

Liberty States Fiction Writers

New York - New Jersey - Pennsylvania



October 15, 2010

Volume 2, Number 8c

Let Freedom Ring!

www.lsfwriters.com

**Liberty States
Fiction Writers
PO Box 2914
Westfield, NJ 07090**

★In This Issue★

President's Column

Gail Freeman dishes on what's happening

Member Spotlight

Meet Your Fellow LSF Writers Members

Road Story

Members Share Tales of Their Road to Publication

★Articles★

Click on Title to Access Article

President's Column

Back Story: Is it really BS? by Shelley Freydont (aka Gemma Bruce)

Writing about What You Know...and Actually Making It Interesting by Timmy Handelman

Homonymic Horrors Part 1 by Anne Frazier

If you cannot read this newsletter, please try these alternatives:

LINK TO WEB VERSION:

[Liberty States Fiction Writers Newsletter](#)

(requires login to Members Only area of Liberty States Fiction Writers Website)

LINK TO PDF VERSION in Files Section:

[LSFW Announcements](#)

(requires login to Liberty Announcements Yahoogroups)

Please send information, news, and articles for the newsletter to the appropriate assistant editor (listed below) if one is specified and to Anne Walradt—newsletter@lsfwriters.com

Articles:

Road Story: Karen Bostrom—bostromk@yahoo.com

Member Spotlight: Kiersten Krum—kksquard@gmail.com

Contests, Conferences, and Classes: Monica Liming—mjliming@comcast.net

Author Spotlight: Kathye Quick—KathyeQ@aol.com

President's Column



First off, I want to thank all the members who stepped forward and volunteered. Believe me, we will have something for you to do! All members will receive an email next week to let you know that voting is open for the 2011-2012 Board of Directors. The vote will be done via the polling feature on Yahoo. No member will be able to vote more than once, and the votes will not have a running total. Voting will be open from October 15th until October 31st. On November 1st we will notify the membership of the results. Special thanks to **Irene Peterson** and **Shelley Freydont** (aka **Gemma Bruce**) for their help with the election committee.

★Contact Us★

www.lsfwriters.com
contact@lsfwriters.com
Become a Friend on
Facebook!
Become a Fan on
Facebook!

Member Spotlight

Do you have a diary? I do.

by Jenn Nixon

Every young girl should keep a diary. Pouring out your present emotions on a blank sheet of paper not only opens your heart, but can also help heal your mind.

My first diary was 8x5 scented, colored sheets of paper with mini hearts scattered all across the pages. I was 12. Each entry started with “Dear Diary” and ended with “Love, Jen.” Nowadays I’m Jenn, I’ve dropped the greeting and salutations, but I still keep a diary. Eighteen years of my life are sporadically detailed in the pages of several books, and most recently a computer file on my desktop.

I started typing my diary on the computer after September 11th. I was stuck at work with no radio or TV, having very little to do because most of the clients at my job were in Manhattan. I began typing and, even though it’s not as intimate as it used to be when I chicken scratched my way through the day’s events, it was just as powerful.

I’ve always been the kind of person who, when stressed, used writing as an outlet. That week, of course, was no exception, and with no other means to handle my frustrations, sadness, and anger, I turned to my trusty diary.

My diary is my most trusted friend, my confidant and safety blanket. It never judges me or thinks any of what I write is childish or unimportant. From the very first entry of “I’m going to 13 soon” to the entry I’ll make on my 60th birthday, my diary has and always will be there for me.

Everyone needs an outlet. Writing has always been mine. When I’ve lost loved ones, had my heart broken, fought with my best friends, or fallen into the depths of depression, writing was my saving grace. If I was in love, received the best birthday present, or had the best weekend ever, my diary was the first to know. I would write until my fingers cramped. Every tick and turn that angered me spilled onto the pages of my diary. If I had a secret, my diary was the only one who I knew would keep it.

I could sit in my room for hours pouring out my emotions, fears, worries, and troubles and not have to worry about anyone telling me I’m too young to have such thoughts or problems. “I’m just a teenager I will grow out of it.” “You don’t know hardships; you’re too young.” My diary listened and allowed me to be myself every time I picked up a pen. My diary shared my happiness and healed my pain.

The more I wrote, the more I realized I could control what was happening

around me. If I changed what I was doing or how I was reacting, my environment would change accordingly. At the time I didn't notice how much I was affecting my own fate or surroundings, but as I grew older I could see where I needed to make adjustments.

I would read entries from previous days and sometimes laugh at my own silliness; other times I would cry remembering the pain I had been through. But overall, the truth of what I felt at those particular moments is forever saved and can never be erased.

Take the time to get to know yourself. Even if you write a paragraph or two once a week or once a month, keep a diary or journal. Tell the blank pages your life story. Allow your mind to jump from topic to topic when the mood strikes you. Divulge your beliefs and fears. Be open and honest with yourself and see who you truly are. Deconstruct your self. Write when you are happy, sad, mad, heart broken, or in love. See the differences from moment to moment. Learn from your past. Look forward to your future. But most important and above all else, find your voice and never silence yourself.

***Jenn Nixon** resides in New Jersey where she was born, raised, and dreamed. Jenn has held various jobs in the customer service and payroll industry, which allowed her to interact with people of diverse backgrounds and personalities. She is a member of Romance Writers of America, the NJRWA Chapter, and Liberty State Fiction Writers. When she's not writing, Jenn spends her free time reading, absorbing pop culture and current events, and role-playing online. For more information please visit www.jennnixon.com.*



[Return to top of Newsletter. . .](#)

Road Story

Are We There Yet?

by Uta Burke

Every person has a story to tell. The difference between a writer and a normal person is that a writer writes it down. The difference between a writer and a published author is perseverance. Let me use a quote by William Kennedy to show you what I mean: "It took me six years to finish my novel. I wrote it eight

times and seven it was no good.”

I learned to write at the age of six like most children, but unlike others I copied pages from books onto crisp sheets of paper, just for the sake of writing. When I didn't write, I read. Back then in Germany nobody paid attention to the fact that a child who writes so much is either a prodigy or very strange. I was pretty much left alone to indulge in my passion because reading and writing doesn't bother others. Just like a goldfish is the easiest pet to have, I made no noise and didn't have to be entertained.

During my teenage and young adult years, I made up my own stories and wrote them into journals, then shelved writing for marriage, moving to America, rearing Allyson, and learning a new language (this one!) by reading excessively. Sometimes I composed a poem or wrote an elaborate letter home, but never did I set out to write a whole book—until we had to drag one of my husband's sisters through an ugly lawsuit.

It all started when my father-in-law left a small inheritance, which was meant to be divided among his five children, and “she-who-shall-not-be-named” (libel) had talked him into appointing her as co-executor before his death. She abused his trust and tried to steal her father's last gift to his children. It was a horrible year in which we lost thousands of dollars to lawyer's fees and almost the inheritance, had it not been for my seemingly innocent habit of writing everything down. By the time the disclosure papers arrived from her lawyer, I had two hundred pages of handwritten notes. I typed up a searing testimony and brought the witch to her knees. The pen had become my weapon for revenge. I also found out that I could produce a novel-length manuscript.

That was five years ago. Around the same time Allyson had started high school and brought home stories that flattened my ears. Instead of just being shocked, I turned her cute friends into unrecognizable characters and spun stories around them which became a four-book series that sits in a drawer, buried under rejection slips. Since then I must have read a hundred “How to write and get published” books, joined organizations such as the Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators, Backspace, and Liberty States Fiction Writers, attended conferences, published several articles, and just finished a new YA novel titled “*What Would Molly Maguire Do?*” I believe in the story so much that when I flew to Germany in May to visit my family, I left an outline for the ending with my daughter, complete with instructions explaining how to go about publishing it should my plane fall down. It would be my legacy to her. Fortunately, I made it back home, though now the dreary task of querying agents lies ahead.

Am I there yet? We'll see, but I know one thing for sure: I am closer today than I was yesterday or last year. If I keep navigating roadblocks and follow the signs, I will arrive one day.

My stories continue to be spiced with reprisal as you can see from my most recent novel's logline: A teenager in historic Jim Thorpe, PA, gets help from the spirits in the Old Jail to take revenge on her rapist.

To give me more time to write, my husband took over vacuum cleaning and other chores, but sometimes he and Allyson complain because I spend so much time at the computer. In self-defense I composed this little jingle:

There are dishes in the sink, I know,
They'll be there later, too.
But the perfect word that comes to mind
Is only passing through.

Bio: *Uta Burke* prefers to live in the world she creates with her characters, but when she's yanked out and has to partake in the real world, she is an Administrative Assistant at Rutgers University and a part-time student at night. She is diligently working on the ten thousand hours of practice it takes to become a professional in anything, in her case, writing.

In closing, this is something else she wants to share about her life: *I grew up in a very narrow-minded, strictly Catholic village in Southern Germany where I would walk barefoot on summer evenings to fetch milk from a nearby farm. As I got older I dreamed of life in America, the America I saw in the movies and on TV. I tried to imagine how the kids my age felt, the lucky ones who could just get up in the morning and step into this cool American life.*

Several years later I married a U.S. soldier who was stationed near my hometown and I moved to New Jersey with him. On my way to a writers' conference in Manhattan early one morning I stopped for breakfast in the little park outside the hotel on Broadway and 32nd Street where I noticed a little old man sitting at one of the tables. He looked so much like a New Yorker and my childhood image of the American people that I spontaneously took his picture before the day unfolded and swallowed him up.

Many times I find that my stories connect with something deep inside me from way back then, and whenever I lose confidence in my writing, I think back to the barefooted little girl who idolized America, and how far she has come. I know that I am exactly on the road I am supposed to be on and doing what I am meant to do—writing.



[Return to top of Newsletter. . .](#)

★This Month's Articles★

President's Column Gail Freeman



Gail has been writing for twelve years and is a yet to be a published author. Ms. Freeman served as President of another writing organization for two years and has also served as Vice President, Treasurer, Special Events Chair, and Hospitality and Critique Chair in that organization. On a national level, Gail was one of the founding staff members of the Romance Writers of America's electronic newsletter, eNotes and served as editor of that publication for a number of years. In 2005, she was awarded the RWA's prestigious Service Award for her commitment and volunteer efforts. She also chaired the RWA's 2007 Chapter Newsletter Contest and the 2008 ad hoc committee for reform recommendations and changes to that contest. For the past eight years she has been a member of the RWA Communication Committee. After being out of high school for twenty years, Gail went back to college and obtained her associate degree in accounting. A lifelong resident of the Jersey Shore, Ms. Freeman believes in happy endings and working towards your goals, no matter how long it takes.

First off, I want to thank all the members who stepped forward and volunteered. Believe me, we will have something for you to do!

All members will receive an email next week to let you know that voting is open for the 2011-2012 Board of Directors. The vote will be done via the polling feature on Yahoo. No member will be able to vote more than once, and the votes will not have a running total. Voting will be open from October 15th until October 31st. On November 1st we will notify the membership of the results. Special thanks to **Irene Peterson** and **Shelley Freydont** (aka **Gemma Bruce**) for their help with the election committee.

On the Board loop, we've been tossing around ideas for next year, and I'd like to get some input from the members. One of the ideas was to have field trips. Since it's almost Halloween, everyone ohhed and ahed over the idea of Salem, MA. <G> The event we planned with Sisters In Crime last year was a big hit, but we were thinking of other ideas also. There is a museum at the NJ Police Academy in Sea Girt, as well as tours. Same goes for the State Police near Trenton. You can have one day tours arranged at Sandy Hook to view the old defense system as well as the lighthouse. I'm sure if we got ideas from everyone we could fill up a full calendar with events. What type of field trip would help you with your writing? Is there an area of research that would appeal to you? As you know, we like to try new ideas, knowing that some will be successful and some won't. Drop a note to contacts@lfswriters.com and share with us.

Now is also the time to give us ideas for programs for next year. I know that **Lois Winston** has been busy and has lined up a few great guests for the beginning of 2011. Is there an area of craft that you would like us to address? Maybe something to do with promotion? Technology? Time management? Drop us a note to let us know, and we'll do our best.

One final note, be sure to check out the conference page on the website. **Rayna Vause** and the conference committee have been hard at work. Check out some of the speakers that are lined up to present workshops. The editors and agents have started to send in their responses. Last I heard we had 9 editors and 2 agents who had confirmed their attendance and the numbers are sure to grow as the date gets closer.

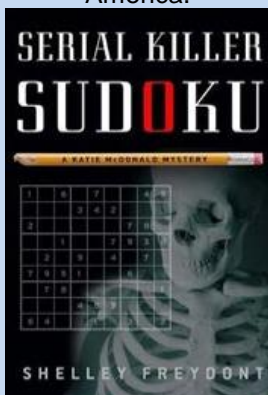
Gail

[Return to top of Newsletter. . .](#)

Back Story: Is it really BS? by Shelley Freydont (aka Gemma Bruce)



Shelley Freydont is the author of the Katie McDonald and Lindy Haggerty mystery series as well as several romance novels under the pseudonym Gemma Bruce. Her novella "Bah Humbug, Baby" appeared in a USA Today bestselling anthology. Her books have been translated into seven languages and have finished in The Holt Medallion, Golden Leaf, Booksellers Best awards and won second place in More than Magic. A former professional dancer and choreographer, she most recently worked on the films, Mona Lisa Smile and The Game Plan. Shelley is a member of Sisters-in-Crime, Mystery Writers of America, Liberty States Fiction Writers, and Romance Writers of America.



There is probably no aspect of fiction writing more maligned than the Backstory. Opinions range from total backstory-free writing to long passages of set up before the present story actually begins. Most writers of popular fiction are positioned somewhere in the middle.

But what exactly is backstory? In general it's the events that led the characters to the point in time where the novel begins. Does it need to include every pertinent fact of the character's previous life? Obviously no.

A scene. It's written as if it were happening now and has a sense of immediacy. It can be traumatic, reverie-like, emotional, but should not go on so long that the reader begins to forget what is present and what is past. Sometimes flashbacks are presented in italics.

Dialogue about the past. Remember when? Be very careful with this, or it will sound contrived or downright inane. Have a compelling reason for the character to tell someone about the past. Break up the dialogue with the other character's reactions or questions. Add some physical reactions by both. Pacing. Stopping. Wringing of hands. Action tags help to keep the story anchored in the present.

Action. Have the action catapult the character into thoughts of the past. This is best done in short sentences or sentence fragments.

Thoughts. Character recalls something in the past.

Telling, not showing. (Yes, you read that correctly) Recounting an event in the past without slipping into omniscient POV, by showing the character's visceral reaction to the memory. Small doses.

The even more maligned prologue. "They" say never write a prologue. But prologues can be very efficient and effective at revealing necessary parts of the past and enables the first chapter to start in the present with a bang. Those who say they always skip over the prologue might be missing a lot of good fiction.

Some stories call for a prologue. Portraying the childhood of several characters which has compelled them to this point in time or showing the evil machinations of the serial killer. Or a specific pivotal event in the past that catapulted the character to the first page.

An aside. There are some pretty interesting ideas about what a prologue actually is. But that's a subject for another article.

Backstory, like setting, should be presented through the eyes of the character. Keep in mind to keep it short, make it relevant, don't repeat. Use it in a believable and noninvasive way, and it can enrich the texture of your story and the lives of your characters.

[Return to top of Newsletter. . .](#)

**Writing about What
You Know...and
Actually Making It
Interesting
by Timmy
Handelman (a.k.a.
Tracy Kelleher)**



Teachers, writing manuals, and that well-meaning but highly annoying little voice in one's head frequently recommend the following advice: Write what you know.

Painful words of wisdom if you are an incoming third grader forced to relate the minutiae of spending one week at your grandmother's, where the most prominent memories were a seemingly unending supply of Shredded Wheat and the strange smell permeating the back bedroom.

Since romance fiction involves the comedy and drama of human relations, everyday life theoretically provides lots of copy fodder. As an author, you don't need to set your story in a war-torn part of the world to create empathetic characters undergoing the melodramas and absurdities with which the reader can identify.

But if everyday situations provide a viable venue for creating your romance's storyline, how do you make the ho-hum world gripping? In other words, how do you make folding the laundry not as dull as, well, folding the laundry?

Best-selling suspense author Tess Gerritson offers one solution. As she explained in a speech at a book conference several years ago, she strives to push the envelope when dealing with mundane events. She takes occurrences that are horrifying but not all that unusual—an emergency room doctor encountering a dead patient—and pushes it to a further point—having the doctor find out that the patient looks exactly like she does.

In Ms. Gerritson's deft hands, this heightened reality is extremely effective. But it's not the only way to go. It's not always necessary for the writer to push the envelope to create horrifying, outlandish, or absurdly funny scenes.

Carl Hiaasen, newspaper columnist and author of hugely popular novels involving corruption in Florida, was asked in a recent *New York Times* interview to compare his books with his home state's politics.

"The Florida in my novels is not as seedy as the real Florida," he said. "It's hard to stay ahead of the curve. Every time I write a scene that I think it the sickest thing I have ever dreamed up, it is surpassed by something that happened in real life."

In my opinion, the key to creating an empathetic relationship between the character and the reader, the essence of successful romance literature, is not so much how the writer portrays the ordinary incident, but how she conveys the character's reaction to that mundane experience. It's this reaction that sets the story in motion and pulls the reader along for the ride.

In Jennifer Crusie's *Crazy for You*, the heroine Quinn McKensie's decision to keep a stray dog despite her fiancé's protests sets off a chain of events, including Quinn's discovering true love with her sister's ex-husband. Finding

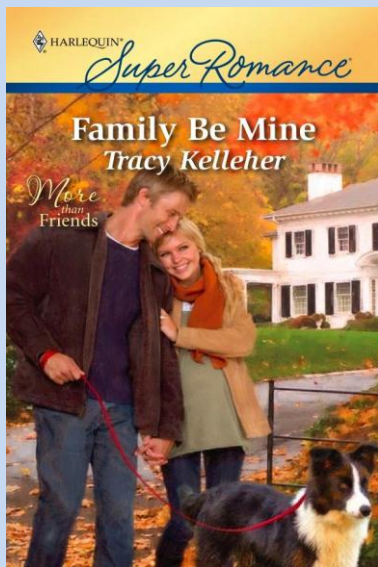
Timmy Handelman (a.k.a. **Tracy Kelleher**), a member of LSFW, has recently sold her first romance, ALL I ASK, to Japanese publisher Ohzora as a manga! She can't wait to join the world of graphic novels. But while she waits for the drawings to be done, she's putting a free novel online at her website: www.tracykelleher.com. Her upcoming SuperRomance, FAMILY BE MINE, arrives in December 2010.

a stray dog in and of itself is touching but not necessarily earth shattering. But Quinn's reaction is.

Or who can forget in *Sleepless in Seattle* when Tom Hanks' son calls into a talk-radio show to voice his desire for his widowed father to find happiness in a new love? Disembodied voices over the radio waves are nothing new. But a child's touching response to these voices triggers a series of events that ultimately lead to Hanks and Meg Ryan finding true love together. The viewer can't help but achieve blissful satisfaction along with the film's stars atop the Empire State Building.

In short, at the heart of romance is, well, heart. And nothing communicates this better than a character's reaction to life's normal stresses. Next time, don't say it with Hallmark—say it with your characters' decisions.

[Return to top of Newsletter. . .](#)



Homonymic Horrors, Part 1 by Anne Frazier Walradt

I find homonym errors a constant source of both amusement and dismay. One rich source can be enjoyed daily: just click on any set of comments following news or media stories online. These are generally your garden variety of homonym errors, such as using *anxious* when you really mean *eager*. *I'm **anxious** to go to the movies. Er, actually you're probably not. You're **eager** to go to the movies. You're **anxious** awaiting the results of the latest miserable medical test.* The best ones come from the reporters themselves. I've found some prime samples:

From a nameless newsletter:

I'm not much for getting up at the crack of dawn in the—brrrr! 60 degree—



Anne Frazier Walradt is one of the grammar goddesses in LSFw (see also Lois Winston and Pattie Giordano and, no doubt, others). Sometimes she reads simply to find the errors! Perhaps you should send her bad examples from the media so she mentions your name in that context. © No one is perfect; she finds there / their / they're errors in her own journals! Your work should be as perfect as you can make it when it goes to the editor.

morning air to high myself off to the parade route.

Do you see it? “. . . to high myself off . . .” I don't think the writer means she's going out for marijuana, though of course I could be wrong. *I think she means . . . to **hie** herself off . . . **Hie** has been used for 8 centuries now; you'd think we'd be getting it right. It means to go quickly, to hasten.*

Chris Harris on AOL—Jan. 27, 2010 (in a news article):

Today, the band issued a statement about the grizzly discovery, saying that they are "profoundly saddened by the news."

I have little patience (NOT patients) with reporters or other writers who don't know the language. Language is their main tool! By now, you've realized that grizzly refers to a type of bear (large, mean type). Someone has not found a dead bear. *The word Chris may mean is **grisly**, which is related to a 12th century word meaning terrible, and it currently means inspiring horror or intense fear, OR **gristly**, which means it's got gristle in it—that's cartilage. From the context, I'd guess Chris really means **gristly**. I could be wrong though since **grisly** is pronounced with a **z** sound (like the bear) and **gristly** is pronounced with an **s** sound and the **t** is silent. I'm doubtful that Chris distinguishes between the two, but surely you can. And anyone ought to be able to distinguish between a bear and a bloody mess even though the first has been known to cause the second.*

“White Collar Travel: Three perspectives on business travelers and their miles” by Tom Johansmeyer (RSS feed) on Mar 18th 2010 at 2:00PM <http://www.gadling.com/2010/03/18/white-collar-travel-three-perspectives-on-business-travelers-an/?icid=main|htmlws-main-n|dl4|link4|http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gadling.com%2F2010%2F03%2F18%2Fwhite-collar-travel-three-perspectives-on-business-travelers-an%2F>

Go away instead of getaway.

I ran into a few people who had but one dream: watching it [their frequent flyer miles] all expire. They miss their families and crave a normal life. I remember one of my bosses reflecting, "The only thing better than watching 'em get hire will be sitting back and watching 'em expire."

First time I've seen this one. Had to read it a couple of times to hear it. Originally I read it as a verb tense problem. Sadly another reader picked it up about an hour after I read it, and Tom changed it. Happily I copied it first to use as a prime example. *Have you found it yet? “. . . watching 'em get hire . . .” I love this one. You know what **hire** means. And **higher**. So I won't go into all that. I suspect he was thinking in terms of the rhyme. I wonder how many times he banged his head into the nearest wall.*

“Conjoined Twins' Housing Project in Danger” by [Megan Mollman](#) Mar 24th 2010 @ 1:25PM <http://www.housingwatch.com/2010/03/24/conjoined-twins-housing-project-in-danger/?icid=main|htmlws-main-n|dl5|link4|http%3A%2F%2Fwww.housingwatch.com%2F2010%2F03%2F24>

%2Fconjoined-twins-housing-project-in-danger%2F

While the housing project is trying to thrive in Dayton, a mid-size Midwestern city hit hard by the struggling automotive industry during the recession, it highlights the financial woes of nonprofits across the U.S. that have been unable to reign in cash donations.

This one is relatively common—rain / reign / rein. What makes this one particularly egregious is that “rein in”—the phrase she meant(?) to use isn’t even the best term for this. She means “get people to donate.” **Rein in** generally refers to horses, mules, and other rideable animals (metaphorically it can also be used for other creatures—humans and the like) and involves correcting their wild or inappropriate actions and calming them down. Generally the goal of fund-raising is to excite people and encourage them to shower their money on the organization. Rather the opposite of **reining in**, I’d say. **Reigning** is what sovereigns (kings, queens, princesses, lords, bossy folks) do over their subjects. **Rain** is that wet stuff that falls from the sky and blows up under your umbrella creating a bad hair day.

Many grammar books have a section called Word Choice or Commonly Confused Words. At least learn which words sound the same so you know where the potholes are. Then look them up! You may think it’s the editor’s job to find and correct these, but many of them miss such errors also—I won’t speculate why here. Some of your readers won’t miss them. Make too many of these errors and those readers won’t buy you again.

You are responsible for the words on the page. Make sure they’re the right (not *write*) words.

[Return to top of Newsletter. . .](#)

Liberty States Fiction Writers ★ PO Box 2914 ★ Westfield, NJ 07090