

# San Francisco Area

Romance Writers of America

Heart of the Bay ❖ December 2004 ❖ Vol 17 No. 12 ❖ Chapter 90

## Meeting information

Date: **December 11, 2004**  
 Place: Marriott Courtyard Oakland  
 Emeryville, 5555 Shellmound  
 Street, Emeryville, CA  
 (510) 652 8777

Directions: Take the Powell Street or  
 Ashby Avenue/Shellmound exits off I-  
 80. Free parking.

Cost: Reserve by December 8, \$17  
 members, \$20 non members. After  
 December 8, \$25 members and non  
 members. Please bring exact change or  
 pay by check.

Agenda: 8:30 Registration and conti-  
 nental breakfast  
 9:30 Business meeting  
 10:30 Speakers and party

Limit: 60 attendees. Reserve early!  
 To reserve, call **Carol Lynn Stewart** at  
 (510) 642 1699 or reserve using the  
 online form at [www.sfarwa.com](http://www.sfarwa.com) before  
 midnight Wednesday, December 8.

## Craft Workshop

**Jenny Andersen presents**  
**“The Surrender Arc: A Character-  
 Driven Guide to Plotting”**  
**December 4 from noon–2 pm**  
**Barnes & Noble, Jack London Square**

Do editors tell you your book has too  
 much plot and too little emotion? That  
 your characters need more motivation?  
 Or that you need a plot—period? Help is  
 at hand. Keep the focus of your romance  
 novel where it belongs with The  
 Surrender Arc. This tool works during  
 both the plotting and revision stages, and  
 is even useful for writing in other genres.

*Jenny Andersen, a certified Gemologist,  
 is multipublished in nonfiction and holds  
 a doctorate in geology. She graduates in  
 January from Seton Hill University with  
 an M.A. in Writing Popular Fiction.*

## Chapter Holiday Party

Please join us for our annual chapter holiday  
 party! It’s time to rejoice in the friendships we  
 have made and lessons we’ve learned in the  
 trenches over this past year. To help us do so,  
 three of our beloved multipublished and best-  
 selling authors, **Diana Dempsey**, **Candice Hern**,  
 and **Kate Moore**, will share their wisdom, reflect  
 on 2004, and set the tone for 2005.



As a “thank you” to our members, we will offer a spe-  
 cial hot breakfast buffet instead of our regularly scheduled  
 continental breakfast. And, since it is the holiday season, we are  
 inviting attending members to participate in a “white elephant” gift exchange, with gifts  
 of \$10 or less. The gift should be wrapped or in a holiday bag. Participation is not  
 required.

Here are the rules for the exchange:

- Your name is called.
- Pick a gift from the table—or from someone who has already chosen!
- Only two “steals” are allowed. For example, if you steal a gift, the next person could steal it, too. After that, you choose from the table. If your new gift is stolen and you really want a previous gift that was stolen, then you can steal it back.

But the meeting won’t be all gifts  
 and goodies. We will close out the  
 year with a few words from our  
 outgoing president, **Cathy**  
**Yardley**, and from our incoming  
 president, **Doreen DeSalvo**.

Don’t miss this special event!

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Welcome new members!

Sony Menoff

Due to renew

Kate Benn  
Diana Dempsey  
Liz Maverick  
Pamela Heath  
Laurel Polarek  
Amanda Scott  
Michelle Tsang  
Ciji Ware

Membership and  
Pub News

Annual dues are \$30. New member dues are \$30 plus a one-time installation fee of \$2, for a total of \$32. Members may renew at the meeting or send renewal checks, payable to SFA-RWA, to Ginny Vermillion, 5609 Schooner Loop, Byron, CA 94514. Please report all address, phone and e-mail corrections to Ginny. Also send her any changes in publishing status (first sales, new publishing house). Phone (925) 516-7948.

From the Editor

Deadline for the January newsletter: December 15. Please send your articles, good news, sales, cover images, and speaking engagements and booksignings for the Calendar to **Shelley Bates** at [SABates@att.net](mailto:SABates@att.net).

Articles may be reprinted by RWA members if you notify the editor and credit the author and SFA-RWA's "Heart of the Bay." Romance Writers of America and RWA are registered service marks of Romance Writers of America, Incorporated.

# A Note from the Prez



by Cathy Yardley

Well, here it is ... my last President's note. It's been a wild two years! I'd like to use my last note to say thank you. In the modern parlance, I'm giving a shout-out to my peeps!

First, I'd like to thank the incredible board, who have kept the ship running smoothly and who will continue to help the chapter grow, evolve, and blossom into something truly special. **Doreen DeSalvo**, our future prez, for her vision and her organization, especially in our annual Heart-to-Heart contest; **Julia Madden**, for her dedication to our finances and her negotiation skills in our venue hunt; **Ginny Vermillion**, for working doggedly on our membership issues; **Shannon Monroe**, for her tireless ability to tie off all loose ends and keep everybody up to date; **Jackie Yau**, for her brilliance in pulling together our slate of programs and publicizing them.

And I'd like to thank the standing committee chairs: **Carol Lynn Stewart**, for being our friendly face in Reservations; **Madelyn Bello**, our kick-butt Ways & Means goddess; **Patricia Simpson**, for pulling us kicking and screaming into the automated 21st century; **Lisa Frieden**, for being our website wonder; **Shelley Bates**, for putting out announcements and taking over the newsletter even as she works a day job and publishes for two different houses; **Candice Hern**, for taking on the Elections committee and making sure we had candidates for 2005; **Jenny Andersen**, for being our wonderful Tape Guardian; and **Beth Barany**, for being our Hospitality chair and helping to create the culture of closeness at our meetings.

Finally ... I'd like to thank each and every member of the SFA-RWA. I've made so many close friends here. Every time I show up, I find people who have fantastic stories for me, something to inspire me, something new to learn. I've been humbled by the talent, drive, and fellowship I've found here at our chapter. I've been to chapter meetings literally all over California, and I can say with all honesty that the San Francisco Area chapter is special. There's warmth and a real sense of camaraderie. The meetings are large, and yet have an all-encompassing sense of community usually reserved for small lunches among close friends. Best of all, there is that amazing sense of support. When one of us makes it, succeeds in anything from a chapter contest to a sale, we're all there cheering her on.

Despite my relocation to San Diego, I have every intention of staying an actively participating member of the SFA-RWA. In the meantime, I know that next year is going to be even bigger and better for the chapter ... and just like the best kind of page-turner, I can't wait to find out what happens next.

See you at the holiday party! :)

*"SFA-RWA: Helping you get to the next level"*

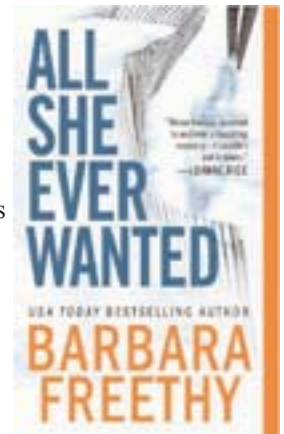
*The 2004 SFA-RWA Board  
is delighted to announce  
that we have exceeded  
our membership goal for 2004  
and have reached  
159 members!*

## Barbara Freethy

*All She Ever Wanted*

Signet, ISBN 0451213653, 4 1/2 stars and Top Pick—*RT BookClub*

She was their closest friend, or so they thought—until years later, when her secrets send them on a perilous search for the truth about who she really was ... and why she died ... Ten years ago, during a party gone out of control, beautiful, vibrant Emily plummeted to her death, leaving her three best friends and sorority sisters—Natalie, Laura, and Madison—devastated. None of them has ever forgotten that night—or the role each may have played in Emily’s death, the guilt that has pursued them, and the loss they still suffer. Now an unknown writer has rocketed onto best-seller lists with a novel that eerily mirrors their own story. Who is he? How does he know the intimate details of their lives? And why is he accusing one of them of murder? As they begin to unravel the startling truth about their friend, each will rediscover a love she lost long ago and uncover secrets that will forever change her life.



## Candice Hern

*Her Scandalous Affair*

Avon, ISBN 0-06-056516-0, 4 stars—*RT BookClub*

When Major Lord Richard Mallory returns home from the wars, his grandmother sends him on a quest to find and retrieve the Mallory Heart, a long-lost family heirloom. Imagine his surprise when he spots the exquisite heart-shaped ruby brooch on the bosom of the equally exquisite Lady Isabel Weymouth! Could this popular young socialite actually be a jewel thief? Richard is determined that the brooch be returned to his family, so when an opportunity presents itself, he pilfers the jewel from the lady’s bedroom. He is stunned when she steals it back the very next day! Clearly the enchanting Isabel is a more formidable opponent than he imagined, and the former soldier finds himself battling wits and wills with the captivating temptress. Passion ignites between them as the competition heats up, and suddenly there is more than a ruby brooch at stake in this game of hearts.

## Susan Grant

*The Scarlet Empress*

Leisure, ISBN 0505525976, 4 1/2 stars and Top Pick—*RT BookClub*

Shot down over Korea, modern-day USAF fighter pilot Cameron “Scarlet” Tucker is put in bio-stasis. She wakes 170 years later. Her wingmate and best friend also survived. Now the “legendary” Banzai Maguire, Bree is being held for treason in the country that was once her beloved United States. Cam has problems of her own. She’s in the masterful hands of Prince Kyber, the dictator whom her friend thwarted. He won’t get fooled again. With the mysterious Shadow Voice urging revolution, and her friend in chains, Cam wants the sexy emperor on her side—and maybe a whole lot more. But her role in the thrilling mission to save her country has to come first. Banzai wouldn’t surrender, and Cam won’t either. It’s time to give a royal butt kicking, and Cam knows just where to start.

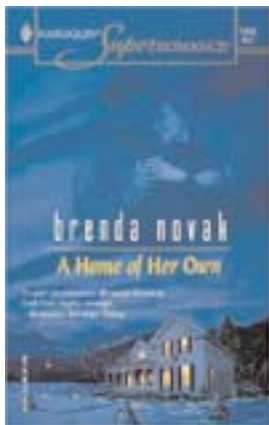


## Brenda Novak

*A Home of Her Own*

Harlequin Superromance, ISBN 0-373-71242-1, 4 1/2 stars Gold, Top Pick—*RT BookClub*

Lucky Caldwell has never been as lucky as her name, though there was a time when she thought her life might improve. When she was ten, the parade of men going through her mother’s trailer finally stopped the day Red married Morris, one of the kindest, richest men in the area. But the people of Dundee didn’t appreciate the fact that Red was half Morris’s age. Nor did they like the town hooker flouncing around, flashing money that had once belonged to some of their most upstanding citizens. Morris’s well-respected first family hated it most of all. Mike Hill should have inherited the Old Victorian on the property next to his ranch. It belonged to his grandfather for years, and he and his grandfather were very close—until Morris married Red, of course. At that point, Red and her three young children invaded his grandfather’s home and his heart, humiliating Mike’s family in the process. But Mike thinks that’s all behind him. His grandfather and Red are both dead, and Red’s children have moved away. Then Lucky returns to restore the Victorian she inherited instead of him, and Mike suddenly finds himself with a new neighbor. One he doesn’t want to like....



# Chapter Bookshelf (cont'd)

## Pam Rosenthal

“A House East of Regent Street” in *Strangers in the Night*  
Kensington Brava, ISBN 0758205295, 4 stars—*RT BookClub*

The war with Napoleon over at last, ex-seaman Jack Merion turns his attention and prize money toward real estate. Jack’s rich now, and he intends to invest in a house that was once a fashionable brothel. But a mysterious Miss Myles also wants the house—and she’s willing to meet all Jack’s terms. With interest. And with pleasure.



## Carolyn Woolston w/a Lynna Banning

“Hark the Harried Angels” in *One Starry Christmas*  
Harlequin Historicals anthology, ISBN 0-373-29323-2

Adam Garnett thought he had nothing to offer Irina Likov, until meddling, matchmaking French sisters intervene. Now his decision to give Irina a Christmas she’ll remember gives Adam the greatest gift of all.

## Madeleine Oh

RSVP, with Jennifer Dunne and Dominique Adair  
Ellora’s Cave

Three women receive invitations to explore their wildest fantasies. (BDSM romantica)

## Roses and Ribbons

**Shannon Hollis** sold an article entitled “Writing the Multi-Author Project,” a look at writing miniseries and continuity series, to the *Romance Writers Report* for its February 2005 issue.

**Lisa Hughey-Underwood** is a finalist in the mystery chick lit category of the Get Your Stiletto in the Door contest with *Blinders*.

**Rae Monet** received a 4.5 blue ribbon review from Romance Junkies for *Racing Hearts*, her novel about a female NASCAR driver. *A Viking’s Vow* received a 5-angel review from Fallen Angel Reviews and was designated a “recommended read.” Rae will be in an anthology with 11 other authors where each story revolves around an astrological sign. Her story, “Chantilly Lace,” will involve the sign Leo. These releases will be e-book and print.

**Jennifer Skullestad** w/a Jennifer Skully inked a 3-book deal with HQN. The books include *Stalking Madison Avenue*, *If You Could Read My Mind*, and one blind book. Congratulations!

Writing as Molly Weatherfield, **Pam Rosenthal** will have a story in the *Mammoth Anthology of Best Erotica*. Also, her Weatherfield novel, *Carrie’s Story*, is going into its ninth printing.

**Cathy Yardley’s** *L.A. Woman*, a 2002 trade paper release from Red Dress Ink, is to be reissued in mass market paperback.

## Upcoming programs

December 4—Craft session  
Noon–2pm, B&N @ Jack London Square, Oakland

**Jenny Andersen**, Ph.D., presents “The Surrender Arc,” a character-driven guide to plotting.

December 11 meeting—Chapter party

January 8 meeting—Playing Nice with Your Dragon

**Jane Porter** examines learning to survive, even thrive, in the creative life. She will focus on balancing the needs of the muse with the demands of being commercially successful—a delicate but achievable balance if you understand and respect your creative process.

February 5—Craft session  
11am–1pm, B&N @ Jack London Square, Oakland

**Diana Dempsey** presents “Make Your Book a Page Turner.” Booksigning to follow.

February 12 meeting—Published Authors Appreciation Party

Don’t miss the fourth annual party, where we toast those members who have successfully nurtured their muses, navigated the tricky world of publishing, and generously shared their wisdom with us.

March 5—Craft session  
11am–1pm, B&N @ Jack London Square, Oakland

**Shannon Hollis** hosts a hands-on Plotting Party, using the sticky-note method combined with the steps of the Hero’s Journey.

**March 19** meeting—Dennis Palumbo

Note **date change** for chapter meeting!

April 2—Craft session  
11am–1pm, B&N @ Jack London Square, Oakland

**Beth Barany** presents “Creativity Techniques to Fill the Well.”

# December Calendar

**2 Romance Readers' Group** meets at Brentano's in Valley Fair Mall, San Jose, from 6:30–7:30 p.m. Authors with upcoming releases are encouraged to contact Ellen Higuchi, Waldenbooks Romance Expert, to arrange an appearance.

**11 Susan Grant, Candice Hern,** and Barbara Plum will be signing their latest releases at The Book End in Newark after the chapter meeting, from 2:30–4:30 p.m.

# January

**8 Victorian Twelfth Night Ball** presented by the Period Events & Entertainments Recreation Society at the Masonic Lodge of San Mateo. Dance lesson 7:00 p.m., dancing begins 8:00 p.m. Tickets \$20.00. Hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, you will enjoy a variety of waltzes, polkas, mazurkas, schottisches, reels, and country dances popular in the mid-19th century (as usual, all set dances will be taught or called at the ball). Period dress admired but not required.

**29 Third Annual Wild Writing Women Weekend Workshop**  
9:00 a.m.– 6 p.m.  
Fort Mason Conference Center

Members of the Wild Writing Women will cover a wide range of writing, editing, and publishing topics. We've chosen a lovely San Francisco setting to make your workshop experience even more enjoyable: historic Fort Mason, right on San Francisco Bay. Classes will be taught by members of the Wild Writing Women, LLC and guest lecturers. Lunch will be provided. The price includes all classes and lunch: \$175 before December 1 and \$200 thereafter. You may pay by check or credit card. Please note that we do not give refunds. To register, contact **Jacqueline Harmon Butler** at 415-751-2217 or [jam747@earthlink.net](mailto:jam747@earthlink.net).

# Market News

*USA Today* best-selling author and two-time Rita finalist Julianne MacLean has sold three more historical romances to Kelly Harms at Avon in a very nice deal; Jolie Mathis has sold her debut novel, *The Sea King*, a sexy Viking romance, to Gina Bernal at Berkley Sensation in a nice deal; **Bella Andre** has sold her book, *Mine, All Mine*, an erotic story of humor, passion, and unrequited love in a nice deal; Jennifer St. Giles sold a contemporary paranormal series *The Shadowmen of Shaddiah*, featuring two werewolves, to Micki Nuding at Pocket in a nice deal for two books; Rita finalist Anna Schmidt sold *Matchmaker, Matchmaker* to Krista Stroeve at Harlequin's Love Inspired, in a nice deal; and **Shannon Hollis** sold her book *Night Moves* to Jennifer Green at Harlequin Blaze in a nice deal for two books. (Publisher's Weekly 11-03-03)

Marianna Jameson has sold her debut romance *My Hero* to Laura Cifelli at NAL in a nice deal, for two books; Judith Leon has sold two untitled sequels to her *Code Name: Dove* to Julie Barrett at Silhouette Bombshell; and GERALYN Dawson Williams sold her Callahan Brothers series, a contemporary romance series set in small-town Texas, to Laura Cifelli at NAL in a nice deal for three books. (Publisher's Weekly 11-09-04)

Torstar Corporation issued a press release noting that Harlequin has suffered a "difficult quarter." Robert Prichard, Torstar's President and CEO, said: "We anticipated a very soft quarter for Harlequin and the results have confirmed it as the mass-market paperback segment of the book publishing industry continues to be very challenging. We sold fewer books in all of our channels, which reduced revenues and profits." Book publishing revenues for Harlequin were down \$17.1 million. Prichard says Harlequin's management is focusing on its core strategy of improving performance in its retail, direct-to-consumer and overseas businesses, and is encouraged by the bestseller recognition achieved by new titles and leading authors. (10-27-04)

Award-winning author Julie Moffett is the author of seven historical and time-travel novels and one novella. Visit her website at: [www.tlt.com/authors/jmoffett.htm](http://www.tlt.com/authors/jmoffett.htm).

The romance column in the new issues of PAGES reports on informal research into the efficacy of such in-store promotions as signings, readings, and pre-signed copies. Their interesting conclusion: "The big winner is the simple promotional bookmark touting an author's new release. The creative uses are growing daily, from stuffing them in books with similar themes to scattering them on tables in the refreshment area. Sellers swear this one tiny tool ups the presale numbers for a romance novel." (Publishers Lunch 11-1-04)

SFA's **Liz Maverick** and her chick-lit novel *What a Girl Wants* were mentioned in an article in the *Toronto Star* entitled "Modern Cynicism" at [www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article\\_Type1&call\\_pageid=971358637177&c=Article&cid=1098094028662](http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&call_pageid=971358637177&c=Article&cid=1098094028662).

HarperCollins has merged a number of the Harper imprints with the Morrow/Avon lines in a new division to be called HarperMorrow—all of which will be under the direction of newly named president and group publisher Michael Morrison. Imprints under his direction are HarperCollins, William Morrow, HarperEntertainment, Morrow Cookbooks, HarperPerennial, Avon, Eos, Dark Alley, Amistad, HarperAudio, HarperLarge Print and PerfectBound. Morrison reports to Brian Murray, Group President of HarperCollins Publishers. One impetus for the move mentioned is to work towards creating clear and separate brand identities for both Harper and Morrow. (Publishers Lunch 11-9-04)

# Chapter News

## 2005 Board Election Results

President—**Doreen DeSalvo**  
VP Programs—**Jackie Yau**  
VP Admin—**Jami Worthington**  
Treasurer—**Karen Lyeth**  
Secretary—**Carol Lynn Stewart**  
Membership—**Ginny Vermillion**

## November 13 Board Meeting Minutes

Courtyard Marriott, Emeryville, CA

Present: **Cathy Yardley** (president), **Jackie Yau** (VP programs), **Ginny Vermillion** (membership), **Doreen DeSalvo** (VP admin), **Shannon Monroe** (secretary), **Julia Madden** (treasurer)

Absent: **Carol Lynn Stewart** (reservations), **Madelyn Bello** (ways and means committee), **Lisa Frieden** (website), **Shelley Bates** (newsletter)

**Treasurer's Update**—J. Madden provided the Treasurer's Report and notified the board that the room rate at the Courtyard Marriott has been increased from \$250 to \$300. J. Madden will contact the sales representative about our complaints if our local contact person does not provide better customer service. The board also discussed making sure not to give too high a headcount over the preregistered count to the staff since we have to cover the cost of empty seats.

**Membership/Chapter News**—G. Vermillion informed the board that we have exceeded our year-end goal and now have 159 members! The board discussed enforcing policy for billing members that are "no-shows." G. Vermillion is steadily progressing on the roster, deleting members without any contact information and/or who have not paid dues after being contacted. D. DeSalvo confirmed that the Yahoo! e-mail loops need to be scrubbed for non-members. C. Yardley noted that once the roster is updated it can be used to clean up the loops. She also asked that L. Frieden post the chapter bylaws (which were previously printed in the hardcopy roster), in the Members Only section of the website now that the roster is online.

**Elections**—Elections were held and there will be new faces on the board in the standing committees. The December 2004 board meeting will be a joint board meeting so that old and new members can confer and pass on the Policies and Procedures Manual. Tremendous thanks to all the people who volunteered:

**Candice Hern** for heading the Elections Committee, **Patricia Simpson** for creating online voting on the chapter website, and congratulations to all the winners! Although all the board positions have been elected, certain committees still need volunteers: Hospitality, Publicity, Newsletter, and Ways and Means. Members are encouraged to ask anyone on the board if they can assist in any way.

**Programs**—J. Yau confirmed Dennis Palumbo for March 19, 2005. J. Madden will confirm that we have that date set with the Courtyard Marriott. We will start promoting the schedule change for Dennis Palumbo at the December meeting, as well as discussion with the published authors in preparation for the Published Authors Appreciation Party in February 2005. J. Yau would like invitations sent out in December and work to begin on the venue and gifts for the authors. The board agreed to give away old RWA National conference tapes at the PAAP.

**Contest Update**—The board held a raffle for the entry fee to be waived as the prize for our Sharp Synopsis Contest. Congratulations to winners **Juanita Salicrup** and **Alexandra Singer**! S. Monroe notified the winners that M. Bello will be in contact with them about entry details. G. Vermillion and **Beth Barany** volunteered to be judges, but we still need more. Please contact M. Bello ASAP if you can be a judge. Training provided!

**Website/Newsletter**—S. Monroe will contact L. Frieden about adding a Craft Sessions link and RWA National brand link to our website. Early promotion about Dennis Palumbo should also be added to the website and the newsletter for the next few months due to the schedule change.

# Heart to Heart Contest

## Long Contemporary

1. *Ask Molly*—Linda Kierney, Oregon
2. *The Lazy Slut Club*—**Shannon Monroe**, SFA-RWA
3. *Strappy Sandals*—Wendy Tolliver, Utah

## Futuristic, Fantasy, Paranormal

1. *A Little Bite of You*—Victoria Grondahl, Virginia
2. *Now You See It*—Teresa Granieri, Ontario
3. *Hocus Pocus*—Teresa Granieri, Ontario

## Short Contemporary

1. *Loving Luke*—**Jenny Andersen**, SFA-RWA
2. *In Perfect Harmony*—Elaine Ervin, Pennsylvania
3. *Strip or Treat*—Janice Lynn, Tennessee

## Historical

1. *Almost a Pirate*—**Pam Fryer**, SFA-RWA
2. *The Horseman's Heart*—Sherril Green, Silicon Valley RWA
3. *Courting Scandal*—**Tonda Fuller**, SFA-RWA

# Conference Tapes

by **Jenny Andersen**

Tapes checked out: 14  
Tapes removed without signing out: 7  
Tapes returned and signed in: 9  
Tapes returned without signing in: 12  
Missing tapes: 14 (Last month it was 7, so we're not improving)

Overdue tapes: 19  
**Shirley Schmalfluss**—1 checked out in June and 2 in Sept  
**Elizabeth Edwards**—7 (October)  
**Jackie Fleming**—1 (May)  
Julie ??—2 (June)  
**Nyree Belleville**—1 (Nov 2003) and 4 (March)  
Rena Leith—1 (Oct 2003)

**Remember:** Sign tapes in and out. Use complete numbers (9-104, 8-33). Be kind—rewind.

# November meeting recap: Annelise Robey

by Kate Moore

Our November speaker was Annelise Robey, a nine-year veteran of the Jane Rotrosen Agency. She began with the agency right out of school in a part-time position, and soon found herself learning the business by selling sub-rights to Bulgaria. Then she began building her own list and hasn't looked back. The agency, founded in the 70s by Jane Rotrosen, prides itself on a selective list of authors, many of whom are NYTimes bestsellers. Annelise attributes the agency's success with its clients to their philosophy of choosing authors they connect with and projects they believe in; their focus on career development with their authors; and their unique team approach in brainstorming, consulting one another, and sharing information that benefits the whole.

Annelise looks for authors whose material she can totally connect with and have a vision for. She must love it. She is looking for work that is not only viable or saleable, but for which she has a vision. She can see the audience and market position, what work is needed on the project and which editor(s) might be a good fit. She stressed that an agent's work is really about relationships. A good agent develops a subtle, nuanced sense for editors' preferences and knows when she reads a manuscript which editor will love it or get a kick out of it. She sees the agent's job as building a bridge between the personal world the writer inhabits as an artist and the world of the market for a book. Her job is to give a writer professional business guidance with the project her artist's soul is telling her to write.

With her own authors, she works closely regardless of their level to set goals and work to meet them. Having a vision for the work helps her advocate for the author with the publisher to encourage the best publication of the work. Annelise explained that what an agent does may change as an author moves through different phases of her career, but the agent's role of offering business guidance doesn't change.

Annelise stressed that an agent should not cost a writer anything. The agent's 15% should come out of that much larger advance that the agent's services gained

for the author. (With category romances there are limits on advances.) The advance reflects the publisher's expectations for a book and an author, and is an indication of the publisher's commitment to the author. There are significant reasons to go for a high advance: placement on the publisher's list, marketing push, publisher's attention, cover treatment. These elements are all part of the "push" going into the book. Advances reflect what the publisher plans to sell; and the performance of a previous book factors into that picture. With each book, an author wants to sell more copies.

She described the process of working with a proposal. The agency encourages an author to get material in the best possible shape to submit for the biggest possible sale. Annelise stresses that they offer "advice," but also tells the story of a writer whose small mystery, when worked on, became a million-dollar sale. They like to encourage authors to maximize the potential of a proposal.

Once a proposal is ready to go out, there are a variety of ways to submit it--exclusively, or to every house in town. Lots of factors go into the decision about how to submit and a strategy is developed. The agent will consider the personality of her author, the nature of the project, the editors who might be interested, how particular houses are publishing at the moment (their strengths, weaknesses, and inventory), and of course how the market is doing. They will figure out a game plan.

When an offer is made, they will negotiate the terms of the agreement, including royalty rate and sub-rights. They encourage authors to hold onto sub-rights when they can for both more money and more control with a whole career in mind.

The next phase for agent and newly sold author may come when a manuscript is complete or nearly complete, and the focus is on how the book is going to be published. Again, the agent will try to offer useful ideas for title, cover, scheduling, and marketing. All sorts of elements need to be considered to support the best publication of a book.

Annelise concluded by saying that an agent is always helping an author figure out what comes next in her career, where

she wants to go, and how to get there.

## Q & A

*Writers work in the dark; how can we learn the sensibilities of editors and agents?*

Annelise suggests there is no substitute for meeting people and networking at conferences. Be persistent in working to find the person who likes what you do. It's like dating 400 guys before you find The One!

*Are there any genres that don't resonate with you?*

Annelise does not do SF., poetry, children's books, or business books. She likes funny, sexy, charming books, contemporary or historical. She is responding to some edgy chick lit.

*Is it unusual for an agent to take a client and never sell?*

It does happen; there is never a guarantee of a sale. It doesn't mean she would drop a client, but she would encourage a re-examination of a project or direction for that client.

*How do you like to be approached?*

Annelise prefers a query letter rather than a full manuscript. A manuscript is daunting. A query should encapsulate a great hook or a tagline for your book in a single sentence. She would like to get a sense of an author's personality and anything quirky in her background. She would like to know the credentials relating to the book and the author's goals. Why this book? Why this agent? Who or what is this project like?

*Do you have an agency contract?*

They have a standard agency contract they ask clients to sign once they have successfully negotiated on their behalf. It's not book-by-book but a 3-year term, renewable annually after three years.

*What is a typical day like?*

Her phone and e-mail tasks take up the day. She is mainly managing and following up on various proposals with editors and authors. She has no time for reading. That's for weekends at home.

*Kate Moore is the author of several historical romances. Her next release, a contemporary entitled *Sexy Lexy*, will be out in April 2005.*

# Sharp Synopsis Contest

SFA-RWA is still soliciting entries for the first annual Sharp Synopsis contest. Find details at [www.sfarwa.com/contests/sharpcontest.asp](http://www.sfarwa.com/contests/sharpcontest.asp). Continuing from last month, following are profiles of our third and fourth final judges.

## Jennifer Jackson

The judge for the Short Contemporary category is Jennifer Jackson, Literary Agent. Jackson joined the Donald Maass Literary Agency of New York City in 1993. She grew up reading science fiction and fantasy, and initially concentrated her endeavors in that field. She continued by pioneering the expansion of the agency into the areas of romance and women's fiction, and is also developing her list in the mystery and suspense genres. Her current roster includes best-selling fantasy writer Jim Butcher, Derringer-Award nominee C.M. Chan, and award-winning author Jo Ann Ferguson. She has previously worked for Waldenbooks and for Titan Books (London).

What is Jennifer looking to represent? This is always a tough question because one's interests and needs change as one's client list evolves—and as one's clients evolve. When asked this at conferences her usual answer is: "A book I enjoy reading, and can also sell." Overall, she's known to have a taste for the darker and/or edgier side of fiction in any genre. In romance, she especially enjoys romantic suspense. She could also use some more contemporary writers, both in category and single title, though, she says, "I'm sure I wouldn't turn down the right historical project if it came along."

If she requests chapters and synopsis, she always read the chapters first. She's more interested in the talent of the writer and the characterization and plot building than in whether they can craft a synopsis. Still, a good synopsis is a sign of a professional author who takes the pursuit of writing seriously. A synopsis needs to smoothly communicate the essentials of the book so that she can get a sense of what the author has planned. An ideal synopsis is smoothly written and gets

across the bones of the story—who the characters are, what their goals are, what the conflict is, how they overcome it, and any important details of time and place. To her, the length isn't that much of an issue; a synopsis should be as long (or as short) as it needs to be for the details to be available to assist in reviewing the submission.

In the short contemporary romance genre, most of her authors have moved on to other types of books, though she still has several clients writing category romance, such as Barbara Benedict, **Shannon Hollis**, and Patricia Rosemoor.

[www.jenniferjackson.org](http://www.jenniferjackson.org)

## Ethan Ellenberg

The judge for the Paranormal/Fantasy category is Ethan Ellenberg, Literary Agent. He is the President and Agent of The Ethan Ellenberg Literary Agency. His publishing career includes stints as contracts manager at Berkley Jove and associate contracts manager at Bantam. He has been an independent agent since 1984 and is a member of the Association of Authors' Representatives.

He represents a wide range of commercial and literary fiction, children's books and serious nonfiction. In regard to romance, he is looking to acquire talented writers in all areas of romance and women's books. It's about the individual talent; he is not overly influenced by trends. The agency is most impressed with great writing, so a sample chapter is slightly more important than a synopsis. The perfect combination is a synopsis and first three sample chapters.

Most of the agency's clients are published, but they do take unpublished clients. If they love your work, they will be interested. They do try and place challenging books at times. His current paranormal and fantasy clients include MaryJanice Davidson, Rebecca York, and Amanda Ashley.

[www.ethanellenberg.com](http://www.ethanellenberg.com)

# Memo from Matera

by Sue Swift

Liz Jennings contacted me at least a year ago to recruit me for her fledgling Women's Fiction Festival, an event she was planning in Matera, Italy, where she lives. Liz, an American who moved to Italy twenty years ago to work as a translator, also wrote for Kensington Precious Gems, and we've been friends for years. She raved about how gorgeous and special Matera is, and after a lot of hesitance as well as bad economic news from the airlines, I decided to blow some frequent flyer miles on first-class flights to Europe.

It was one of the best experiences of my life. I love Europe anyway—it's my spiritual home, and I have family in London I always enjoy visiting. I'm also fond of Italy, but had never seen the Sassi of Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Its main claim to fame is that Mel Gibson filmed most of *The Passion of the Christ* there—it's more like Jerusalem than Jerusalem, and much safer. Matera photos can be accessed by going to [www.sue-swift.com](http://www.sue-swift.com) and clicking on Photo Album on the main menu. Matera is more than just another Italian hill town. The area's caves have been inhabited since the Stone Age. In the last decade, the caves have been renovated into modern dwellings. My hotel room was a cave—a very luxurious one, with satellite TV and a full kitchen ([www.lacasadilucio.com](http://www.lacasadilucio.com)). Most important for the many single women attending the conference, Matera is absolutely safe—safe enough for us to explore its mysterious passages, tunnels, and stony staircases at any time, including the wee hours of the morning.

The festival is the brainchild of Liz Jennings and chick lit author Deanna Carlyle, who resides in Stuttgart, Germany. It attracted translators, agents, editors, and writers, including Nina Bruhns of *Silhouette Intimate Moments*, Crystal Green of *Special Edition*, Australian author Barbara Hannay, who writes for Mills and Boon, and romantic suspense author Cherry Adair. The WFF attracted both local and international media attention, including an article in the *International Herald Tribune*



([www.iht.com/articles/2004/10/17/business/books18.html](http://www.iht.com/articles/2004/10/17/business/books18.html)). Harlequin Mondadori, the Italian branch of Harlequin, was one of the sponsors, so a contingent of Harlequin's European editors attended, including Karin Stoecker, head of the UK office of Mills and Boon; Maria Paola Romeo, of the Italian office of Red Dress Ink; and Alessandra Bazzardi, Harlequin Mondadori editorial director.

### Translation

Unless she's writing for a publisher like Harlequin, where translation is a matter of course, a writer must be on top of the subsidiary rights situation. She has to have an agent who has the necessary contacts in Europe to get the book properly translated and distributed, as the process is convoluted. European agents, editors and translators all get into the act, and they all want their cut. Liz Jennings compared a bad book translation to a painting leached of its color. Slang, colloquialisms, and wordplays challenge translators. Erotica doesn't translate well, becoming obscenity in other languages; thus traditional romances, with their emphasis on emotion, do well.

A good sales record in the originating language will get your book translated. In Harlequin, all categories are translated and reprinted, though not all books in a category. Not even all books in a continuity series will be translated and reprinted.

Maria Paola Romeo stated that the traditional stories sell well: boss/secretary, doctor/nurse, adventures. Italian readers are okay with American settings as long as they aren't too provincial. Neither cowboys nor romantic suspense sell well in Italy.

Karin Stoecker, the editorial director of the UK office of Harlequin, has been at that office for 11 years. Her prior job was the Editorial Director of Harlequin in North America. She sees these trends: —Fewer titles more widely read. —Much more public discussion about books, fueled by the internet and TV book clubs. Reading groups have become phenomenally popular. —Readers are becoming more demanding. They're looking for depth, accessibility, richness. They want to be fully engaged, emotionally and intellectually. —They want a personal endorsement, which is possibly the result of Amazon's posted reviews. Karin believes that more



readers are making decisions based on reviews.

### What's selling in Europe?

Karin says that historicals are selling well in Europe. Harlequin Historicals will still be retailed in North

American Wal-Mart stores, other chains, and online. Their writers are asked to write longer books with less romantic content. Thrillers are popular worldwide. Biographies and autobiographies, reflecting personal aspirations; biofic, accounts of people changing their lives, often stories of northerners going to live in a kinder clime, such as Tuscany or Provence. People want to read about simpler, reassuring times. As life becomes more frantic and fast-paced, stories in which life is simpler and slower become popular.

She stated that fiction always moves in trends while certain aspects remain constant, such as archetype characters and universal themes. Women's fiction is today's interpretation on age-old themes: to love and be loved, build friendships, maintain relationships, quest for fulfillment. She believes that if an author writes to these themes with honesty and understanding, she'll be successful. She's looking for emotional truth in the books she buys.

Harlequin wants to counter the perception that their books are rigid and play it safe. In her opinion, good writing and a successful book boil down to captivating characters, especially in women's fiction. She believes that no setting should overwhelm the plot and the characters of a book; she compares the setting of a book to the setting of a gem. It should lift and enhance the jewel, not overwhelm it.

Harlequin Presents is especially popular in eastern Europe, where there's apparently a hunger for glamorous settings and characters. Though romantic suspense does well in Europe, Silhouette Intimate Moments does not, possibly due to the books' length—neither short nor long. Intrigues, with their slightly small-

er word count, do well. SIMs do well in the UK, though, where readers want less suspense and a deep, emotionally driven story. Most of the category lines are sold in small books at magazine/newspaper kiosks, so the smaller, quickly read titles do better. The books will stay at the kiosks for 2-4 weeks. Karin says that reading is an "aspirational" experience, but readers want more than just the bride of a rich guy on a big yacht. Readers identify with the heroine's experience; she must face adversity and triumph.

### What's hot and what's not?

**Hot:** Aspirational heroes and heroines. Archetype characters such as alpha heroes—sheikhs and the like. Short fiction with intense emotional content, secret babies (better than ordinary babies), arranged marriage, marriages of convenience.

Karin stated that the British chick lit market is very competitive, so they're moving their chick lit out of RDI and into a different imprint. Babies are popular, but readers want a love story, not a baby story. Temptations sell well. They're bringing in Georgette Heyer and hope those reprints will do well. Historicals, including sagas, and erotica are popular.

**Not:** Cowboys, military/American "uniforms," North American rural settings. Comedy did not do well (i.e., Duets and Flipside). Alessandra Bazzardi, the editorial director for Harlequin Mondadori, doesn't think Luna books will be marketed in Italy, implying that paranormals don't sell there. She wants to bring in Bombshell to see what will happen, though it's very hard to grow new romantic suspense authors in Italy.

Alessandra says they sell 50-60 new titles monthly through the "Harmony" line at Italian kiosks. Mira and RDI are sold in bookstores. She echoed Karin's belief that in our complex world, stories of a simpler life are attractive.

### Personal notes

I'd return to this event in a heartbeat. We were pampered beyond belief in a stunning and unique setting. I highly recommend the Women's Fiction Festival! <http://www.womensfictionfestival.com>

*Sue Swift writes for Silhouette Romance. Her fifth book, Engaged to the Sheik, will be available in January 2005.*

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