

# BLINK

May 2006  
Vol. 17, No. 5

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## *Used Books: One Writer's Perspective*

BY ARDATH MAYHAR

For many years, I have heard my fellow authors complain about the sales of used books, believing that such sales somehow infringe upon their own incomes. Naturally, those sales involve no royalty for the writer, yet given the extremely short shelf-life of any except bestsellers, they keep the body of her work available. Most novels disappear from bookstores within much less than a year. There have been incidents of excellent novels that gradually built enough word-of-mouth reputation to achieve award-winning status, only to be pulled from the shelves and returned, out-of-print before the impact of the award could be felt by publishers or booksellers. Then

they can only be found through used book dealers.

Put in simplest terms, would you rather your out-of-print work be available to those who want to read it, or unavailable except through expensive specialty shop book-searches, which your average reader cannot afford? Personally, I am more than happy to have my work available through whatever means, rather than forgotten.

Having been a used book seller for many years, I know some things that authors seldom understand. The most important of these is the fact that it is not only the well-to-do who love to read. Those with small or retirement incomes are often dedicated readers, but no one can afford to indulge the reading habit at the expense of money needed for food, rent, and medi-

cine. Even paperbacks, nowadays, are relatively expensive, and most hardbacks cost more than twenty dollars, which on a limited income can be a significant sum.

While in the business, I found that often a reader would become fascinated by the inexpensive out of print work of an author to the point at which she would save especially to buy that writer's new books. This could not have happened if that reader had been faced with a ten or twenty-dollar book in the beginning. In addition, many who began by reading used romances at a dollar a book became so involved in reading that they graduated to used historical romances at a dollar and a half, then moved to regular historical novels, and from there the world of new

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9241 Castle Knoll Blvd.  
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brendahb@aol.com

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Manhattan KS 66503-7750  
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linda@lindamadl.com

**TREASURER:** Deborah Gordon  
1240 Noonan Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95822-2507  
916-448-1964  
DBHGORDON@aol.com

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** Annette Carney  
PO Box 33204  
Reno NV 89533  
775-746-1680  
annettecarney@sbcglobal.net

**ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE:**  
Pat Rice  
15222 Strollways Dr.  
Chesterfield MO 63017-7756  
636-778-0075  
price100@aol.com

**CENTRAL COORDINATOR:**  
Tonya Wilkerson, Varney and Assoc.  
Novelists, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2037  
Manhattan KS 66505  
Fax: 785-537-1877  
ninc@varney.com

**Website:** <http://www.ninc.com>

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## President's Voice

# We just keep getting better

As I write this, I'm still basking in the afterglow of our 2006 conference at the Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans. Even with my added presidential responsibilities, I have to say this was the best Ninc conference I've ever attended. Since Ninc conferences have always been far and away my favorite conferences, that's saying quite a lot!

We have several folks reporting on the individual sessions for you, so I won't attempt that here, but I do want to say a few words about the overall experience for those who couldn't attend—and for those who did, and want to relive it. With the 2006 conference, I believe we may have set a new standard against which all future Ninc conferences will be measured. Certainly, all other hotels will have a hard time living up to the Monteleone, which treated us like royalty the entire time we were there. The French Quarter was open for business, and our members went all out to help the local economy by spending—and spending—at the shops and restaurants. As in February, we were all thanked wherever we went. The theme was "Recapture the Magic," and I feel like we did exactly that. There was a palpable buzz of creative energy running through every session I attended, from the intimate Ninc@Nights on Thursday to the Saturday luncheon speech by Elizabeth Berg. (For those not on the link, Elizabeth graciously agreed to step in when Nora had to cancel.)

Even at the potentially dry AGM, before things really got going, members seemed excited to hear about things like the Author Coalition money, which allows us to do more cool stuff (fill out those surveys!), and updates on the Used Book Committee and the Outreach Committee. A word on the latter, for those who couldn't attend: My hope is that we can grow and diversify Ninc along three parameters I call the "3 G's": geography, genre, and gender. The committee now represents Canada, Costa Rica, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S., so we have a good start on the first G. As for the other two, Ninc is slowly changing its historically romance/female emphasis. I'd like to personally encourage folks of other persuasions (genre and gender) to consider serving on the Outreach Committee, or at least to send them ideas on how to increase Ninc's visibility and appeal to writers like you. Several authors at the conference volunteered to hand out member brochures at upcoming conferences and events, and I hope some of you reading this will do likewise.

At our final wrap-up session Saturday, members were fairly bubbling over with praise for conference goddess Pat Roy and ideas for next year. I hope I wrote them all down, because some of them were truly innovative. As it happened, for various reasons, we ended up with no editors at this conference, which a surprising number of attendees said they enjoyed, as it made for a more laid-back atmosphere. Some even suggested never inviting editors again! I doubt we'll go that far, but there was a lot of thinking outside the box that I believe we'll be able to put to good use while planning for 2007.

Which brings me to (drum roll, please) our 2007 conference site: the U.S. Grant in San Diego. This is another historic hotel, on the edge of the Gaslamp District, which is currently undergoing a \$52 million renovation

and which promises to be a showpiece when it reopens this fall. They've offered us a deal we can't refuse on room rates, and the contract should be signed by the time you read this. As for the 2007 conference itself, most is still in the planning stages, of course, but I can tell you about two or three things now. First, and most importantly, Pat Roy has agreed to reprise her role as conference coordinator! (This is a Ninc first, and I hope everyone will shower her with the thanks she deserves for making such a sacrifice for our enormous benefit.) Second, we all enjoyed Eric Maisel's two-hour workshop so much that Pat has already prevailed on him to do an all-day workshop next year. And Authors Guild attorney Anita Fore has agreed to return, to follow up her excellent session on contract terms with another on how to negotiate more favorable terms into our own contracts.

In other words, the 2007 conference has the potential to be even better than 2006, if such a thing is possible. So block off March 14-18 on your schedules now and start saving your pennies, because this is one you won't want to miss!

— **Brenda Hiatt Barber** :)

# Bits'n'Pieces

## It's Time for Murder in Idaho Again!

Boise's Murder In The Grove, June 2-3, 2006  
[www.murderinthegrove.com](http://www.murderinthegrove.com)

Guest of Honor this year is Sara Paretsky. Special Guest is Anne Perry. Also on hand will be authors C.J. Box, Joanne Pence, Bob Weibezahl, Kirk Russell, Aileen Baron, Mary Buckham, Denise Dietz, Deborah Donnelly, Sylvia Hubbard, Kelly Jones, Larry Karp, Con Lehane, Rae Monet, Twist Phelan, J.D. Rhoades, Michael W. Sherer, Denise Swanson, Pari Noskin Taichert, Pat White, Catherine Mulvany, and agents Meredith Bernstein and Jo Grossman. Carolyn Wheat will give a day-long workshop on June 2. There will be three tracks—author panels, writing workshops, and forensic issues.

*"Bits" Compiled by Sally Hawkes*

## 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:**

Jacquie D'Alessandro,  
Lawrenceville GA  
Emily McKaskle (*Emily McKay*),  
Austin TX

Barbara Meyers, Naples FLA  
Sylvia Wolicki (*Sylvia Day*),  
Murrieta CA  
Donna Young, San Mateo, CA

### **New Members:**

Carole Bellacera, Manassas, VA  
(returning member)  
Chris Green (*Chris Marie Green, Crystal Green*), Henderson, NV  
Sally MacKenzie, Rockville, MD  
Erin McCarthy, Westlake, OH

Linda Susan Meier (*Susan Meier*),  
Johnstown, PA

**Ninc has room to grow...  
recommend membership  
to *your* colleagues.  
Prospective members  
may apply online at  
[www.ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com).**

# Used Books: One Writer's Perspective

Continued from page 1



books was wide open to them. This simply could not have happened to minimum-wage readers confined only to expensive new books.

Make no mistake, we did not make a lot of money in our bookshop. A bare living, augmented by my writing income, kept us going. But we made some wonderful friends, took part in terrific discussions of politics, literature, philosophy—no subject was out of bounds. A used book shop can be a forum in which the intelligent-but-financially-limited can express themselves freely. Sadly, such venues are becoming rare.

Not all areas are as chronically

depressed economically as East Texas, I understand, but the unconsidered numbers of people who would buy books if only they could afford them are not small. Though in our area there are no more used book shops, the internet has filled the gap to some extent.

Abebooks.com and Alibris.com offer used books at very affordable prices (most titles on Abebooks begin at a dollar). Sometimes you pay more for shipping than for the book itself, yet you still have an affordable volume, usually in extremely good condition.

This means that even an affluent reader who finds your newest books on the shelves can check out the list of your prior publications, usually printed on a front or back page. Then by going to one of the

online sources she can order one or all of your backlist, which in today's marketplace may only be available there.

One who sells a used book takes nothing from the author. Instead, he offers to that author an opportunity to keep her literary children alive and active for many years, instead of having them vanish into limbo in a very short period of time. Logic suggests that the used book market is one of the most valuable resources open to writers, as it allows inexpensive copies of early work to seduce readers into moving forward into the author's current books.

This is free advertising at its best. ▲

## Bits'n'Pieces

### Was It Worth Suing Dan Brown?

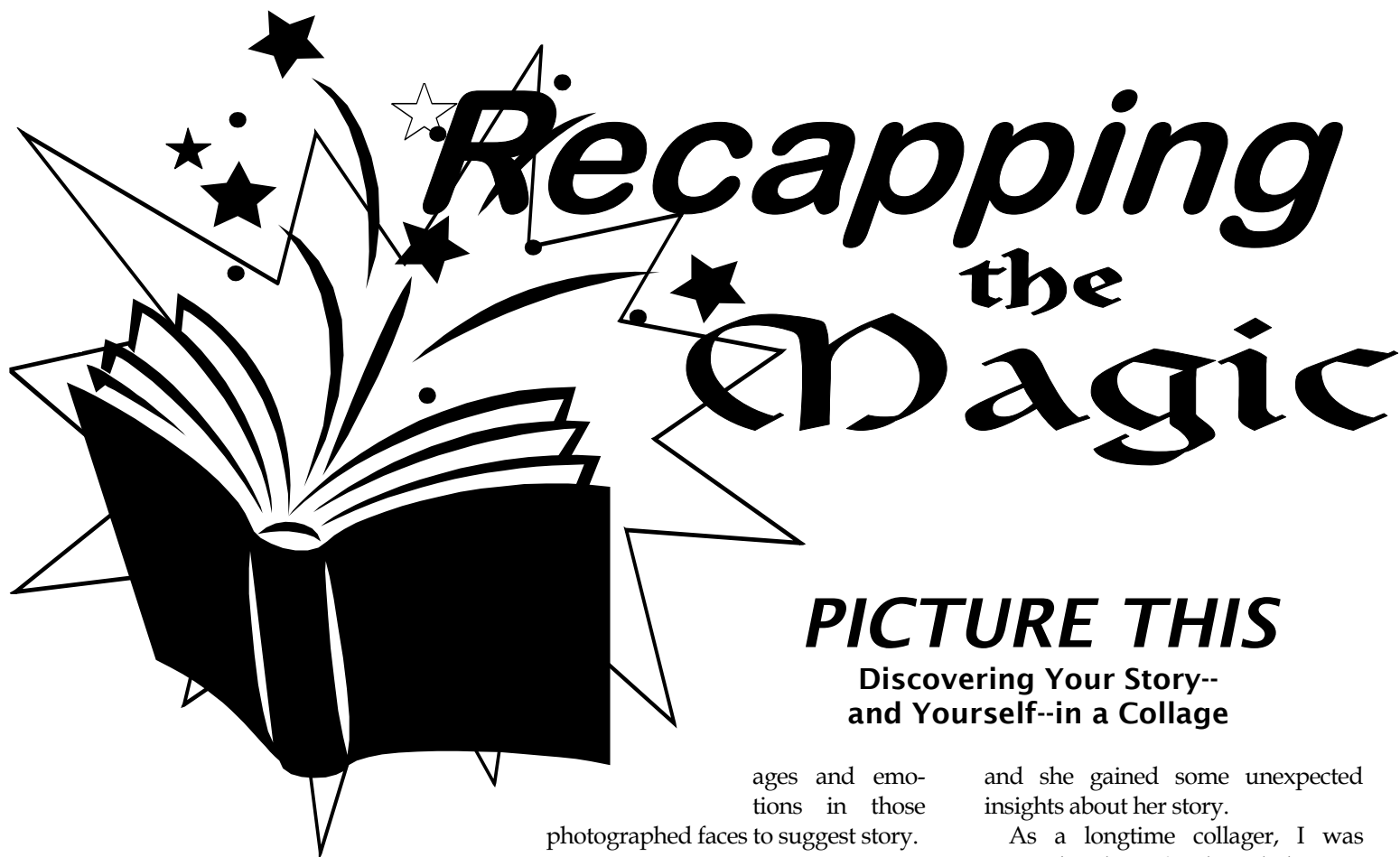
UK Court rules in Random House and Dan Brown's favor in the case filed by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, two of the three authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Justice Peter Smith ruled they did not have a central theme for Dan Brown to copy, contrary to what the authors suggested. The justice reported being "astonished" that the pair filed the lawsuit, commenting that it was, "an artificial creation for the purposes of the litigation." The two authors were denied an immediate appeal by Justice Smith (but say they intend to appeal) and must pay 85% of Random House's court cost of £1.3 million (\$2,266,176.64). They've been ordered to pay £350,000 (\$610,109) by May 5. Their 1982 book has been in the UK's top 40 during the trial, so hopefully that will help with the payments. Baigent also released a new book, *The Jesus Papers* (HarperCollins), in March.

### Time Warner's New Name

As soon as the Hachette Livre's purchase of Time Warner Book Group was completed March 31, the new owners named the U.S. branch Hachette Book Group USA, and the U.K. branch Little, Brown Book Group.

### Agent Leaves Priest

Molly Friedrich leaves the Aaron Priest Literary Agency to open her own company with Paul Cirone and assistant Andy Marino in July. The new agency will share space with The Gernert Company on 57th St., New York.



# Recapping the Magic

## PICTURE THIS

Discovering Your Story--  
and Yourself--in a Collage

BY CHARLOTTE HUBBARD

Picture this: it's a breakout conference room like you've seen dozens of times, with round tables and white tablecloths. Scatter some markers, magazines, loose photos, scrapbooking scissors, construction paper, glue sticks—all that kindergarten art stuff—along with some feathers and other paste-on trinkets. Add about 25 women who'd just chowed down on chocolate. Watch them meander in and gravitate toward the art supplies.

Fifteen minutes later, those same ladies who'd been hooting and hollering as we shared impromptu stories over dessert, were deep into a trance. They sat quietly, choosing images and textures and colors. Cutting, gluing, arranging. As I wandered around, some of them speculated about what these colors and images might mean—not plotting, not planning. Just allowing the im-

ages and emotions in those photographed faces to suggest story.

Or not.

The collage process is all about pleasing and inspiring minds that usually wield—or wrestle with—words. It's a right-brain process, but I would say instead that everyone in that room was in her Right Mind.

I stood in awe, feeling the creative *thrum* in that hushed room. I hadn't said four sentences by way of "instruction"—yet even those new to collaging had intuitively engaged in it.

Magic? Absolutely!

Ruth Glick, a newcomer to collaging, had arranged two photos of darkly handsome men and a couple of wolves...added a stick-on earring to one guy, and a clump of silk greenery beside the other. She'd coiled a piece of twine around and between them.

"Ties it all together," she explained. Her WIP involves men who morph into wolves, and one's a landscape designer. Made perfect sense—even though she didn't know this would all come out in her picture—

and she gained some unexpected insights about her story.

As a longtime collager, I was amazed at how *fast* these ladies put things together! My own process tends to lap over days of contemplating magazine faces and taping them into an unfancy, functional grouping. Sometimes the way these photos arrange themselves suggests relationships, or secrets, or evolution of character and plot.

But Patricia Rosemoor covered a foam-backed board about 24"x30" with lush images of New Orleans, Mardi Gras faces, and erotic, exotic characters in about an hour!

"I'm writing a Blaze set in New Orleans," she told me. It was about a model who got blackmailed when she didn't realize the dressing room at a shoot had hidden cameras. Who knew?!

I envied her that facility of hand and mind, that rapid-fire collecting of images that sang to her and filled that board so quickly!

Ann Schuessler, a first-timer at collaging, had this to say:

"In my current WIP there are three main characters. I explored ▶

## Picture This...

▶ one of these women through Butler's writing exercises. I explored another through collaging. I learned lots of cool things about her and the man she will be involved with. I did this while exchanging comments and pictures with other collagers, and visiting tables in search of pictures and other things to add to my collage. The energy in the room was phenomenal!"

Susan Gable's success story was pretty inspiring, too—and her excitement was contagious!

"I have never been in a room filled with writers that was so quiet and calm," she confessed with a grin. "There was a therapeutic atmosphere in the room. Something very soothing about what we were doing. Part of the reason it worked for me (and I didn't go in as a total believer, but I'm converted now!) is that "words" have had me frozen lately, but this was a way to explore my story and character that didn't involve words. So I was freed to work in this other medium.

"A specific example of how this worked for me: I glued a picture of an ambulance on my heroine's portion of the collage. I had no idea what that ambulance meant! But, as I was waking up the next morning (which is my favorite "work" time, and I've not been harnessing that in the last year) I realized exactly what it meant: no passion. No adrenaline. No danger. My heroine is living her life by the mantra of playing it safe.

"I knew when I woke up that I was supposed to go back down to the collage room, get a red marker, and draw a circle around the ambulance and put a slash diagonally through it. NO ambulance!"

The most gratifying, *amazing* collage story I heard, however, was Mia Zachary's. Who knew an entire book would come from about an hour of what she called "goofing off" ?!

"It's hard to describe the vibe in the room if you weren't there," Mia re-

ported on Ninlink. "Is it possible for something to be energizing and calming at the same time? There was a little chatter and laughter but for the most part we were all really into what we were doing. Except me, at first.

"I'd been working on a collage for my first single title romantic mystery, and though I brought it to show, I had no intention of working on it at the conference. I thought I'd just goof around and be social.

"Then a page from *GQ* magazine with the headline 'His Orgasm' caught my eye [Hey, I write for *Blaze!*] so I started gathering photos of sexy, half naked men. One nice big picture caught my eye, so I pasted him in the middle of a file folder and started cutting out the other guys just to slap on the page.

"Then something... weird... happened. I looked—really looked—at the picture I'd chosen, and the man's eyes began to haunt me, calling out for my attention. So I went with my gut instinct and abandoned my ode to orgasms and started trusting my instincts, just ripping and cutting from various magazines words and phrases, whispering 'yes.' Some blue feathers

spoke to me, as did some shards of broken glass, so I glued those on, too. 'Yes, there is a story here.' 'Yes, it's better when you stop thinking and start trusting.' 'Yes, you are talented enough to bring me to life.'"

"I ended up with not a goof-off project, but a really powerful combination of images. So powerful that I couldn't sleep, so compelling that I woke up at 5 a.m. because my mind wouldn't shut down. I was blessed that my creative partner, Lisa Chaplin, was with me at the conference, so we took my collage and a note pad and went to Cafe du Monde to plotstorm. I ended up creating from that collage a richly detailed, haunting story that I'm excited about writing in a way I haven't been for over a year!

"I understand another collage session is already planned for next year's conference, so if you can make it to San Diego, go to the Ninc@Night session and try it. You won't be sorry, even if you think you're just there to goof off."

I can't improve upon Mia/Mika's testimonial, so yeah—y'all come next March! We'll let our Girls out of the Basement, and let our Inner Kids out to play again, and then *you* can picture this: a whole new method of arriving at story—or maybe even *The Meaning of Life!* See ya there! ▲

### E-Reader to the Masses from Borders

Borders will retail Sony's Reader this summer at 200 stores, mostly superstores and also some airport locations. They will also sell prepaid cards for online e-book purchases (sold only through Sony Connect system). The Reader also has access to blogs, news feeds and online magazines. Sony will sell the device from the Sony Style stores, too.

## Bits'n'Pieces

### Distribution, Who's Got the Distribution?

Source Interlink purchased Anderson SCN Services in Southern California (\$9 million) and Anderson's Mid-Atlantic News (\$4 million) in the Philadelphia/Baltimore/Washington area.



# Recapping the Magic

## *Is Writing About the Past Passé?*

BY DEBRA MULLINS

This informal roundtable discussion on the historical romance market was moderated by Jo Beverly, and was very well attended. The topics under discussion included what periods are currently selling in the historical market, current publishing trends, and the changing levels of sensuality in historical romance.

From 2002 forward, book sales in general appear to have gone down, especially mass market paperback. Trade paperbacks are selling well, perhaps because they look “literary.”

Sexier seems to be selling better, and publishers seem to be leaning toward super-sexy, or the other extreme, inspirational. Editors are encouraging authors with books of moderate sensuality to go one way or the other. There even appears to be a subgenre of “historical erotic Regency” developing.

Historicals with paranormal elements are also doing well. Younger readers are getting pulled in by these elements.

Medievales don't look to be sell-

ing as well as other periods. Westerns are passé, except for Western inspirational. England and Scotland are the hot settings now.

Some settings that aren't selling well in the current market are:

Wars and revolutions (i.e. French or American revolutions, Civil War)

Ancient Greece or Egypt

American Westerns

Any other country that is not England or Scotland.

Early 20th century. The traditional reader of historical romance does not consider the 20th century a historical period. Mystery seems to do well in the period between 1910-1948, but not romance.

The traditional Regency lines are gradually closing, and those writers are beginning to target the Regency historical romance lines at a more sensual level. How much more can a market already saturated with sexy Regency historicals hold? This is the question.

The idea was presented that readers are suffering from “shelf confusion” because there are too many books, and people can't decide what to buy. Also, readers may be getting

bored with traditional story formats.

Since September 11, people seem to want either spiritually uplifting stories of hope, such as inspirational, or more intense stories, such as erotic or paranormal. This trend towards darker or more intense books may account for the current popularity of graphic novels and vampire heroes.

The vampire can be perceived as an alpha hero; vampire heroines do not seem to work as well. Does the vampire hero represent immortality? Are dark and dangerous heroes in general perceived as protectors? In the discussion, it was noted that before September 11, the vampire character was usually the cursed vampire, an evil being who would need to be either slain or redeemed by the end of the book. After September 11, however, the redeemed, immortal vampire became a hero.

But if people are looking for darker heroes, why aren't they going for the medieval settings? The medieval is the perfect place for a dark, alpha warrior. Or is it that the medieval romances emphasize too much the helplessness of the female? Is ▶

# Is writing about the past passé?

▶ this something our readers—usually women—don't want to see?

Some of the market news brought to the table involved the increasing levels of sensuality and the new trends in historical fiction.

Ellora's Cave authors have been picked up by Avon Red, Avon's new erotic romance line.

Warner wants historicals set in England or Scotland. Authors are encouraged to make books hotter.

NAL is starting a historical fiction line for books à la Philippa Gregory, where the story is told by a real historical figure. These books should be around 100,000 words, have a lot of action, and the book should end on an "up" note.

With all these changes in our market, how is an author supposed to make her book stand out? How can we keep the contracts coming?

Many authors have found suc-

cess by doing something well and sticking to it. This creates proper reader expectations and therefore, success for the author. But what if you want to transition to something different, something no one has done before? The answer is, you have to write the book first. It's the only way publishers will take the chance. Someone needs to blaze the trail... maybe it's you! ▲

## POD Gets a Reprieve

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit handed Ingram and its Lightning Source division a reversal of the 2003 ruling by a lower court in St. Louis. The previous decision found in favor of On Demand Machine Corp (ODMC) in a patent infringement case. This case has been followed closely by the Print-on-Demand industry, concerned that the decision by the St. Louis court would impose higher costs, and slow the development of POD.

## Bits'n'Pieces

### Future Shock from Bloomsbury

Bloomsbury (UK publisher of Harry Potter) has high hopes for e-books as they announce their venture into downloading books. They believe 50% of all fiction could be purchased over the internet in 10 years.

### More Agent News

Karen E. Quinones Miller (former journalist, author and small press publisher) joins Liza Dawson Associates to cover nonfiction and commercial fiction.

### Stay in Touch with Ninc online.

Visit the website at [www.ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com). Join the neverending e-conversation—for members only—by joining Ninlink. If you have questions, email moderator Brenda Hiatt Barber at [BrendaHB@aol.com](mailto:BrendaHB@aol.com)

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# Coaching the Writer

BY JANELLE CLARE SCHNEIDER

Judy Duenow (writing as Judy Baer) has written over seventy young adult, romance, and inspirational romance titles. Her credentials as a life coach are also impressive. She has been trained and certified by the Coaches Training Institute of San Raphael, California, is a certified dream coach, and is currently working on her Master's of Human Development at St. Mary's University, Minneapolis, MN, in the areas of writing, coaching, and spirituality. Thus, her clients know they're getting expert assistance both from her writing experience and from her training as a coach.

"The areas of writing, coaching, and spiritual issues (are) the big passions in my life," she explains. "In my Master's program, I'm developing models for coaching writers as a way to combine my experience in writing and my training in coaching."

Writers come to Judy for one of two reasons: they want to figure out how to make their life support their writing, or they're having problems with the inner workings of a story. In other words, Judy will coach either the writer or the story, or both.

Judy emphasizes that coaching is much different from counseling. She often uses this example to illustrate: coaching is like hiring a fitness trainer to help you maximize your workout, to reach your goals more quickly. If you're actually injured, you need a physical therapist to help you get back to normal, just as you would hire a counselor or a therapist if you were depressed, or had serious issues to deal with. If you're feeling good, and want to feel even better, you hire a trainer.

"Coaching is the art of helping people discover their abilities, design their own lives, and achieve their goals," she says. "As a coach, I believe that the answers people need are already within them." Or, as the official definition of coaching from the International Federation of Coaching puts it, "The coach's job is to provide support and to enhance the skills, resources and creativity the client already has."

Judy also explains her work this way. "I do nearly all

my coaching from an attitude of lightness. Even serious issues can be discussed in light ways. This allows the client to see more than the heaviness in his or her situation but perhaps (also) the gifts, the humor or the commonality of the human experience in their circumstances."

Judy has clients from California to Israel, and thus, does most of her coaching over the telephone. "Because coaches are trained to have and to trust heightened intuition, I can often tell by what the client is saying – and not saying – what they are doing, the positions of their bodies, their moods and emotions. In coaching it is as important to listen to the spaces between the words as it is to listen to the words themselves.

"Intuition, deep listening, and the ability to follow a client's every lead, no matter how subtle, are skills a good coach must develop ... Just as a horse can pick up the tiniest shifts in its rider's position and move in accordance with that direction, coaches watch for the same subtle emotional shifts in their clients ... They are always aware that it is the client's agenda, the client's needs and wants that must be served. The coach strives to be the invisible partner in the dance."

Judy's skill became evident to me as we conducted this interview over the telephone. Something she said in response to one of my questions made me think about a thorny problem I was having with character motivation in my wip. I said, "So, in other words, if I were to ask you about (description of the problem) you'd work with me to help me figure out why my heroine is making the choices she's making." Judy agreed, then asked me a question about the character. I answered, then paused, hoping she'd have a deep insight that would solve my problem. She only asked, "What next?" It made me think deeper, delving more into my character's motivation. When I answered and paused again, she asked again, "What next?" As I groped for words, my inner light bulb went on, and I realized my heroine had always felt invisible, unnoticed by those she cared most about. I gave voice to that, and to my surprise, she asked again, "What next?" In the silence which followed, I gained ▶

# Coaching

▶ personal insight which changed the way I view my writing and myself as a writer.

It felt as though each time she asked the simple “what next?” I had to dig to the next layer of my own thinking and feeling. Having spent my fair share of hours in therapists’ offices, I was used to having someone else point out what they perceived as my unseen issues. Usually they were right. However, in this case, I made the discovery on my own, prompted by someone skilled enough to perceive that I hadn’t yet reached bedrock, as it were, and who prompted me to dig a little further.

Judy finds that her clients are generally seeking help with one of three areas in their writing (if not all three): getting started, staying on task, and reaching writing goals.

## Getting Started:

She helps writers get started by helping her clients discover and define their unique strengths, knowledge, and talents, “the place from which (the writer) can speak (his or her) heart.” Then she helps the writer evaluate where he or she is in terms of writing skills, and where he or she needs to go to enhance his or her natural talent. Sometimes she helps the writer identify, challenge, and defeat the non-productive tapes that play in her brain that tell the writer she can’t write, doesn’t have time, won’t ever get published, etc.

## Staying on Task:

Staying on Task usually involves partnering with the writer through regular phone and e-mail contact. She addresses issues related to productivity, writer’s block, and healthy self-care. “I’ll keep track of your progress when you forget how far you’ve come,” she promises, “and I’ll hold you accountable for your own dreams and the steps you’ll take toward meeting them.”

She serves as a sounding board for the writer’s thoughts and ideas, and provides “character coaching” to help the writer portray realistic and emotional heroes and heroines.

## Reaching Writing Goals:

In helping her clients reach their writing goals, Judy encourages them to clarify goals, then helps them find the tools and structures which will help them progress. “I will cheerlead, mentor and encourage,” she explains. “After all the books I’ve written, I’ve seen or heard just about everything (in the publishing world).” When the inevitable setbacks occur, she helps her clients find ways

to learn from them and find new opportunities.

While at first, it seems that Judy’s main role is that of cheerleader, closer examination reveals that her methods are tougher than they look. She’s not afraid to ask tough questions and to give honest feedback. “Sometimes ... a client is so adept at lying to herself about dreams, goals, or circumstances that a coach may have to employ what is called the ‘coach to be fired’ technique. This means that the coach (views) the client as so creative, resourceful, and whole, and cares enough about the client (that she will) tell (him/her) the painful truth about what she is seeing, whether the client likes it or not ... A coach who wants true success for a client, and is willing to risk being fired for the sake of the client’s ultimate good.”

Judy emphasizes that she’s a writer first, coach second. She says that coaching takes up only ten to twenty percent of her professional time. “Each client is coached thirty to fifty minutes per week, and I limit my coaching to one day per week,” she explains. “It’s because I’m a writer, and love the complexity and depth of the human spirit that I even considered coaching. And I’m a better coach because of the mental gymnastics I’m always doing as a writer.”

Here are Judy’s ten indications that you might benefit from life coaching:

1. Your family chimes in [in unison] when you say “someday I’ll write (another) book.”
2. You comment on the lovely office in the spare bedroom, and your spouse reminds you that it’s YOURS!
3. Your Post-It notes are arranged in color wheel order, and are perfectly aligned with the edge of your desk.
4. Your hero is so boring, you can’t stand to be in the same room with him.
5. You’ve cataloged and re-cataloged the books in your office six times (last month alone).
6. The floor in your office is so clean, Monk would be comfortable eating off it.
7. You spend all your writing time sharpening pencils.
8. You’re on the 23rd edit of the first forty pages of your manuscript.
9. Your office furniture is dizzy from being rearranged so often.
10. You finally begin Chapter 3, only to find the teen-aged lovers from Chapter 2 grew sick of waiting, got on with their lives, and retired to Miami.

*Janelle Clare Schneider has too many books to be catalogued, and has forgotten what a clean floor looks like. She has, however, written her share of boring heroes and heroines, though Judy’s advice has put her back on track.*



# BOOKS...

## ABOUT BUSINESS

REVIEWED BY PAT MCLINN

### ***Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*** **Malcolm Gladwell** **Little Brown & Co.** **January, 2005**

Malcolm Gladwell is a distiller of disparate primary sources, and a darned good one. He makes interesting connections among the work of researchers and renders their topics wonderfully readable.

In *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*, he takes on humankind's rapid cognition, otherwise known as snap decisions. He tells us that we make snap decisions even more quickly than we acknowledge, that they frequently serve us well, that they can go horribly wrong, and that we can make better use of them.

We come to snap decisions by "thin-slicing." Thin-slicing is our adaptive unconscious finding "patterns in situations and behaviors" based on limited exposure. Thin-slicing can go by many other names—instinct, gut reaction, a little voice. It contrasts with the "thick-slicing" of marketing research, pro-con lists, decision matrices, and such.

Often our bodies start to respond (sweat forming, eyes dilating, etc.) to thin-slicing well before our minds have caught up. And when our conscious does catch up, it frequently delivers an explanation that researchers can prove isn't true. Perhaps this is partly because we don't know all the mechanisms of the adaptive unconscious. Gladwell refers to thin-slicing as happening behind a locked door, and that can make us mistrust it.

Every writer should read about priming experiments. Gladwell tells of test subjects set to seeing how fast they could re-order word jumbles into sentences. But the real experiment was what happened afterward. One group worked with words conjuring aggression, another group had words connected to good manners. Then they were put in a situation to try their patience. Guess which group was more cooperative. None of the subjects were even aware of having been "primed." Talk about the power of words! (Hmm, maybe lots of positive "buying"

words worked into proposals?)

Gladwell does explore the dark side of thin-slicing, our unconscious' tendency to make what he calls Warren Harding Errors: the equivalents of assuming tall, dark and handsome also means smart, hard-working, and honorable. The Implicit Association Test helps expose underlying automatic associations. (Take it at [www.implicit.harvard.edu](http://www.implicit.harvard.edu) — I bet you're surprised and possibly shaken.)

Gladwell uses stories—some barely character sketches, some more meaty—to explore the concepts in *Blink*. From researchers, to a general, to an ER doctor, with stops for marriage assessments based on dialogue, tennis, speed-dating, and an extended view through the lens of rapid cognition of the police shooting of Amadou Diallo in the Bronx in 1999—all can inform a writer's thinking.

*Blink* can help writers know how their heads operate and gain understanding of their characters. But where I found it most interesting was applying *Blink's* concepts to the industry. There's an entire section on marketing called "Kenna's Dilemma." You will understand and empathize with Kenna, a musician struggling with a music company's testing and focus groups, but might also gain insight to editors, booksellers, and even marketing.

I do wish Gladwell had addressed more fully the problem of overcoming a potentially erroneous thin-slice. He cites a study in which university students viewed film of instructors and rated them as effective teachers. The researcher first used 10 seconds of videotape with no sound, then five seconds, then two seconds, and found that students viewing even two seconds of soundless videotape were in tune with students who rated after a semester of class. Gladwell indicates from this that two-second viewers rated the instructor correctly.

He doesn't address the possibility that students who sat in the class for the semester, in fact, made their decision about the instructor in the first few seconds, and didn't let anything that happened afterward affect their view.

The "Notes" section gives enough information to dig up the original studies, an exercise that made me further appreciate Gladwell's talent for distilling. ▲

# DO MEN MAKE BETTER AGENTS THAN WOMEN?

BY IRENE GOODMAN

It's been whispered about for years. I've heard it talked about sub rosa in the halls at conferences, and occasionally someone will say it to me right out loud, but in confidence. It's the kind of thing no one likes to admit, because they know it isn't politically correct, but that doesn't stop them from believing it. Despite plenty of evidence to the contrary, despite massive advances in the workplace and every other place, some women continue to harbor this deep-seated and intractable prejudice. They believe that men make better agents than women.

Why do they believe this? There are a variety of reasons. They think that men are naturally more aggressive, that men may be less nurturing but they are all about business, that men add a pleasant contrast to the mix, and that men can get them more money.

You may think, considering my gender, that I am being a wee bit self-serving in bringing this up. And you may be right. But I am surely doing a greater service to all authors by pointing out that when you dismiss half the population for spurious reasons, you are denying yourself the services of some of the very best people. I can't tell you what to believe, but I am telling you not to shoot yourself in the foot.

Are men naturally more aggressive? I won't bore you with the anthropological data, but actually, women can be more ferocious and tenacious, and they have better endurance. Are men all about business? They may sometimes present that way, but that's just the veneer. They need just as much reassurance and comradeship as anyone else. As authors, they certainly need as much hand-holding as anyone else. But the real question is: can a man get you more money than a woman can?

The answer is. . .sometimes. Depends on the man. Depends on the woman. Some men are good at this, and so are some women. There are also some men who are not so good at it, and there are some women who aren't so good either. The point is that it has absolutely nothing to do with gender. I have seen women reduce publishers to tears when negotiating a contract. And I have seen men cower. The stereotypes just don't add up. Even when they do, you have to be careful. There is the notable case of an agent whose behavior during a seven figure

deal was so obnoxious that the publisher refused to continue, and the author had to get another agent.

Do you think men are smarter than women? If you do, then there is not much I can say. We all have a brain. Anyone can be smart, and the Y chromosome is simply not a factor. If you really believe that men possess some kind of superior innate intelligence, you are living in the Dark Ages.

In thinking about this, I compared it to choosing a doctor. Do you prefer a male or a female doctor? I prefer the best doctor. Gender isn't even on the list. Between the four people in my family, I made a list of all our doctors. Between the eye doctors and dentists and pediatricians and specialists, there were a total of 17. Nine are men and eight are women. We didn't plan it that way and we never even thought about it. We chose these doctors because they were the ones we wanted. And we wanted them because they were the best.

Is it true that men can add a pleasant contrast to the mix when all the other people on your team are women? Yes, but it can also add a subtle discordant note when the man is the odd man out. An all-female team is free from the subtle nuances and tensions that come into play when men and women are together. You may gain a certain chemistry with a man on board, but you also lose a certain chemistry. So at best, you break even. Once again, gender isn't a viable factor. I'm not denying its existence, but it ultimately carries no meaningful weight. It won't give you an advantage either way.

If you are in the market for an agent, and you interview several good ones and really click with one of them, go with that one, gender aside. End of story. I once got a call from an author who had had a number of prior agents and she announced that she "wanted to try a woman this time". Aside from the fact that she knew I had a certain standing in the industry, this was a foolish reason for calling me. I couldn't believe anyone would be so short-sighted.

So do yourself a favor. If you are looking for an agent (or a doctor, or a lawyer, or any important professional person in your life), leave the gender issue out of it. You will open your door to more qualified people that way, and you will increase your chances of finding the very best. ▲



# Miller's Musings

## ***Success is a 14-Letter Word...***

I've decided that the word "success" is one of the scariest words in my vocabulary. When you add the word professional to success, it's liable to send me screaming from the room, because of the associated baggage the word carries. Success carries with it not only huge expectations, but huge pressure. It gives me indigestion, anxiety attacks, envy, jealousy, yearning, dissatisfaction, comparisons—and yes at certain times—satisfaction. Satisfaction that is generally short lived, as I panic about what I need to do next. After all, you're only as good as your last project, right? Therefore, in my neurotic viewpoint, "success" really ends up as a primary consideration when it shouldn't be.

I mean, what is Success? To some it's money, celebrity, more toys, better living conditions, all of which are generally above or beyond the line where you started this life. To others the word is not such a big picture. At its worst, the word is terrifying and debilitating. It becomes a measure of your worth, rather than a by-product. Many times we imbue the word success with all of our hopes, dreams, outside approval, and most of all, with our fears for not measuring up. It can paralyze us.

Before I published, my critique partner, already published, and I were working with another unpublished writer. This writer wrote and rewrote a proposal she'd been working on for years. It was a gem of a project. My partner encouraged her to send it to her own agent. The writer did, received an enthusiastic and glowing response along with an offer to represent her. Then the agent wanted to know when the

book would be finished, because she was sure she would successfully sell it. That did it! The word "success," and the expectation it posed, overwhelmed the woman. She procrastinated, and rewrote the proposal again and again, until each word gleamed diamond-bright. Result—she never sold a book.

So I've decided to think of success as "Accomplishment." Accomplishment is concrete, while success is open to interpretation—generally someone else's viewpoint, or a circumstance totally out of your control that you end up measuring yourself against anyway. Accomplishment allows you to set the parameters and desired results. (I'll finish the book no matter what it takes.) It's easy to accomplish any number of things without the added pressure of defining it as success.

Face it, we're all accomplished. At one point we bucked the huge statistical odds and published a book. Think of the number of manuscripts that are out there, all hopefully awaiting that stamp of approval. Publishing one book is a huge accomplishment, much less more than one. I tend to forget this as I consider my life and my writing goals.

From now on, when I'm in a periodic funk about not reaching what I'd first defined, I'm going to force myself to list my accomplishments, both professional and personal. What the hell—I'll even add in the results I've achieved! With any luck, the good will outweigh the bad. ▲



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

BY BARBARA SAMUEL

## **Celebrating the body. (Yes, yours.)**

Take one second, before I get started, to think about the tip of your left middle finger. Just notice it, that's all. Look at it. Feel it.

Now, just for the record, how long has it been since you noticed that part of your body? Ever? Maybe once in awhile you trim the nail, or last August you managed to get one hell of a splinter in it, but other than that, it's not something that needs much attention, that left middle finger. It does what it does.

But what if you cut it off? When I was fifteen, on an icy cold winter day, I went into a vestibule of my high school and stretched my hands out to warm them over the heater. There was a missing grate and my fingers got too close and I very nearly cut off the tip of that left middle finger. It was so cold, I didn't feel it much, but it was a nasty cut, requiring stitches and a big splint (what fun that was, on that finger, when I was a sophomore in high school. They call it "sophomoric" humor for a reason). The best part was when it started to heal a bit, and I could gross everyone out with the purple-green Frankenstein freakishness of it.

If you cut off that section of that finger, you'll adjust, but right now, there it is, doing the work, typing D's and E's and C's for you without being told. The nail eases that itch on your eyebrow. It even adds a nice little symmetry to the shape of your hand—and it's just one small piece of the amazing network of our bodies.

Last week, I had to finish a project, which for me requires blitzing time, a period of days when I'm not doing anything much except living inside the book, writing

long, long hours—polishing, looking up facts, cutting, rewriting, adding scenes. These are things I seem to only be able to do in a certain blazing depth of attention. So I did it. At the end of the week, I saw an undeveloped thread that was too appealing to leave alone, so I headed back through to weave it in, knitting in this fine strand of amber to give the composition some pizzazz.

Saturday morning, I was physically wrecked. In spite of walking and several yoga classes and lots of sleep, my shoulders were killing me, my thumb joints were sore (I keep meaning to remove the right-hand space bar on my ergonomic keyboard to save this right thumb and keep forgetting) and there was a tight, hot spot between my shoulder blades that will make my massage therapist twist her mouth and tsk, "Barbara, Barbara, Barbara."

You've been there. Your particular assortment of aches and pains is likely different, but if you spend 12 hours a day at a computer keyboard for weeks on end, some part of the body starts to hurt. Even with the best possible ergonomics, it's hard to address everything.

Anyway, I had a date with my hiking group to go for our first long hike of the season at noon, and I made one more pass through the book, looking for TKs I might have missed, then printed it and shoved it in the mail. I managed to get my hair combed and some hiking boots on in enough time to meet the gang on a brilliant Colorado spring day.

There was a light wind, and alternating clouds and sun across the big sky, so we never got too hot or too cold, the mountains still blue and white. Four hours was

the goal, and I wore a daypack with a hydrating system to start getting used to it.

We set out at a good clip. The thinking part of my brain collapsed in an exhausted heap at the back of my skull, and the girls wandered into various basement bedrooms to sleep (which is why I think I get such terrible aphasia at the end of a book. “Hand me that...uh... thing? With the little...um...things on the end?” “You mean this fork?”) and the only part of my mind still functioning was Primitive Girl who grunts single notes. Flowers. Color. Sky. Pretty.

And my body, which had been whipped into staying in the same position for days and days and days, said, “Oh. Thank. God.”

Writing is a highly demanding and intensely mental pursuit. I’ve said before that I think we’re all pretty incredible, that each and every one of us is able to lay a feast for a reader’s senses with nothing more than black lines on white paper. And we all know that it’s a very demanding thing, that every single detail comes from some dark internal well, but it is internal. Within you.

But it is our bodies that house our minds. Cerebral, intelligent, creative, thoughtful, thinking types sometimes forget all about the body unless it starts to hurt or malfunction. Or worse, they complain about those physical vessels, citing all the things wrong with it—too big, too small, too creaky, too old, too rebellious, too.....whatever.

What I felt, walking on a breezy day after ten days of brutal mental work, was relief. It felt good to be in my body again. To notice that I had feet that were designed to carry me over roads and passes and trails and carpets, arms that could swing in addition to holding my hands over the keyboard. That my hips moved in many directions.

The best part was the pack, just heavy enough to pull my shoulders back into position and keep them there, stretching out those tight rotator cuffs, pulling the muscles below my neck into a position almost exactly opposite that which I use while writing.

It made me feel grateful to have a body. To notice it. To walk in it. Sit in it. Feed it.

One of my hiking companions complained about the fact that she can’t seem to do anything to make her thighs smaller. She is a healthy woman in her fifties, and yes, she does carry weight in her thighs, which is not the ideal of beauty. It’s a constant source of unhappiness for her.

One of the other members of the group is a physical therapist who said, “You should thank those thighs right now for working so beautifully that you can walk ten miles. Stop being mean to them. You should see the people I see every day.”

It startled woman #1. In my semi-vegetative state, I watched her recognition dawn in a literal way over her

face. She put her hands on her thighs. Quietly, she said, “You’re right.”

A body is a miraculous, incredible organism. If you take one second to think about all the processes that are taking place in your body right now, it’s just astonishing to imagine. Breath comes in, gets cleaned, sends oxygen to heart, cells, blood, goes out with waste and unused bits. Blood is, right this instant, moving in every single part of your entire being. Cut yourself on the toe or the chin or the edge of an elbow, and blood comes spurting out!

Amazing!

Twitch your nose, and a thousand signals, a million, are activated, carried by neurons and electrons and through an extraordinarily complex system of pathways through the body—instantly! Twitch your nose, twitch your big toe, twitch your nose—and do it really fast. Could you do it? Of course you could. You didn’t even have to really think about it. You just think—twitch—and it’s done.

Incredible!

Say aloud the word incredible.

In-cred-ible.

You just performed an astonishing feat requiring a dozen systems and nerves and pieces of the body to work together. Brain finds the word, sends signals to throat, larynx, lips, tongue, breath. All work together in a symphony of perfection to give life to that one word.

Right this minute, take a moment to be in your body. Really be inside of it. Close your eyes, notice your feet, your hands, your arms, your face, your knees. Just notice it, what it feels like to be a human being with a body.

Love that body, just as it is. No fair thinking, “okay, I love all of it, except my fat tummy” or “arthritis hands” or “bad feet.” Love all of it, with unconditional acceptance. You might even put your hands on those parts you’re thinking about, thank them for their hard work, send love to the sore wrist, the bad feet, the diseased part, and especially any part you continually hate, like my friend’s big thighs.

Is this simplistic? You betcha.

This is even more so: now, think about the parts of your body that you like. We all have them. I like my hands. They’re strong looking. Long fingers, square nails. I like my feet, too, even though they really are large. They’re graceful and have high arches and I like to look at them. One day, in yoga class, I did a move the teacher could not do, but not because I’m strong—only because my hips are very flexible, and it’s a natural position for my body. I liked discovering that.

What do you like? Body. Not mind. Not according to some external measure of beauty or value, but what you like, for whatever reason you like it. Maybe you have plump and pretty shoulders. Maybe you like your strong knees or delicate wrists. Something. You must ▶



## ***The Girls in the Basement . . .***

### ***Celebrate...the body***

► have something. If you can't think of anything, it would be a great exercise for you to spend five minutes a day thanking your body for its assistance until you discover some things to love.

How is this connected to writing?

How are you going to write without a body? Without a head to hold up your brain, and arms to hold your hands and hands to hold a pencil or type on a keyboard? The body is a miracle and should be revered in that way.

Celebration homework this month is simplistic, too. Every day, take five minutes and be in your body. Really in it. Just stop what you're doing and notice the amazing vehicle that moves you around the world. Spend some time thanking it. Send love to the pieces and bits. And if you like, ask your body what it wants—then give it what it wants. Maybe today it's chocolate. Maybe it's a walk. Maybe it wants collard greens (I often get this one in January or so) or a nap or a hot bath or a glass of wine.

Be in your body. Pay attention. Send love. Give it something it wants.

Celebrate it. Yes, your body.

*Barbara Samuel has funny looking knees, but she's very happy to report they work quite well, even on long downhill hikes. Her current book is Madam Mirabou's School of Love. Visit her website at [www.barbarasamuel.com](http://www.barbarasamuel.com)*



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