



The Write Touch

RWA Chapter 13
Volume 101, No. 4
October 2008

Drumroll please... WisRWA 2008 election results

Kathryn Albright, 2008 Election Chair

As with last year's election, the results this year were predictable. Huge thanks to each of you for volunteering. WisRWA could not exist without the enthusiasm, spirit, and creativity that you bring.

I was fortunate to attend the most recent meeting of the WisRWA board in Green Bay after this year's conference. With quiet amazement I listened to the reports that each officer detailed and the decisions that were made to move WisRWA forward through the next year and beyond. The commitment to excellence and the dedication these officers portrayed "blew me away."

Mary Jo Scheibl continues as President of WisRWA. She has an impressive history of helping this organization as a FAB Five judge and contest coordinator. This year she has helped WisRWA evolve with the change to an online polling process. (Thanks Mary Jo—you made my job so much easier with this change—and saved money too!)

Rachel Berens-VanHeest is taking over **Meagan Hatfield's** position as Vice President of WisRWA. A member of our organization for the past three years, she has "given back" frequently in her duties as the WisRWA newsletter editor for the past one and a half years. Most recently she has developed a WisRWA 25th Anniversary logo for this coming year. Thank you so much for adding this job to your duties, Rachel.

Jamie Kerstan, is returning for a third term as secretary. The last three years she coordinated the Romantic Suspense category for the FAB Five contest and served as start-up contact for the Wausau area.

Returning Treasurer (for her third year also) **Sandra Turriff** has been a judge for the FAB Five Contest for several years and also assisted with Deb Dixon's workshop in 2003. As a writer for professional journals and a business owner, her expertise with finances is a major

asset to WisRWA. Last year she spent untold hours evaluating and modifying WisRWA's financial situation for compliance to the new IRS standards for a non-profit organization. She deserves a HUGE THANK YOU from all of us (and assistance if she asks!). Thank you so much for agreeing to one more term, Sandee. You have done an awesome job.


Green Bay/Fox Valley has both co-chair contacts returning: **Donna Kowalczyk** and **Stacey Netzel**. In addition to the monthly meetings, Donna will again be serving as the 2009 Write Touch Conference Chair. It will be a very special conference since it is WisRWA's 25th Anniversary!

Bobbi Dumas continues as the Madison contact for a second term. Recent meetings have included a day workshop to enhance creativity through the use of collage and using Tarot cards to delve deeper into a character's personality.

Milwaukee Area Contact co-chairs are **Ilona Fridl** and **Maureen Welli**. Both women have been FAB Five judges and both write historical romance in addition to other genres.

Returning Chippewa Falls Area Contact is **Peggy Strand**. She has been a member for the past 12 years and helps WisRWA annually by judging the FAB Five Contest. She writes romantic suspense.

Laurel Bradley replaces **DeAnne Wildes Michelson** as the Area Contact for the Wausau Area. She is recently published in time-travel romance and has served as president on her local library board.

Thanks to all of you who have stepped forward to help through this next year. There is such a wealth of knowledge within the organization that WisRWA keeps getting better every year and it is because of volunteers like you. 

Board of Directors

President

Mary Jo Scheibl
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The Board of Directors meets twice a year, in spring and fall.

*Area Contacts are the liaisons between the general membership and the executive board.

The *Write Touch* Newsletter is published quarterly. For more information, or for reprints, contact Rachel Berens-VanHeest, Newsletter Editor, at reberens@charter.net.

The chapter's Web site, www.wisrwa.org, is updated regularly. Submit changes and new information to the Web site coordinator, Rachel Berens-VanHeest.

President's Report

By Mary Jo Scheibl

We are fast approaching our 25th anniversary year for WisRWA. This 2008-2009 year will be one of nostalgia and anticipation.

In twenty-five years we've seen our membership grow, along with our treasury. Many of our members have become published. We established successful and well-respected contests for published authors and unpublished ones. We've had a series of very successful conferences that have drawn excellent speakers. We've moved into the 21st century with our loops and our Web site.

All this has happened because WisRWA is blessed with members who believe in giving back to the group through volunteering their skills, talents and time. How very fortunate we are. As president, whenever I've put out a call for extra help, I get volunteers.

Most recently, I asked for a PRO Liaison person. I had several people respond. The board approved and chose a newer member of WisRWA, **Kristina Diesen**. She's from the Madison area. Welcome aboard, Kristina.

To kick off the 25th year, WisRWA is sponsoring an all day workshop in Milwaukee on November 1st. Margie Lawson will be leading this workshop on *Empowering Characters Emotions*. What a perfect way to get started on this special 25th year.

The Board and our Conference Committee are busy planning some special surprises for #25 also. If you have any photos or information regarding WisRWA, especially from the early years, please let me know at mjscheibl@wi.rr.com.

Also, if you are or know of any current member who was among the original group starting WisRWA, please let me know at the above e-mail address.

Our vice-president, **Rachel Berens-VanHeest**, is busy updating and redoing our Web site. Some of this has already happened. One major difference will be WisRWA's ability to update items on the site in a timely manner as Rachel will be able to do some of that.

Our RWA approved revised Bylaws can now be found in the files section of the AlertWisRWA loop. Our revised Policy and Procedures Manual will also be there. All financial reports and Board reports can also be found there. The Alert loop is for the business side of WisRWA. Announcements and information will be on that loop. This functions like the RWAAlert loop.

This year will be a busy year and an exciting one. My wish is WisRWA continues to grow and serve our members needs in the coming years.

Have a productive autumn.

Send in your News!

Do you have something to include in the newsletter or add to the Web site? You don't have to wait for the Alert e-mail. Just e-mail Rachel Berens-VanHeest at reberens@charter.net whenever you have news to share! Wondering about proper format? Just follow the example of what's already up on the site or in this copy of *The Write Touch*! Or contact Rachel with any questions. Send in your news—we want to help you celebrate!

Write Touch Readers' Award Contest

By Virginia McCullough, Contest Coordinator

The 2009 Write Touch Readers' Award Contest, our chapter's contest for published authors, is underway. An entry includes three copies of your novel-length romances with 2008 copyright, first printing, first North American printing date. You can enter one of eight categories:

- Short and Long Series Contemporary
- Contemporary Single Title
- Romantic Suspense

- Historical (includes Regency)
- Inspirational/Traditional
- Paranormal (includes fantasy, time-travel, futuristic, and so forth)
- Strong Romantic Elements
- Erotic/Romantica.

Our 90+ judges are enthusiastic romance and women's fiction readers located all over the country. Many comment that they are always looking for new authors—and they tell us they like to spread the word

about books they enjoy!

For more information, entry form, and rules, go to www.wisrwa.org or contact the contest coordinator, Virginia McCullough, vemccullough@earthlink.net.

Each entry costs \$25, but remember that WisRWA members are entitled to one free entry as a benefit of membership.

The deadline is January 12, 2009. 📅

Edgerton Book Festival Report

By Bobbi Dumas

Alex Bledsoe and I represented WisRWA at the Edgerton Book Festival on Saturday, Oct 4.

The event, which celebrates and supports literacy and writing in the Southwest Wisconsin Area, offers workshops, literacy events and a Book Fair where local authors can sell their work and meet the public.

It was a fun day and we made a valiant attempt to overcome some of the stereotypes and misconceptions about romance writers and the value of RWA and WisRWA. As Alex so sagely put it, "We're here to reach the people who get it."

We had some genuine interest in our programs and meetings, and were both amused by the elderly self-published woman who told us that she "was sure there a market for that kind of...ummm...literature," but that it's not what she writes.

At the risk of sounding smug and self-serving, I'd like to congratulate you all for being a part of WisRWA. It truly is a fantastic, generous, intelligent group of people,



Bobbi Dumas and Alex Bledsoe at the Edgerton Book Festival

and I was reminded just how lucky I am to be a part of it by talking to some people who "just didn't get it."

So pat yourselves on the back. Just being a member of WisRWA reflects well on you. 📅

Not sure when and where your area's next meeting is? Check out the Meeting Schedules page on www.wisrwa.org!

Thirteen opening lines that tug a reader in

By Brenda Davis

Want to snag your readers' attention? The key is often the very first sentence because that's where many readers decide to read on or to put your piece aside.

In his book *Hooked*, Les Edgerton asks: "What should be in an opening line? Anything that provokes the reader into reading the second sentence."

Great beginnings, he says on pages 167 and 168, have "mystery, intrigue, shock, or a revealing glimpse of an interesting and original character that promises excitement or some other strong emotion to come—whatever."

The first sentence usually presents a question your reader wants answered. It serves as a gateway into your fiction so make sure it grabs your readers' interest.

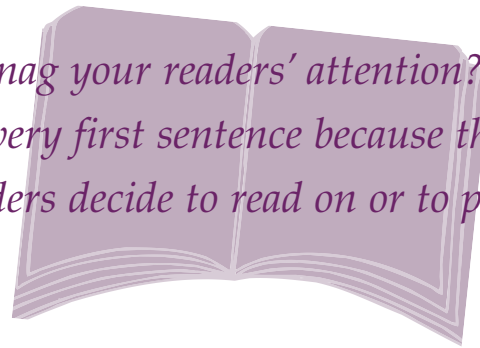
Here are 13 opening lines that grabbed me:

1. "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice." (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 1967)
2. "Like the brief doomed flare of exploding suns that registers dimly on blind men's eyes, the beginning of the horror passed almost unnoticed; in the shriek of what followed, in fact, was forgotten and perhaps not connected to the horror of it all." (*The Exorcist*, William Peter Blatty, 1971)
3. "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone 84 days now without taking a fish." (*The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway, 1952)

4. "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." (*David Copperfield*, Charles Dickens, 1850)
5. "All children, except one, grow up." (*Peter Pan*, JM Barrie, 1911)
6. "I became what I am today

12. "This is a tale of a meeting of two lonesome, skinny, fairly old white men on a planet which was dying fast." (*Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut, 1973)
13. "Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested." (*The Trial*,

Want to snag your readers' attention? The key is often the very first sentence because that's where many readers decide to read on or to put your piece aside.




- at the age of 12, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975." (*The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini, 2003)
7. "We were about to give up and call it a night when somebody dropped the girl off the bridge." (*Darker Than Amber*, John D MacDonald, 1966)
8. "Let me say this: being an idiot is no box of chocolates." (*Forrest Gump*, Winston Groom, 1986)
9. "You better not never tell nobody but God." (*The Color Purple*, Alice Walker, 1982)
10. "My name was Salmon, like the fish; first name, Susie. I was 14 when I was murdered on December 6, 1973." (*The Lovely Bones*, Alice Sebold, 2002)
11. "It was the day my grandmother exploded." (*The Crow Road*, Iain Banks, 1992)

Franz Kafka, 1925 [tr. Breon Mitchell])

If you want to find more great first sentences, many Web sites feature beginning lines. One I recommend is <http://openingsentences.com/favouraites3.htm>. On this site you can actually vote for the openings you like best.

If you want to try your skill at creating a terrific first sentence, check out www.smrw.org/contest.htm.

Did you know the Smoky Mountain Romance Writers run a contest dubbed, "The Dandy Line" contest? Entry is free and the contest lasts about a month.

And if you need help crafting great openings, read *Hooked*. Edgerton, Les -- *Hooked: Write Fiction That Grabs Reader at Page One and Never Lets Them Go*, Writer's Digest Books, 2007. 

Want to pull in readers? Thirteen tips from *Hooked* to help you do just that

By Brenda Davis

Whether you blog, write articles or write fiction, if you're like me, you rack your brain thinking, "How can I get people to read my stuff?"

I've found an answer in the book *Hooked*. It's about writing beginnings "that grab readers." This book gives you guidelines for great beginnings and offers examples you can "steal." (Wonder what I mean by steal? Mr. Edgerton, the author of *Hooked* explains in the book.)


Here are 13 pointers from *Hooked*.

1. Start your story as late as you can in the inciting incident. (An inciting incident, defined by Mr. Edgerton is, "the crucial event—the trouble—that sets the story in motion.") Try to begin in the MIDDLE, possibly when your main character has a problem and knows he/she has to do something about the horrible situation he/she is in.
2. Make sure that problem is a story-worthy problem. The problem has to have some weight and importance. Mr. Edgerton says that this story problem is "the heart and soul . . . the driving force of your story." Usually the story-worthy problem is an inner psychological need. For example, in *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy wants to find a place where she'll be happy and accepted. She runs away from home right before a tornado hits and spends the rest of the story trying to return to her family. Although she doesn't know it in the beginning, she realizes she already has a place where people accept her—home.

3. The story-worthy problem has to be something the main character wants passionately. Your hero has to care or the reader won't.
4. Start your story with something that intrigues the reader, something interesting.
5. Make sure that the something interesting is tied to the rest of the story. It's fine to have a shoot out or a bank robbery, but these openings need to have something to do with what follows. By definition the beginning should lead to the middle and the end of your novel. The beginning of the story is also where you set-up the rules for your world that your characters will have to follow for the entire novel.
6. If you're having problems with your beginning, look to the end. Mr. Edgerton says that a lot of great starts hint at the story's outcome.
7. One of the most common mistakes unpublished writers make is they start the story at the wrong place. Too much backstory and all kinds of character history will weigh a beginning down. What is backstory, you ask? Mr. Edgerton says "backstory is all that has gone on before the inciting incident."
8. Another way beginnings can sour is when writers over-explain things. Readers are savvy. They can pick up on the slightest clues.
9. On the flip side, readers lose interest if they don't have enough information to understand the significance of the opening scene. They need just enough details to put meaning to the scene. Mr.

Edgerton calls these bits of information necessary set-up.

10. Good openings introduce the main character of the story.
11. Check the words in your beginning. Every word should count or be important in your opening.
12. Make sure you start with a scene, not a summary. Most of us have heard the "Show rather than tell" reminder. This is really important as your readers pick up your writing. Mr. Edgerton says, "Your goal is to evoke an emotional response in the reader, and telling absolutely won't get it. The reader must live the opening scene right along with the protagonist."
13. Remember to include specific details to help readers envision the opening scenes.

These 13 pointers are only the beginning of the information in *Hooked*. There's much more you can learn if you read *Hooked*. Get it. At least for me, *Hooked* is a must-have book. 

2009 Wisconsin RWA Write Touch Conference

2009 marks the Wisconsin Romance Writers's 25th anniversary, and the conference committee is already hard at work making sure this conference is memorable!

Join us June 5-7, 2009, at the beautiful Radisson Hotel & Conference Center/Oneida Casino in Green Bay.

Stayed tuned for more details!

Author News

Rowena Cherry's newly released *Knight's Fork*, has been chosen as "PNR Reviewer "Top Pick" for September 2008. It was also recently voted best book of the week by LASR readers. *Knight's Fork* is a futuristic Helen of Troy story, where an innocent interstellar knight and a queen who only wanted a viable sperm donor are caught up in a cosmic power struggle. Romance Junkies' Kimberly Leslies awarded *Knight's Fork* 5 Stars. Rowena is also delighted to announce that *Insufficient Mating Material* won the 2008 Hollywood Book Festival's Romance Category. *Insufficient Mating Material* is the sequel to *Forced Mate*.

Kelly Moran's book, *When the Leaves Stop Falling*, was nominated for a 2008 Best Books Award.

Kathy Steffen just signed a contract for a new historical fiction novel, *Theatre of Illusion*, to release from Medallion Press in May 2010.

Virginia McCullough's manuscript,

Greta's Grace, finalized in the women's fiction category of the Golden Gateway contest sponsored by From the Heart of Romance (FTHR) chapter.

Lori Handeland recently agreed to a new contract with St. Martin's Press to write two more novels in her new urban fantasy series *The Phoenix Chronicles*. *Apocalypse Happens* should be released in November 2009, with an as yet untitled novel to follow in 2010. The first two books in the series are *Any Given Doomsday* (November 2008) and *Doomsday Can Wait* (May 2009).

Christine Merrill recently signed a two book contract for books #2 and #8 of an eight part Regency continuity series with Harlequin Historical/Mills & Boon. The series has a working title of *The Silk Rope Scandals*, and will be released in 2010. These will be Merrill's seventh and eighth novels.

Jerol Anderson will be signing cop-

ies of *The Queen Anne Fox* and *Gone Missing in the Underground* from the Jessica Tyson Trilogy at the Milton Fine Arts Festival at Milton College in Milton, Wisconsin on Sunday, October 12, 2008 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

JL Wilson's *Forgiveness* got third place in the PRISM awards in the Paranormal category.

Christine DeSmet, Madison, Wis., is among the retreat leaders for "A Weekend with Your Novel," Oct. 24-26 at University of Wisconsin-Madison, www.dcs.wisc.edu/lisa/writing. The main workshop day is Saturday, Oct. 25. The annual event focuses on "rejection-proofing" manuscripts and features critiques (Fri. p.m./Sun. a.m.) and hands-on writing exercises with your manuscript pages. Fees vary.

Helen Brenna's October Superromance, *Finding Mr. Right*, scored with a 4 1/2 star TOP PICK review from Romantic Times BOOKreviews. 📖



WisRWA authors **Mary Biebel, Laura Iding, Judith Lyons, Pam Ford, Lori Handeland, and Ann Voss Peterson** having a blast at the Harlequin Party at the national conference.



Congratulations to **Helen Brenna** (center), whose book *Treasure* won the 2008 RITA for Best Contemporary Series Romance Suspense/Adventure!

Writing reviews—Building name recognition before you publish

By Laurel Bradley

Reviewing a book is easy, and a really good way to make friends, ensure peer reviews of your book, and get your name out there in a positive manner even before you are published. Every time you review a book you add your name and credentials at the end i.e. “reviewed by Wendy Writer author of...”

To review a book you: read it, write a brief synopsis that hooks the reader but doesn't give away the ending, and finish up with a paragraph about what you honestly liked about the book. Aim for quotable comments. This helps both the author and you. The author attributes quotes from the review back to you.


Reviewing is also great practice

on writing book blurbs—a very useful skill. Next, send a copy of the review to the author as a courtesy and post the review on-line. If it's a book from the publishing house you are with, post it on the publisher's website where appropriate, it's smart to post it on the author loop as well. Post it on amazon, Barnes and Noble, and wherever else you know the book is available.

Sing about it on the loops—“I read this great book.” I particularly like crowing about books I've enjoyed on loops. I get so tired of marketing my books, but I never tire talking about other people's books. It makes me feel good and helps fellow authors. What's not to like about that?

I also post reviews I've written on my Web site blog under the heading

Laurel Reads. I never know what to blog about, but I'm usually reading something. Another good place to mention books you've reviewed is on Friday's edition of Barbara Vey's Publisher's Weekly blog www.publishersweekly.com/blog/880000288.html. That's a great place to get your name out there even before you get published.

A couple things to note. If you find you don't like a book, don't review it. As an author (heck, as a person) it is important to be positive. It's also important to be honest. Don't say you liked something when you don't, simply don't put the time and effort into reviewing a book you don't like. Bad reviews hurt the author AND the reviewer, especially if the reviewer is an author. 

New Releases

August

Dulcie Sorenson w/a Delia DeLeest
Eye of the Beholder
(now available in print)
The Wild Rose Press

September

Kathryn Albright
The Rebel and the Lady
Harlequin Historicals
Jannifer Hoffman
Secret Sacrifices
Resplendence Publishing
Lynette Baughman
Love with a Welcome Stranger
The Wild Rose Press
(ebook)
Christine DeSmet (Jewels of the Quill)
Christmas Wishes (anthology)
Whiskey Creek Press

October

Donna Marie Rogers
There's Only Been You
The Wild Rose Press
(ebook)
Jane Toombs
Rebel's Revenge
Amber Quill Press
Helen Brenna
Finding Mr. Right
Harlequin Superromance
Renee Wildes
Duality
Samhain Publishing
Sandra K. Marshall
The Catalyst
Forbidden Publications
Susanne Saville
The Wiccan Kitten
The Wild Rose Press
Pamela Ford
The Wedding Heiress
Harlequin Superromance

November

Jeannine VanEperen
Rose of the Rio Grande
Wings ePress
Jane Toombs
Once An Outcast
Champagne Books
Jane Toombs
North of Nonesuch
Anthology
Whiskey Creek Press
Lori Handeland
Any Given Doomsday
St. Martin's Press
Kathy Steffen
Jasper Mountain
Medallion Press
Eden Rivers
Fighting the Undertow
Loose Id

December

Carrie Lofty
What a Scoundrel Wants
Zebra Debut
Anna Schmidt
Mistletoe Reunion
Love Inspired-Steeple Hill
Jannifer Hoffman
Rough Edges
Resplendence Publishing

January 2009

Isabel Sharpe
No Holding Back
Harlequin Blaze

March 2009

Laura Iding
Emergency: Single Dad, Mother Needed
Harlequin Medical Romance

May 2009

Lori Handeland
Doomsday Can Wait
St. Martin's Press

Web site update

By Rachel Berens-VanHeest

We have switched vendors for the WisRWA Web site, and are redesigning the site. The site will have the same basic look, but will be cleaner and more organized.

We will also have the ability to make changes faster than we did with the old vendor. Please be patient as we're getting everything ready.

As we make some changes behind the scenes, we're also making a few changes with how we deal with member news, etc. From now on, when you are sending in news, please put it in the following format (just like you do for the newsletter):

New releases

Month
Author
Title
Publisher

We will be featuring book covers again on the actual new releases page. If you would like to submit a cover for your new release, please send it at 200 pixels wide, with a dpi of 72. You may also send in a brief (no more than three or four sentences) blurb about your book to go with the cover.

Author News


"Mary Sue Author placed third in the Great Contest with her manuscript Fabulous Book." or "Judy Writer has signed a contract with Amazing Publisher for a paranormal book about Something Interesting."

If the information is not sent in using this format, I will be e-mailing you back, asking you to resend it. I really want to publicize all the great news and new releases for everyone,

but I just don't have time to reformat everyone's information, so please follow the new rules!

I will set up an automatic alert for the middle of each month to remind people, but feel free to send in your news at any time to me at reberens@charter.net. (Please note that you only need to send the information to me once for both the newsletter and the Web site.)

This Web site is for you to publicize yourself and your writing! So please follow the rules, and send in all your great news! In the next few weeks, the redesign will be done, and we'll be back on a regular updating schedule. Thank you for your patience!

If you have any questions about the Web site, please contact me directly at reberens@charter.net. Thanks! 

The Write Touch Newsletter
438 Jefferson St.
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