

LARA CONFIDENTIAL

The Newsletter of the Los Angeles Romance Authors Chapter of RWA

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EDITOR'S TALK: TO THE MOUNTAINTOP

Don't tell me you haven't thought about it. Dreamed about it. Wondered what it would be like.

You wouldn't be a romance writer if you hadn't. But have you ever asked yourself what happens after your dream comes true? When hope is realized? When you get to the top of the mountain you've been climbing, and catch a glimpse of what's on the other side?

Well, guess what? There's another mountain on the other side. Whatever your fantasy is—finaling in that big contest, getting "The Call," hitting the *New York Times* bestseller list—there is always another mountain on the other side. That's not necessarily a bad thing. Mountains may be the destination in and of themselves, or they may be objectives on the way to our goals: some big, some small. Sometimes the peaks are hidden in the clouds, and we think because we can't see them, we'll never get there. Sometimes the day is brilliant and the way is clear, and we charge with a mighty fervor up the slope. Sometimes we go alone; sometimes we take our friends. But there is always another mountain to climb, another peak to reach.

On Friday, March 25, 2005, I reached one of mine. I got a call that I'd been hoping for all week, and yet still hadn't expected to receive. Karen Fox, an RWA Board member, called to tell me that my entry *Dreamweaver* had finaled in the Golden Heart paranormal category.

I floated on a cloud of overwhelming joy for most of the day. Congratulations from my chapter members (dear hearts all) began pouring in. I'm not normally an emotional person, but that was an emotional day. By the end of it, I was exhausted. Then someone told me about a loop for Golden Heart finalists that I should sign up for, and I did.



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That's when reality set in. I loved the new Golden Heart loop, but I began to see that rather than the end of a journey, this was simply another step on the road. Several people on the loop had finaled before—one seven times—and had yet to achieve their dream of publishing. As we sent each other exuberant congratulations, and waited for our heart-shaped pins to arrive in the mail with a certified letter assuring us that, no, it hadn't been a mistake and yes, we really were finalists, I realized that this was no guarantee that I would reach my goal of being published. As we babbled about everything and anything to those who understood how we were feeling—other finalists—I re-wrote my query letter and sent out another batch. I set up a regular writing schedule using Susan Mallery's method of "writing more," and got to work on my current work-in-progress. I re-read the PRO-class pages for valuable information from industry insiders, and checked out the PRO member's only newsletter on the RWA website for tips that would help me reach my goal...

...and dreamed about the next mountain I would climb.

Enjoy, and Happy Reading!

TJ Bennett

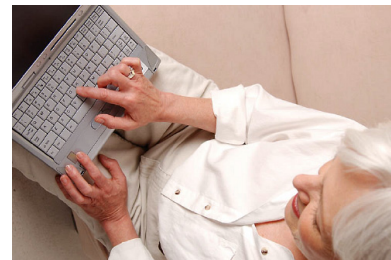
*Editor, LARA Confidential
2005 Golden Heart Finalist*



2005 Golden Heart Nominee TJ Bennett (far right) with critique partner Gina Bono (left) and Susan Cooper-Berg (middle) at the March 2005 LARA meeting.

Hot Off the Keyboard

(Last minute news from the grapevine)



YEAH, BUT DID I WIN?
(Contest News)

PAN contest news: Shannon Donnelly's *Regency Lady Scandal* is a finalist in the 2005 Colorado Award of Excellence contest. In addition, Shannon tells us she will be teaching a variety of online classes this summer. More information is posted on her website at www.shannondonnely.com. As it happens, Christine Locksy is also a finalist for the Regency category of the 2005 Colorado Award of Excellence contest with her first book, *A Proper Introduction*. Though we know both Shannon and Christine can't win (hey, how about a tie?), we're wishing them all the best!

Other contest news: Lynne Marshall's newest manuscript, *One for the Road*, is doing well on the contest circuit (but, of course. Would we expect anything less of our contest diva?) This time, she won third place in the Chick Lit category for the ColoNY RWA Happy Endings contest, even though she swears the story is Hen

