalamazoo – Retreat from Harsh Reality  
Speaker: Jo Ann Ferguson
- May 15**  
Jackson – A Writer's 7 steps to Positivity  
Speaker: Connie Smith
- June 19**  
Grand Rapids – Member critique
- July** – No Meeting
- August 21**  
Lansing – Query Letter Idol
- September 18**  
Kalamazoo – How to Access the Internet
- October 16**  
Jackson – Rebounding Panel
- November 20**  
Grand Rapids – Member critique
- December 11**  
Lansing – Christmas Party

## May Meeting Directions

Directions to:

**Bella Notte Restaurant**  
**137 West Michigan Avenue**  
**Jackson, Michigan**  
**Phone: (517) 782-5727**

**From Grand Rapids:** Take I-196 E toward Lansing. Merge onto I-96 E. Take exit 106A to merge onto US-127 S toward Jackson. Continue onto NW Ave/MI-50 E/US-127 BUS S. Turn left at Wildwood Ave. Continue onto W Michigan Ave.

**From Lansing:** Take US-127 S toward Jackson. Continue onto NW Ave/MI-50 E/US-127 BUS S. Turn left at Wildwood Ave. Continue onto W Michigan Ave.

**From Kalamazoo:** Take I-94 BUS E/MI-96 E. Continue to follow I-94 BUS E. Take the ramp to Battle Creek. Merge onto I-94 E. Take exit 138 for US-127 N toward Jackson/Lansing. Turn right at NW Ave/MI-50 E/US-127 BUS S. Turn left at Wildwood Ave. Continue onto W Michigan Ave.



## RETREAT FROM HARSH REALITY 2010

**APRIL 16-18, 2010**

**GUEST SPEAKER: Jo Ann Ferguson**

After months of planning and preparation, the Mid-Michigan RWA's Retreat From Harsh Reality 2010 opened Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup> at the scenic Yarrow Golf & Conference



Resort in Augusta, Michigan. This year's Retreat featured award-winning author **Jo Ann Ferguson** who has penned numerous best-selling historical novels, traditional and mystery Regency stories, paranormal novels, and contemporary mystery novels. Over 80 of her titles have been published by Tudor, Ballantine, Zebra, Harper, Warner and Thorndike. Her books have been translated into almost a dozen languages and are sold on every continent except Antarctica.



Early on Friday, a number of us gathered in the Pub downstairs to enjoy lunch and laughter as we caught up on each other's lives and made new friends.

Smiling faces and helping hands continued to arrive all afternoon as we prepared to pamper our muses and revive our spirits all weekend long.

Friday afternoon found the Book Basket Assembly crew gathered in the Main Lodge coordinating the assortment of donations and devising innovative themes for the auction baskets as well as organizing the raffle books. Thanks to Maris Soule, Dawn Bartley, Lynette Curtis, Lucy Kubash, Rosanne Bittner, Cathy McClain, Anne Marie King-Jakubiak and Anne Stone for volunteering your time and talents. These same ladies also organized the authors' promotional materials and the folders for the Goodie Bags for all the Retreat Attendees. As an added bonus this year, each attendee received copies of autographed books by our guest speaker, Jo Ann Ferguson, and Rosanne Bittner. Florence Price once again designed the professional looking name badges for all attendees.

Retreat officially opened at 6:00 pm with an all-you-could eat pizza buffet followed by the "Dessert Anyone?" feast (thanks, Anne Stone for organizing this event) that simply oozed with chocolate and other sweet treats that were all either low in calories or calorie-free. All these culinary treasures ensured that we were ready to tackle the first activity of the evening – the Ice Breaker led by Dawn Bartley and Lynette Curtis. First, teams were determined by answering trivia questions. Then the rules of the game officially known as "Bestsellers" (but unofficially renamed "The Alphabet Soup Game") were announced. Each team would receive two letters and a theme card. Each team would then write a story including as many words beginning with those letters that revolved around that theme.

Pat Lazarus and Lee Cardle provided the following example to get us started. The letters were "W" and "O" and the theme was Paris.

*Winnona Writer whined over the ominous wind-swept clouds on the western horizon. She wistfully watched the overloaded ore boats wallowing along the open water of the Seine and wondered if the oncoming wicked weather would overshadow the overwhelming feeling of romance she felt within the omnipresent shadow of the Eiffel tower.*

*Obadiah O'Malley, owner and operator of Our World Warehouse Outlet in Wicklow, Oregon -- originators of the organic wire widget -- observed the willowy wisp of a woman occupying the wobbly wooden bench overlooking the water.*

*"Oh, wow!" His overworked cardiac organ whacked against his chest and omitted a beat. What a wondrous wench. The woman's oval face, partially obscured by her wavy onyx hair, was wholesome and welcoming. He wandered over. She offered him a winsome smile that sent his heart over-the-top and out-of-control. Then the skies opened.*

*Winnona ogled the outlandish outsider. Rain whirled his wooly hair around his head giving him an ovine appearance. "Would you like to wear my Wellington?" She worried that this might be out-of-line. Was it wise? Would it be okay to wrap herself in the overcoat of a weird wanderer just to outfit herself against the onslaught of wetness.*

*His owlsh eyes, obscured by an old-fashioned ocular device, winked warmly. The wild rain wet his washed out Wranglers, making it out-of-the-question for her to overlook the obvious. He was well hung. Outrageously, out-of-proportion to his wiry build. White-hot wishful thoughts ran wildly through her overworked medulla oblongata. To her off-color way of thinking, there wouldn't be any objection as long as he was a wizard with that outstanding, oversized wand.*

*"Why, yes," she whispered wantonly. I will wear your Wellington. Won't you wear it with me?"*

What creative stories everyone composed in such limited time! And such a great activity for jumpstarting that resistant muse on days when the blank screen stares back at you.

In the free time after the Icebreaker, we enjoyed socializing in the pub and in our hotel rooms, while some of us found time to write and others quiet time to relax.

Saturday morning dawned with a brisk chill in the air but that certainly didn't diminish our spirits. After a hot breakfast in the Main Lodge, our guest speaker, Jo Ann Ferguson, took center stage and presented two workshops, "Taming the \*&^% Synopsis and Query Letter" and "I Second that Emotion." In the first presentation, Jo Ann helped us devise a high concept for our story by using cultural icons to show that our project is appealing to the masses yet different from everything else out there. She explained the pitch is a thirty second commercial about our book based on three to four sentences describing the characters' GMC for internal and external conflicts. The synopsis is the book report for the book that hasn't yet been written. She states it must be written first.

In her second program, Jo Ann discussed how the emotional aspect of the story keeps the reader reading, even if the writing itself is not superior and the grammar is terrible. We then engaged in a two-part exercise, one from a male point of view and the other from a female perspective. The same emotions are expressed differently. Body language and reactions vary from men and women. Jo Ann encouraged us to take notes about our emotions so we can write about them later.

To celebrate twenty-five years of Retreat From Harsh Reality, Dawn Bartley put together a slide-show of photos from previous writing events and retreats and we smiled with fond memories at our friends. Anne Stone brought a marvelous cake embellished in the shape of two books stacked upon one another, which we devoured on Sunday.





The presentation of the MMRWA Angel Award is always a highlight at Retreat. Since 2002, the chapter bestows this prestigious honor upon one of our chapter sisters who has been nominated for her outstanding work and unselfish dedication to our organization. Laurie Kuna, last year's recipient, presented Annette Briggs with her wings as the 2009 Angel Award winner.



**MMRWA Angels**

This year's Book Sale was hosted by Kazoo Books. Donna Liptrot, a familiar face, along with newcomer, Jean, were the quintessential booksellers with their outstanding recommendations. Kazoo Books had a great variety of reference books and fiction books for our Book Signing. Authors signing this year included our guest speaker Jo Ann Ferguson, Nancy Gideon, Maris Soule, Rosanne Bittner, Lucy Kubash, and newcomer Cynthia Arends (writing as Arianna Skye). Thanks to Cathy McClain for cashiering at the book signing.

Thanks to Tereasa Bellew for organizing our "Garage Sale" for our gently used writing reference books, a new event that I hope to see at future retreats. And thanks to Annette Briggs for putting together the Book Cover Quiz featuring our very own Mid-Michigan authors. This fun game brought back memories.



The Member Recognition Committee led by Florence Price proclaimed our many accomplishments during the Toot Your Own Horn segment. A notepad labeled with "This is so going in my next novel" and a pen was presented to each individual whose achievements were celebrated. First Sales honors went to Cynthia Arends for *Wings of Desire*, written as Arianna Skye, from Eternal Press. We then raised our champagne glasses high in a celebratory toast to each other and shared best wishes for another even more successful year ahead.

Last-minute bidding wars on the silent auction baskets drew to a close shortly after four o'clock and the winners were announced thereafter. At breaks interspersed throughout the afternoon, winners of the book raffle were busy selecting their prizes. Then the event we were all anxiously awaiting -- the live basket auction. Laurie Kuna, our Auctioneer Extraordinaire, ruthlessly convinced many of us to willingly bid higher than our self-imposed limits. One hundred percent of the money raised from the auctions and the book raffle benefits the Kalamazoo YWCA Domestic Assault Shelter. This year, our efforts resulted in a generous donation of almost \$1100 for the Shelter.



After our dinner buffet, Jo Ann Ferguson presented her novelization of *Thomas Kinkadee's A Christmas Story* and discussed how writing a book based on a script was both easier and more difficult than writing a novel from scratch. In this case, the dialogue was already provided, making that part of the book easy to write. However, not knowing what actions were taking place and what the characters actually looked like made writing description difficult. Not to mention that the script was being rewritten at the same time as Jo Ann was penning her novelization which necessitated rewriting multiple segments. Some movie scenes which helped explain the characters' motivations ended up on the cutting room floor, leaving the viewer unsure of the reasons behind the character's behavior. When asked if she would undertake such a project again, Jo Ann heartily replied, "Yes."

For an extra-special treat on Saturday night, The Lazarus Connection (Pat Lazarus, Laurie Kuna and Lee Cardle) played many perennial favorite songs including "Vasectomies 'R' Us" and "Just Add Some Spice." They dedicated a new song in honor of Jo Ann Ferguson. The rest of the evening was spent relaxing with friends, writing or critiquing. Tarot card readings and Reiki healing sessions were in high demand.

On Sunday, after a short business meeting and a review of the weekend's events, the Biz Round Table Talk with Jo Ann Ferguson began. Jo Ann shared with us how her writing career began and evolved over the years with the changes in the publishing industry. Her advice is to "never give up, never surrender." The best marketing tool you have is to write the best book you can write.

All too soon it was time to say good-bye to our friends and return to that harsh reality, having refilled our writer's creative well, rejuvenated our writer's spirits and nourished our muses with a profusion of chocolate and laughter. Fond memories of our weekend retreat at Yarrow and our newly acquired knowledge inspire us to continue to march onward in our pursuit of publication.

See you again next year!

**Julie McMullen**  
**Retreat From Harsh Reality Chair**



### Retreat From Harsh Reality Survey

In order to serve our members and ensure the annual Retreat From Harsh Reality is a yearly success, the Board would like your opinion. Please use the other side and/or attach additional sheets for further comments.

Please place a check ✓ in the box that best represents your opinion:

- I like retreat just the way it is. I don't want to see anything changed.
- I would like there to be more time for critiquing, working on our own, brainstorming, etc., as opposed to the more structured speaker/ workshop.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If we keep retreat the same, and continue to bring in well-known speakers, how would you suggest we add to our retreat budget? (Our budget for next year is about \$600 less than this year's.) Some suggestions have been: use the funds (approximately \$800) that used to be set aside for PAN to pay speaker expenses (This comes from the chapter's general fund, which is also running lower.); instead of donating 100% of proceeds from the book basket auction and raffle, we keep a % for retreat expenses.

- Pro for keeping retreat the same: We are able to offer an affordable way for people to attend a workshop(s) who cannot go to national or any of the other larger conferences.
- Pro for a less structured retreat: More time for authors to exchange ideas, get feedback, brainstorm, discuss problems in the writing process, write, and relax.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would you think if we took one year off from having an outside speaker and held a less-structured retreat, giving the chapter a chance to regroup and raise the money for the retreat budget, so we could better afford to have a speaker the following year?

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Any comments/suggestions you would like to add?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We will discuss retreat in depth at the June meeting but in the meantime, please feel free to discuss it on the Rom loop. If you prefer, you may also bring your survey to the May meeting or email it to the [info@midmichiganrwa.org](mailto:info@midmichiganrwa.org) address. Thanks!

*The following was published in the May issue of Midwest Muse, newsletter of Midwest Fiction Writers (MFW). It may be used or forwarded by RWA® chapters with proper attribution to Leanne and MFW.*

## Emotion Sells

*by Leanne Taveggia (Farrell)*

Every writer should see the movie Avatar. Not because of the story or plot structure, but because of the methods James Cameron used to film the movie. It's called Performance Capture.

Avatar is not an animated film. Rather, by placing markers on the actors' bodies, every piece of action created was recorded as they performed. This idea is nothing new. The bio-mechanic prosthetic fields have been doing so for years, this is even incorporated in video games. But James Cameron expanded the technology for filmmaking by using markers on the actor's faces in combination with a camera connected to a boom extending from their body to capture the small muscular nuances of facial expression. This is where, as Cameron says, "movies live and breathe."

So what does this have to do with writing your novel? Everything.

The reason Avatar made well over a billion dollars at the box office is that it has done something that no one else has done. It has captured the real-time emotions of a person and digitized it into a very humanistic, yet fantastical creature without the use of elaborate (and arguably unrealistic) costumes and makeup. Yes, fellow writers and authors. It's that simple. Emotion sells.

Now, we as writers can reveal emotion like actors do. We can describe character reactions to the world around them using body language and facial expressions, but, unlike actors, we also have another tool for revealing emotions. We can show the internal feelings of our point-of-view character in both the visceral sense (i.e., heart leapt) and in the introspective sense (thinking). And guess what? It doesn't take a computer genius to make it believable.

The major difference between emotion that is done well and not done well, is in showing versus telling. If something happens to your POV character and it makes them angry, don't tell us this, show it to us. By showing us their emotion we become them, we live in their world.

For some of us, being in tune with our emotions comes naturally and being able to describe all of the corresponding body language, facial expression, visceral feeling, and introspection is simple. For others of us, it's more difficult. One common problem is that we're distracted, and when we put an emotional reaction into print, it becomes lost in translation or we forget to show the reader the emotion the character is feeling. The good news is there's a fix for this. All that's needed is a little bit of "emotion training" to properly tap your floodgates.

There are many theories of emotion developed by well-renowned psychologists, but the one that resonates with me is Robert Plutchik's. He believed that there are eight basic emotions, and each basic emotion corresponds with a particular type of behavior.

| <u>Emotion</u>        | <u>Behavior</u>  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Joy                   | Reproduction   |
| Acceptance (or Trust) | Incorporation:<br>acceptance of stimuli from outside world that is beneficial or pleasurable |
| Surprise              | Orientation:<br>contacting a new or strange object   |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Fear         | Protection:<br>contacting conditions of pain or threat of pain   |
| Sadness      | Deprivation:<br>loss of pleasurable object or something possessed<br>or enjoyed                          |
| Disgust      | Rejection:<br>expelling something harmful which is already incorporated                                  |
| Anticipation | Exploration:<br>exploring one's environment  |
| Anger        | Destruction:<br>contacting a barrier to the satisfaction of a need<br>and attempt to destroy the barrier |

When your character is reacting to the world around them, ask yourself: what emotion is my character feeling? Then look to the corresponding behavior that the emotion can produce. Do they match what my character is feeling? Now, think about that behavior. What sort of body language or facial expression could they have? If it's a POV character, what sort of visceral feeling or introspection? To get you started on brainstorming, here are some visceral feelings for each of the eight basic emotions. Using the heart organ to show them proved to be somewhat difficult because it may not be the best choice for certain emotions, but please, bear with me for exemplary purposes.

| <u>Emotion</u>        | <u>Visceral Feeling</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Joy                   | heart soars             |
| Acceptance (or Trust) | heart fills             |
| Surprise              | heart in your throat    |
| Fear                  | heart freezes           |
| Sadness               | heavy heart             |
| Disgust               | heart revolts           |
| Anticipation          | heart pounds            |
| Anger                 | heart bursts            |

Now, the visceral feelings in the chart are all one beat showings of emotion, probably not what you want to include in your manuscript. Instead, take these one beat emotions and write them in a new and fresh way and in the context of the stimulus and the reaction your characters.

My challenge is this: open your work-in-progress and perform a word search for each of these eight basic emotions. If you can't find one, try searching for all of your -ly adjectives. Oftentimes these words are a beacon for telling emotion instead of showing it. When you find one, replace it with body language, facial expression, visceral feeling or introspection. Don't tell us your character is angry, surprised, or disgusted. Rather, show us those emotions. If showing emotion can make James Cameron a Golden Globe winner and Oscar nominee, it can make your novel a New York Times Bestseller.

***MFW member Leanne Taveggia is an intellectual property attorney by day and writes historical and women's fiction in the scraps of time in-between. To get more "emotion training" visit her at A Guide to the Wheel of Emotions ( [www.emotionwheel.blogspot.com](http://www.emotionwheel.blogspot.com)).***

*The following article ran in the March 2010 issue of The Final Draft, the newsletter of Carolina Romance Writers in Charlotte, NC. Permission granted to sister chapters to forward or reprint with proper credit.*

## Are You A Perfectionist?

by *Carole St. Laurent*

As you write, do you delete some words to replace them with others? Stronger, more powerful words? Do you polish a scene so much it sparkles? Do you edit instead of pushing forward?

If yes, then you may be a perfectionist.

Have you set yourself some goals this week? A long list of goals? Maybe too many to possibly do in one week?

If yes, then you may be an unrealistic goal-setter.

Have you committed yourself to judge a contest? Two contests? To volunteer at your conference? For your online or local writers' group? To bake one hundred cupcakes for your child's class? Are you incapable of saying no?

Then you may be an over-doer.

Just imagine someone - like me - who is a perfectionist, who sets unrealistic goals and takes on more than can be chewed. Yikes!

The perfectionist in me wants everything to be done right. Including all the goals on the list. Including all the extra curricular activities. But it is impossible to do twenty hours of work in ten! In the end, tasks are not done right, goals are not reached, and people depending on you get disappointed. And I'm back to self-defeating behavior number two: H-e-l-l-o guilt! (The first one being procrastination)

In "How to Defeat Your Self-Defeating Behaviors" online class, Margie Lawson addresses those issues, very popular amongst writers.

### SETTING UP REALISTIC GOALS

How do I stop the perfectionist in me?

Sometimes, it's stronger than my will, I go back, change that word, tweak this, look up in the dictionary, measure, ponder... and while I do all that, my novel stagnates. It does not move forward. It does not come closer to "THE END".

I don't believe in "curing" perfectionism. Sometimes, in other areas of my life, it's quite useful. But in writing, it can be nuisance at the first draft stage. Not that I don't want to write the perfect book! But in wanting that perfect book, I prevent myself from finishing it.

Setting goals is a way to placate my inner perfectionist. I thought setting writing goals was so simple. Easy: write three hours a day. Nothing more to it.

Snort. If only that were true.

Three hours a day is way too vague. Maybe some writers have a steely discipline and can forge ahead and do it. But not me. I can easily spend three hours researching one detail.



Setting writing goals is a serious business. How many scenes do I need to complete my novel? How long does it take me to write a scene? How much time should I give to my chapter?

Where do I want to be in five years? Four? Next year? Next month? These questions gave me a headache, but if I had not been through them, I would not have a serious plan.

Now my weekly goals are much more precise: write scene 13, 14 and 15. Write 1 blog article. Brainstorm on X character. Then I break them by day: write first part of scene 13. If finished, start scene 14.

The perfectionist in me is somewhat mollified by my goals, because deep editing will come, and the perfectionist will have her day.

#### GET A TIMER!

I don't know why I didn't think of a timer before Ms. Lawson mentioned it in her class. She mentioned it last year, and again this year. Keep time. Measure time with a timer.

When my daughter was five or six, it was difficult to send her to bed. She'd push our limit until we had to get angry. I finally found a fun method to make her go to bed, giggling all the way.

I counted out loud. If she wasn't in bed when I reached ten, I could tickle her. You should have seen that child hurrying up to her room! Timers do that. I set my timer for 30 minutes, and it's ready, set, write! I can cram an average of 450 words in 30 minutes.

30 minutes is my own time measure. Over that and my brain quits. When I plan a scene, I know how many 30 minutes sessions I will need to write it.

That's how I learned to set realistic and specific goals.  
No kidding, try a timer!

#### OVERDOING

Overdoing is a difficult beast to tackle, because when I agree to do something, I truthfully believe I have the time to do it. Since I can be quite an enthusiastic person, I tend to say yes and jump into projects I shouldn't be in. Or sometimes I just say yes because I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings (guilt alert!).

Learning to say no is difficult. But it's doable, and can be done in a nice way.

When a family member calls and wants to chat for one hour, I find myself unable to say, I don't have the time right now...But I learned to say: I'm writing at this moment. Let me call you back, okay?

In Ms. Lawson's class, we learned how to say no in a polite but firm manner. She calls it "refusal skills".

Now, when a project is presented to me, I take a deep breath instead of jumping in right away. I evaluate, do I really have the time? If not, I answer: my schedule is so full, I promised myself I would not take any more project before my book is completed.

#### HAVING THE RIGHT TOOLS

Ms. Lawson's teachings have provided me with many tools to defeat my self-defeating behaviors. The tools are there, ready to be use. Now it's up to me to use them.

***Carole St-Laurent is a Canadian living in South Carolina. She's hard at work to complete her first full length historical novel.***



## —CHAPTER CHATTER—



### MEMBER NEWS

**Nancy Gideon:** Got a *starred* review in Publishers Weekly for *Masked by Moonlight*

**Elizabeth Fortin:** Entered two contests, judging another. Became active in Deadly Prose Int. Critique Group.

**Lucy Kubash:** Attended Retreat; otherwise just writing.

**Lana Miersen:** Attended Retreat and was energized to tackle the revision of my futuristic and finally finish it!

**Alyssa Marble:** I'm working on major plot modifications on my historical, and hope to begin polishing soon.

**Dawn Bartley:** Working on grad student papers, professor article.

**Julie McMullen:** Queried two agents and waiting (still) for responses. Working on a straight historical.

**Anne Marie King-Jakubiak:** Submitted my Christian newsletter article to a Christian magazine. Just living a life besides that.

**Tracy Roper:** Researching for historical fiction ms. Revising contemporary ms and writing synopsis. My first three chapters of *Totally Dody* earned first place in the Connecticut RWA FictionFest Write Stuff Contest for single title, contemporary. Yea! Best of all, because of this, I've been asked for a full ms submission by an editor at Berkley.

**Laurie Kuna:** Entered Hearts Through History contest.

**Loralee Lillibridge:** Attended Retreat, reworking plot for single title.

**Lisa Cardle:** Preparing submission for category romance and continuing to work on a paranormal.

**Malea Powell:** Took three online workshops, attended Retreat, published nonfiction essay "The X-Blood Files" in *Native Authenticity* (SUNY Press).

**Jackie Braun:** *A DINNER, A DATE, A DESERT SHEIKH*, coming out in June from Harlequin Romance, received Four Stars from the Romantic Times. "Quite humorous at times, with beautifully written characters, this is a terrific read." – *Romantic Times*

**Florence Price:** I've been busy working on my WIP, and I'm taking an on-line workshop called Fairies and Other Magic Folk through Savvy Authors. I'm also judging the YA Category for the Golden Pen Contest.

**Anne Stone:** I'm currently working on an idea about a baseball player. I hope to stay motivated and write each day. I am looking forward to going to National in July. Thank you to the chapter and especially Julie for this wonderful retreat. All of your efforts are appreciated!

**Rosanne Bittner:** My agent absolutely LOVES my new book - just needs some very minor changes - so she'll be shopping it around very soon! I am so happy to finally have something in the works again! Working on a new book set against the American Revolution.

**Annette Briggs:** Armed with wonderful suggestions from my critique from mega-published Rosanne Bittner, I'm fired-up to improve my WIP. MMRWA ANGEL!!!! You blew my mind, fellow members.

**Teresa Bellew:** Coming home from Retreat energized and ready to write! Had a wonderful time.

**Diane Burton:** Inspired at Retreat; Survived the replacement surgery; revising YA Futuristic.

**Maris Soule:** Halfway through revisions on my Skagway book. Will be on a panel at Kazoo Books. Gathering research for third book in the Crows series.

## Members' Current and Upcoming Releases Spring/Summer 2010

**Jackie Braun:** *A Dinner, A Date and a Desert Sheikh*, Harlequin Romance, June 2010, and *Inconveniently Wed*, the third book in the *Girls Weekend in Vegas* continuity, Harlequin, August 2010. [www.jackiebraun.com](http://www.jackiebraun.com)

**Arianna Skye:** *Wings of Desire* available in e-book and at Amazon.com February 7, 2010 through Eternal Press. [www.ariannaskye.com](http://www.ariannaskye.com)

**Nancy Gideon:** The first three books in a shape shifter series from Pocket Books: *Masked by Moonlight*, June 2010, *Chased by Moonlight*, July 2010 *Captured by Moonlight*, August 2010. [nancy.gideon.com](http://nancy.gideon.com)

**Melissa Ford Lucken w/a Isabelle Drake:** *Roughneck by Request*, from Ellora's Cave (Quickie), available January 19, 2010 [www.isabelledrake.com](http://www.isabelledrake.com)

**Alison Hart/Jennifer Greene:** New releases by Jennifer Greene from Silhouette Romantic Suspense: *Secretive Stranger*, April 2010, *Mesmerizing Stranger*, September 2010, *Irresistible Stranger*, December 2010.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY! May

01 Alice Weidner  
02 Margo Hoonstra  
14 Lila Marie Chandler  
21 Leila Davis  
27 Nancy Gideon  
30 Lorelee Lillibridge

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Beverly Betz  
Debra J. Moser  
Stephanie Berg  
Jennifer Kamptner  
Katharine Dubois



## —THE FINAL REFLECTION—

### **Persistence**

**By Alyssa Marble**  
**Editor, Mid-Michigan Mirror**

Watching the flooding of Nashville recently, I'm reminded of how indomitable the human spirit is. It's a fact that can be easily forgotten in the humdrum of our daily lives. Work, school, write, sleep seems to be the rhythm of my days so that I forget how precious and fragile life is. Not just our corporeal bodies, but our memories and mementos and all the happenings that make up our lives, both significant and inconsequential.

Yet since time immemorial, the human race has suffered setbacks that are well beyond our control. Floods, earthquakes, fires, plagues. And after each disaster we pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off—or squeeze out the water as the case may be. We rebuild and we regroup. And we go on.

The persistence of the human spirit is a marvelous attribute that, if we let it, can fill our lives. Sometimes, just rolling out of bed in the morning is an exercise of persistence. Sometimes, fitting in just one more load of laundry or one more meal or one more meeting requires persistence.

And sometimes writing one more chapter, one more sentence, one more word requires dogged persistence.

And yet we persist. Ah, the indomitable human spirit. What wonderful inspiration.

*Alyssa Marble - Editor*

### **Submission Guidelines**

**Topics:** writing-related—business/marketing, craft, how-to, interviews with industry professionals, book reviews, member news, member bios, members' latest releases, and program recaps, etc.

**Manuscripts:** single-spaced, readable 12 pt. black font, no special formatting or colors, one-inch margins, saved in rich text format.

**Deadline:** the 2nd Saturday of the month, unless otherwise stated. Member News deadline is the 3rd Saturday (meeting day).

### **Policy**

The *Mid-Michigan Mirror's* policy is to offer our original MMRWA articles to other RWA® chapters and loops to use with all credits given unless the author specifies restrictions in the article. The *Mirror* staff reserves the right to edit submissions for such things as spelling or typographical errors, punctuation, grammar, size requirements, etc., and content with author's approval.

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### **Chapter Information**

Non-members seeking information about Mid-Michigan RWA, our meetings, and joining our chapter, may email our membership chair at [members@midmichiganrwa.org](mailto:members@midmichiganrwa.org), write to MMRWA, P.O. Box 2725, Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2725, or visit our chapter online at [www.midmichiganrwa.org](http://www.midmichiganrwa.org) to learn all about us.