

Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

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President's Voice

Thank You for the Privilege

I am completely amazed that it's time to write my last column. Of course, due to the time warp phenomenon I mentioned in an earlier column, I still have two months in office to go, but...you get the drift.

This has been quite a year. As the first president not to come from the ranks of charter or longtime members, I was beyond nervous that I wouldn't do justice to this organization I admire so deeply and thus, queer the deal for any more new-blood types to follow me. I began in October last year to get ready, wanting to be as organized and effective as possible, though the term ahead was a blank slate that looked likely to remain that way.

Weeeellll, not exactly. It's been a wild ride, but by the time I'd come through the Santa Fe conference (let me pause again to shower praise on Max the Magnificent aka Cathy Maxwell and the wondrous, very hardworking, and killer listmaker Laura Baker), I felt that perhaps I had begun to earn some of my stripes. Those of us lucky enough to attend had a ball, didn't we? All the attendees and speakers deserve high marks for making the entire experience something special.

I can't say enough about the terrific committee chairs I've been privileged to work with. Elizabeth Doyle Fowler served as retention chair and charmed all those who interacted with her. Lillian Stewart Carl has done a magnificent job with membership, including revising procedures to dovetail with the new website application process (and has agreed to serve again—yay!). Debbie Gordon and her crew of Judy Myers and Sue Swift conducted this year's audit with admirable attention to detail. Cathy Maxwell, Laura Baker, and Barbara Samuel did yeoman's work in creating the aforementioned 2004 conference, and Ken Casper, 2005 conference chair, has put in many, many hours to step up to the plate when our conference planner backed out. Aided by Sandra Kitt, Susan Guadagno, Darlene Gardenhire, and Joyce Ware, Ken is making the NYC conference in April 2005 something to look forward to.

I've been blessed with a wonderful board: Vicki Lewis Thompson, who will be a superb president next year and was a delight to work with this year; Jaclyn Reding, who did her job as secretary so seamlessly that most of us didn't even know she had a new baby during the process; Ann Josephson, who's had to contend not only with inaugurating new accounting software but new audit procedures that will reflect the capabilities of our upgraded website, all while dodging repeated hurricanes; Lorraine Heath, who has juggled a lot and never missed a beat in producing a truly remarkable year of newsletters. And then there's Advisory Council rep Barbara Keiler, who has had to pay in spades for recruiting me for this job by answering an endless stream of questions and never once lost her cool. I'd also like to extend heartfelt thanks to Sandy Huseby, our *NINK* publisher and bona fide true gem, who has been endlessly helpful in working with us on special needs with the newsletter.

It's been an honor to work with all of you.

We've had some big ticket items to deal with, and I'm proud of the whole gang. We've confronted a range of advocacy issues ranging from agencies wanting rights in perpetuity to agents who don't pay on time to publisher contract concerns.

And then there was the website conversion. I have learned more than I want to know about merchant account providers, gateways, yadda yadda, but I have to extend major kudos to our webmaster Craig Johnson for his genius design and steady hand throughout the process. After months of working through our needs, the ramifications of changes, trying to project future uses, etc., etc., actually going live was almost anticlimactic—because it happened so smoothly. Those who have used the site to apply for membership, register for the conference, or update their member information have uniformly applauded the ease of use, so thank you, Craig, for making it all look easy when it was anything but. Thanks also to David Brooks, our Central Coordinator, who has put in a great deal of time to assist Craig by providing needed information and to assist me by sharing his knowledge of the process of maintaining our member database.

I began this year by touting Ninc as a knockout group, and if anything, I feel more strongly about the caliber of our members, your compassion for one another, your endless reservoir of knowledge about any topic, however arcane (Lawrence immediately springs to mind), the warm and hearty welcome you extend to our newest members. I wanted very much to be a good steward of an organization I treasure, and I hope I've done that.

Thank you for the privilege.

— Jean

The election results are final, and they are as follows:

2005 Board:

Joining Vicki Lewis Thompson,

President, will be:

Brenda Hiatt Barber — President-elect

Linda Madl — Secretary

Ann Josephson — Treasurer

In addition, Annette Carney has agreed to serve as Newsletter Editor, and Barbara Keiler has agreed to serve as Advisory Council Rep again.

2005 Nominating Committee, in alphabetical order:

Connie Brockway Julie Leto Klapka

Kathy Garbera Sylvie Kurtz

Vicki Hinze

Heartfelt thanks to all who allowed their names to be placed in nomination—it is generous volunteers like you who are the lifeblood of this organization. Best wishes to all of you—Ninc looks to be in great hands for next year!

— Jean

Reminders for the Good of the Order...

Dues Renewal: The deadline for renewing your dues is January 15, 2005. Online renewal is available at www.ninc.com. For members without Internet access, a renewal form was included in the November 2004 NINK.

Current Email Address Needed: We tested our email announcement system in October. If you didn't receive an email from "Novelists' Inc" with the subject "Renewal Available Online" then your email address on the roster may be wrong. In order for the system to work at maximum efficiency, we need all members to keep their email addresses on the roster current. You can now do this easily online in the Members Only section. If you've misplaced your new User ID and password (it was sent in August), you can go to the log-in page at www.ninc.com and request a reminder.

TEN TIPS



Getting the query out in the mail is the easy part. Actually following it up is not. On a local basis, I always call about a week after I've sent my package and make a pitch over the phone, offering to meet with the editor or do a sample story to show him I can do the job. When I moved to Indiana, I was hired at three publications within two weeks using this method. It takes some gumption, yes, but it's relatively painless (I promise) and has good results.

4. *Build a network.* When I was building my freelance copywriting business, I attended Chamber of Commerce events, trade shows, etc. and brought my business card. On it, I had printed "marketing, PR and copywriting" to immediately show what I did. This netted me more work than I could handle. While copywriting doesn't give you a byline or a step up in the magazine world, it does pay very well and pays on a regular basis.

5. *Join writers groups and lists.* I am involved in real life and online groups and have to say that not only are these women some of my best friends but also some of my best means of finding work. We pass work to each other; tell each other about opportunities, etc. When I needed to hire a couple of writers to help with the marketing side of my business, it was as easy as sending an email. I also used this network to hire the writers who are now my main writers at the magazine I edit.

6. *Offer a helping hand.* There are so many writers out there struggling to get ahead or just break into a new market. In this industry, I have found the "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" axiom is very true. Many of the writers I have given contacts to reciprocate with jobs for me.

7. *Know the news outlets.* When you are looking for sources for stories, it pays to be aware of the sources out there (that's where writers' lists will be helpful). PR Newswire, for instance, is fabulous for hooking writers up with sources.

8. *Don't stop.* I never, ever stop looking for new work or pursuing jobs. I want to have a steady stream at all times, so I can have some income to depend on. I still contact new publications, still hand out my card, still send out my resume, even though my workload is overwhelming. Believe me, dry spells come when you least expect them and you need to be prepared.

9. *Always have a new idea ready.* If I like working for a publication, I *never* send in an assignment without pitching or asking for another one. That practice has given me many, many regular jobs with magazines and business journals. Now, my editors just call me and give me work. I don't have to pitch to them. I have established contacts, after being with the same place for a few years, and find each story takes less time than the one before. Leaving me more time to...

10. *Pursue more work.*

Will Write for Food



responses as varied as the types of writing they did. For this article, I only focused on writing jobs that provided a regular income, rather than asking about "regular" day jobs. There are plenty of Ninc members who hold those, too, because many of us have found that the pay-every-six-months royalty thing isn't an easy way to support a Chihuahua, never mind a family of four.

Jodie Larsen Nida, who writes for both Penguin Putnam and HAWK Publishing, started editing for HAWK, a small press, twelve years after she sold her first book. She says the editing experience has helped her career a great deal by giving her an insider's view of the fiction industry, along with great networking opportunities.

Lawrence Watt-Evans, who writes fantasy novels for Tor Books, started out writing freelance articles in high school, then switched to short stories, then sold his first novel in 1979. Four years later, he started writing articles again. Unlike other writers, Watt-Evans writes "articles and short fiction and the like for fun and a little extra money, not because I need the cash flow." He has a different insurance policy for his monthly income. "My wife's day job ensures the groceries get bought."

One of the things Watt-Evans points out that I also found to be true when I went from writing nonfiction to fiction is that the two are as different as oil and water. One is based on interviews and data, the other is written from the gut. I had to relearn all my writing skills in order to make the leap from nonfiction to fiction. Watt-Evans agrees. "They're surprisingly different skills, and you may not have the others just because you can write novels; be prepared to be a beginner again."

Nonfiction writing has, however, helped me learn to be concise, meet a deadline (especially writing for a daily newspaper where I had to turn in two stories every day by midnight, whether there was any news or not). It's given me a dabbling of information in a wide variety of topics (what I call cocktail party information, meaning I can carry on a conversation about virtually anything long enough to last through a drink at a cocktail party), all of which helps my fiction be richer, at least to me.

Sharon Lee, who co-authors science fiction novels with Steve Miller, has earned money as a book review writer, a freelance copywriter, and a features writer for newspapers. Although she writes fiction full-time now, she says the nonfiction experience has been invaluable. "I firmly believe that writing is writing is writing, and that writing *anything* steadily hones our skill and sharpens our prose. Writing both copy and features taught me to write to length and to deadline—and to write pay copy even when I didn't feel good, or [I] was having a dull day. On the flip side, I think that my tendency to structure a feature article like a short story, rather than a 'news' story, helped me land more assignments."

Nina Gettler, who writes as Nina Beaumont for Harlequin Historicals, says sometimes the need to pay the bills can keep a writer too busy with the other work to write. She works full-time

as a translator, something she did before she sold her first book and continued doing on a freelance basis after selling. "I'm so busy with translating now that I barely have time to write. [I] wish I could translate less, but it's called having a mortgage and liking to eat."

She says she tries to write early in the day, but often her quick turnaround deadlines get in the way. "As a result, by the time I quit translating for the day, my brain is fried."

That's the number-one problem for writers who are juggling more than one writing job—the draining effect of the "other" job. "Designing interiors and covers, plus editing other people's manuscripts, zaps virtually all of my creativity. Finding the spark to ignite my own writing passion is much harder these days—the difference between lighting a fire with a blowtorch and rubbing two sticks together. It can still be done, but it requires far more patience and willpower," Nida says.

Lillian Stewart Carl does freelance editing for Five Star and says sometimes, "the time I spend on other people's work takes away from mine, not only in actual time, but in that sometimes their characters and stories start humming along in the back of my mind and blank out my own."

However, there is a benefit in reading other people's fiction work, says Carl. It helps keep her on her own writing toes. "Analyzing why something works and why it doesn't, and helping authors to revise to good effect, has helped me to critique my own work more effectively. And I have to admit to a bit of guilty pleasure when I read a poorly written submission and think, 'I'm better than that!'"

Phoebe Conn, who also writes as Cinnamon Burke, agrees. She works for *Romantic Times BOOKClub* magazine's Evaluation Service. "Writing other types of fiction, nonfiction, or working with novice writers will all sharpen your skills. When you can so easily spot flaws in other people's work, you can avoid them in your own."

Before writing for Harlequin, Linda Barrett started a resume writing business after finding she had a knack for helping people craft a written job history. Surprisingly, even writing resumes helped her fiction. "With resumes, the most important info goes toward the top of the document where the reader will see it first. In fiction, the most important stuff is used for the big scenes. In both cases, the reader is the most important person. Writing to communicate is always the goal.

"Writing resumes also exposed me to a myriad of occupations in detail, from legal secretaries to chemists and everything in between. More revealing, however, were the personalities. Every single person thought they weren't getting paid enough. Almost every professional, at one time or another, went into a business of their own—lasting two years—before returning to the 9-5 world. I got a huge kick out of my observations."

Clearly, writers aren't the only dissatisfied workers on the planet. They're also not the only ones who find that sometimes being self-employed can be a little more uncertain than they'd like, hence the need to search out additional income from other sources.

Building strong writing muscles is one of the bonuses some authors pointed to when asked about their dual careers with words. Margaret Evans Porter, who writes for four different publishing houses, started out as a professional nonfiction writer

How Do They Do It?

With all these authors juggling multiple wordsmithing jobs, you might wonder how on earth they manage. Here are the top tips from those interviewed:

1. *Prioritize and compartmentalize.* "When deadlines are looming from multiple directions, you must be capable of switching gears quickly and efficiently. If you can compartmentalize your life—clearly assign certain times to accomplish certain tasks—success will be much easier," Jodie Larsen Nida says. "For some, two creatively demanding jobs may not work. For others, closely related careers can fuel each other."

2. *"Be organized,"* Binnie Syril Braunstein, who also works as a publicist, recommends. "And *always* have pen and paper nearby, in case an idea strikes. That includes in the bathroom, at the dinner table, in the car, at the ballpark. I once wrote a complete short story while stranded in Baltimore City traffic, and outlined a story at a baseball game."

3. *Be practical.* Linda Barrett says you should always think about benefits. "One of the jobs you have must offer health insurance or you need to become a best-selling author who can afford to buy it individually. This is one of the reasons I've worked another job in addition to writing."

4. *Keep good notes.* Sharon Lee says this helps you keep track of multiple projects. She also recommends dividing up your day. "If you can, try to work on nonfiction, say, in the morning, then take a break—lunch, a walk, maybe—before opening the current fiction project."

5. *Remember there's more to it than words.* "It's not just about the writing," Candace Schuler says. "To be a successful freelance writer, you have to invest considerable time in cultivating and maintaining clients. In my case, the research, networking, meetings, follow-up, billing, etc., can often take more time than the actual writing."

6. *Know who you are.* "Have a husband with a dependable income and benefits. Just kidding," says Trana Mae Simmons, who also writes as T.M. Simmons. "I think it's really an individual thing and depends on the necessities in your life. I think you need to be an obsessively disciplined person, know yourself and your creative cycle."

7. *"Be prepared for the trade-off,"* Vella Munn says. "Guaranteed money vs. a serious loss of writing time."

8. *Get organized.* "I try to allow x amount of time for the editing work and x amount of time for my own work. Of course the slush reading/editing work is cyclical, so sometimes I'm scrambling a bit. But organization works well in theory," Lillian Stewart Carl says.

9. *Keep a good calendar.* "I mark down deadline dates—'first draft' deadlines,

Will Write for Food

▶▶▶ and scriptwriter before selling her first novel. She also has a Master's degree in Journalism/Radio/TV/Film. She has continued to write nonfiction despite her success in fiction because she sees different rewards in the second career. "It gives me a chance to stretch other writing muscles on a regular basis, to keep in mind other audiences besides fiction readers," Porter says. "I must maintain good research skills and self-editing habits, which connects very neatly with my fiction work. Having to write tightly and cleanly in my nonfiction/journalism career has definitely improved my fiction writing."

She says nonfiction often pays better than fiction, particularly on a per word/per hour basis, though it has a shorter shelf life. And, she has the double bonus of book PR when her books are mentioned in her bylines, a win-win all around.

Vella Munn, who also writes as Vonna Harper, writes nonfiction and also teaches for Long Ridge Writers Group. Along with the regular paycheck, she says the teaching job gives

How They Do It

▶▶▶ editorial deadlines," Margaret Evans Porter says. "Make your time pay by accepting only the assignments you really yearn to do, or the ones that pay the most. Don't take on more than you can reasonably handle...it helps if you can keep the stress factor down as much as possible [for a writer]."

10. *Make sure you're happy.* After 23 years as a freelancer, I learned that if I wasn't happy writing, *all* my writing suffered, not just the project I dreaded. I moved my magazine and copyediting work into areas that were more rewarding personally, so that I was happier doing the "other" writing. That way, I look forward to each day at my computer, rather than dread the words I have to create. Well, okay, I'll be honest. I keep a chocolate stash beside my keyboard. A girl has to eat, after all. *Will write for food.*

her additional credibility. "I'd say editors take note when I add that I'm a writing teacher. [It] makes me sound like a professional."

However, she, like many other authors, has found that the additional job takes away a great deal of her writing time. She hopes to cut her "other" writing work in half in 2005 in order to pour more of her efforts into fiction.

I've juggled multiple writing careers for many years and continue to do so partly because I like the monthly income but also because I learned a long time ago not to put all my eggs into any one financial basket. Bad economic times happen when you least expect them and for me, diversifying has helped me keep a regular paycheck coming in despite the economic fluctuations.

Then there's the added bonus of never being bored. I may not leap out of bed to write that article on 401k planning for small businesses, but when I'm stuck in the middle of my book, it's sure a lot more fun than figuring out my plot problems. I can diversify my days just as I diversify everything else about my career.

Candace Schuler, who also writes as Candace Spencer and Janette Darwin, agrees. In addition to writing fiction, she does development and grant writing for non-profits. "Freelance nonfiction writing helps my fiction-writing career by giving me a break from it. It satisfies a part of me that fiction writing doesn't. It keeps me sane and keeps me from obsessing over the vagaries of the publishing industry. Without it, I would probably have chucked fiction writing altogether years ago because it is an insane business designed (I am convinced!) to drive authors crazy."

She says the nonfiction writing pays better, works more like a real job, with bonuses, pay increases and other things that are standard in the world outside of publishing (which can be a world unto itself). In the corporate

world, she's treated like a partner, her input is welcomed, and contracts are always negotiable. Fiction writing doesn't work that way at all. Schuler says she has often felt like a replaceable cog in the publishing wheel. "Once I finish writing the book, all other decisions pertaining to it are out of my hands, and any input/questions from me are mostly considered interference. In any other job in the 'real world' I would have walked a *very* long time ago—except that I love writing fiction; I love seeing my name on the cover of a book; I love seeing my books in the bookstore; I love knowing so many people are reading and enjoying the stories I've written."

To all of the authors in this piece, and to me, that's the final answer, really, to why we do this job even when it sometimes pays so lousy we maintain a second writing job to support the first one. Because we love it. The good news is we can make money with our words. There's no greater thrill for me when I receive a check or a copy of something I've written, whether it be an article or a book, and see *my* name on there. Those were my words, my creation. And best of all, they *paid* me for it.

Not enough to quit all the day jobs yet, but hey, if it did, I'd probably just play Free Cell way too much anyway. At least this way, I stay out of trouble.

Shirley Jump spends her days writing romantic comedies with sweet attitude for Kensington Books (The Bride Wore Chocolate, September 2004) and for Silhouette Romance (Her Frog Prince, December 2004) to feed her shoe addiction and avoid housework. A wife and mother of two, her real life provides enough humor to fill more books than she can write, one which won the Bookseller's Best Award. In her spare time, she writes articles and is the author of How to Publish Your Articles (Square One Writer's Guide Series; also available from Writer's Digest Book Club and Forbes Book Club). Visit her website at www.shirleyjump.com.

Duo-logue

Is Solitude Blessed Peace or Solitary Confinement?

BY PAT MCLAUGHLIN WITH VIRGINIA ELLIS

Pat: So, here's the question: is solitude blessed peace to write alone in or is it solitary confinement? The question has particular resonance for us, since we each live alone, but for the moment, let's consider the more general issue.

I heard a speaker at a workshop say he rented a small, Spartan apartment to focus on drafting and editing a project. And there are a number of writers who have offices they go to. Although I wonder how much of that is for the solitude and how much is for the "going to the office" mentality. For me that "going to the office" mentality doesn't work. Because in my case, the office mentality means working at the *Post*, which means editing, being critical—like my internal editor needs any encouragement!—and accessing the business side of my brain. To write, I need to shut all that up and access the creative.

Have you ever sought out more solitude to write?

Gin: Well, first I think we have to define whether we're talking about solitude of the body (quiet isolation) or solitude of the mind (calm, worry-less freedom.) To me they are distinctly separate and almost equally hard to attain.

In the area of quiet isolation—I have plenty of that. No husband, no kids. Just a dog to feed and a yard to mow. I can go up to my office, leave the door open, and have perfect quiet. Of course, there are the assorted phone calls—my ex used to call me every afternoon. He knew I'd be home and I'd be working because that was my habit when we were together. It took caller ID to change his habit of calling. Or let's say, to change the habit of me—drifting in the absent-minded zone of writing—answering the phone. Talk about a "buzz kill."

Does this kind of solitude help my writing? Of course. I know a very successful author who can write through anything—from arguing chil-

dren to heavy-metal rock music. Unfortunately, that's not me. I *love* music—most kinds. But, if I put on a CD, part of my brain wants to listen to it. If I try to write at the same time, I find myself drifting off into the lyrics or singing along. And let's not even talk about TV. I *never* have the TV on in the daytime. If I turn it on to hear the weather I'll catch myself sitting down and waiting through the next commercial to see tornado footage from last year. It's a sucking black hole for my mind and my time.

Pat: *Yup, yup, yup.* I rarely have the TV on until after 8 p.m., and more often 9. I will turn the radio on during forays to the kitchen. The good thing is it's always tuned to the news/traffic/weather station, and if I hear more than one report, I know I've been listening for more than ten minutes and better get back to the computer.

But music can help me focus. My CD player can hold six CDs. I have six that I play a lot—I mean a LOT—while I'm writing on multiple projects, doing proposals, hopping around. If I'm on deadline I select six as a soundtrack for that book. Many are movie soundtracks. And they all have quickening, upbeat sections that make me write faster.

The other thing playing the same CDs over and over does is train my mind that when they come on, I write.

But I agree about the lyrics—no one singing and no songs I might know even snatches of lyrics to (which is all I ever know, come to think of it, except for Christmas carols). I think that's because lyrics tell a story or sketch a scene. And not the story/scene I'm writing about. So they intrude on the story in my head. They disrupt that solitude of the mind that you mentioned.

Gin: Once, when I had jury duty, I was forced to sit in a room with about 100 people for the entire day. I brought my computer along to get some work done. Well, I can ignore a room full of people, but unfortunately the

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Duo-logue

Solitude

▶▶▶ courthouse had supplied televisions, much like the ones on 24/7 at the airports nowadays. They were playing the soaps. Even though I had no clue what the plot lines were about, I got nothing done. I did, however, catch a nasty case of the flu. (Another problem of too much isolation—facing several new strains of bugs just waiting to dance with my immune system.)

My best creative time of day is from around ten in the morning until four in the afternoon. Perhaps this is a tiny piece of the office mentality. Not that I write every day from ten to four. (Discipline is a topic for another day.) That time span is, however, when I get my most creative work done. I can edit before or after but to accumulate those new pages, I have to be awake and focused. And I also have to have solitude. No phone calls, no errands to run, no brain-hijacking entertainment.

How about you, Pat? When or how do you find solitude?

Pat: LOL about the flu strain after jury duty. (You know I've never been called for jury duty—I'm starting to get the idea they eliminate journalists before the call even goes out.) So there you didn't have solitude of the body or the mind.

In case you can't tell from the fact that I jumped back to an earlier point rather than answering your question, I don't necessarily take things in order. That includes the writing. I've often thought a schedule would help my writing. Every time I've tried it I've been miserable ... and not productive. Then sometimes I've become convinced that if I just clear all the decks (those errands, phone calls, etc.) before I try to write that I could really get a lot of work done. Instead, what usually happens is it puts my mind firmly in the practical, non-creative mode. And that's bad.

I associate that practical, non-creative mindset with being connected to the outer world. I write best when I can mentally disconnect from the world, when I can live inside my head. So that is both solitude of the body and solitude of the mind.

What drives me nuts is that I rarely can find that kind of solitude. I have to wait for it to occur. I don't have control over switching into that mode. I sure as heck can fall out of it quickly, but getting into it seems part fear (deadline!), part magic, part

effort, part desperation (deadline!), part determination, part ensuring the solitude of the body, part surrender—giving myself, my life, my control up to the book. And then the book consumes my life. (And here come lyrics again ...remember Ado Annie in *Oklahoma!*

signing, "with me, it's all or nothing?" That should probably be my theme song. Sigh.)

I'll also confess that giving myself and the world up to the book is a little scary. Not when I'm in that mode—then it seems like the only way to live. And after the book's done and I've emerged, I feel a sort of nostalgia, a longing for that mode. But when it's time to go back into that Only The Book Exists box, I feel a huge resistance.

I wish I could get into that mode for shorter bursts. But it so darn hard for me to shed the world and it takes so darn long, that I tend to do it only when I have to and only for long stretches, which makes it seem more worthwhile, I suppose.

If I could switch into no-world-mode faster, maybe it wouldn't have to be so all-or-nothing for me.

Any ideas how to switch into that solitude of the mind mode faster?

Gin: Yeah. Get a wife. That's the calm, worry-less freedom part. The downside of having all the quiet time I need is that there's no one else here. Ha! Wives take care of the details, make the phone calls, wait for the cable guy. Back to the mowing of my lawn—add to that paying the bills, taking the dog to the vet, buying groceries. You name it. If it happens at my house, I have to do it. So, when trying to write, I'm easily distracted by the plumbing leak or the neighborhood zoning fight. I can't ascend to my office and ignore all—or even part—because it's my job to worry. And let's *not* talk about money. Let's just say, I have no back-up. In order for the rent to be paid, I have to sell books. To sell books I have to write them—fast.

When life takes over and things get crazy, my only weapon is to make myself sit at the computer for a predetermined time. Stephanie Bond did a speech for our RWA chapter about thirty minutes a day making all your dreams come true. At the end of the speech she handed out egg-timers with the instruction to write for thirty minutes. Not do email or phone calls, not design new bookmarks or press kits. Write.

In my case, it's an hour. I can make a deal with my worries to let me sit at the computer for one hour. Invariably, I get more than a single hour's work done. I look up at the clock and realize three hours have gone by and I have pages. The hard part is letting go and sitting down. Works for me.

Pat: Oh, yeah, a wife. I wondered about that speaker who recommended going off for a month to devote himself to writing. I wondered who paid the bills back home, let in the plumber (how did you know about my bathtub leaking on the floor – the kitchen floor one story below it?) and, of course, mowed the lawn.

A timer, huh? Sounds suspiciously like a deadline <g>. Might work.

One issue I often have with balancing solitude is the need to be away from people in order to write vs. the need to connect with people in order to fill the well and, yes, not go entirely insane. On some days I have been known to shout at the ringing phone, "Leave me alone!" Other days, I whine that nobody ever calls me.

Which also brings up the question of whether there's any hope of maintaining friendships outside writing? Writers understand a friend disappearing for unpredictable chunks of time. Non-writers keep asking me what I do other than write, and all I can think is "Huh? Everything's connected to writing."

That stuff is all external solitude. I keep coming back to the internal being more of a struggle for me. How much of the world beyond whatever I'm writing to allow into my mental sphere – I rarely feel I have the mix right. (Another refrain of all or nothing.) Either I'm so immersed in the book that I lose track of the outside world or the outside world keeps hammering away on the sheer silk that forms my "wall" of concentration. Or all that outside world stuff comes pouring in on me.

Writing's harder with that stuff pouring in, but not letting that stuff into my head isn't any good, either. There's that sanity thing again. There's also the need to connect with the world in order to write about it.

Gin: Yes, well, it's easy to get isolated. Although most of my friends are fellow writers, I have to go out among real people. People who worry about things that have nothing to do with deadlines or wanting to kill a character. Otherwise, I'd be stuck writing about the stereotypes portrayed on TV or in movies. (I love movies – one of my wicked pleasures is seeing a great movie at early show prices. I save it to reward myself when I get pages done.)

When I moved back to the suburbs of Atlanta, I forced myself to get out and meet my neighbors. Sure, I'm one of only two single women in the entire development. But, instead of whining about being around married couples – I accept every invitation. I go to baby showers, Halloween parties and play poker every Monday night. It's my way to connect with the real world and real people.

Pat: Okay, here's my top three solitude or not-to-solitude wish list:

- ▶ I wish I could balance these solitude elements within a single day instead of in streaks.
- ▶ I wish I could shut the outside world out of my head at will.
- ▶ I wish I could switch from practical-mode to creative-mode with a magic password.

Gin: Here's mine.

- ▶ I wish I could win the lotto to finance years of bills-paid time to relax and write good books.
- ▶ I wish I could focus the creative part of my mind and give the analytical side a rest.
- ▶ I wish my dog could mow the lawn.

Pat: Oooo, a dog mowing the lawn, I like it. I keep thinking if my dog could star in commercials I could hire someone to mow the lawn. Heck, I could hire a wife. Any wish-fulfillers out there?

Bits'n'Pieces

What's in a name?

HarperCollins + Morrow/Avon = a new division to be called HarperMorrow. New President and group publisher Michael Morrison will direct the new group. Imprints involved would include: All HarperCollins, William Morrow, HarperEntertainment, Morrow Cookbooks, HarperPerennial, Avon, Eos, Dark Alley, Amistad, HarperAudio, HarperLarge Print, and PerfectBound. This move is said to have been a move to create clear and separate brand identities for both Harper and Morrow. *[Is anyone else confused by this?]*

Amazon Talking Greater Discounts

After third quarter sales figures rose 12% (includes books) for Amazon's North American media, Tom Szkutak said the company is looking at testing "even greater discounts" for books "that meet certain price points and elasticity criteria." At the present time, books over \$15 have a 30% discount and customers using the new A9 search engine receive an additional 1.5%.

— Bits Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Writing

Tech

Dr.



Delete

BY KATHLEEN O'REILLY

As writers, our works are our source of income, and for those of us who use a computer, backups should be as much a part of our daily routine as flossing. Every week we hear a story about some poor writer who lost his work. So how can your WIP get screwed up? Let me count the ways:

a) File corruption, or accidental deletion — This is the most common failure. Your file either became unusable, or else, you deleted it.

b) Hard-disk failure — Hard-drives are fairly reliable, however, industry sources say that the quality of hard-drives has diminished as the price of disk storage has dropped, so even if you haven't had this happen to you in the past, odds are higher that it will happen to you in the future.

c) Total catastrophe — Not only is your computer destroyed, but any other computers you had in the house are gone as well. For instance, fire, flooding, or tornado can cause you to lose all the data that happens to be at your locale. Or perhaps, your mother-in-law thinks you write trash and takes a hammer to all the computers in your home.

Could it happen to you? *Hehehe...* You think not, and then WHAMO. Your files are toast.

Okay, you don't want to be toast, so here's what you need to know. There are two approaches to backup: complete and partial. A **complete** backup is when you make a copy of everything on your drive. Although it's nice to have a copy of your drive sitting out there somewhere, it's time-consuming and space-consuming to do this on a daily basis.

The more practical approach is a **partial** backup, where only the critical data is copied. In my case, my WIP. I'm only going to touch on the partial approach here because an operating system or word-processor can be reinstalled. A lost manuscript is gone forever.

So you want to backup every day, but maybe your memory isn't with you on this plan. Very conveniently, there are all sorts of ways to use technology to automate your backups. I use a Windows-based PC, so I'm going to start by addressing some solutions for Windows users. For your daily backup, I would highly recommend

automating the process. I store all my writing work under the "My Documents" directory, with a subdirectory for each manuscript. This subdirectory will include all of my versions of the manuscript, plot notes, scenes I deleted, timelines, etc. In this way, I know that all of my files specific to a manuscript are in one place. Our house has a wireless network, so I have created a Backup directory on another machine on the network. Every day I run a backup of my WIP directory to the other machine. How do I remember to do this? I don't. That's the beauty of computers, they can be taught to automate tasks in one easy step. So, how do you automate a backup?

One way is by using software like *Second Copy*. This is a little shareware program that I downloaded from <http://downloads-zdnet.com.com/> in researching this article. You set up profiles for each backup, and then tell the software how often you want to schedule a backup. The nice thing about this software is that it keeps a log just in case you don't believe it's really working.

The second, geekier way to keep an automated backup is to schedule a task. In all the recent versions of Windows, you have the ability to "schedule a task," so what I did is create a batch file to do my backup for me and then schedule it to run every day. And then I let my computer do all the backup-remembering work for me.

GEEK ALERT! GEEK ALERT! GEEK ALERT!

What's a batch file? A batch file is a list of commands saved in a text file. In my case, my backup batch file `copymf.bat` contains one elaborate command:

```
Xcopy "c:\documents and settings
  \Kathleen O'Reilly\My Documents
  \DivasGuideToSellingYourSoul\*" "\\
  servername\d$\My Documents
  \DivasGuideToSellingYourSoul\*" /s /y
```

xcopy will copy all the files and subdirectories within my `DivasGuideToSellingYourSoul` subdirectory (my current WIP) to the clone directory that I created on our server.

The `"c:\documents and settings\Kathleen O'Reilly\My Documents\DivasGuideToSellingYourSoul*"` is the source directory. The `"*` indicates that all files in

DivasGuideToSellingYourSoul directory will be backed up. The "\\servername\d\$\Kbackup\My Documents\DivasGuideToSellingYourSoul*" is the destination directory for the backup on the server, where servername indicates the name of the server and d\$ is the shared drivename on the server where I store my backups. There are two flags at the end of the command /s and /y. The /s flag will copy all directories and subdirectories except empty ones. The /y flag will suppress prompting to confirm you want to overwrite an existing destination file.

You can use your word processor to create the batch file, but make sure you save it as a text file, and give it a .bat file extension. Once the batch file is created and double-checked that it actually does what it's supposed to do, you set up a scheduled task by selecting "Scheduled Tasks" from the Control Panel. A wizard will prompt you to specify the program to run, in my case, copymf.bat, and then I specify how often I want it to execute and when. Each time I start a new manuscript, I set up a new batch file and a new clone directory on our server.

Please note that this backup method should NOT be used to shuttle working files back and forth between two machines. I only do my work on one machine and only backup to another.

Many people are using thumb drives or flash drives these days instead of servers. I have a thumb drive that I backup to every few weeks, and when I do that backup, I copy the entire My Documents subdirectory. These little devices can be carried with you, stored in safety deposit boxes, or mailed to friends for safe-keeping. You can automate your backup to your thumb-drive in the same way I outlined above, using the following:

```
xcopy "c:\documents and settings\Kathleen O'Reilly\My Documents\*" "K:\*" /s /y
```

where K: is the drive letter that your thumb-drive is assigned.

I've burned a CD a few times for a backup, but it's slow and cumbersome. However, it's probably not a bad idea to burn a CD of all your data once a year and put it somewhere for safekeeping, perhaps a safety deposit box, or mail to a friend or relative who won't forget where they store it.

Macintosh users should check out the Backup and Backup 2 software from Apple. It will do an automated backup to either another disk, or up to their .mac Internet server. Many of the Mac users on Ninclink were kind enough to point out this option, and several swear by keeping a copy of their data on the Internet.

So, let's say you have a PC, and you want to backup to the Internet as well. www.yahoo.com has a facility called "Briefcase" where you can store up to 30MB of data for free. This is a private storage place, only accessed by

you, unless you designate it as "Shared" and tell yahoo who else can access it, or make it "public," which means everybody and their dog can get to it. Another option is to FTP your manuscripts to your website if you have one, but make sure they're adequately protected from prying eyes.

So, to sum it all up, it's tempting fate to not have some sort of backup plan. You never know when your drive will crash, your house will burn down, or your dog will chew up your computer. Better safe (and backed up) than sorry.

Kathleen O'Reilly has written several books for Harlequin and is the author of the April 2005 Downtown Press title, The Diva's Guide to Selling your Soul, and is a contributor in the December Downtown Press anthology, In One Year and Out the Other. In her previous life-adventures, she played a tech-head geekazoid for an insurance company and authored two computer programming books.

Bits'n'Pieces

Bookmark It for Success

Publisher's Lunch cited a recent romance column in the PAGES reporting on some informal research on the usefulness of in-store promotions such as signings, readings, and pre-signed copies. What was the most useful? "The big winner is the simple promotional bookmark touting an author's new release. The creative uses are growing daily, from stuffing them in books with similar themes to scattering them on tables in the refreshment area. Sellers swear this one tiny tool ups the presale numbers for a romance novel."

Nov. PW editors pick romance again

Secrets of a Summer Night by Lisa Kleypas joins Gene Wolfe's *The Wizard: Book Two of the Wizard Knight*, Mark Winegardner's *The Godfather Returns*, Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*, and *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on the November list by PW editors. The monthly lists of fiction, nonfiction and children's books are sent out to PW Daily for Booksellers. Like Kasey Michaels' book in Sept., Kleypas is the only paperback selection in the group.



War of the Dust Bunnies

DEAR ANNETTE:

Help! I've created a monster. I've always done more than my share of housework. Okay, I've done all of it, even when I was writing and working an outside job. But now that our kids are involved in more and more activities and I've got more deadline pressures, I need more help from my husband. He's great with the kids, but he seems to have a big blind spot when it comes to housework. I've hinted about the piles of laundry and the layers of dust coating the furniture, but clearly I need to be more forceful. I'm exhausted. Between deadlines and dust bunnies, I feel like I have no free time to myself. How can I bring this up without starting a fight?

Signed: At the End of My Rope

DEAR END:

You're right. Hinting rarely works. Too subtle by half. Sounds like you and your spouse need to have a talk before you blow up. Resentment is a scary thing when it reaches critical mass. I like your plan to try and discuss things while you're still calm.

First, recognize that your husband may not be aware of these things. I'm serious. At our house, my husband handles all things related to cars. I grab my keys, switch on the stereo, and drive off. I rarely even check the gas gauge because he keeps the tank full. So I tend to forget that cars don't roll down the road on their own. They need tires. They apparently need outrageously expensive synthetic oils and engine degreasers and brake shoes as well. *Huh. Who knew?*

So just keep in mind, if you've been making things run smoothly all this time, he may not be conscious of everything you're doing. Far from being the slothful TV addict he may appear, he may simply not be aware that

house elves don't scour the sticky kitchen counters every night while you're dreaming.

You may have to clue him in. Maybe early in your relationship you had more time and energy to run the household pretty much on your own. Clearly, over the years life has changed and you feel there should be a shift in resource allocation. Nothing wrong with that.

I think the best plan is to approach household management as a business arrangement. Dishes and clothes need to be cleaned, food needs to be bought, school lunches need to be made. There are certain things that just have to get done to make life work, right? You've been handling them up until now, but circumstances have changed. No harm, no foul. We just need to come up with a new plan that reflects the fact that life has changed.

Look at the tasks on paper: Before talking to your spouse, I'd recommend getting your ducks in a row. Make a list of the ongoing things that need to get done. I know it'll take awhile, but I think it helps the conversation to talk about specifics instead of throwing out generalities, like the perennial, "You never help with anything around the house."

Plan a time to talk: I'd suggest that the two of you set aside a good chunk of quiet time to discuss this. And tell him what you want to talk about. Scheduling time allows both people to be in the frame of mind to get down to business. Ambushing your husband as he climbs into bed at night won't get optimal results.

Once you sit down to talk, bring out the list and let him know that you can no longer get all these tasks done on your own. Don't say you need help. To me, that implies that it's all your responsibility. It's not. Approach it as a problem-solving issue. X,Y, and Z need to get done, so how can we work together to make that happen?

Stay positive: The key thing is to try to keep the conversation productive. Blaming doesn't help. People are not at their best when they feel defensive. I'd recommend trying to leave any resentment and anger out of the discussion if possible. The past is the past, and we're moving forward.

The old adage about "I" statements definitely applies here. "I'm feeling overwhelmed," is a lot more constructive than, "You've never lifted a finger around here."

But do share your feelings in an appropriate way. If you're worried about this turning into a fight, say so. Tell him that you've been wanting to bring this up for a long time, but you don't want to upset him. Talking about talking is never a bad thing, in my opinion.

Ask him what he wants, too. This is your meeting, about your issues, but encourage him to give you his perspective too. You'll get a lot further by respecting his point of view.

Let him participate: Telling him which chores he needs to get taken care of probably isn't the way to go. If he's like most people, he won't enjoy being told what to do. There's a big difference between the two of you working together to make something happen and you being the parent and telling him how it's going to be.

But be prepared. It may not be easy to hear everything he has to say. What if he suggests that letting the kids eat hot lunch at school would make more sense time-wise for the family than buying food and packing lunches every night? It's a point you may have to consider. By allowing him to participate in the household management, you've also got to allow him a voice in how the household is run.

Remember, he's your partner, not your employee. If you want someone to do what you want, when you want it, you may need to consider hiring a maid.

Which isn't a bad option, either, if you can afford it.

Beginning next month, Annette is migrating from columnist to NINK editor for 2005, a move that will surely necessitate more vacuuming and, God help her, grocery shopping from her husband, Mark.

Editor's Note: Thank you, Annette, for your insightful column. Your levelheaded monthly advice will be missed, but we wish you the best with your new undertaking and look forward to your touching our lives in other ways. **LH**

Bits 'n' Pieces

Can PW and NYTBS lists become obsolete?

Check out a fascinating article in the *Washington Post* that looks at various bestseller lists, interviewing industry experts and representatives from *PW*, *NY Times*, *LA Times*, and *USA Today*. During a recent study, Stanford business professor Alan Sorensen's questions about time lags between publication of lists and compilations were examined. A major question that emerged is "If Nielsen BookScan data are more accurate and more timely, why do newspapers and magazines continue to go through the effort of compiling their own lists?"

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A26726-2004Nov4.html>

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INTRODUCING.....

The following authors have applied 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 15 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of Ninc:

New Applicants:

Jessica Andersen, Voluntown CT
 Cheryl Bacon (*Lynnette Kent*), Fayetteville NC
 Lisa Childs-Theeuwes (*Lisa Childs*) Marne MI
 Jerri Corgiat, Overland Park KS
 Judy Corser (*Judith Bowen*), Point Roberts WA (returning member)
 Katie Fforde, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK
 Dorien Kelly, Pentwater MI
 Lissa Manley, Beaverton OR
 Janice Macdonald, Vista, CA (returning member)
 Teresa McCarthy, Naperville IL
 Jill Shalvis, Truckee CA
 Marsha-Anne Tanksley (*Viveca Carllyle*), Jamaica NY

New Members:

Juliet Blackett (*Jennie Klassel*), Cambridge MA
 Katy Cooper, Peabody MA
 Kaye Dobbie (*Sara Bennett*), Quarry Hill, Victoria, Australia
 Ola Ghaith (*Olivia Gates*), Cairo, Egypt
 Susan Kay Law, Minnetonka MN
 Lisa Manuel, Coral Springs FL
 Sophia Nash, Potomac MD
 Jacquelin Thomas, Raleigh NC
 Sara Williams, Deer Harbor WA

Ninc has room to grow...recommend membership to your colleagues. Prospective members may apply online at www.ninc.com.



The Care and Feeding of the Girls in the Basement . . .

BY BARBARA SAMUEL

Side jobs, survival, and rebuilding the raft

Over the past few months, I have been hearing from a lot of my friends about various career/life/personal challenges that have caused cash flow to become a huge issue.

Cash flow. Is there anything that causes more anxiety for writers? I don't know if it's the economy or an alignment of stars that opposes writers or just the nature of the beast, but I know more cash-stressed writers at this moment than I've known for a long time. Even some of the writers I know who are making a comely living are juggling and struggling and shuffling credit cards, thanks to delays or setbacks or other things beyond their control.

I've been writing for a living—more or less—since I was in my twenties. Like every other self-employed person on the planet, I have grown intimate with the vagaries of cash flow—the boom times, the bust times. The times when there should have been a plump check in royalties and there was a quarter. The times when the check should have been cut and wasn't and the mortgage company is calling. Until you become a megabestseller or Household Name (at which point there are doubtless other struggles, headaches, and hassles) this particular thing tends to be an issue for nearly all of us.

Mostly, it ends up working out. A deal for some-

thing unexpected comes in. An offer for a small project or a juicy foreign sale or book club deal or royalties from something that was released a long time ago. I keep my overhead low and try not to use credit cards much and all those other things. Dean Koontz recommends saving a year's salary and putting it aside. (I'll see what I can do about that when the kids are finally through college!)

But what about those times when things are not working out? Or when you're afraid they won't? When stress or external pressures or life events or book crushes mean the cash flow is drying up, or just simply isn't enough. That's where side jobs come in.

I'm going to divide the side jobs into two categories—the writing and the non-writing. Writing side jobs include writing that's done primarily for money: articles, shorts, essays, novellas....and a big one for a lot of Harlequin/Silhouette folks, continuities. Which, if you don't know, can make a pile of money. Non-writing side jobs are exactly that—the work you do for money besides writing. For this column, I'm not referring to Day Jobs, which are in another category entirely.

When I first made the choice to go for broke and try to become a published novelist, I was working as an intern at the local daily newspaper and finishing a degree in mass communications. I'd won prizes, made

great contacts, and I knew I could get a very good job as soon as I graduated. Thanks to an incident that's too long to write here, I knew I had to try to make it as a fiction writer before I got comfortable, and with the cooperation of my husband, I set a time-line.

One of the first things I did was resign my place at the paper, and I took a job as a waitress in a tiny, twelve-lane bowling alley, where I would earn money, but precious little else. I reasoned that my self-esteem would then have to come from how much writing I did each day, what kind of progress I was making toward the goal of becoming a professional storyteller.

Now, I'd not necessarily recommend this to anyone else, but for me, it worked. The weird part is, without the side job at the hole-in-the-wall bowling alley that sat on a grimy street in the shadow of the steel mill, I'd never have stumbled on the book that I finally sold. The book came directly out of my experiences there. (Cultural note: the hero of the book chain smokes. That lets me know I've been writing a long time.)

When I sold that first book, I quit my job and for the years that followed, I didn't have to work at a second job. Not that it was always smooth, but one of the great blessings can be having a spouse who pays half the bills so there isn't so much terror. I happened to divorce about the same time as my eldest son started college. In spite of a decent income—not stellar, but not bad for a full-time writer—I was worried sick about cash flow, worried that I would somehow let my son down. I took the first job I could find, one that wouldn't demand much mentally, one that is always available in Pueblo, home of the 1-800-number: I took inbound calls at a call center. This involved a headset and reading scripts from a computer screen, and the possibility that at ANY MOMENT a supervisor could be listening in, rating your performance.

It was an awful job. Up-sells to old ladies. Really bratty rich guys snarling over financial applications. Cubicles, fast food out of machines....I lasted about two months. Out of that two months came an encounter that gave me ever so much richness: a Spanish-speaking old man who loved Spanish poetry and instructed me how to read it. I knew him for three or four days, but he made the whole time worth it. The next side job was right after that—a stint in a facility that offered court-ordered classes to domestic violence offenders and alcohol abusers. It was quite illuminating, as you might imagine, and gave me a lot of new material, but not as much as that teeny stint with my friend the Spanish poet (and no, for anyone who might have read *Godesses of Kitchen Avenue*, he looked nothing like Angel, the dashing Spaniard).

I like restaurants and bartending and psychologically based things—another stint at residential boarding homes for schizophrenics gave me the plot line for my

next book—but I've noticed another big favorite is cleaning houses. It doesn't really matter what it is. Side jobs can often be a very rich source of new material.

Another side job angle is writing for money. Of course, we all write for money, but there seems to be some pain attached to it for some writers. I had a long conversation about all this with a good writer friend, and she was feeling very depressed about all angles of her side jobs—both the external jobs and the writing-for-money jobs she'd taken. She felt she was letting her muses down, that the reason she'd had trouble was because she'd betrayed them by doing these other things.

I knew she didn't need platitudes. She needed to remember that artists often have to make compromises, and it's okay. More than okay. I wrote to her:

Okay, this is a riff off the top of my head, and you can take it or leave it.

I love it that you're cleaning houses for basic funds at the moment. That feels important.

I hear what you're saying about books you betrayed, but I keep wondering if you might just need to think about those books in a different way. Maybe you don't, and that's okay, but this causes you so much pain and I want you to feel good about books you've written, whether or not you wrote the books you thought you were supposed to be writing.

You wrote books. Some of them have been well received and financially successful and have caused readers to send you mail. Some of them have not been so successful in those ways, but you still wrote them, and I bet on each and every one of them you can find a reader comment or letter or review that says, "this book meant a lot to me."

I tend to believe things happen the way they are supposed to. As tragic and terrible as it is to say, good writing and great books are not necessarily rewarded by big bucks and fame. Of course I know that you know that, but I wonder if you have internalized the other part: all books are really important. We don't always hear from the one person who needed THAT book to keep going. Not in the "you saved my life" way. More in a "I didn't know this book would keep me going through that really bad day" kind of way.

I just think you're thinking that the girls in the basement are way more serious and obnoxious than they really are. I think they say, "oh, good grief, they want us to write this crazy thing! Get this...blah blah blah!!!" I see them eating chips and drinking wine and reading the revision letters and snorting hysterically as they start brainstorming really crazy things.

Then they go into pow wow and figure out the challenge. "How do we write a good book in spite of all this crap? Let's play!"

You haven't betrayed yourself or your muses. We learn as we go, and that includes writing books that don't work as well as we like, and figuring out where we can compromise and where we can't.

You are a good and flexible writer. Those are good things. Don't be so hard on yourself!!!!!! ▶



the Girls in the Basement . . .



Often, there is a sense of the muses as terrible, elusive, hard to please creatures. That's why I love the image of the girls so much more. Those girls are not drill sergeants, slapping our heads when we have to do things to keep body and soul together. It's no betrayal to take a side job or write something strictly for money. We're writers, that's what we do: write. But we also have to eat, and the girls know that. They're happy to do whatever they can to help. They'll take a lousy job at a call center and turn it into something rich and juicy for some book down the line. They'll take a bad day and

mark off all the details and tuck it away where you can't see it, then pull it out right when you need it most. They'll struggle with a bad book idea until it's better—or even if it's bad, they'll laugh with you over it.

We're never really alone, with the girls down there taking notes. If you're working a side job or writing something strictly for the money that you don't necessarily like, or if it feels you've betrayed the girls...I want you to take a minute and go buy them a chocolate-covered cherry. Or a lipstick. Or a new wrench. Something. It honors you and honors them.

Barbara Samuel has loaded trucks during the Christmas season at UPS, made perfect martinis for yacht club guys, cleaned ovens, filed and typed, rearranged computer systems, and various and sundry other things to support her writing habit.



Graphic by Laura

Just a brief reminder:

The Novelists, Inc 15th Annual Conference will be in New York City at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on Times Square April 7-8-9, 2005

Member Registration: \$295
Late Registration (after Dec 15th): \$315
Industry Registration: \$175
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www.manhattan.crowneplaza.com/nycmh/index.shtml

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Please put "Roommates" in the subject line.

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or Susan Gable, the conference registrar, at sgable@susangable.com

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