



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



**novelists,
inc.**

VOLUME 29 : NUMBER 6
JUNE 2018

Nink June 2018

Contents

- ◆ NINC Membership Update
- ◆ President's Voice ~ Julie Ortolon
- ◆ Writing Retreats ~ Cheré Coen
- ◆ Season Your Fiction Just Right ~ James Harbeck
- ◆ Improve Your Health: Create ~ Denise Agnew
- ◆ Knife Fighting 102 For Writers ~ Jerry Spradlin
- ◆ The Mad Scribbler: End of An Era ~ Laura Resnick
- ◆ Conference 2018: Craft Your Perfect Career
- ◆ NINC Membership Benefits
- ◆ About NINC

President's Voice

By Julie Ortolon



The more the world changes, the more it stays the same. That saying has really resonated with me during the last month. Novelists, Inc. was founded to ensure that professional, career authors would have a way to share information. What's changed since our founding is the variety of issues we're facing.

I distinctly remember sitting at my computer in 2008, reading about Joe Konrath's KDP experiment on NINCLINK, followed by Brenda Hiatt's "Show Me The Money" report. Those articles were a life-changing epiphany for me, and I'm sure, for a lot of you. I reached out on NINCLINK, and with private email to NINC members, asking for advice on how to navigate the new, uncharted waters. I am very grateful to NINC for providing a way to share in what has been a fast-moving journey in publishing over the past 10 years.

With the NINCLINK, articles in *Nink*, and our awesome conferences, we've had access to the information we've needed to make important decisions about our careers. Now we have even more issues facing us: online retailers yanking the rug out from under honest authors, scammers filling bestseller lists, piracy taken to a whole new level, and a trademark issue I certainly never saw coming.

NINC has allowed us to share information and bounce around ideas. That will continue on the NINCLINK and with upcoming articles in *Nink*. We're also planning a special Night Owl at the conference to talk about what issues need to be addressed and to share ideas on what NINC can and should do.

I hope you'll join your fellow NINC members [at St. Pete Beach](#) in September!

Julie

NINC Member Benefits

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), and the members-only [Facebook group](#) if you haven't already. The Pro Services Directory, member [discount page](#), and [sample letters](#) are also great resources.

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#). You can also [propose an article](#), submit a [letter to the editor](#), or volunteer to [be an assistant editor](#) and become part of the team. You can also [buy a paperback copy](#) of the 2016 Best of Nink!

Accessing the NINC Website

Not sure how to log in to the NINC website? Visit the login page here: <https://ninc.com/membership-overview/login-to-ninc/>

Julie Ortolon is a USA Today best-selling author of contemporary romance. First published by Dell Publishing in 2000, she has also written for St. Martin's Press and Signet Eclipse. Since going indie in 2009, she has hit the Amazon Top 100 several times. One of her greatest joys is helping other authors find success. When not writing, she enjoys traveling the world with family and friends.

Writing Retreats

By Chéré Coen



I stopped crying once I crossed the Arkansas line. I was almost there.

It had been a stressful time juggling work and family, with long stretches of little time off and none for fiction writing. And because I was heading to a week-long writing retreat in the Ozarks, I had piled on the work beforehand.

Once I got into the car to head to Eureka Springs, I came unglued.

Even after I checked into the Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow, I couldn't shake that horrific feeling of being overwhelmed. But as I entered my little suite complete with fireplace, kitchen and a giant bathtub, I vowed to relax. I poured myself a glass of wine and moved my writing materials into my writing room, an adorable space that overlooked a neighboring park so the two walls of windows provided me with nothing but nature.

Within minutes, all my cares were gone.

By the end of my week, with several chapters under my belt, I cried because I hated to leave. This time, however, I left feeling empowered and renewed.

Writing retreats like [Dairy Hollow](#) provide writers with space and time away to work, in many cases without interruptions. For \$75 a night, the Eureka Springs nonprofit offers suites in two buildings within walking distance to downtown Eureka Springs, plus a home-cooked meal Monday through Friday nights. For other meals, Dairy Hollow's commercial-sized kitchen remains stocked and available for writers' use.

"We give people the space and time to be quiet," said Linda Caldwell, Dairy Hollow director. "When people come here, they put their lives on hold."

Although having hours to do nothing but write may sound like heaven, Caldwell has noticed that writers crave company. She tries to make sure that visitors book on weeks when others are present, which offers someone with whom to talk at dinnertime or someone with whom to share the sights of Eureka Springs.

"They (writers) feel that time alone is really valuable," Caldwell said. "But they also like that camaraderie."

Instructional retreats fall at the other end of the spectrum: writers attend classes and workshops, then steal away to work on their projects. The [Wake Up and Write Writers Retreat Workshop](#) (WRW) brings in authors, editors, and agents and combines classes and one-on-one meetings with writing time.

Some of the past participants have included agents and editors Donald Maass, Matt Bialer, Alice Orr, Lisa Abellera, Caitlin McDonald, Dana Isaacson, Richard Thomas, and Elizabeth Lyon, and writers and writing instructors Lisa Cron, David Corbett, Joe Lansdale, Daniel Palmer, Arianne Thompson, and Grace (G.G.) Wynter.

“Whether you are a proficient writer or a rookie at your first workshop, you can find the tools to assist you in your work, and a team of instructors who are present in order to share their knowledge and experience with you,” director Carol Dougherty said. “We are all writers on the same path, pilgrims on the journey of our individual stories. This is not a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach to the craft of writing. Every instructor will share his or her understanding of what is effective for the various tasks involved in constructing a novel. You are ultimately the one who determines what will serve your vision, your characters, your book.”

The WRW retreats are located at retreat centers, not hotels, to keep down costs, and have been offered in Boise, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, San Antonio, Bristol, Connecticut, and Florence, Kentucky.

Some writers take it upon themselves to develop a writing retreat. Jan Risher of Lafayette, Louisiana, enlisted a lakeside home of a friend to provide a respite for fellow writers, creating a weekend retreat. For a nominal fee, participants enjoyed accommodations—some bunked together in a large upstairs space, meals, and instruction from a writer who discussed showing not telling and from an artist who spoke of creative development. Outside of discussions on craft, the writers had plenty of time to work on their own projects, especially since Risher’s husband, Julio, cooked all the meals.

“Personally, my hope was to get started on a bigger project that I seem to never have time to do,” Risher explained of her reason to create the retreat.

“I believe the outcome was positive,” Risher continued. “From the people I keep up with regularly, I know of at least one book published, one TEDx talk (delivered last fall), another cool presentation, and the bones of a fine fellowship application came out of it—so I’d say that’s more impressive than I had realized.”

Types of retreats

There are different kinds of writing retreats; the key is knowing what format works for you. Do you desire instruction, networking or feedback? Would you like to have access to editors and agents? Or do you need a quiet space without interruption to finish a project?

Here are a few to consider:

[Cruising Writers](#) has two events left for 2018, a seven-night Western Caribbean cruise for \$1,750, Oct. 13-20 featuring Kristen Lamb and Rachel Caine, and a Dec. 2-9 Immersion cruise with Margie Lawson for \$1,595. Christina Delay, author of young adult and women’s fiction, hosts Cruising Writers.

[Writing on the Water](#), a seven-night memoir writing workshop and cruise led by author Dayna Dunbar and coach Julia Padawer, occurs Feb. 2-9, 2019, traveling from New Orleans to the Bahamas, Key West and CocoCay.

Sorry, no men allowed at the [Taos Writer's Retreat](#) July 29-Aug. 4 or Oct. 28-Nov. 3 at the Mabel Dodge Luhan House in Taos, New Mexico. The retreat is taught by Jennifer Loudon, author of "The Woman's Comfort Book" and six additional books on well-being and whole living.

[Wellspring House](#) is run Preston Browning, Jr. who, along with his late wife, wanted to offer a quiet space for working writers and artists. Fees range from \$60 to \$90 a night depending on room and time of year.

Writers of all levels may enjoy [The Iceland Writer's Retreat](#) April 3-7, 2019, which offers small group workshops with well-known authors, editors, and teachers.

If you enjoy running, you might consider [Writers Who Run](#) retreat June 25-30 in Fontana Dam, North Carolina. There's even a 5K and 10K race on June 30.

For those we have already mentioned:

[The Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow](#) requires an application. The cost is \$75 per night and includes food. Workshops are occasionally offered onsite.

[Wake Up and Write Writers Retreat Workshop](#) costs \$1,895 for 10 days and covers everything but transportation to and from the Nazareth Retreat Center in Boise, Idaho.

Cheré Coen is a Louisiana-based author who writes mysteries and romances under the pen name of [Cherie Claire](#).

Season Your Fiction Just Right

Adjust these little things to get the sound of a different time and place

By James Harbeck



Can you tell when and where (America or England) these passages were written? (And I promise the answers will be revealed.)

1. When we were summoned to dinner, a young gentleman in a clerical dress offered his hand, and led me to a table furnished with an elegant and sumptuous repast, with more gallantry and address than commonly fall to the share of students.

2. She wore the hood set back off her square honest face and showed her hair, dark brown with a tinge of Tudor red. Her smile was her great charm: it came slowly, and her eyes were warm. But what struck me most about her was her air of honesty.

3. I was so vexed to see him stand up with her! But, however, he did not admire her at all; indeed, nobody can, you know; and he seemed quite struck with Jane as she was going down the dance.

Prose is a rich soup with many different seasonings. We know that news stories have a different feel than academic articles, and you can often tell what genre of fiction you're looking at from a sentence or two. But the seasonings also vary across the centuries—and across the Atlantic. And they vary in ways you may not expect.

The molecular gastronomy of writing

The linguist Douglas Biber performed statistical work on large sets of literature to identify grammatical features that tend to work together to set the tone. He's found several "dimensions" of variation: the most important of which is between "involved" and "informational." For example, "I think you'll see they're cooking it" is very involved, and "The cooking of the food is evidently being performed" is very informational.

To make a text feel more involved, use more private verbs (e.g., "think"), contractions, present-tense verbs, first- and second-person pronouns, demonstrative pronouns ("this"), and

“is,” “am,” and “are” as main verbs. Use fewer nouns and prepositions, drop “that” in relative clauses more often, and use shorter and less varied words. To make it more “informational,” do the opposite.

There are other dimensions as well: “situated” versus “elaborated” has, among other things, longer and more complex sentences in more elaborated text; “abstract” versus “non-abstract” has, among other things, more past participles in more abstract texts.

A sprinkling of phonaesthemes

As I’m also a linguist, I’ve done research on a bit of seasoning that goes along with the others: phonaesthemes. A phonaestheme is a sound cluster that tends to be associated with an area of meaning, even in unrelated words, though not necessarily in all words containing it. Some phonaesthemes evoke noise or motion, like the *spl-* in *splash*, *splatter*, *split*, and *splurge*; others do not, like the *gl-* in words such as *gleam*, *glimmer*, *glass*, and *glow*.

Words containing phonaesthemes have a more direct and vivid feel; they can make the writer seem more involved—and less dignified. They tend to go together with a more involved and less abstract style. Well-known phonaesthemes include *fr-* as in *frizz* and *frill*; *scr-* as in *scrimp* and *scrunch*; *sl-* as in *slide* and *slick*; *sn-* as in *snout* and *sniff*; *spr-* as in *spread* and *spray*; *-url/-irl* as in *twirl* and *curl*; *-ap* as in *flap* and *slap*; *-ash* as in *dash* and *crash*; *-atch* as in *latch* and *catch*; *-op* as in *hop* and *pop*; and *-ump* as in *hump* and *slump*.

Who used what when

An involved, situated, non-abstract style with more phonaesthemes is relatively common in fiction, especially romance and mysteries, and a bit less so in science fiction. It was a bit less common in fiction a century ago. But you may be surprised by the fiction of *two* centuries ago.

British fiction of the late 1700s and early 1800s had sentences that are much longer than now, with more passive voice, but its tone was, on average, more involved than in the later 1800s. In fact, it was at least as involved as it is now, and it uses phonaesthemes at least as much. But that’s *British* fiction. American fiction used even fewer phonaesthemes in the 1700s than in the 1800s and appears to have had a less involved style.

Our three examples at the start of the article illustrate this. The first example (Number 1) is from *The Coquette: Or, the History of Eliza Wharton* by Hannah Webster Foster, an American, published in 1797. The second (Number 2) is from *The Queen’s Fool* by Philippa Gregory, from England, published in 2004. The third (Number 3) is from—did you guess?—*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, published in 1813.

Class and insecurity

The reason American fiction of the 1700s was less involved and used longer, less phonaesthematic words had to do with class, literacy, and insecurity. Two hundred years ago, people who wrote—and read—books in England were, on average, of higher class, secure in their social status. In America at the time, on the other hand, they were up-and-comers. As literacy spread in both countries during the 1800s, it included more people who wanted to be upwardly mobile. Status-insecure writing uses more formal words and tone and strives to sound less

personally involved; it avoids anything that the author is afraid might seem undignified, such as phonaesthemes. And more writers of the late 1800s (and of 1700s America) were insecure in their status.

Adjust the seasoning

Let's try adjusting our sample passages.

We'll make *The Coquette* more involved—perhaps like a British author of the time. We can take out the passive, use some shorter words, and add a phonaestheme (“spread”):

When they called us to dinner, a young gentleman in a clerical dress offered his hand; with more gallantry and form than one expects from students, he led me to a table spread with an elegant and sumptuous feast.

Let's take *The Queen's Fool* in the opposite direction—merge sentences, use a passive, increase nouns and prepositions, and get rid of “struck:”

Her hood was worn set back off her square honest face, displaying her hair, which was dark brown with a tinge of Tudor red; a charming smile, slow in arriving; warm eyes; and, most prepossessing, an air of honesty.

What about if *Pride and Prejudice* had been written in America at the time?

I was so particularly displeased to see him arise with her. However, he had no admiration for her; indeed, nobody has, as is well known; and he seemed to have a distinct attraction to Jane as she was going down the dance.

But wait. How about if it had been written in 2004?

I was so vexed to see him stand up with her! But he didn't admire her. Nobody can, you know. And it seemed Jane struck his fancy as she was going down the dance.

The differences are subtle but effective... and all through just a few simple adjustments of the seasonings listed above.

James Harbeck is a linguist, editor, educator, and writer. He is author of the blog [Sesquiotica](#) and the book [Songs of Love and Grammar](#) and co-founder of the group blog [Strong Language](#) (NSFW). His articles have appeared on [TheWeek.com](#), [BBC.com](#), [Slate.com](#), [UrbanAdventures.com](#), and elsewhere. He is available for hire at [jamesharbeck.com](#).

Improve Your Health

Create

By Denise A. Agnew



We've all met that person who believes that arithmetic is all a body needs in life. Some of these people will go so far as to say that "art" is a useless activity. They'll say good health happens only by eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep. Yet, there is ongoing and emerging evidence that writing or other forms of creativity can go a long way toward improving overall mental and physical health.

Do you wake up one morning and just don't feel like writing because of an illness? Of course. Many people don't feel like creating when they're sick, whether they have a cold or a more serious chronic condition. If you're in that mode when you wake up, pushing yourself to the keyboard to connect with that story might be one of the best things you can do to feel better.

It's history!

Over humankind's development, building and creating have been a part of us. Certainly humans had to deal with their basic survival needs, and the only way they could do so was by making shelters, tools, planting and hunting food. Yet, many cultures soon went beyond these basic requirements. Archaeology shows us the jewelry, paintings, and pottery ancient cultures created. No doubt the satisfaction these cultures' peoples received from their creation went a long way to improving and maybe lengthening their lifespan.

Instead Of eating ice cream...

It's very easy on certain days to indulge your pity party and swallow that pint of ice cream. Writers have a host of challenges in their careers and some days you aren't going to be able to avoid difficult situations. But, it's also easy to pretend there isn't anything you can do for yourself when actually you can.

Engaging in deliberate creativity can take you out of yourself and into the act of making something new. You're adding meaning to your life and possibly receiving insights you wouldn't have received had you been eating ice cream.

In some cases, diving deep to express emotions can also act as a release valve, allowing you to expel some of your own frustrations and emotions. Writing about a character, whether it is someone who survives a trauma or not, allows many people to reveal and analyze aspects of themselves they might otherwise not explore. Many light bulbs can go off when you're putting words on the page.

Some people might feel an immediate increase in negative emotions after they initially express something in a story. However, getting these emotions out could result in an increase in more positive emotions. Writing about a happy situation for your characters can also emphasize the feel good aspect of your own life.

Is there ever a time when writing doesn't give a health benefit? Yes. People who write about trauma over and over and yet nothing changes in their lives are often cogitating on the negativity without learning anything from that trauma. In this case, the writing might have little to no benefit to a person's overall health. There has to be growth and insight derived from the creation and a solution-oriented thought process.

While psychologists and therapists sometimes suggest to their patients to start a journal, maybe creating that fiction story is just as useful to you in expressing those repressed emotions in a healthy way. You may get an entire book out of the deal.

Scientists say...

Don't just take my word for it.

A Mayo Clinic 2015 study cited in [Psychology Today](#) mentions that people who participate regularly in creative arts in middle and old age might delay cognitive decline. How? By engaging in creative work, you're building new neurons and possibly protecting them. But why wait until you're in old age when you can build those neurons now?

[The Huffington Post](#) featured an article on the many ways writing can improve your life. Individuals who indulge in music, writing, painting and other creative endeavors can reduce stress, doctor visits and improve immune function.

A [Medical Daily](#) article written in February of this year talks about other types of creativity besides writing that may boost your overall health.

A TED talk by artist [John Paul Caponigro](#) gives a focus on how creativity can highlight and improve your life.

Start creating and feel the benefits now.

Denise A. Agnew is the award-winning author of over 67 novels. Denise's novels Love From the Ashes and Blackout were optioned for film/TV by Where's Lucy? Productions. Denise is a writer/producer (Happy Catastrophe Productions/Bright Frontier Films/Where's Lucy? Productions), a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, Certified Creativity Coach, and RT Academy Mentor. As a creativity coach, Denise assists anyone in the arts to maintain lifelong creativity. You can find her at www.deniseagnew.com and www.creativepencoaching.com.

Knife Fighting 102 For Writers

Discovering the culture of the trained professional knife fighter

By Jerry Spradlin



Editor's Note: Knife Fighting 101 ran in the April 2018 issue.

Perhaps a character from the relatively unknown culture of Professional Knife Fighting can add exotic dimension to your next story?

Knives, encompassing all edged weapons, fit in any story and any time period as they are favorite choices for crime, especially spontaneous crimes of passion. Knives are inherently available, an integral part of everyday life, and are also increasingly the weapon of choice in crimes of terror—perhaps because they are terrifying beyond belief.

Although London has strict gun control, its [murder rates have surpassed NYC murder rates](#) in recent months, and both cities have similar size populations. The citizenry is alarmed, as many people, including juries, are often more terrified of knives than guns: crime scene photos of the blood, gore, dismemberment, and disembowelment have high visual impact.



Image 1: A commercially Japanese produced weapon from Spyderco, a company recognized as a good quality mass producer. This weapon is ideally suited to disemboweling an opponent.

For the purpose of this article, let us narrow our focus to an authentic professionally trained Knife Fighter culture originating in the Philippines and Indonesia.

Despite rampant knife crime, true Professional Knife Fighters remain relatively rare, and the ability to identify these individuals and grade their ability is difficult; however, these arts are being professionally taught in most U.S. metropolitan areas. The study of this opens doors to the history of many warrior cultures, including but not limited to Persian warlords. This skilled heritage remains in wide practice today, making it ripe for harvest by authors.

Knife fighting arts deeply rooted in Filipino and/or Indonesian history are filled with facts, folklore, cult-like secrecy, and romance. Fighters start training as toddlers. By puberty, they have attained a level of muscle memory that seems as if they can see through the touch-sensitivity in their hands while blindfolded.

I studied with the late Pendekar Herman Suwanda, founder of the Mande Muda discipline that blends 18 tribal combat systems. Multiple marriages are permitted in Indonesia, and Herman was the eldest child of seven separate households maintained by his father, all fed by the profession of piracy, which is still a vocation in Indonesia today. Research "current Indonesian maritime piracy threat," and you will find that global pleasure-boat travelers avoid these waters due to fear that they will be looted (including the boat's engine), killed, and their vessel sunk or set ablaze to destroy all evidence.

One historically revered art is Filipino Kali, which legend says was founded by a blind Filipino princess. The movements are feminine, favoring quickness, agility, and accuracy over physical strength.

Men are more difficult to train than women. My first instructor said he was going to take all my strength away from me, and when he gave it back to me, it would be greater than I had ever known. Although true, this is a difficult concept for western male egos to absorb. It often requires forced defeat and pain; you must adjust to a whole new paradigm: like learning to walk again, but differently. *Filipino Kali* will empower your female character(s) to overcome the widely perceived notion that males have physical domination due to overpowering strength against females. Real knife fighters are created with thousands of hours of disciplined training.

The strategy, akin to playing chess, is one where every contemplated move has advantage and liability: there are counter moves, and counters for the counters. Study reveals that the acquired body mechanics have application to all martial arts—with or without weapons. Even at the entry level, the practitioner is rewarded with increased awareness, intellectual stimulation, cardiac/breathing benefit, increased flexibility, and a new concept of space and speed.

Learners can start with special rattan wood sticks. Researching "Kali sticks" will reveal multiple sources of supply, including Amazon, Walmart, and dozens of martial arts supply houses. Depending on the tribal origin, Kali sticks are also known as Arnis or Escrima sticks, and they are used in varying styles of martial arts. Evolving styles of this art are often treated as secretive intellectual property not to be shared with "outsiders."

I was privileged to briefly study Balintawak (Filipino stick fighting) in person with Grand Master Bobby Taboada. Search his name on YouTube, and in those videos, you will see speed and reflexes and use of sticks.

Sticks are typically 28 to 34 inches in length. Being a natural product it will be difficult to find a true matching pair, unless you opt for comparatively new synthetic material sticks. They should be acquired in pairs because training starts with "single stick" and evolves to "double stick," and it is beneficial to use matching-diameter sticks.



Image 2: Kali/Escrima/Arnis stick

Training initiates the beginner to the primal notion of swinging at, but not hitting, a human—and of course being swung at, leading to awareness (when you're eventually hit) that there is life on the other side of pain, and pain is not a signal to retreat or panic.

Visually tracking these less-than-one-inch-diameter sticks is much more difficult than tracking a human hand. When a Kali stick practitioner returns to empty-handed combat, it appears as if everything is moving in slow motion by comparison.

In a real-life situation, these sticks could equate to canes, bats, hatchets, tomahawks, axes, hammers, crow bars, pipes, swords, machetes, and so on; for training purposes, the stick provides the student with "safe distance" introduction to training.

The next step after acquiring these skills is to learn to strip a stick from your opponent's hand; then both sticks versus single sticks, empty hands versus sticks, and so on.

After you become proficient, the sticks are replaced with practice knives that are commonly rubber; however, I favor aluminum knives with dull edges for more realistic feel. Highly skilled practitioners, with great control, may favor real knives with edges protectively taped.

Shortening the practice distance addresses fears of intimacy; you will now smell your practice partner's perspiration as you struggle with dramatically increasing speed, and reflexes will be forced to become quicker, approaching cat-like speed and accuracy.



Image 3: A commercially available knife developed by an American advanced knife fighting instructor to be worn horizontally on a belt, positioned somewhere near center of the torso, designed to facilitate quick lateral short-distance draw from a Kydex retention sheath. Particularly practical if you're suddenly caught off guard in a "bear hug," rendering both arms immobile. This blade is very short, as preferred by most skilled knife fighters, for easy concealment and ease of weapon retention.

As part of training you will engage in "katas"—a term defined as a formal pattern of sequenced interactions of attack and counter, some practiced solo, some with a training partner. Each kata may include as many as 60 sequential moves. While real combat never occurs in a patterned sequence, katas provide both mind and body mapping that "fires" reflexively without thought or delay when under stress in a real-life combat situation.

Skills acquired at this close range with short weapons are immediately transferable to combative ink pens, flashlights, screwdrivers, ice picks, broken bottles, scissors, and so on.

With additional training, the same body mechanics and patterns lead to empty-handed combat skills, not focused on striking with a clenched hand (fist), but rather focused on enhanced understanding of body mechanics blended with a better geometric understanding of cause and effect manipulation. This skill set also enhances use of projectile weapons such as pepper spray, rocks, and firearms.

Not discussed in this article, but of significant intrigue are "flexible weapons" such as belts, chains, ropes, bullwhips, pet leashes, or sarongs. A sarong is a garment commonly worn by both Indonesian women and men that can comfortably carry cargo when worn over the shoulder; when removed, it can be used as a flexible weapon and is ideal for defense against a knife. This simple item of clothing can also be used to garrote your opponent.



Image 4: A custom made knife with a custom made Kydex retaining sheath designed to be used hanging upside down with a necklace that could be concealed underneath a shirt/blouse untucked or a jacket/coat. This blade is very short, as preferred by truly skilled knife fighters for easy concealment and ease of weapon retention.

By day, [Jerry Spradlin](#) is a consultant and writer for the imported auto parts distribution trade. By night, he is a lifelong student of combative arts, both hand to hand and with weapons. (Photos by author.)

The Mad Scribbler

End of an era

By Laura Resnick



“Along the way, this NYC dollhouse expert made friends with readers, writers, editors, booksellers, agents, publishers, and a zillion other folks whom she would quickly infect with her joie de vivre and general love for everything remotely connected to publishing.”

—Martha Hix, romance novelist

Without Kathryn Falk, founder and publisher of *Romantic Times Magazine*, my writing career would have been so different that I really can’t guess what path it might have followed.

She caught my attention, along with that of many other writers, when she recently announced that she’s closing down the magazine and discontinuing the company’s annual convention, effective immediately. On the RT Book Reviews website, Falk says in a [letter](#) to readers, “After 38 years, I am retiring and ending my participation in publishing. It was a great privilege to have a lifetime experience in the book industry and specifically women’s fiction.”

The letter is accompanied by several photographs, including one of Falk as a pretty young woman holding the first issue of *Romantic Times*, which she began publishing in 1981, working out of a walk-in closet in a renovated 19th century carriage house in Brooklyn Heights where she lived with her then-fiancé (now husband), Kenneth Rubin.

With the benefit of hindsight, her premise for launching the magazine seems self-evident: “I believed that if millions of women were buying the new sensual historical novels, they must be like me and want information about the books and authors, the illustrators, cover models, and how-to-write articles,” she told *Writers In the Storm* in a 2013 [interview](#).

However, the logic of launching a magazine wasn’t obvious 38 years ago. Falk said people thought she was a little crazy and insisted that romance readers (presumably all barefoot, pregnant, and illiterate?) didn’t need or want such a publication. Falk said, “But I knew the subject, having been a rabid historical reader my whole life, head of the library club in school, and fashioned my life after Angelique, in the French historical series!”

(I didn’t understand that reference and had to look it up. Angelique was the heroine of 13

historical adventure novels published 1957-1985. Here is a brief but typical sample of the series description on Wikipedia: “[Angelique] gets captured by pirates, sold into slavery in Crete, taken into the harem of the King of Morocco, stabs the King when he tries to have sex with her, and stages a daring escape along with a French slave who becomes her lover.” Having known Kathryn personally, I’d say this fits.)

The magazine she launched from her closet was one of the very few venues in which romance novels were reviewed back then (indeed, the *only* place, for many of the genre’s releases), and the staff took that mission seriously.

“We have a responsibility,” Falk said. “Many women have budgets for their books, so we hope our reviewers help them find books they want.”

The late Walter Zacharius, founder of Kensington Books, once told the *New York Times* in a [feature article](#) about Falk, “She had the courage to go forward at a time when people were snickering at her.”

Around the time she launched *Romantic Times*, Falk, who had previously managed a Manhattan store that sold dollhouse furniture, wrote a book about romance writers who had huge readerships but were ignored by critics. Among the 65 authors she interviewed for *Love’s Leading Ladies* were Kathleen Woodiwiss, LaVyrle Spencer, Janet Dailey, Barbara Cartland, Victoria Holt, and Jude Deveraux.

Her next book was *How to Write A Romance and Get It Published*, and that’s where I enter the story. A few years later, I read that book, which was a multi-author collection of essays and articles containing practical advice for aspiring writers. Using it as my road map, I wrote several manuscripts and started submitting them. The following year, I made my first sale to Silhouette Books, and I wrote a letter to Kathryn to thank her and tell her how her book had helped me.

To my surprise, she wrote back—and she invited me to meet her in person at a bookstore event a few hours’ drive away from where I lived. She was flying in from New York for the event, and as I happened to have friends in that area, I went.

Kathryn spent time with me, and she was personally friendly and professionally encouraging. We stayed in touch, and the next time I went to New York—and multiple times after that—she encouraged me to visit her. I was her houseguest on a couple of occasions, once at the lovely Brooklyn carriage house where Kenneth Rubin had a truly extraordinary collection of antique vending machines, and once at the charming cottage she owned in rural Austria, which she’d acquired back when she was dating Austrian-born actor Maximilian Schell, who won an Academy Award for his performance in *Judgment At Nuremberg* (and upon whom I’d had a crush ever since seeing him in the glamorous heist film, *Topkapi*—but I digress).

Kathryn was that encouraging and hospitable to many writers, not just me. It was (and still is) her custom. She also loved introducing people to each other and helping us network and make new connections. In addition to the many other romance writers I met through Kathryn, she introduced me to booksellers, literary agents, librarians, distributors, reviewers, screenwriters, editors, publishers, and marketing people.

I met one of the most consequential people in my career through Kathryn—Denise Little, who also became a good friend. Denise—then a national buyer for Barnes & Noble—was an enthusiastic reader and intelligent businesswoman. She had a lot of information about the sales

and distribution side of the publishing industry, she knew a lot about readers' purchasing habits, and she was generous about sharing knowledge. She later became an editor for Kensington, where she acquired a book from me. After Kensington laid her off, Denise went to work for the legendary anthologist and packager Martin H. Greenberg at his then-growing company, Tekno Books. During her years there, Denise commissioned many of my short stories, as well as hiring me to write for various other projects the company worked on. About a decade ago, she returned to her first love, bookselling; however, she also recently spent a year editing part-time for Arc Manor, a thriving small press, during which time she bought a novella from me.

I met Denise at the annual conference Kathryn's company has hosted since the early 1980s. I only attended it once (I'm not exactly a people person, so it took me years to recover), in San Antonio around 1990, but I started friendships at that convention which have stayed strong ever since. Indeed, while I was working on this column, one of my closest friends in the business, NINC member Mary Jo Putney, reminded me that is where we met. (As I recall, upon meeting her, I blurted, "But you've been dead for years!" Someone had told me so, and being new to the community, I didn't know how wrong they were.)

I also met Melinda Helfer at that convention. She was a voracious reader and indefatigable book reviewer. RT had just named me Best New Series Writer that year, primarily because of Melinda's enthusiasm for my writing, and that recognition gave my profile a boost. Melinda, who took me out to lunch in San Antonio and gave me an impromptu guided tour of the city, was as encouraging and supportive in the early days of my contemporary romance career as she later was of my unexpected shift to writing blood-and-glory epic fantasy. Sadly, Melinda Helfer died in 2000. Many writers have missed this conscientious and articulate RT reviewer who remained such an enthusiastic reader to the end of her days.

RT's conventions have always been famously colorful, and that's a reflection of Kathryn Falk herself, who has been described by friends and colleagues as "wacky," "eccentric," and "flamboyant."

To give just one example, she had a pet chicken, Juliet, who went everywhere with her. Novelist Marsha Canham recently [reminisced](#) about the time Kathryn "brought [Juliet] to one of the conventions, smuggled into the five star hotel in a large straw bag. Not only did the little pecker take a liking to my margaritas (Kathryn always had late night parties in her suite), but it apparently thought it was a rooster and crowed every morning. I was staying on the same floor and had to think fast on my feet when the concierge stopped me at the elevator and asked if I knew there was a live fowl in one of the rooms."

Kathryn has also been described as "temperamental," and her career has certainly involved controversy.

The *New York Times* [reported](#) (and an eyewitness described the incident to me between bouts of incredulous laughter), "At the *Romantic Times* convention in Nashville, among hundreds of conventioners, [Falk] hit Charlene Keel, a former employee, with her fists. Ms. Keel was beaten badly enough that she had to be taken to a hospital by ambulance. Ms. Keel had been buttonholing conventioners to promote her rival magazine, Ms. Falk said. 'I defend my turf,' she said."

That same article cited publishing executives and editors who asserted that *Romantic Times* offered good press to writers who bought ads in the mag, while ignoring or panning writers who did not. (RT publisher Carol Stacy denied the allegation.) An Avon editor said, “I’ve seen instances of retaliation” against writers who did not buy ads, and Walter Zacharius said, “Some writers and editors are afraid of [Falk].” Many people viewed Falk and RT as having the power to make or break a book, the NYT wrote.

Kathryn has also been described as “a phenomenal promoter,” a description that I think few people would dispute, whether they loved her RT empire or were wary of it.

I both loved RT *and* was wary of it. I dearly valued the generosity, encouragement, and hospitality I always experienced from Kathryn and her company. But just as I was never a great fit with the romance genre, I was also never at ease with the ethos of RT. As soon as I switched my focus away from romance and into writing fantasy, a genre where my sensibility was a much better fit, I began drifting away. I remained on cordial terms with RT, but I completely lost touch with it over the years. I’m Facebook “friends” with Kathryn, and I enjoy her posts about her adventures on her organic farm in Texas. Seeing how happy and absorbed she is in that lifestyle now, I wasn’t really surprised to read about her retirement.

It’s the end of an era, but not the end of her influence. It’s realistic to describe Kathryn Falk as one of the game-changers in the romance genre during its years of enormous growth, and some of her effect on the genre will last for years past her retirement. After all, I don’t even write romance anymore, and I still benefit from her larger-than-life impact on the development of my career, connections, and work-related relationships.

And for that, I tip my hat, offer my thanks, and wish her a very contented retirement.

Laura Resnick wrote 14 romance novels for four publishers before recognizing she wasn’t very good at it. Since then she has written 11 fantasy novels, two non-fiction books, and about 70 s/f short stories.

September 26 - September 30, 2018



Join us for *NINC 2018: Craft Your Perfect Career* to discover the latest strategies and insights, from marketing innovations to high-level craft to running your business as smoothly and effectively as possible.

As the publishing world continues to evolve, so must the careers of successful novelists. Whether your business model is being hands-on with all aspects of your career or partnering with a team to allow you to focus on writing, authors have more options than ever.

In September 2018, come discover the latest tools, maximize your publishing relationships, hone effective strategies, exploit opportunities, and rocket your career to the next level!

Registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/2018-member-registration/>

Conference FAQs: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/ninc-conference-faq/>

Hotel information: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/conference-hotel/>

Membership Benefits

Need industry intel, software, or legal help? We've got you covered.

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

As a NINC member, your benefits include industry discounts, newsletter and website articles, professional services directory, networking opportunities, and more.

We've compiled all of these—which you can also find on our website—into this list as a helpful reminder.

Networking

The email list for Novelists, Inc. Members: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/NINCLINK/info>

Join our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>

We offer a critique/brainstorming group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NINKcritique>

Follow NINC on Twitter: https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc

Conference 2018: Craft Your Perfect Career

Conference information: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>

Registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/2018-member-registration/>

Conference Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Ninc2018/>

Yahoo e-loop: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BeachNINC2018/info>

Newsletter

Propose an article: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/propose-an-article/>

Submit a letter to the editor: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/submit-letter-to-editor/>

Newsletter archives: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/news-archive/>

Best of Nink in paperback: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/best-of-nink/>

Website (you must be logged in to access these services)

Legal Fund: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/legal-fund/>

Pro Services Directory: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/pro-services-directory/>

Sample Letters: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/sample-letters/>

Articles & Links: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/>

Welcome Packet: http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017_New_Member_Welcome_Packet-public.pdf

Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts. A complete listing of these can be found at <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/member-freebies-discounts/> along with other member discounts.

Volunteer

One of the greatest benefits of NINC is the opportunity to volunteer your talents to benefit other members—which pays incredible and unexpected dividends in networking and knowledge. Learn more about volunteer opportunities here: <https://ninc.com/members-only/open-positions/>

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- 2018 Conference Promoter
- 2018 Conference Reporter
- Anything!



Founded in 1989

NINC Statement of Principle

Novelists, Inc., in acknowledgment of the crucial creative contributions novelists make to society, asserts the right of novelists to be treated with dignity and in good faith; to be recognized as the sole owners of their literary creations; to be fairly compensated for their creations when other entities are profiting from those creations; and to be accorded the respect and support of the society they serve.

Founders

- Rebecca Brandewyne
- Janice Young Brooks
- Jasmine Cresswell
- Maggie Osborne
- Marianne Shock

2018 Board of Directors

If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

- President: [Julie Ortolon](#)
- President-Elect: [Wayne Stinnett](#)
- Secretary: [Gillian Doyle](#)
- Treasurer: [Mindy Neff](#)
- Newsletter Editor: [Michele Dunaway](#)
- Advisory Council Representative: [Victoria Thompson](#)

Advisory Council

- Lou Aronica
- Brenda Hiatt Barber
- Linda Barlow
- Jean Brashear
- Janice Young Brooks
- Laura Parker Castoro
- Meredith Efken
- Donna Fletcher
- Kay Hooper
- Barbara Keiler

- Julie Leto
- Pat McLaughlin
- Kasey Michaels
- Diana Peterfreund
- Pat Rice
- Erica Ridley
- Marianne Shock
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

2018 Committees

- [*Complete committee member listings*](#) are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.
- 2018 Conference Committee:
 - Conference Director: Laura Hayden
 - Program Director: Julie Ortolon
 - Sponsorship Chair: Rochelle Paige
 - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
 - Registrar: Pam McCutcheon
 - Onsite Coordinator: Hannah McBride
- Authors Coalition Reps: Laura Resnick & Laura Phillips
- Social Media Coordinator:
 - Dianne Drake
 - Sue Phillips
 - Laura Hayden (conference communications)
- Membership Committee
 - Chair: Sarah Woodbury
 - Boyd Craven
- *Nink* Newsletter
 - Editor: Michele Dunaway
 - Assistant Editor: Susan Anderson
 - Assistant Editor: Heather C. Leigh
 - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
 - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee:
 - CJ Carmichael
 - Steena Holmes
 - Tawdra Kandle
 - Pam McCutcheon
 - Laura Phillips
- Technology Committee
 - Nick Thacker
 - Elizabeth Ann West
 - Jamie McFarlane
 - Erica Ridley

- Discount Program Chair: Emilie Richards
- Volunteer Jobs (Just One Thing) Coordinator: Lois Lavrisa

Central Coordinator

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin
P.O. Box 54, Hartland MI 48353
admin@ninc.com

Address changes may be made on the website.

***Nink* Newsletter**

June 2018 edition – Vol. 29, No. 6

To request reprint rights or to submit an article proposal, please contact [the editor](#).

Publication: 12 issues annually. Available in PDF, mobi and epub formats. Public issues redact NINC members-only information. To change subscription preferences, please contact admin@ninc.com.

Copyright ©2018 by Novelists, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission.