

# Novelists' INK

*The official newsletter of Novelists, Inc. — a professional organization for writers of popular fiction.*

## Working Wounded

By PATTY GARDNER EVANS

**E**very wage earner has given at least one passing thought to developing a health problem that would prevent him or her from earning that wage. Most writers have given the possibility of serious illness or accident more than a passing thought because few of us have disability insurance—and too many of us lack even adequate health insurance. Chronic illness or a sudden, life-threatening disease or accident has destroyed more than one writing career, yet many writers, Novelists, Inc. members among them, have proved that there is indeed writing life—and income—after a grim diagnosis. Some of those NINC members generously shared advice and coping strategies for overcoming the challenges of chronic ill health or major illness. The purpose was not to make the rest of us feel ashamed for whining when we have the sniffles or to add one more to the list of worries that swarm over us when we wake up at three in the morning to stare into the dark. Rather, it was to offer what they have learned through hard experience because much of it applies to many of the other hard hits life can deliver as well.

### Take Charge

Phrased in a variety of ways, the number one piece of advice and coping strategy of nearly all boiled down to this: take charge. It must be universal because the latest book on the subject is titled *Taking Charge* (Irene Pollin) and echoes just what the NINC members said: Take charge of your life as much as possible so that the disease is not in total control. For everyone, time management is part of that control. Because they can no longer do everything, they cold-bloodedly choose the activities most important to them and give up the rest. As one writer, who deals with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as well as two other auto-immune illnesses and has only six to eight functional hours a day for everything from getting dressed to reading a book to writing one, puts it, "The fact that I've had to make changes in order to continue being a writer is no more nor less significant than the fact I've had to make chan-

ges in order to continue being a wife, mother, and homemaker. I know if I spend the afternoon writing, I will not be able to fix dinner that night." This requires, of course, even more self-discipline than the usual amount writers must develop. Another member, diagnosed with lupus, has had to become "Ms. Dracula" since sunlight causes flare-ups, yet she gets in four to five fast miles every day at dawn and does indoor exercises as well to keep stiffness at bay. She rests every afternoon, sleeping for at least 20 minutes. Naps and resting are, not unexpectedly, built into the daily schedule of most who contributed.

To make life especially interesting for some members, their illnesses time warp in and out, usually materializing without advance warning. While they appreciate the absence of symptoms for periods of time, the unpredictability of their illnesses creates predictable problems. One member with recurrent shingles—a disease often thought of as nothing more than a pesky rash by the ignorant—finds that, while the blisters are extremely painful, the burning pain in the nerves of her back that remains long after the blisters disappear is worse. Trying to sit at the computer becomes a special torture. Added to that is the lack of sleep from pain which makes whatever writing she does get done often questionable in quality. Because of the unpredictability of attacks, a consistent program of time management is, naturally, futile.

The two migraine sufferers—one also with the double whammy of clinical depression—and a member with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) share the same futility. SAD might be thought of as predictable to the extent that it occurs only in the winter when sunlight is scarcest, but, *(continued on page 8)*

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## Vice PRESIDENT's column

# Nominations Committee Ideas Sought

Our esteemed president, Evan Maxwell, has decided to take a breather this month, and he's asked me to fill in. As it happens, it's a good time for me to chat with all of you, since I've just undertaken a new responsibility—taking a look at the way the nominating committee works.

As you read your last few months of newsletters, you should have noticed that the 1994 Nominating Committee—composed of the past president, a member of the Novelists, Inc. Advisory Council, and the people we elected last year to serve as nominators—has completed its work, producing a slate of officers for the 1995 NINC Board of Directors, as well as providing choices for next year's Nominating Committee.

The purpose of any nominating body is to identify potential candidates and get the best, the brightest (as well as the most willing) in front of the membership. Our nominating committee functions by coming up with a slate of candidates that committee members believe will be a good match for the various offices. Our bylaws require the Nominating Committee to offer only one candidate for each office, a practice observed by many non-profit organizations to avoid the factionalizing that can result from repeated contested elections. Elections still may be contested, however, and our bylaws do provide a method for doing that.

As NINC grows, it becomes increasingly difficult for any of us to know all of our fellow members personally, and the work of the committee in putting together a slate of candidates becomes more complicated. What happens to those fabulous candidates who don't happen to know anyone on the committee? How does the committee cast its net further, as well as encourage more input from the general membership?

With questions such as those in mind, Evan Maxwell has appointed two of us to take a look at the nominating process, to suggest ways to help the committee function more ef-

fectively and allow for more member input. I will be working with Susan Elizabeth Phillips, a member of this year's Nominating Committee.

If you have anything to say about the operation of the Nominating Committee, now is the time to speak up. Susan and I will be soliciting your input at the NINC conference in Atlanta. For those of you who won't be there, please get in touch with either of us as soon as possible. We'll need your comments by November 1 so that we can properly consider them before we put together a proposal for the Board.

Here are some issues you may want to ponder:

❑ Are you satisfied with the size of the Nominating Committee? (Our bylaws currently specify that the committee must include at least nine members, with one from the Advisory Council and the chair appointed by the Board.) This number is a little large for efficient communications, but if we make it smaller, are we concentrating too much responsibility in too small a group?

❑ Should there be any restrictions on who can be nominated? What about people currently serving on the Nominating Committee? Should they be able to put themselves on the ballot?

❑ How can the Nominating Committee more effectively solicit member input?

❑ Should the Nominating Committee have more specific guidelines to help them choose between the candidates being considered?

❑ If someone chooses to run against the slate, how easy or difficult should that process be?

Please take a few minutes to think about all of this and give us your input. Susan and I are going to do our best to make sure that the process is fair and efficient. We would very much appreciate your help.

Thanks!

-- Julie Kistler

# LETTERS to the editor

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LETTERS to the editor is the most important column in our newsletter, since it is the monthly forum in which we can all share our views and express our opinions. Anonymous letters will NEVER be published in NINK. Upon the author's request, signed letters may be published as "Name Withheld." In the interest of fairness and in the belief that more can be accomplished by writers and publishers talking with one another rather than about each other, when a letter addresses the policies of a particular publisher, the house in question may be invited to respond in the same issue. Letters may be edited for length or NINK style.

## Balancing the Scales

Since reading Diane Chamberlain's article about marriage and Terri Herrington Blackstock's responding letter, something has bothered me. I think I have finally figured out what has had me so upset and confused. It is the very first time I have ever heard a woman writer confess that she put her writing above all other matters, including her primary relationship, and as a result, her marriage failed. It was an absolute first.

I've been hearing the opposite complaint from women writers for the past twenty years. It is usually the woman writer who is already doing the lion's share of household chores and parenting simply because she's working at home, and in addition to that, she is the one expected to take care of the relationship. I am accustomed to hearing that the woman writer takes off the month of December, most of the summer, and managers to quit by three p.m. so that her family is assured of her devotion, while her spouse's regimen is to work his typical 60 hours a week and then play golf on the weekends. Instead of warning a woman to get her priorities straight, I am usually found encouraging her to bravely develop her talents, despite the fact that her family (and sometimes friends) finds it hard to accept and support the idea that she could have personal goals that exceed caretaking.

So, given that I'm coming from a different angle, may I be so bold as to add something to Diane and Terri's advice? In addition to those important qualities required to nurture a successful marriage, add balance. Whether you're writing or climbing the corporate ladder, every successful marriage thrives on partners who both communicate, both support the needs and ambitions of the other, and both make compromises. I know people whose marriages have failed because one of them became successful and also because one of them lacked ambition, so it helps immensely if you and your partner understand, appreciate, and support what the other is trying to achieve. And above all, no matter what your occupations, if either of you tries to embrace some sort of double standard, the end result will definitely not be two healthy, happy, fulfilled adults.

Most of the women writers I've known have jokingly (or not so jokingly) claimed they need a wife. So to the rest of you out there who have struggled with having the demands made upon you

too many, I urge you to bravely pursue your dreams and brazenly insist upon mutual support. And a statute of limitations might not hurt, either; if your husband is silently gnashing his teeth over some perceived marital imperfection, make it clear that if he's at all interested in resolving a problem, he'd better not wait too long to address it. People can be declared legally dead in seven years, so how can you defend chewing on some bitch for longer than that? After all, adults must take responsibility for expressing their needs, and if you do so in a partnership, they must be fair and reasonable requests. Adults also have to learn to have meaningful lives even when the answer to one of their requests is no, because none of us can be all things to another person, nor can we expect another person to meet all our needs.

I must say, in response to Jasmine's letter, that my husband stares off into space as much as I do, and in his case it's usually some work-related problem as well. And, I may not be the queen of attentiveness when I'm thinking about a book but I'd hate to see an EEG done on him during the NBA Play-offs.

I'd like to rephrase Terri's final sentiments for the benefit of writers, men and women, who find themselves overburdened because they work at home and undersupported because no one understands what they're trying to do. If only one of you is interested in putting your relationship first, it doesn't look good. If the needs/sacrifices/compromises/support seem a little lopsided and out of balance, there could be trouble brewing. It suggests that one person is doing too much giving while the other is actually being robbed (without really knowing it) of the opportunity to put their own effort toward marital harmony. Everyone knows we appreciate things we've worked for more than things that fall on our heads. Taking on all the work and responsibility for a relationship doesn't usually ensure its success because it turns out, often, that not only do people not want to be a slave, they typically find they don't want to have one.

— Robyn Carr

## Stand by your Woman

I know, I know, this could go on forever, but obviously Diane Chamberlain's article, "Private Relations and the Writer" has pulled more than a few chains and knocked the scabs off many wounds. It makes my heart ache, the element of self-blame I saw not only in the original article, but in the responses it elicited. I hope both Ms. Chamberlain and Terri Herrington Blackstock have considered that their ex-husbands left them, not because of neglect, not because of any great failure on their parts, but because the men in question were possibly self-indulgent jerks. Of course, when things blow up in their faces, men like that have to justify themselves, hence the accusation of neglect. It could just as easily have been an accusation of smothering.

I spent seventeen years of my thirty-two-year marriage playing second fiddle to the most powerful mistress of all times—the army. Never once did my husband put me, our children, ➤

# LETTERS to the editor

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or our needs first. When duty called, a good soldier answered. What he did, he did to support us financially. What he did meant career advancement. What he did was act like the professional he was, and he asked me to understand that and accept it. (I did, though not always graciously.) I figure it's my turn now to ask for a little understanding of my career needs; when a deadline calls, a good writer answers. I do what I do to help provide the lifestyle we both want, though I do try to schedule myself as does Terri, to take most of December off, and much of the summer. I also try hard to curtail my moments (hours) of staring off into space, going to that place where my husband can never join me because, like Jasmine, I realize it's an intensely irritating habit shared by most writers. However, I do take my laptop on boating vacations.

If my husband leaves me for another woman, of course I'm going to look back at the way I've done things. I am a woman and I'll likely spend the rest of my natural life beating myself up, saying I should have done this, I should not have done that, or if I had only said...done...been.... But I'd like to point out that if I'd left him at any time during those seventeen years when my needs were way down the list, he and likely the rest of the world would have said, "Tsk! Another weak, whining army wife who refused to stand by her man." Maybe it's time we all started thinking that a real man will stand by his woman when she has difficult choices to make regarding the expenditure of her time, and quit flagellating ourselves when he doesn't. — **Judy Gill**

## Writers Need Space

With further reference to Diane Chamberlain's article on *Private Relationships*, it was a useful piece—it certainly stimulated discussion in my house. However, aspects of it disturb me because it seems to be being treated as a gender issue, and the message I'm hearing is that women must always put spouse or family first or risk punishment by withdrawal of affection, and/or ultimate dissatisfaction with all other endeavors.

Frankly, that sucks.

I really wish some of the men who belong to Novelists, Inc. would express their attitude to their personal relationships and their identity as writers. I suspect they take it for granted that their spouses will accommodate their creativity.

It was ironic that as I was trying to formulate a response on this issue I came across an article about women who lived with great writers. They could almost have been Diane Chamberlain's husband.

Beatrice Beehan, wife of Brendan Beehan, said "Jesus protect us from geniuses." Caitlin Thomas, wife of Dylan Thomas, wrote, "I grew bored when he ignored me, and felt undervalued." Sound familiar? And the article's writer, Clare Longrig, sums it up this way. "Everyone knows writers are difficult bastards to live with."

Everyone knows, see? So are we writers or not?

Writers are different, though other creative people are probably much the same, whether they create poetry, paintings, computer programs, or new technology. But we're talking about writers here and as successful writers we have been given a special gift.

What I'm about to say may be unfashionable. It may be politically incorrect. But what the heck, here it is. Novelists, Inc. is composed of very special, gifted people.

Think about it. How many people want to write a novel, but can't? Of those who manage to write a novel, how many see it in print? Of those who have novels published, how many make a livable income from their fiction? And yet I think the majority of the members of Novelists, Inc. are in that select group of lucky and talented people who have achieved the dream of being full-time fiction writers.

Achieving a dream always comes at a cost, both to the individual and to those close to them. Does the wife of a professional ball player complain about having to up and move every time his career shifts? Does the spouse of a concert pianist complain about the time the performer spends practicing and touring? Does the spouse of a politician complain about endless rubber-chicken dinners?

Yes, of course they do, but if the relationship has value they also accept these problems as an essential part of pursuing their partner's dream, and therefore something to be worked around. In the best situation, one partner's love and respect for the other leads them to make sacrifices to help them to achieve that dream.

Of course, it shouldn't be as one-sided as it seems to have been with Beehan and Thomas. Even creative people have a responsibility to those who share their lives, a responsibility to give of themselves, and to be aware of their partners' reasonable needs, too. But we do have rights. Yes, wives have rights. Even mothers have rights! Everyone has the right to have some part of life for selfish (literally) endeavors.

As writers, most of us have a great need for mental space in which to create. Have you ever noticed how successful writers often say something like, "I told them unless it involved blood or smoke I didn't want to hear about it." Many families don't take that easily, but is it so unreasonable to ask that people not invade our creative space to ask if they have clean socks, or to be driven to the mall, or if we want to go to the hardware store to help pick out faucets?

In my opinion, it is reasonable to assert our right to a number of hours a day in which we are not spouse or parent—or child or sibling either, if it comes to that—but are just ourselves, the writer. And it is reasonable to expect spouse, children, and all others to respect that time completely, without any complaint or martyred sighing.

Yes, it can be hard to achieve, especially hard when society

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is telling us that for a “good” wife and mother the family’s needs always come first. So, for heaven’s sake, we don’t need our professional organization sending the same message—that our creative gift must always be secondary to the needs of those around us.

— Jo Beverley

## Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics

My wife, Jasmine Cresswell, may have been “too busy” to write and thank Barbara Bretton and Diane Chamberlain for their articles on burnout and marriage failure, but she seems to have found a moment to compose an erudite letter to *Novelists’ INK* (August 1994 edition). I, of course, have all the time in the world to write letters since my day is taken up only by dreaming of luxury cruises in the Mediterranean (actually, it’s the Pacific).

What is blessedly lovable about people in general—and, perhaps, authors in particular—is that they can happily expound on subjects about which they have no facts and little knowledge. What grounds does Jasmine have for knowing that Diane’s problems lay in the fact that she’s a writer, not in the fundamentals of her relationship? Do insecure, power-hungry men and women marry doctors and bus drivers just as frequently as they marry writers? Does writing have more of “an intense disconnect between physical presence and spiritual/mental presence” than any other profession?

Beautiful words—they’re mostly Jasmine’s, of course—but that’s all they are. Words.

Where are the statistics to back-up these glib assertions? They probably don’t exist and I’m not suggesting we take the time and trouble to poll the populace in order to create them. If we did, I believe (no facts mind you) that we’d find writers to be a more typical cross-section of the population at large than they would have themselves and others imagine.

I’ll be interested to see if this short letter finds its way into my next edition of *Novelists’ INK*. That will likely arrive in the mail during my September all-expenses-paid luxury trip to Puerto Rico. Jasmine can read it first while she spares another moment from “focusing inwardly” and meeting deadlines.

— Malcolm Cresswell, nee Candlish

## Living a Fulfilling Life

I’m glad that Diane Chamberlain’s article has inspired debate on the subject of writers’ private lives. After reading Vicki Lewis Thompson’s response to my letter (which I appreciate her sending to me before it was printed), I would like to say that this is not a gender issue. I’m not sure what Michael Crichton’s family life is like, but I do know that John Grisham, who seems to be one of the best-selling authors today, coaches little league. In interview after interview, he emphasizes the fact that his family comes before his writing.

I would also like to point out that most of the male authors who dominate the publishing world do not have books out every year. In fact, most of them publish at a rate of a book every two to five years. They have lives that they actually live, instead of working around the clock to meet two or three deadlines a year. And I doubt that many of them actually move away from their families while they’re writing, as Michael Crichton does.

Having a fulfilling life, whether it be with family, friends, or varied activities apart from writing, contributes to an author’s writing, rather than detracting from it. I’ve been through a period where I lived my life through my books, and I can tell you with certainty that my writing was not better for it, though my bank account may have been. Certainly there are still times when my children’s requests are superseded by my last-minute deadline rush, and when they don’t get to go somewhere because I’m waiting for a phone call and can’t take them. My house is usually a wreck, I’m always behind on laundry, and my husband does virtually all of our cooking. I never meant to imply that I’m a Susy Homemaker who writes in her spare time. I consider myself a serious author, too, and my family honors the hours that I’ve set aside each day for my work. That’s because I made that a priority and have trained them to recognize it. However, they also know it’s not my top priority. My biggest goal is to get to the point where I, too, can write only one book a year, or one every couple of years, and spend more time with my family.

I’ve never heard of anyone who, at the end of life, looked back and wished he had spent more time working. I have heard of many, many people (both male and female) who died with deep regrets about the amount of energy they gave to their relationships.

— Terri Herrington Blackstock

## Reflecting on Recent Issues

### *Re: Private Relations and the Writer*

At least half of my married, non-writing friends are now divorced or in the process of getting divorced; and most of those divorces took one partner (usually the woman) by surprise when they began. I don’t see anything occurring among the many writers I know that isn’t also occurring among the many non-writers I know. Consequently, I am bound to say that I think the personal issues discussed with such brave honesty by Diane Chamberlain and others in recent issues of *NINK* could apply to anyone living in this society at this time. The only stumbling block which may be unique to writers (though I personally suspect it applies to other professions, too) is the one mentioned by Jasmine Cresswell: the writer’s mental absence which, when combined with her physical presence, is so frustrating and baffling to her intimates.

And, by the way, you know what’s difficult about being a non-married writer? Working alone at home, I meet about one-tenth of the number of men I used to meet.



# ***LETTERS to the editor***

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## **Re: Member Conflict of Interest**

There is nothing in NINC's bylaws regarding a professional novelist's other profession(s). If someone has published two novels, she is a professional writer according to NINC's chosen definition (more stringent than most, as noted by Evan Maxwell), whatever her other connections.

Moreover, admitting publishing's dual-professionals to NINC is not a new policy. There is at least one professional literary agent who has long been a member of NINC, and I am not aware that this has been "at our expense."

Nor do I believe such a practice "strips" us of our "real powers." The Science Fiction Writers of America includes editors—and writing editors!—among its members, and it remains a respected and powerful writers' guild with an impressive advocacy track record, as well as a private newsletter notorious for the candor of its letters. Letters whose authors, I might add, do not feel compelled to hide their complaints and accusations behind the sobriquet "Name Withheld."

While a professional conflict of interest may certainly arise for someone working as both editor and author, I would expect such an individual to rely on her own integrity, rather than assume she has none and withhold from her the very support I have so valued as a member of one of her professions.

— Laura Resnick

## **Warning! Your Writing Could Be Read Without Your Consent!**

This is one of those things you (or at least I) never thought would happen—but it did. And I was horrified, shocked, and appalled. This letter is meant to alert my fellow writers of something so intolerable, I hope, by informing you, it will never happen to anyone else.

A few weeks ago, my computer decided to malfunction on me. I figured it was the C-drive going bad. Since I'm new in town, I asked at the computer-supply store for a reputable repair shop. They gave me one. I called them, and the technician seemed to know what he was talking about. But for peace of mind, I phoned several others from the yellow pages. Most of them wanted to sell me a new computer rather than fix the old one.

After backing up all my files on floppy disks, I drove over to the recommended store. The man who greeted me at the counter was very nice. For the sake of this letter, I'll call him Sam. Sam and I got to talking, whereupon I told him I needed my computer back as soon as possible because I was on a pressing deadline. He inquired as to what I did for a living. I told him I was a historical romance writer. He was excited. He said his wife loved romance books. Sam assured me he'd take good care of my computer for me.

Several days later, I picked up my computer. Instead of the C-drive being bad, it was the A-drive. Sam put in a new one. He

also said, in a whisper, that he'd upgraded my software at no charge since I'd promised, and did, deliver an autographed copy of my latest book. I was happy. Sam was happy.

I took the computer home. It worked fine—all except for the clock and date. Every time I booted up the morning after, the date would remain July 30. I called Sam and he said the battery must be out. Just bring it on by and he'd take care of it. I said okay.

During this conversation, he mentioned that his wife had gone out and bought the rest of my books and enjoyed them. Then Sam inquired as to how my current novel was coming. I replied, "Slow, but I've got to keep writing."

Sam said, "Good, because my wife can't wait to read the ending. She told me what she's read is your best book yet. When will it be out?"

My heart fell into my stomach. "Excuse me?"

"I have a laser printer here," Sam said, "and I printed out what you've written so she could read it." He explained since his wife was such a fan, he knew she'd be dying to read my book in progress.

I got chills; my hands shook. Dismayed and feeling violated, I tried to keep cool. I could not afford to anger this guy. He had my work! I can't remember the rest of our conversation. As soon as I hung up, I called my agent. She advised me to counsel him, he had infringed on a copyright. Also to notify him, if xeroxes of the manuscript circulated (there were 17 chapters stored on my computer), he could be sued by my publisher. I was to ask for his copy.

If I hadn't wanted those precious pages he'd printed off, I never would have gone back. But I had to. On the pretext of getting the clock repaired, I returned to the store with my computer's hard-drive totally empty. I'd wiped out everything and put it on disks.

Sam greeted me with a smile, not thinking he'd done anything wrong. He was chatting, and once again, asked when I'd be finished with my current book. I told him he'd upset me greatly by invading my privacy. Casual as I could, I asked, "Just how much did you print off?" (My outrage must have been showing on my face.) He got scared then and stammered only six chapters or so. I didn't believe him. I relayed, in a calm but firm tone, what my agent said. When I demanded he produce my copy of the manuscript, he assured me he'd destroyed it right after his wife read it. There was nothing I could do. But I made sure he understood the legal ramifications of what he'd done.

I left the store, never to return again. If I thought Sam had made a copy of my work for profit, you can believe I would sic my publisher's attorney on him. But I think since Sam told me what he did, he thought he was paying me a supreme compliment about my writing.

I guess I was lucky. Sam bragged about making the copy. What about those technicians who could be printing manuscripts and not telling the author?

I'm still appalled. I never in my wildest dreams thought to yank my work off my computer before I had it fixed. I URGE you, the next time your computer needs service, PLEASE take the time to pull ANYTHING off the hard-drive you DO NOT want ANYONE to READ. There is nothing I can do about what happened to me. But by sharing my experience (that in hindsight makes me look like a naive idiot), I can stop it from happening to you!

— Stef Ann Holm

## Low \$s Hurt All

Libby Hall's article, "Educating the Masses," offered excellent insights into the problems of first-time and new authors who accept low advances and royalty rates. However, it doesn't address how such gullibility affects every other author's career, including, eventually, their own.

First-time authors who sell their work too cheaply are often

the reason why you can no longer buy as many books by your favorite authors who started in this business years ago. Why should a publisher pay Old-Time Author Z a \$12,000 advance when he can buy books from New Authors A, B, C, and D, paying them each an advance of \$3000 apiece? That's four books for the price of one. Unless Old-Time Author Z consistently produces best-selling books, she's pushed out into the cold by all those new authors.

This problem, however, is being discussed in the wrong forum. Novelists, Inc., isn't the place to educate would-be authors, since our members have all published at least two books. The situation needs to be addressed by organizations with large populations of wannabees, who need to be convinced that settling for low advances and royalties isn't in anyone's best interest. In a few years, when they should be commanding higher advances, they may be in the same fix as Old-Time Author Z—lucky to sell at all.

— Pamela Browning

## Atlanta Update

By VICTORIA THOMPSON,  
Conference Coordinator

**W**e've had some last minute additions to the agent and editor lists, so we're giving you a completed, updated list below. Also, we wanted the members to know that the Board will be asking the members to comment on the current system of nominating officers with a view toward making the nominating committee more efficient and responsive (*see VICE PRESIDENT's column, page 2*). This discussion will take place on Thursday from 2:00-3:45 p.m. during the Business Sessions. We've also added some additional Night Owl Sessions and will be adding more as suggestions continue to come in.

To date, the following publishers are planning to send representatives to the conference. These representatives will be participating in the Professional Discussion Groups, and they will also be available to meet with authors privately:

BANTAM BOOKS: Nita Taublib

BERKLEY PUBLISHING GROUP: Judith Stern

DELL: Marjorie Braman

HARLEQUIN BOOKS: Candy Lee, Randall Toye, Tracy Farrell (Harlequin Historicals, Dianne Moggy (Mira Books)

HARPERCOLLINS PAPERBACK: Karen Solem

KENSINGTON PUBLICATIONS: Sarah Gallick, Ann LaFarge, Denise Little

NAL: Hilary Ross

RANDOM HOUSE VALUE PUBLISHING: Kate Hartson

SILHOUETTE BOOKS: Leslie Wainger

WARNER BOOKS: Ashley Kraas, Jeanne Tiedge

The agents listed below are planning to attend the conference and will be participating in the Professional Discussion Groups. They are willing to meet with authors privately. Please contact them directly to make an appointment.

Steven Axelrod, The Axelrod Agency, 413-637-2000

Maria Carvainis, Maria Carvainis Agency, Inc.,  
212-580-1559

Andrea Cirillo, Jane Rotrosen Agency, 212-593-4330

Ruth Cohen, Ruth Cohen Literary Agency, 415-854-2054

Ethan Ellenberg, Ethan Ellenberg Agency, 212-431-4554

Eileen Fallon, The Fallon Agency, 212-399-1369

Linda Hayes, Columbia Literary Associates, 410-465-1595

Eugenia Panettieri, The Panettieri Agency, 804-825-1708

Damaris Rowland, Damaris Rowland Agency (in association with The Axelrod Agency), 802-446-3146

Maureen Walters, Curtis Brown, Ltd., 212-473-5400

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# Working Wounded

*(Continued from page 1)*

unfortunately, that isn't true for many, our NINC member included. As one of the migraine endurers said, "How do you set a deadline when you have no idea how many headaches you'll get and how many days you'll lose between now and when the book is due?"

One might think that if one has to be stricken without warning, it would be best to develop a life-threatening disease that, while really rotten during its duration, will last a finite time, then everything will go back to normal. As a breast cancer survivor reported, there are time management problems unique to this situation, also. Deadlines were established before the cancer was diagnosed and, with surgery and chemotherapy, it became very difficult to meet them, and the author chose not to ask for extensions for fear her editors would think she was done for.

**W**hich brings us to something else that every contributor mentioned must be controlled or at least lessened: stress. Stress and time are frequently entwined, which is not surprising, considering that the former is often a function of the latter. Stress worsens any illness and is either proven or suspected of causing attacks of shingles, migraines and asthma—one of another member's chronic illnesses—yet stress is even more difficult to manage than time. Prioritizing what's most important can help lessen the stress between family responsibilities and writing responsibilities as long as family members understand writing is important. Members didn't report much conflict in this area.

A major source of stress, as might be expected, is deadlines. One member with arthritis spoke for all when she said that the fear that "you will be physically unable to finish a book is a great deterrent to starting one." To combat that fear, one author doesn't sell anymore on partials or sign multi-book contracts. She will run an idea by an editor, but refuses to commit to a deadline because she finds she can handle the uncertainty of selling a complete manuscript better than failing to meet a deadline. Several have extra time built into contracts to allow for down time.

Another stress point is whether to tell an editor about health problems. Contributors were divided on this point. Some felt as the breast cancer survivor did: revealing your illness will cause editors to lose confidence in your ability to take on another project. Others have told their editors and found sympathy, understanding and definite stress relief. Unfortunately, that sympathy and understanding aren't as plentiful if the illness is above the neck. The writer with SAD felt she should, in fairness, tell her editors and found understanding; but she also has found that, although she has had the illness under control for a good while, there is still "a notable lack of trust," and she is "constantly on call to prove myself as 'well'." Both writers with migraines have not reported their health status, either. The reason, says one, is that some people still assume migraines are a sign of "craziness." (What

makes her crazy, she says, is rushing to make deadlines on revisions so that the manuscript can sit on an editor's desk for weeks.) Sadly, any brain dysfunction is still considered by too many to be a sign of craziness and perhaps moral weakness or plain laziness as well. Much of that attitude may come from the fact that people with "mental" illness do not come with warning labels—a cast indicates a broken limb, racking cough pneumonia, etc. Instead, they usually look perfectly fine, then suddenly and seemingly inexplicably exhibit bizarre behavior. It is understandable that people once thought they were possessed, which was somehow their fault. With the ever-expanding research on the brain, that attitude is now indefensible. Dysfunctions of the pancreas are perfectly acceptable, but dysfunctions of the brain—the most complex part of the human body—still too often aren't. Freud probably didn't help matters a whole lot either by implying that patients could become well if they just worked at it hard enough. Hence, when SAD is still called "cabin fever," migraines "a headache" and depression "the blues," it is understandable that authors are reluctant to tell editors about them.

One area contributors found easiest to control was their medical regimen. Some, like the arthritis sufferer, spent frustrating years being misdiagnosed and mistreated; others were diagnosed correctly immediately, but all eventually took at least partial control of their medical care and have worked out what works best for them. Some have drastically cut back on medication or cut back at selected times. This is not, warns the breast cancer survivor, an option when your life is at stake. The author with pulmonary disease was overdiagnosed and overdosed on huge amounts of steroids until she switched to another doctor who cut her back to a more sensible level. The SAD author found she could cut her medication in half and function fine, helped by meditation and exercise, "anything" she adds "that brings you out of yourself so you are not the focus of your attention." The writer with arthritis discovered that listening to her body showed her that pounding a computer keyboard was not the sole cause of her pain. Other arm activities aggravated her arthritis, and when she cut back on them, she found that her arms became far better than she had ever thought they could be.

One writer began keeping a journal as personal therapy, later finding it also provided much self-enlightenment. Another with several auto-immune illnesses was initially coping with six different specialists, cut the number to three who refused to consult with each other and finally found one who, while he isn't 100% happy with her choices, is willing to let her take control of her treatment and her life. She uses standard prescriptions in combination with holistic medications. Another writer who has one of the same auto-immune conditions had awful side-effects early on from the standard prescribed drugs and became very skeptical of all supposed treatments—including kissing bees, goat bladders and practitioners claiming to "hear the voice of the ages (a voice that usually turns out to speak bad English with a movieland

Chinese accent.)” She has evolved a regimen of rest, exercise and a healthy diet which, she admits, makes her wish she will have warning that life’s end is coming so that she can gorge on every “bad” food, starting with corn chips and bacon.

More than one writer foregoes treatment temporarily in order to write although that can be a two-edged sword. The author with shingles will stop taking prescriptions despite label warnings that all pills must be taken, because they make her too dizzy and nauseated to work, which, as the days go by without producing anything, adds to her stress level which may trigger another attack. By cutting out or cutting back the medication, she is able to write, but she worries the whole time that she might be setting herself up for future outbreaks which increases her stress level which....

When asked if their illnesses had caused them to have fears of stigma, dependency, abandonment and/or isolation, response was mixed. The level of support members received from family, friends and similar sufferers didn’t seem to have much correlation to the levels of their fears, either. Some who had the least support did seem to have the most fears, yet some with the most support did, too. The author with shingles reported much support but she also dreads having her illness known beyond a few friends because 1) “shingles just sounds like an ugly, nasty thing” and 2) she might have to admit publicly that “perhaps (horrors!) I’m not really Superwoman.” Another writer knows friends ask how she is because they care, but she asks them not to because she finds if she talks too often about her illness, she begins to think of herself as a sick person.

Several members said they did feel isolated at times by their illnesses. One didn’t find it especially hard, since she liked being alone. Besides, she added, “one of the worst things about chronic illness is that it is a boring subject, boring to those who are ill and to everyone around them.” Another admitted that she didn’t share every bad aspect of her disease with her husband which caused him to think he was more supportive than he was, but the isolation was unavoidable because he has problems, too, and adding all of hers wouldn’t help either of them. She does, she added, have one very good writer friend to whine to—“she had to be a writer to understand”—and she never feels isolated or abandoned after talking to her. The author with clinical depression and migraines, realizing her isolation, took the positive step of taking a part-time job at a mall to get herself involved with people again.

Whining is necessary occasionally, more than one author said. “The Puritan part of me claims that being sick for more than ten days in unacceptable behavior—and those ten days were used up long, long ago,” but the same author isn’t too hard on herself when she isn’t always “a good little soldier.” The role is too hard to play continuously, and most mental health experts agree that a good cry, bitching, and/or bout of self-pity once in a while is a good release. Trying to be the perfect sufferer is exhausting, stressful and, frankly, damned annoying to those around you.

Something else everyone tries to control is anger, the “Why me?!” kind of anger. Most admit to a bitterness at having a more “cramped” lifestyle than they’d anticipated, enjoying less financial as well as physical health, having plans for the “golden years” tarnished yet there wasn’t as much as could be reasonably expected. None of the contributors are Pollyannas; what they are is realistic—“Like it or not, I have these illnesses. There are not cures nor much in the way of treatment. I’ve had to accept that and get on with my life.” This from a writer who was diagnosed after eight years of great success with an illness that initially left her unable to move. “I can always find someone worse off than myself,” several said; trite, true, but it does have meaning coming from a writer who used to write two to three books a year and now barely manages one and pays \$36,000/year for medical insurance. They have a sense of humor, too, even if it’s sometimes understandably black—“God sent migraines so I know I won’t get cancer or heart disease.”

Was anyone glad that they had become ill because of the personal growth they experienced? Not hardly, but several said they found they were not as compulsively driven to work as they used to be yet were more productive when they did work. And one writer made a point that summed up the entire subject of writers working wounded in a remarkably positive way: “Adding the uncertainties of writing—selling—to the uncertainties of illness makes life even harder, but, on the other hand, I can do the job of writing and I couldn’t do an eight hour a day/five days a week job. Writing is my only economic alternative and what got me going again.” **NINK**

## INTROducing

*The following authors have made application for membership in NINC and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 30 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of NINC:*

### New Applicants:

Karen Amarillas (*Susan Amarillas*), Granada Hills CA  
Patricia De La Fuente (*Patricia Oliver, Olivia Fontayne*),  
Edinburg TX  
Jennifer Smith (*Jennifer Crusie*), Alpha OH  
Karen Young Stone (*Karen Young*), Thibodaux LA

### New Members:

Joyce Anglin, Jenks OK  
Zita Christian, Manchester CT  
Chelley Kitzmiller, Tehachapi CA  
Bonnie Jeanne Perry, St. Louis MO  
Lauraine Snelling, Martinez CA

# The American Crime Writers League

## Code for Publicity Persons

*With the proliferation of author tours, many if not most organized by the individual midlist writer, the American Crime Writers League asked its membership for suggestions on how such tours might be less stressful and more profitable.* **ED.**

**P**ublicity, particularly author tours, has become an accepted and almost unavoidable part of an author's job. Whether we approve or deplore this practice, most of us have to deal with it. This code does not address the pros and cons of publicity but attempts to make the process easier and more effective for writers and publicity persons alike.

1. *Organize.* Nobody knows what sells books. Nobody has ever tried intelligently to find out. So publicists, and writers, try to do everything, without stopping to ask whether it is worth doing. Quality, not quantity, should be your aim. Start planning well in advance. Ideally a publicity campaign should begin taking shape as soon as the author announces the date of the delivery of the manuscript, and it should be keyed to the pub date. Some publicity sources don't require or want long advance notice; others have a lead time of six months or longer. The publicist should ask, NOT "How many appointments can I make for this author?" but 1. What markets do I want to reach? and 2. What is the most effective way of reaching them? There is a growing impression that many publicists lack the imagination or ability or inclination to try something different. Instead they focus on the easy stuff: signings at small bookstores, talks on small radio stations or at libraries. Writers don't need help with this sort of thing. They have learned, God help them, how to reach such sources and often do it more effectively than their publicity person can. What they need and want are new ideas and an intelligent, reasoned consideration of the campaign as a whole. Evaluate each activity separately and on its own merits. Is it worth the expenditure of time and energy (by the author) or money (by the publisher)? There is only so much money available; could it be better employed?

2. *Before shooting* authors off into hithers and yons, the planner should sit down with somebody from the sales department and find out what sections of the country are showing up on the charts as the most profitable markets for books at the time of planning, and also what kinds of books are selling best in particular areas. You may, if you wish, cite the fiasco resulting from a certain young nitwit's having heard from somebody or other that Jackson, Mississippi was a great book city and believing it without stopping to find out whether a place where they read nothing but Andrew Vachss would be receptive to the witty, erudite and relatively gore-free works of a certain dainty little lady and refused to listen when she said she saw no sense in going and was, goddammit, right. It should be stressed that figures can change and there's

no point in depending on what somebody else set up as a viable schedule back in the age of the plesiosaurus.

3. *Don't labor* under the illusion that publicity tours are fun for the author. They are not pleasure trips, they are WORK. The only time the author isn't working is when she is alone in her hotel room. Travel is tiring. Strangers are tiring, even pleasant, friendly strangers. The emotional demands made on a popular author by adoring fans leave the author drained, if she is conscientious and courteous enough to give them what they want: smiles, laughter, wit, personal recognition and individual attention. The late greatly lamented Dorothy B. Hughes once summed it up: "It's the sparkling that wears me out." The writer on tour is a performer; that's what you've made of her, Mr. or Ms. Publicity Person, and performing in public is WORK. The better the writer is at that job the harder she's working.

4. *Bear in mind* that authors are not automatons. Difficult as it may be to believe, they have the same physical needs as normal people. When putting together a schedule allow them time for sleeping, eating, resting, and going to the bathroom. Recent medical studies indicate that 7-9 hours sleep per night is necessary; at least three meals per day improve not only the health but the amiability of the average author. Labor unions insist upon a short break every few hours. Are writers entitled to less?

5. *Not only* are writers not robots, they are individuals, with varying needs, energy levels, and personal foibles. Your author will love you a lot more if you take these factors into account. You might even ask—tactfully, of course—whether there is an unknown physical disability or phobia to be considered, and warn the host in advance so the writer won't be put in an embarrassing position. Thrusting a cute furry pussycat into the arms of Joan Hess might result in a permanent rupture of Joan's relationship with the owner of a bookstore (not to mention a rupture of the cat). Booking Elizabeth Peters into a non-smoking hotel would almost certainly result in permanent damage to YOU. And we have learned, from a well known writer of Southern historical novels, that she does not consider a sandwich in the limo between signings an acceptable substitute for lunch. Another writer, who was courageously carrying out her schedule despite a broken leg (cast, crutches and all) discovered when she arrived at the hotel into which her publicity person had booked her that the hotel had no elevator. Her room was on the fourth floor. If you don't know your author well enough to know things like these send her a questionnaire before you begin planning the tour. **INK**

Part 2 of the American Crime Writers League "Code for Publicity Persons" will be published in the November issue of *Novelists' INK*, along with additional book-tour advice from Novelists, Inc. members.

# The Same Side...Interview with Kent Carroll

By CLAIRE BOCARDO

**K**ent Carroll, editor and publisher at Carroll & Graf Publishing, has been in publishing for nearly 25 years. I spoke with him at length for the article on writer-editor relations (*Sept. issue*), and he had so many interesting things to say about the business as a whole that I felt his remarks deserved a separate article.

**CB:** Some experienced writers have told me that new authors often have unrealistic expectations about what an editor can do for them. Will you comment on that?

**KC:** The unfulfilled expectation that often colors everything is of high advances and promotions. A first novel does well to sell seven to eight thousand copies. Many writers expect TV and radio interviews, large advances, publicity, and ads in the New York Times book section that the house can't afford; the projected sales don't justify the expenditure. So when a house fails to invest heavily in a book, the writer's disappointment can affect the relationship with his editor.

**CB:** What about writers who want a mentor in their editor? Some complain that their editors don't work with them enough to improve their writing.

**KC:** I think it's true that a number of writers don't get the editorial attention their books warrant. What often happens is, only certain things can be fixed. It's much easier to help with plot, which can be worked out logically. It's harder to help with character problems without rewriting the book for the author. And editors are not necessarily good writers, although they understand how writing works.

When I started out in the early 1970s, there was a tacit understanding among writers and publishing houses: if you took on a writer, you would publish that writer's work while he built his career. Publishers had an obligation to the writer that worked quite well. One thing that comes from a stable, long-term relationship is the personal investment of time, care, and concern in that writer. Writing is an exquisitely human process, and trust built over a long working relationship helps that process.

**CB:** Vague statements like "Not right for our line," or "Doesn't suit our needs," can be especially frustrating when they come with encouraging handwritten notes. What might keep you from buying an otherwise well-written manuscript?

**KC:** We publish only ten to twelve of about 400 mystery manuscripts we receive yearly; an enormous number of mysteries are being published nowadays. If a book's first draft doesn't work, it probably won't ever work, and if it's very good, a fine editor can add maybe 10% to it. So many editors are reluctant to accept a book that's not already good, and avoid the risk. It's a shame, because often the level of editing a good editor does would benefit a promising book more than an accomplished one.

One common problem is that a manuscript is too derivative. The writer is talented and the story good, but the work is not original enough; it is too obviously influenced by Sue Grafton or Robert Sherman or some other mystery-writing luminary. In that

case, there is little an editor can do; the model's style is so pervasive that the writer would have to start over from scratch.

**CB:** What do you think is the main cause of problems in the writer-editor relationship?

**KC:** A lot of them have to do with personality. Editors do appreciate writers who respond quickly to suggestions. For me, things should be done on schedule; if not, it interferes with getting the book out. Second, I most enjoy writers who'll enter a real exchange of ideas. It can unveil a lot, and it gives me an opportunity to encourage them to do what means most to them. They do their best and most original work then.

**CB:** What if the writer is unwilling to make a suggested change, but too intimidated to say so?

**KC:** The writer is always free to say "no." I'd rather work in a dialogue with questions and answers going both ways.

Writers should write what they believe in, even if it's unconventional or risky. We know our readers are intelligent enough to follow them; a lot of good books sell. Rules about what a writer may or may not do or say are foolish. They limit the writing.

**CB:** Besides writing as well as they can, what can authors do to help their books?

**KC:** The more people you know at your publishing house, the better. Key sales, marketing, and publicity art people are vital to the book's success, and they get little attention for what they do. A pat on the back can make a world of difference. Meet them if you can, and drop a note of appreciation.

**CB:** How do you feel about dealing directly with writers on business matters?

**KC:** Talking business with the editor can pollute the relationship. Agents have insinuated themselves into the process and taken over much of the editor's responsibility. As a result some writers' loyalties are strictly to the agent, and that can be detrimental to the editorial relationship. Now some writers even have contracts that forbid editing, which is a form of insanity.

**CB:** What advice do you have for writers on getting along with their editors?

**KC:** It's no great mystery. Treating people well, being polite, doing all the things your mother told you—that works well.

If the editor knows the writer appreciates his suggestions, he'll feel challenged and work harder. Many editors are in it for the love of books. They're making a lot less money than they could elsewhere, but their rewards are psychic and emotional. They know what they've done, and your understanding and appreciation add to their satisfaction.

Editors want writers who grow and develop, get better, take risks, do more. Good fiction is risky to publish, and getting harder to do well. Nonfiction, which is easier to do because it's concerned with information, outsells fiction. But a lot of people came into this business to publish *The Great Gatsby*, not "How To" books; they want to do memorable fiction.

When you've been in the business for a while, that hope begins to fade, but working with a writer who wants to get better revives some of that original spirit. **INK**

# *the NEXT PAGE*

At least two months preceding publication, please send information to JoAnn Ross, 43 E. Boca Raton, Phoenix AZ 85022-4713. You're welcome to submit this information as soon as your publication date has been confirmed.

Andrews, Barbara (with Pam Hanson) w/a Jennifer Drew: *Turn Back the Night*, Silhouette Romance  
Bartell, Linda Lang: *Tender Rogue*, Zebra  
Broadrick, Annette: *Temptation Texas Style!*, Silhouette Desire (Man of the Month)  
Chamberlain, Diane: *Brass Ring*, HarperCollins (hardcover)  
Chamberlain, Diane: *Lovers and Strangers*, Harper-Paperback (reissue)  
Chastain, Sandra: *Scandal in Silver*, Bantam Fanfare  
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deJong, Daphne Clair w/a Daphne Clair: *Dark Mirror*, Harlequin Presents  
Feddersen, Connie w/a Carol Finch: *Apache Knight*, Zebra Lovegram  
Finnigan, Karen w/a Karen Lockwood: *Stolen Kisses*, Jove Tea Rose Historical  
Gideon, Nancy: *Midnight Temptation*, Pinnacle supernatural romance  
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Naujoks, Sabine w/a Sabine Kells: *Shadows on a Sunset Sea*, Leisure Love Spell  
Orwig, Sara: *Nightspell*, Zebra Halloween Collection  
Palmer, Linda Varner w/a Linda Varner: *Dad on the Job*, Silhouette Romance Fabulous Fathers (Book #1 of the *Mr. Right* trilogy)  
Putney, Mary Jo: *Dancing on the Wind*, Topaz Historical  
Rice, Patricia: *The Genuine Article*, Signet Regency

Siegenthal, Deborah w/a Deborah Simmons: *The Devil's Lady*, Harlequin Historical  
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Stewardson, Dawn: *Gone with the West*, Harlequin Superromance  
Taylor, Janelle: *Chase the Wind*, Zebra Books (mass market edition, sequel to *Follow the Wind*)  
Taylor, Janelle: *Starlight and Splendor*, Pinnacle (Book III in *Moon dust* futurist series)  
Undsderfer, Adrienne Lee w/a Adrienne Lee: *Something Borrowed, Something Blue*, Harlequin Intrigue  
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