



# Connections

The official newsletter of the Connecticut Romance Writers Association

Connecticut Chapter, Romance Writers of America, Chapter 1, Region 1

## President's Letter

December 2009

Ah...my last letter! I'll now admit that I was never really sure what to write; I wanted to be encouraging, first and foremost, and entertaining and informative and maybe even motivational. If not, sorry, gang! You get what you pay for. But for my last letter, I thought I'd share a few things I've learned thus far in my writing life. Hope it's worth something.

**Writing is a marathon, not a sprint.** It takes time to develop a voice, understand a genre, write with conviction and grace. Take that time and enjoy it. Learn what you do best and keep doing it, building it, working it. If you're not getting the results you want, keep trying. Your time will come.

**Listening is the most forgotten skill of any writer.** Everyone in the writing world has a story — not just the one they're writing, but the one they're living. Sure, I have my own methods, my brushes with greatness, my evil twin. But so do we all. Of course we all want to talk about our own experiences, what we've learned, what we're writing and how we're doing it. Just don't forget the flip side.

**Each stage along the way is a gift.** No, no, it really is! I know it's a cliché, but remember what the philosophers say...it's the journey that matters. Wherever you are now in your career, you'll never be here again. There's something here for you to learn and enjoy and appreciate. It's good to have goals, but not if you're so singleminded that nothing else matters. That's no fun.

**People can be mean.** There will always be those who don't want you to move forward. To them, your success means their failure. There are people who will gossip and badmouth and suck the joy from a moment. They're poopyheads, to borrow a phrase from my four-year-old niece. Don't let them matter more than the next type.

**People can be amazing!** Sure, there are the petty thieves of good karma, but guess what? They're outranked 50 to 1. There will be writers who champion your work...and they don't even know you. Editors who give you their time and expertise, even if they don't sign you. People who come up to you at a signing and say, "You're my favorite author." And your mother didn't even hire them.

**Writing is a gift.** Yes, of course it's hard. But at some point, your story comes to life, and you're granted the grace only a writer knows...watching those characters you created say and do things you never expected, delighting you, distressing you, bringing you to laughter and tears. We writers are *blessed*. Whether we're beginners or veterans, whether we've written one manuscript or fifty, what we do is uncommonly wonderful.

It has been an honor and a privilege to be president of CTRWA this past year. I can't tell you how grateful I am for your enthusiasm and support of our chapter and personally, of my own work. But even more than that, I just love how it feels when I walk into our meetings and feel the camaraderie, intelligence, good humor and inspiration of this chapter. And that credit, my friends, belongs to you.

Thank you. ~ Kristan

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## December 12th

### Holiday Party!

MONTHLY MEETINGS of the CTRWA are held at The Four Points Sheraton in Meriden.

Non-members are welcome to observe a meeting before joining. Meetings begin at 10:30 a.m. with a speaker or workshop at 11:00. PYOW lunch follows.

See our website ([www.ctrwa.org](http://www.ctrwa.org)) for more information and directions.

# COMMUNITY

## MEMBER NEWS!

**Susan Hanniford Crowley:** Full length 95,000 word vampire romance, *THE STORMY LOVE LIFE OF LAURA CORDELAIS*, came out on Nov. 15th as an ebook from Tease Publishing LLC and is available at All Romance Ebooks. It will come out in print next year. Awaiting news of the release date (in Dec.) of my vampire romance novella, *A VAMPIRE FOR CHRISTMAS*. Blogging like a maniac. I was invited by Hannah Howell to blog at her blog. I've blogged at Romance Alley, Paranormal Romantics, have an interview coming up in January at Romance Studio, will be a featured author at a blog holiday party at author Sandra Sookoo's website, and will be giving away an ebook at my own holiday blog party for Nights of Passion <http://nightsOfPassion.wordpress.com> on Dec.19-20th.

**Marie Roy aka Collette Thomas:** Tomorrow my story *Deadly Affairs*, Book Two of my Todd Hollow series goes live on the Damnation Books website. Also, my editor there emailed me last week to tell me that *Deadly Games* made Cooler Books best seller's list.

**The Write Stuff:** Bob Bonitz and Cassy Pickard are closing down submission as of today. We've had a fantastic response in each of the categories. I'm putting together a final count shortly, but I know we've had no problem meeting our submission numbers. Entries have come in from all over the country. This proves, yet again, to be a great opportunity for writers to have their work read by multiple judges plus be a source of income for our chapter. Double win!

**Kristan Higgins:** passed in her sixth manuscript an entire week before her deadline, shocking herself...She will be interviewed in February's edition of Booklist, the monthly magazine distributed to libraries with a total readership of 450,000 (but no pressure, of course). Kristan has started outlining book #7 and has dreams of this one just flowing out of her fingertips.

**Eleanor Sullo:** I am thrilled to announce that my six-book mystery-romance series, *Menopause Murders*, has found a home, ironically with the publisher of my very first book, *The Moonrakers*, Wings EPress, the Encore L'Amour line. I currently have a contract for Book One, *Hostage*, which will be available in a few months, and then the next two, *Harem and Hurdles* will be forthcoming, then the final three when I complete them

Will I be busy? you bet, but happy as a lark! I'm especially giddy to see my six slightly whacky, good hearted and clever heroines who solve murders and are always ready for romance, come to print. Their sell-by date may have expired, but their zest for life has not! I do thank everyone in CTRWA who has inspired and encouraged me and my menopause gals over the past few years--you know who you are, and you're the best. Cheers and Happy Holidays to all.

**Lindsay Downs:** I didn't finish the NaNoWriMo cause I wanted the time to edit the partial request I got from Michelle Wolfson, Wolfson Literary Agency, when I was at the NJ Conference. I also wanted to devote time to editing my submission to the contest. Maybe next year.

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

*How do the holidays affect your writing? Do you have coping tips?*

**Susan Hanniford Crowley:** Regarding writing during the holidays: I decorate like crazy to give myself free time for writing after everything is done. I always take advantage of when people are exhausted. On weekend nights when the family sleeps, I write very late into the night.

**Marie Roy:** The Holidays are tough because there are distractions like playing my new Yamaha keyboard (an early gift to myself) and practicing Christmas carols. Setting aside a time every day to focus on the writing is probably the best way to keep on track and get it done.

**Jennifer Iszkiewicz:** Writing is actually a GREAT excuse for retreating from family drama. Somebody's getting on your nerves? Your burnt out from all the festivities? Grab your laptop and smile apologetically, "Sorry, but inspiration calls." Fortunately, my family is very supportive and this always works. And it's nearly always true. Only sometimes do I have an US Weekly hidden under the bed! HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

**Kristan Higgins:** Writing is how I cope with the holidays...it's nice to have a little window of normalcy between the shopping, cleaning, baking, and wrapping.

**Lindsay Downs:** Holidays. What holidays? Coping tip - Try chocolate. It always works.

# CRAFT

## KICK YOUR MUSE'S BUTT- HOW TO FIND INSPIRATION WHEN THE WORDS WON'T FLOW by Gina Ardito

There's a reason why the blinking prompt on your monitor is called a cursor. When the creative part of your brain gets distracted, that blinking prompt mocks you until the most colorful invectives race through your head. So next time your muse refuses to come out and play with you, try luring her to the forefront with one of these tips:

**Music.** Turn up the tunes, sing, dance, or just let the rhythm carry you to a better place.

**Art.** Study the scenery of landscapes, the clothing and expressions in portraits. Ask yourself questions: Why would dogs play poker? What's Mona Lisa really thinking? Did Andy Warhol paint Campbell's Bean With Bacon Soup?

**Take a shower.** Something about hot water and the enclosure actually frees your mind to think outside the box.

**Go for a walk.** Take a break from your normal scenery and seek out something new.

**Add scents to your room (candles, air freshener, etc.).** The sense of smell is highly evocative and brings memories, visions, and ideas.

**Exercise.** You know this one. It's endorphins.

**Famous quotations.** One of my favorite research books is a Quotations Dictionary. I've come up with lots of scenes by simply reading the words of famous people.

**Read.** Books, magazines, newspapers, children's stories, maps. The possibilities are endless and so are the story ideas inside.

**Eavesdrop.** Know that obnoxious person speaking loudly on the cell phone? Listen in. Make up the other half of the conversation. Or head to Starbucks, a diner, a local park. Anywhere you'll

find two or more people conversing. Note body language and facial expressions.

**People watch.** You can still watch body language and facial expressions. But you have more freedom to imagine what they're doing, where they're going, and why it might matter when you have to fill in the dialogue.

**View photo websites.** Try stock photo sites or sites like Flickr. Or just type in "couples" or "love" in Google Images. See what pops up.

**Color or draw (with bright, vibrant colors!)** Don't think it matters? Consider this. Which color gives you a more visceral reaction-mint green or fire-engine red? Which evokes better images?

**Meditate.** Sometimes your muse just needs a little quiet time.

**Blogs.** Some of my favorite sites for inspiration are pretty quirky: My Life Is Average, Emails From Crazy People, It Made My Day. Just remember these can also suck time so be disciplined about how often you fall back on such distractions!

**Interview a friend or relative.** If you're fortunate enough to have your parents or grandparents around, ask them about their dates, teenage years, or early married life. Ask a neighbor couple how they met. Talk to a child you know (not your own) about his/her favorite day, toy, or person.

**Window shop.** Antique stores, gift shops, craft stores, even garage sales are treasure troves of inspiration. Find stories in a jewel case, a painted thimble, or a unique lamp.

**Word puzzles.** Crosswords, jumbles, encrypted quotes, even word searches can jumpstart your creative spark.

**Board games.** Play a solitaire version of Scrabble®, or other games that might open blocked passages. Try Scattergories®, Imaginiff®, and Apples to Apples® for starters. Bring in the family and make a night of it. Sometimes, you have to reconnect with those you love to continue crafting your stories of love.

Hopefully, with these helpful tips, that cursed cursor will stop blinking and start flying across your pages!

President and Co-Founder of Dunes & Dreams RWA, Gina Ardito has kicked muses' butts so often she wears steel-tipped boots and carries a big whip. For additional helpful articles, visit Gina's website: [www.ginaardito.com](http://www.ginaardito.com). This article first appeared in the December 2009 issue of Footnotes, the newsletter for Dunes & Dreams RWA (Eastern Long Island).

## WHAT MAKES A BAD BOY SO GOOD

by Juliet Burns

Ahh, the allure of a Bad Boy. Whether he rides up on his stallion or his Harley, whether he swings across the chandelier or the mast of his ship, he sweeps you off his feet and you're a goner. Maybe not in real life (although there are exceptions) but we definitely love a Bad Boy in our Romance novels.

In a Historical Romance he's The Pirate, The Rake, or The Gunman. In a contemporary, he's usually the Biker or the Player--the Serial Dater. But he can also be the CEO, the Sheik, or the Navy Seal. Any man can be a Bad Boy. I'm a fan of the archetypes book, *HEROES AND HEROINES* by Tami Cowden, Caro LaFever, and Sue Vidars. In their book they list Bad Boy traits as: Charismatic, Street Smart, and Intuitive. The boy from the wrong side of the tracks. The Rebel. Tami Cowden, et al lists such examples as Johnny Castle from *DIRTY DANCING* and Jack Mayo from *AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN*. These are wonderful examples, and if you have the chance I recommend this book for more insight into The Bad Boy. My Critique partners and I were discussing Bad Boys from our own works in progress at our annual retreat one year and came up with a list of traits we would add:

1. He has a temper
2. He's cynical, an outsider, doesn't like rules
3. He's not a big talker.
4. He's aloof, acts as if he couldn't care less
5. He never explains himself
6. He's unpredictable, exudes an air of danger
7. He's a passionate lover
8. He never admits he's wrong
9. He'll take the blame whether it's his fault or not
10. He never runs from a fight and doesn't mind picking a fight if he's in a temper
11. His word is his bond
12. He never lets anyone see the goodness inside him, or his fears, or any feelings for that matter
13. He doesn't believe in love
14. He's possessive, won't share his woman
15. He's capable of pouring all his passion and love into a lifetime devotion to the woman who can love him and make him want to be a better man.

And that last trait is the fantasy. The end game. The reason we read Romance. We might all have a Bad Boy in our past somewhere. Maybe it worked out, maybe it didn't. But in a romance, the heroine always gets her man. A reformed rake makes the best husband. The Bad Boy is always tamed, or at least loved. I found a list of Romance novels that feature Bad Boys as heroes here <http://www.likesbooks.com/rakes.html> Not surprisingly, I've read a good percentage of them. In my upcoming release, *THE PIRATE'S POSSESSION*, Ewan MacGowan, aka Merciless MacGowan, is a Bad Boy Pirate who meets his match in a prim and proper lady who trades her virtue to save her servants from Cromwell's murderous slaughter of the Irish in 1649. So, my Bad Boy is a little reformed but it's also fun when my proper Lady is taught to be a little bit naughty.

*Juliet Burns lives in Texas with her husband of twenty years and their three active kids. Juliet believes romance novels have the power to change lives with their message of eternal love and hope. Her erotic romance in Red Sage's Secrets anthology Vol 28, Sensual Cravings, The Pirate's Possession, will be released in December. Juliet has 2 more books being released in 2010 for Harlequin Blaze writing as Jillian Burns. For more information and excerpts you can visit her website [www.julietburns.com](http://www.julietburns.com) This article first appeared in the November Yellow Rose Newsletter, Pedal Press.*

## Tips for Writing Love Scenes

by Margaret Moore

This article first appeared as a column in Margaret's web site. The column is based on questions Margaret gets asked by those who also want to write romance novels. The answers are based on her personal experience. Every author must and should find their own way along this path; however, sometimes it helps to know how it was for an author who's reached the goal of publication.

*So, how about those love scenes? Have any tips/suggestions/helpful hints?*

Margaret answers:

As in any scene, a love scene should:

1. Move the story forward
2. Reveal character (and I'm not talking about their bodies)

*How does a love scene move the story forward?*

A love scene should indicate that the romantic relationship between your characters has been altered by the physical intimacy of making love. Are they pleased by this? Worried? How has it upped the stakes in terms of the rest of the plot?

*How does a love scene reveal character?*

By demonstrating how your characters behave when they are alone with each other. There is nobody else to influence their behavior.

For example:

Does a supposedly arrogant, selfish man behave with unexpected tenderness? Does a woman determined to refuse a man's advances discover that all her preconceptions about him have been wrong? How does that effect the future of the story?

*How many love scenes do you need?*

As many (or as few) as the story requires.

*How do you determine this?*

As you write, you'll find how many love scenes you're

comfortable with writing; this is one way to determine your style, as well as the type of romance you want to write. Some settings or stories will provide or require more moments of intimacy than others.

There is no rule or formula for the number or placement of love scenes in any romance, of any kind. It's up to the author to decide that, and then determine where the book should be sent.

## Eight Tips for Writing Love Scenes

1. Where are we in terms of the overall relationship -- the beginning, the middle or the end?
2. How comfortable are the characters with each other?
3. What do you want this scene to do? How is making love going to change the direction of the relationship between the characters and where is it going to go afterward?
4. Determine the mood of the characters at the beginning of the scene. What has just happened to them? Are they relieved, happy, anxious?
5. The setting -- where are they? What kind of place? Furnishings? Time of day? Lighting? Think of the five senses. Bring as many into play as you can.
6. Don't neglect dialogue.
7. Don't reach too far for interesting, new descriptions of body parts or sensations or you run the risk of sounding ridiculous and yanking the reader right out of your story (talk about coitus interruptus!).
8. Try not to envision your mother or her friends reading your love scenes. You are a fiction writer creating a story about two people distinct from yourself and this is one part of the process.

*USA Today bestselling author and past president of Toronto Romance Writers, Margaret Moore has written over forty historical romance novels and novellas for Harlequin, Avon and HarperCollins Childrens Books. Her latest release is THE WELSH LORD'S MISTRESS, a Harlequin Historical Undone available at eHarlequin. Visit Margaret at [www.margaretmoore.com](http://www.margaretmoore.com) or her blog at <http://margaretmoore.blogspot.com>*

## The Perils of Being Published: Control

by Gerry Bartlett

I'm something of a control freak. Which means being a romance writer is the worst possible profession for me. Because there is so little we can control in this crazy business. I admit the idea for this article was born out of pure frustration. Yeah, I'm about to blow. But I won't. Not an option. I've got a deadline and a contract that I can't afford to breach. So instead, I'll vent here. The following is my list of things a writer can and cannot control in her publishing career. Here goes:

You can control what you write. Paranormal? Vampire or Werewolf? Better yet, a demon or a witch. Contemporary or historical? How about a Regency or maybe a Medieval? The what is wide open. You pick. Go ahead, make your day.

You cannot control whether anyone will give a flying fig whether you wrote it or not. Vampires are suddenly so yesterday. Contemporary? Fine, but we want a small town saga, not a funny romp. Regency? Gluttons and Victorians have to include something called Steam Punk. Are you feeling me?

You can control how much you write. Five pages before noon. Oh, still have a day job? Make that five pages after the kids are tucked in at night. Hubby will understand. Maybe he'll get lucky and that steamy scene you're writing will put you in the mood before you crawl between the sheets exhausted. Or you didn't write at all today because the computer didn't look like your friend. Your brain was on a holiday, couldn't face that story about the steam punk demon who terrorized a heroine who you've decided is too stupid to live and maybe you need to... Oh, well, you'll do ten pages tomorrow right after you get home from the beauty shop. You are much more creative when your roots aren't showing.

You can't control whether anyone will read that deathless prose. Send it in. Many agents now don't even bother to send rejections. They figure their silence says it all. Oh, but you have a contract? Fine. Make a deadline. Then it will linger on your editor's desk until she is good and ready to look at it. That could take months. Then she'll give you exactly a

week, maybe ten days to do major revisions before it simply has to be turned in to production.

You can control how good your story is. You slave over it. This is the best damned steam punk demon story you ever read. You've done those revisions, your agent loved it. Even the editor said it was sexy and a fast read. Yay! It's great.

You can't control how many of your books will land on the shelves. Your print run is totally up to the publisher. The sales force didn't get enthusiastic. The economy is sluggish. Book stores are ordering conservatively and suddenly your book is playing least in sight on its release date. Even if every one of them sells, you won't earn out your advance. What? And when they're gone from the shelves, which they are in a week or two thanks to a decent cover and loyal fans, the book stores don't reorder because they're just relieved they don't have any remainders. Sigh. Forget the chance of impulse buys and new fans.

You can control how you handle your disappointment. You can communicate with your agent in a rational ten point email. You can whine to your friends over a fattening lunch. You can examine your options for writing something different and searching for a different publisher. And you can start writing another book that is even better than the last. What you shouldn't do is post something on a loop where a lurker (and there are legions with their own agendas) will see it and spread tales that you're ungrateful to that publisher who at least did put you on shelves for a nano-second.

You can't control whether your current publisher will offer you another contract. They'll play a waiting game. One-book deals are becoming common-place and it's all about the bottom line. Did your book make them money? Probably, even though it's not making you much. You'll be left to sweat for a while, angsting over your future, while they wait for numbers.

What to do? Brainstorm another story idea, a new direction. Read, read, read. Pay attention to what's on best seller lists and fall in love with some of those popular books. Try your hand at something that is similar, yet different. Come on, you know what I

mean. I could name at least three authors who have done knock-offs of New York Times best selling books and enjoyed great success. Copied exactly? No. Used their own unique voices to put a new spin on a popular concept? Sure.

I think I've got my next book idea now—The Twilight of the True Blood Brotherhood. What do you think? Do you see movie, TV and hardcover deals in my future?

So take control of your own destiny. My biggest regret in this business? That I didn't use my time more wisely. Taken more risks and certainly written more when I was playing that waiting game. It's stupid, really, to be idle when this is one of the few things you can control. Nora Roberts says it in every workshop where I've heard her speak. Her output says it even better. "Butt in the chair." And not just for surfing the Internet. Right?

*Gerry Bartlett is out of control as usual, writing this article in between her February book, REAL VAMPIRES HATE THEIR THIGHS, and her next book, REAL VAMPIRES HAVE MORE TO LOVE, due out December, 2010 from Berkley Publishing. This article first appeared in the November 2009 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA.*

## Writing a Bio That Works

By Dawn Temple

An effective bio is a necessity. Unfortunately, introducing yourself in print is often as painful and embarrassing as doing so in front of a live audience, but with a little pre-planning, you can craft a bio that makes a stellar first impression. Well, actually, I recommend all up-and-coming writers maintain three versions of their author bio. A small blurb as a tag for articles. A medium paragraph for the inside of your book and speaking engagements. And a large, in-depth bio for your website.

More on each of these later, after we discuss content.

The first step (always the hardest) is to look at yourself, your life and your history as objectively as possible. What makes you unique? Wait. Don't give up too quickly. Think hard. It doesn't have to be that out there. I mean, if you were a child acrobat in a traveling circus, then, score! Your job's going to be pretty easy.

But for the rest of us, unique may translate less dramatically.

Are you one of a dozen kids? A military brat? A garden enthusiast? A rabidsports fan? Do you own

every Neil Diamond album ever published? Can you sing the alphabet backwards? What seems mundane and everyday to you could be just the thing to capture your reader's attention.

The second step in crafting an effective bio is to never forget that your bio is an introduction, kind of like that initial exchange of handshakes and howdys at a cocktail party. Now is not the time to spill all your deepest, darkest secrets. (Honestly, no one needs to know that the inspiration for your current WIP started with a nasty case of toenail fungus.) The idea here is to paint yourself as an interesting, professional writer.

Thirdly, remember that your bio should match the tone and genre you're best known for. For instance, if you write gripping medical thrillers, don't include a flippant line about your embarrassing tendency to pass out at the sight of blood. For one thing, flippancy doesn't fit with the tone of a thriller, and while the sight of blood might truly send you straight to the floor, sharing that fact with readers will damage your credibility.

Please remember, painting yourself favorably does not mean lying. Strategically chose which aspects of your life and personality to highlight, but never, ever resort to out and out fibbing. That will cost you your integrity, and without integrity, credibility is impossible.

And lastly, remember that your bio is a powerful marketing tool. You've captured the reader's attention, so take advantage. Tout your latest release, reference your website, recommend your upcoming online course. It's free publicity. Don't waste it.

Now that we know what to consider when writing a bio, let's take a look at the specifics of all three recommended bio sizes.

**Small:** This is a two to five line blurb generally submitted with a newsletter or magazine article. Ultimately, the size is determined by the length of the article. An eight-line paragraph bio is not an appropriate ending to a 250-word book review. It's a smart idea to keep this blurb somewhat fluid. If you've submitted an article to your chapter newsletter, tweak your bio and tie it back to your subject matter. Same thing goes if you're giving a workshop. Make that bio work for you!

Review and edit this short bio frequently. Having the same tag line for five years doesn't illustrate much creativity.

**Medium:** Here you have two or three paragraphs, so include several of those key facts you gathered earlier. Sprinkle in a few personal tidbits, but concentrate on your writer's side: how long you've been writing, any awards, what got you started, your previous / current career and how that impacts you as a storyteller. Let your personality begin to show, but not at the expense of your professionalism.

**Large:** No more hiding your light under a bushel. You'll write this bio specifically for your website and, when the time comes, your press kit. Anyone who reads this version will have actively sought out additional information about you, so don't disappoint. Keep the rules in mind, and give them what they're looking for. Who are you, where did you come from, how did you get where you are? Why do you write? What do you write? What do you do when you're not writing?

Tap into your creativity, and if necessary, treat

yourself like a main character and think in terms of backstory!

Don't put off writing you bio any longer, because by the time someone asks for it, you won't have the opportunity to think, edit and polish in order to make that perfect first impression.

*Dawn Temple is a former Golden Heart Finalist who never meets a stranger. Introductions are a personal favorite, but still, she had to force herself to sit down and craft her small, medium and large bios. Her sophomore book, Moonlight & Mistletoe, will be a November 2009 release from Silhouette Special Edition. This article first appeared in the October 2009 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA.*

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