



## February 2013 MBT Special Open House Share the Love!

It's our birthday and because of that we're having a very special Open House:

### Share the Love!

With your host, Member Care Coach, Reba J. Hoffman, Ph.D.

**Tonight's Guests:** 5 Romance Authors share their secrets to writing romance.

**Susan May Warren:** Award winning author and founder of My Book Therapy

**Rachel Hauck:** Award winning author and resident book therapist at My Book Therapy

**Lisa Jordan:** award winning author and MBT Bleacher Forum Coordinator

**Beth Vogt:** fiction and non-fiction author and MBT Skills coach

**Melissa Tagg:** Debut Novelist and Marketing Mentor for MBT

Reba and team had a Surprise MBT Birthday wishes for Susie and Rachel from MBT Members around the world:

If it were not for Susie and Rachel, I would not be a contracted writer. They literally changed my writing life, and showed me where I was going wrong. They gave me the tools to work with and now I have a 3-book deal with Revell!!! So thank you very much, Susie and Rachel!  
Pat Trainum writing as Patricia Bradley

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I would not be where I am as a writer if it weren't for the influence of Susie and Rachel in my life. They've both done more than help me become a better writer -- think Storyworld, think emotional layering, think always upping your game. Susie and Rachel taught me how to walk the writing road with faith, trusting and loving God whether the terrain is rough or smooth, whether I can see what's up ahead or whether I'm facing a detour or a bend in the road. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul said to follow him as he followed Christ. That's what I'm doing with Susie and Rachel -- I'm following them as they follow God along the writing road.  
Beth Vogt

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Thanks you so much, Susie and Rachel, for all you do through MBT. We know you sacrifice time with your family, your own writing time and time for yourself so that you can help us become better writers. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Angie Arndt

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When I took my first leap of faith in to writing, it was when I traveled in to the big bad world of writing in Nashville, TN to my first ACFW conference. That was when I met Susie May Warren for the first time. She was like a rock star and I was a groupie. And then I met Rachel a couple of years later. Every writer dreams of a mentor who will guide her through the ups and downs of the writing world. And I am so unbelievably blessed to have not just one, but two. Both of these women believe in me when I struggle with my own abilities. They encourage me and build me up. They have been spiritual mentors, writing mentors, but most of all, they have been my friends. So I just thank you so much. You have no idea how much you mean to me. You are such Godly examples not only just as writers but as women who walk the walk. And I'm just so blessed. Lisa Jordan

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I have learned so much from Susie and Rachel. I can't thank them enough for selflessly sharing their wisdom, knowledge and talent with me. Not only are they both fabulous writers, they're also incredible mentors. Plus, they're just so fun to be around!  
Roxanne Sherwood Gray

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This afternoon I was sitting at my desk and decided I'd write out my thoughts and I began to tear up just thinking about My Book Therapy and how much you mean to me. And I said to myself, if someone passes by my door right now, I'm not going to be able to convince them I'm crying over my monthly report. So I



ended up with three words: I Love You, because I love you and I so appreciate you. You have been such huge blessings. Melissa Tagg

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Happy MBT Anniversary to two gals who define (and redefine) writing for many of us, and do it all with wonderful skill and heart.  
With love and thanks, Delores Topliff

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Susie and Rachel,  
I can't say thank you enough for all that you've done in teaching me the craft and mindset of writing. Your encouragements, patient guidance and super suggestions for making my story better have blessed me more than I can express. THANK YOU!!  
Jeanne Takenaka

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I have to say that my writing all changed when I met you, Susie, just a year and a half ago at ACFW. You took one look at my deer-in-the-headlights expression and said four magic words. "Let's meet for coffee." You taught me more in those thirty minutes than all the books I'd read previously combined. Your gift of teaching and generous heart for others has made you a blessing to me as both a mentor and a friend.

I met you Rachel just over a year ago at Deep Thinkers and getting to know you since then has really blessed me. You wouldn't believe how many times your words during a chat really echo what God has been teaching me. I also really appreciate your ideas and enthusiasm for my story when I did the brainstorm therapy. I'll admit I was a bit nervous but you made it so much fun. Your friendship has really blessed me.

Both of you ladies are so gifted and a blessing to so many.  
Tari Faris



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From the very first time I met Susie, I could see that she had a teacher's heart. She has a special way of making you feel like a star, even if you are a newbie, or simply need the whole italics rule explained for the eightieth time. She always gives others a chance to shine. Thanks, Susie!

One of the things I really appreciate about Rachel is her sensitivity to others emotions along the journey. There are times when I get this amazing e-mail just reminding me not to be discouraged before I even voiced how I felt. She puts the presence of God foremost in her priorities and it is evident in her sensitivity to the Spirit. Thanks, Rachel!

Michelle Lim

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Susie and Rachel -- you've shared so much to this newbie writer. Words (although I will try) cannot express what your friendship and help has done in my life. You've taken the time to encourage, the time to brainstorm and the time to just listen. In one word? INVALUABLE! You've given me the ability to see the dream come true. Value? PRICELESS.

Sowing and Reaping is a principal that we all understand. I pray that you reap a 100 fold harvest from your efforts.

Super Cyber Hug!

Alena T.

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Dear Susie & Rachel,

I remember my first exposure to MBT. It was at the ACFW Conference in Denver. It was my first ACFW and I'd attended alone. I didn't have anything to do during the Friday night free time, and got an invitation to the Pizza Party.

Even though I didn't know anyone there, and no one knew me, I immediately felt at home. And that's been the consistent thread that runs through every mention of MBT I've ever heard.

There are a lot of places where writers can find good information about writing and the industry. But none provide the place of community like MBT. And even



more than providing a community to be built up so we're equipped to succeed in this industry, we have a place to give back.

There are a lot of exceptional writers in our industry, but very few can translate that gift into teaching as successfully as you. Your methods are approachable and reproducible, providing tangible roadmaps to publishing success.

I know God has special blessings for two such humble and obedient servants!  
Much love,  
Edie

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**Reba:** These are just a sampling of what all the members and Voices at My Book Therapy would want to say to both of you. So thank you so much for giving so much of yourselves so that we can be all that we can be. Thank you ladies.

**Susie:** Thank you very, very much. We love it. We love helping people and are just here to help people reach their dream.

**Reba:** Well, since we are "Sharing the Love" let's just get right to it. We are going to share the love with you. I want to talk to each of you because each of my 5 author guests because I know you all are really excited about romance and want to share your secrets.

Let me just start out with the Grand Pubbah, the Mother Superior, Susie May Warren. Susie, can you tell us just a little about your personal romance writing journey?

**Susie:** I started writing ten years ago when I was in Russia. I was alone and didn't know how to write a novel. So I started taking novels off the shelf and just studied them. I had a degree in journalism and creative writing from the University of Minnesota so I knew a little bit about what I was doing, but not a lot. I joined a little tiny group called ACFW. I was number 24 and that was really neat because I connected with people.

I wrote four novels while I was in Russia. The fourth one got published, which is pretty average I think for people. I know we even have some people in the panel tonight who got published on their first novel and that's really kind of rare.



But if you do apply yourself and understand what you're doing, it is possible. I didn't know what I was doing so it took me four. But since then I publish approximately 3-4 novels a year and currently have over 40 on the market. So that's been really fun for me and I love it. But what I found is that I really love helping other people get to that place as well because the journey is so valuable. You learn about yourself, God and faith. And you learn about other people and it's just a fabulous journey.

So even if you do make it to publication, the journey is so valuable to your personhood and your character. But we do try to give you everything you need to get published.

**Reba:** It must have been a real challenge for you trying to get your writing career off the ground in a foreign country so kudos to you, Susie. Rachel, what about you?

**Rachel:** Wow, that was stellar. I always feel so behind the eight ball after listening to Susie's story.

**Reba:** ok, from now on, you'll go first.

**Rachel:** Well thank you. I appreciate that. I started writing back in 1993. The Lord laid it on my heart about a year into marriage that I was to quit my job. I thought I was going to be a stay at home pastor's wife. It was great. I had this great routine, but I really didn't know what the Lord was calling me to. But it was to be a writer, so I started writing then. I set it aside for a few years then picked it back up in the early 2000's. I just finished my 16<sup>th</sup> novel and I wouldn't do anything else. I love it and in those times when you're thinking, "am I ever going to make any money at this?" or you're worried about a deadline, I just would change it. My worst day writing is my best day out in the corporate world. That's how I feel about writing. It's how I came to be a writer. I've been published since 2004.

**Reba:** Wow that's awesome. Very different stories that wound up in the same place and I think that's really great. Beth, what about you?

**Beth:** Well, as most of you know I am the person who said she was never going to write a novel. I was very happy in the non-fiction world until I hit a season of burnout. And God turned that burnout into a bend in the road. And I found myself writing a novel just for the fun of it. Then I went to Susie's first Story Crafter's Retreat and I got that deer in the headlights look, she just told everyone to lock the doors and not let me leave the room. Melissa and Reba were there for that. I



kind of breathed into a paper bag a couple of times because it was all so new to me.

I went to that conference asking God if I would be as serious about writing a novel as I had been about writing non-fiction. And about two o'clock in the morning Saturday night/Sunday morning, I was at one table and Susie was over at another table helping someone else. At one point she just turned to me and said, "You CAN write fiction".

She did not know that had been my prayer that God would show me if I'm to pursue fiction. I felt like her saying that to me out of the blue was God's answer to my question. I knew I had a lot of work to do, but I felt like I had confirmation. And because of Susie and Rachel mentoring me, it's kept me on the dark side.

**Rachel:** If anyone might be discouraged about their writing journey and can relate to Beth's story, I just want you to know that Susie is so convinced that she could teach even a rock to write. MBT works and Susie's confidence infuses your heart.

**Reba:** Lisa what about you?

**Lisa:** I've been a reader all my life and before I could even read, my mom always read to us. As a teenager, I read some books that were not really appropriate for sixteen year olds. I read "The Promise" by Daniel Steele. I stood in the living room clutching that book to my chest and I knew I wanted to make my readers feel that same way. At that moment, I knew I was called to be a writer. I didn't know how God was going to use me.

I majored in fiction writing in college. I'm a happily ever after gal. I fell for a hot marine and we eloped. I put my writing on hold while raising my boys. I would write during naptime and such. One year I actually completed NANOWRIMO (National Novel Writing Month). My husband figured I was serious about my writing dream and bought me my first laptop computer.

I'm one of those rare people whose first novel got published. However, that book went through many, many revisions. It's the story of my heart and dedicated to my husband. I lacked focus until I got connected with MBT. A one hour brainstorming session turned into two hours. That book won a contest and got the attention of my dream publisher and my dream agent.



**Reba:** and finally, the newest novelist, Melissa.

**Melissa:** I have such a random publication story. I originally didn't want to write romance. I wanted to write like a Ted Dekker type book. And I attempted for a couple of months to write it and it was really like a circus gone wrong. It was horrible. I randomly ran across information about MBT, and the date that I signed onto MBT for the first time was the day Susie put out information about the MBT Storycrafters retreat.

I went to it and it and all the things I was trying to do with my story and struggling with for months, I felt came together at that retreat. I learned that I was writing in the wrong genre, the wrong voice. I got over the whole idea that writing romance was just naked men on the covers of books. I realized that I can do this. So I worked really hard on one book then a 2<sup>nd</sup> book. I continued to go to MBT things. My editor actually found me out of the blue online, and sent an email saying she liked my blog, liked my tweets and asked if I would be willing to send her something. So I did. Several months later I signed a two book contract with my dream publisher.

It's definitely a story of God opening the right doors at the right time. I love that about Him.

**Reba:** The reason I wanted you to hear all of the background of these 5 published romance authors is to show you that you don't have to be a certain personality, come from a certain background or particular genre to be successful. Of these 5 successful authors, not one of them has a story that is the same.

One was a missionary. One came from corporate America. One was a non-fiction writer. One was a reader of romance. One was a journalist. So you see, no matter where you are in your journey, you can pursue writing romance.

Now we are going to get inside their notebooks and let you show them how they do it. Susie, how do you write such amazing romance?

**Susie's Secret: Two different types of structure in romance.**



- 1) Why/why not
- 2) why not/ why

**Beth's Secret: You can't rush the kiss**

Just like you don't want to rush a kiss in real life, you don't want to rush a kiss between the hero and heroine.

Write a memorable kiss for your readers. Don't deprive them of that.

**Melissa's Secret: The why and the why not must be in equal scope to each other.**

The reasons why these characters should be together must be equal in scope to the reasons why they should not be together. That makes the tension.

**Rachel's Secret: Have the characters already know each other.**

That way you can really use dialogue to up the conflict without having to know a lot of the backstory.

Ex: "Well, how's your mom? Are you still fighting?" That immediately sets the reader on a journey.

But make sure you don't over power it with the external challenges.

**Lisa's Secret: Put yourself in the character's skin so you can see what they're seeing, feel what they're feeling**

That way you can make that connection with your reader.

<http://mbtbirthdayoffer.mybooktherapy.com>

WHAT'S NEXT FOR EACH AUTHOR:

**Susie:** *Duchess*, the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Daughters of Fortune Series (1930's Hollywood)

**Rachel:** *Once Upon a Prince* (May 2013)



Florida Christian Writer's Conference Keynote Speaker

**Lisa:**

I have exciting news to share when I can but you're not saying goodbye to Shelby Lake yet.

Teaching a workshop at the 2013 ACFW Conference: building your writing career while working full time

**Melissa:** Debut Novel: *Made to Last September* 2013

**Beth:** 2<sup>nd</sup> book, *Catch a Falling Star* (May 2013)

Teaching at Blue Ridge Mountain Writer's Conference: Dancing with the Book Buddy

Teaching at 2013 ACFW Conference: Distilling it Down (Pitching your book)

The Book Buddy is a publication of My Book Therapy and is available in the MBT online store.

**Last Words of Advice**

**Susie:** Read a LOT of Romance Novels.

**Melissa:** Don't hesitate to be funny when you write romance. There's nothing funnier than romance.

**Lisa:** Study the men around you. Women romance writers notoriously write male characters like women.

**Beth:** Every romance needs a good story. It has to be more than just boy meets girl, they break up... Get to know your characters.



**Rachel: Your dream is worth the effort.** Like a body builder cuts out the bread from his life to have six pack abs, writers have to cut the bread from their lives that's keeping them from reaching their writing goals.

**Reba:** You don't start where you're going. You start where you are. So wherever you are, start there Don't ever compare your writing journey to someone else's because it is yours uniquely and yours alone. That dream you have of being an author is too important to remain unlived. Live that dream. Write that story that's in your heart.