

SORMAG

SHADES OF ROMANCE MAGAZINE
FOR READERS AND WRITERS OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE



**MEET
COVER AUTHOR
Rochelle Alers**



**POETRY
WRITING**
JUNE/JULY 2003

**Writing Poetry--The
Damnably Scribble Dribble**

Poetry 2003

Genesis Press - Niani Colom

Self Published Author

Denise Campbell

Mainstream Author

Francis Ray

Hot New Author

Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez

FIRST PRINT ISSUE

**JUN/JUL 2003
ISSUE 16
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I want to thank you for your articles on Self Published Authors. You see I was just accepted by a new publishing company called Nubian Publishing and I will be their first published author. I was really nervous about the decision, but after reading the testimonies of different writers who self-published, I feel a lot better about my decision.

Even though they have self publishing programs, I was offered a standard publishing contract. I feel better knowing there are a lot of writers like myself that are getting a chance to have our voices heard. To date I have published fourteen short stories. Thanks to you and Nubian Publishing, Nubian Mindz, and Timbooktu I do not believe the black voice will never be silenced.

Thanks again,

MS. Sammie Ward

CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Wanza McInnis

Congratulations!

**May our Heavenly Father continue
to bless and prosper you!
Yolanda Callegari Brooks**

Congratulations, girl!!!
Sharon E. Foster

**I just got the note about SHADES going pdf
and print. I am SO proud of you!**

**Blessings,
Mary Griffith**

Thank you for subscribing to SORMAG. This issue is dedicated to four women. Rochelle Alers for asking me to step up to the next level with this magazine. Brenda Turner, my #1 fan who believes in me even when I can't. Trisha Goyer our first PDF subscriber and Beverly Jenkins our first Color subscriber. Without these four women this issue wouldn't have come to life. Thank you ladies for believing in SORMAG.

The theme for this issue is Poetry Writing. I must say, I have all respect for poetry writers. As a writer you display a lot when you put words to paper, as a poet you display your soul.

This issue I would like to introduce you to a few poets, and let them tell you in their own words what poetry means to them.

Not much has changed with SORMAG, we changed our name to an abbreviation easier to remember, and now you can take us with you in print form. You still get the great articles and interviews. We continue to keep you informed reviews and literary news. You get to read some for now, and save some for later.

Please feel free to let me know what you think of the new look.

Don't forget to pick up a good book and enjoy the summer.

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COVER AUTHOR ROCHELLE ALERS

Shades Of Romance Magazine: Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer.

Rochelle Alers: I am a native New Yorker currently living along Long Island's South Shore in a picturesque fishing village. Most of my interests and hobbies are depicted in my books: traveling, cooking, music and art. Although cautious, and quite curious by nature, I've travel extensively while observing people, and sampling new dishes, all which become ingredients for each new title.



SORMAG: Tell us about your current book?

ALERS: I have two upcoming releases: *Renegade* (BET Books–June '03) and *Secrets Never Told* (Pocket Books Atria–July'03).

Renegade will conclude what has become known as the **Hideaway Legacy's** 10-book series. I am amazed that I was able to write so many books using spin-off and/or continuing characters with fresh plots and locales. I'm currently experiencing separation anxiety because I do not want to leave the characters whom I've come to know and love. To say that I am blessed is an understatement. There was no way I could have known in 1985 when I first attempted to write *Hideaway* that this manuscript would impact so greatly on my writing career.

Renegade, the final book in the Brothers and Sons Trilogy is Gabriel Cole and Summer Montgomery's adventure. It involves a dangerous, but passionate masquerade played

Secrets Never Told will celebrate the debut of my first women's fiction novel. Selected as a featured alternate of the Black Expressions Book Club, this novel is the powerful story of one woman and the secrets that will forever alter her vision of her family, her marriage, and herself. New York Times best-selling author Connie Briscoe says that *Secrets Never Told* is "An unforgettable tale of love, and betrayal, marriage and infidelity. I was hooked from page one."

SORMAG: What would you like your readers to take away from your book?

ALERS: I would like for the readers who read my books to live vicariously through the characters and learn from their mistakes, raise the bar in their life choices and aspirations, and most of all I want them to smile after reading the last page.

SORMAG: What's in the future for Rochelle Alers?

ALERS: You've asked what's in the future for Rochelle Alers the author? I am very excited about my 50-state family miniseries for Silhouette Desire. The first book in the Virginia Blackstone trilogy: *The Long Hot Summer* is scheduled for a February 2004 release. Look for Sheldon and Jeremy Blackstone later that year.

Love At Leo's, the sequel to *Welcome To Leo's* is slated for March 2004. In my contribution, "Love Lessons," handsome executive chef Tyrell Hardcastle will be tutored in the ways of love after he meets a sexy older teacher.

"**McKinnon Island**," my second women's fiction title will hit the shelves May 2004. This uplifting novel has all of the makings of a perfect summer read. **CONTINUE ON PAGE 5**

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SORMAG: Any advice for writing mainstream novels?

ALERS: I don't have any advice about writing mainstream novels because, as a novice, I am still learning how to navigate this genre. The execution is very different from writing for BET and Silhouette. However, I've discovered writing *McKinnon Island* is much easier than *Secrets Never Told*. When I first saw the line-edited manuscript for *Secrets*, it took me two days to accept the changes and deletions in what I had considered, close to if not, my best writing thus far. Swallowing my pride, while at 2004 continues as a banner year with the re-release of the first three **HIDEAWAY** Legacy titles: *Hideaway*, *Hidden Agenda*, and *Vows* in a 3-in-1 omnibus from BET Books. This collection will coincide with my first annual HIDEAWAY Series Literary Retreat in Orlando, Florida. Sponsored by Woodbury Literary Services, the event will focus on indulging all of the five senses as we look forward to relaxing and falling in love again with those sexy, sophisticated men and women who dare risk everything for love.

SORMAG: Joshua seems to be the most favorite of all your characters. Why do you think the readers are so taken with him?

ALERS: Joshua—Mr. Kirkland! I'm not ashamed to admit that he is my favorite romance hero. Most readers are probably taken with him for the same reasons I am. He definitely is the stereotypical strong, silent type, but there is another layer that makes him vulnerable: his illegitimacy. It was a challenge to attempt to write about a character like Joshua, because of his ability to hide his emotions. It took ten years to develop enough confidence and writing experience to pen *Vows*. Once Mr. Kirkland appeared on page in his own book I knew that I had a special hero. With him there is no compromise — it is either all or nothing.

SORMAG: Our theme for this issue is Poetry Writing. Have you ever written poetry and if so what type? Can you give us a sample.

ALERS: There are two creative mediums I do not attempt: poetry and scriptwriting. I am always amazed by and admire those who are able write both.

SORMAG: What is something readers would be surprised you do?

ALERS: What may surprise some is that during the winter months I bake bread — the old fashion way. My favorite is focaccia—the same one served at the Macaroni Grill. Stuffing it with crumbled gorgonzola, sliced mozzarella, basil and topping it off with coarse salt, fresh rosemary leaves is an extra treat. A small dish filled with virgin olive oil and freshly ground pepper is essential for dipping. Oh, what a moveable gastronomic feast!

SORMAG: What do you feel has been your greatest accomplishment as a writer and why?

ALERS: I believe my greatest accomplishment as a writer has been the ability to write category romance, [i.e. Silhouette Desire] romance and romantic suspense, [Arabesque], and women's fiction, [Pocket Books]. During the fifteen years that I've been a published author there have several momentous changes in my life, yet I managed to keep my faith and my eye on my prize. Staying focused has resulted in 19 full-length novels and 10 novellas since 1988. I approach each title with the excitement that I'm beginning something new, but also with a trepidation that I must give my readers what they have come to expect from me. I never take anything for granted.

SORMAG: What is the latest pager-turner you've read?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

ALERS: The last book I read that had me devouring every page, paragraph, and word is Sheila Williams's novel *Dancing on the Edge of the Roof*. It is the story of a 42-year-old woman who decides to run away from home—to change her life, and to finally do something for herself after reading several romance novels. This book made me laugh, cry and cheer for a heroine who in the end becomes a real-life heroine.

SORMAG: Do you have any advice for those aspiring writers?

ALERS: I'm not known for giving advice, but when I do give it to aspiring writers it is: read in the genre you want to write. And, I'm not talking about five or 10 novels, but as many as you can obtain. If there is a formula, then familiarize yourself with the elements that make up the formula.

SORMAG: How can readers get in contact with you? (mail, email, website)

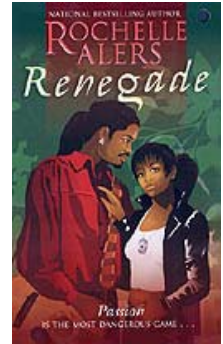
ALERS: I can be contacted via my website: www.rochellealers.com or email at: roclers@aol.com

ALERS: For those who do not have access to the Internet at: Post Office Box 690, Freeport, NY 11520-0690. I am notoriously slow in answering snail mail. Now that I am writing full-time I will have more time to answer letters. For those who have sent me correspondence, please bear with me. I plan to answer every letter no matter how dated.

SORMAG: Any last advice for the aspiring writer?

ALERS: Parting advice to aspiring writers—"Just Do It!" Begin and complete that

manuscript, then send it out. Rejections aren't rejections, but a temporary detour until you find the publisher who will invite you to come and stay awhile. Many of today's best-selling authors have received dozens of rejections letters before an editor decided to take a chance on their work. And as a constant reminder of how far I've come I refuse to throw away my rejections letters.



JUST BEFORE DAWN
An Ode To
Rochelle Alers
by
Brenda Turner

Just before dawn
My love will come
I'll wait patiently until he returns.
No need to worry about what will soon be.
Because my love always satisfies me.

Just before dawn
We'll meet and greet
Lips touching
Hands feeling
Both of us engrossed in the heat.

Just before dawn
Our love is complete
we share an intimacy
pressed together between the sheets.

His touch like flames igniting a fire
We both filled with a strong desire.

Just before dawn
We will seek our pleasures
The sun will rise
and again we will have memories to treasure.

Writing Poetry--The Damnable Scribble Dribble

by
Lynnette Velasco

A constant brooding drool. Writing poetry can be a brutal, welcomed pain as craved by nymphomaniacs searching for ultimate orgasm just beyond the horizon.

Writing poetry is a predestined experience we share however reluctantly. Whether meditating in a quiet, isolated moment or reaching for that little pad to jot down fleeting thoughts amidst the groundswell of nine to five noise that pays the rent, we work with our muse, our often times unrequited love, to capture and freeze frame moments, passages of time and experience.

Hopefully, we employ sparing, descriptive but not overly melodramatic, cryptic words that connect...connect the conscience to the unconscious, feelings buried, sleep walking spirits...and awaken...awaken and move the reader just one brief step to a communion, a healing, and regeneration of spirit, choice and possibility.

Poetry is brushstrokes across a wide canvas of living. Brushstrokes of ink to help, to hurt, to heal, to reveal, to dream. A writer must be eclectic in style, willing to not only study but devour a subject, and most of all write, revise, rewrite, and repeat the process until... In writing poetry, I hope that my words connect, renew, give sustenance, peace, and when necessary strike daggers in the heart of injustice.

A sample of my poetry follows:

Untitled

i was glad
you came,
blizzard rage
quieted to
that distinct
delicate scent of
forest peace.

wolves danced
as gazelles
in quiet grace

when you were
stench of rotten eggs
was
fragrant joy

gone
you remain
my silent forever.

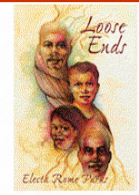
CONTINUE ON PAGE 7

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Memories

Mother
 Elegant, stately
 Tears shrouded in grace,
 Never a blemish could
 be detected in her tender smile.
 She knew her stay
 was short,
 So she poured,
 Sparing nothing,
 Not even her life,
 She poured
 Her love
 Her wisdom
 Her conscience
 Into her treasure
 Her children.
 Grandma,
 She stayed when mother
 could not,
 At ninety eight,
 her love stings,
 yet warm.
 Eyes unbowed,
 Her mind defiant
 Against age,
 That relentless knock.
 She keeps her
 Daughter's treasure safe
 Within those still
 Slender, silken
 ginger root hands,
 Those hands,
 Around our hearts,
 Strong.

Lynnette C. Velasco is a poet and author of the self esteem building, children's book, *Zinzi: A Child's Journey to Self Fulfillment, Giving and Caring*. She resides in New York.

LOOSE ENDS
 by Electa Rome Parks


You can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.

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New Voices In Poetry

by Annette Dammer

Since the days of Shakespeare, Blake and Byron, poetry has expanded from the sometimes tight and stuffy to include poems and poets that bring life to light in just a few, engaging lines.

Gone is the dry rhyme and antiquated language. In fact, some of today's poetry is highlighted in popular, mainstream movies. Antwone Fisher, subject of the movie by the same name and directed by Denzel Washington, was based on Fisher's memoirs, *Finding Fish*. His poem, "Who Will Cry for the Little Boy?" was highlighted in the film when Fisher gave his psychiatrist, Davenport (Denzel Washington) the poem as an explanation of his desperate childhood.

Early this year Fisher released a collection of poems entitled *Who Will Cry for the Little Boy? A* lovely hardcover edition (\$9.95), it includes a variety of poems that express Fisher's struggle to overcome his childhood neglect. His poems range from the torment of a family lost, to the family he has built for himself as an adult. "Azure Indigo" is an inspirational poem he wrote about his daughters.

It's been more than a decade since popular writer and poet, Alice Walker, released a book of poetry. In fact, this Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Color Purple* says she spent the last several years wondering if she would ever write again.

Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth (Random House, \$22.95) is Walker's sixth book of poetry. An exploration of her love of nature and the strength of the human spirit, Walker wrote these poems following the terrorist acts of 9-11. *Absolute Trust* focuses on love and grief, acceptance and gratitude, home cooking and friendship, and love "for the living and the dead".

This fat book of short-line prose is receiving praise from all sides. *Publisher's Weekly* recently wrote,

"Other work continues Walker's longer-term spiritual and ecological interests: the poet (who subtitled her 1990 collection *Earthling Poems*) now writes 'Divine Mother/ Keep on praying/ For us/ All Earthlings/ All children/ Of this awesome place/ Not one of us/ Knowing/ Why we're here/ Except to Be.'

"Though critics' interest in Walker will continue to concentrate on her prose, the readers across the country who cherished Walker's earlier poems will find in this new work exactly what they've awaited."

Harryette Mullen may be more obscure than Walker and Fisher, but her popularity is building. She is often called upon to speak at poetry events, has several books of poetry, and teaches poetry-writing, American poetry, and African American literature at UCLA.

Dr. Mullen says that she often uses her dictionary for inspiration. Her latest book of poems came to her in sleep – literally.

"I woke up in the morning and something was poking me in the back," Mullen says. It was her dictionary – something she uses often for poetic inspiration. So she entitled her collection *Sleeping With the Dictionary* (UC Press). Mullen has written several books of poetry and *Freeing the Soul: Race, Subjectivity and Difference in Slave Narratives* (1998). "For years, I've been satisfied with very little: one person saying, 'I like that poem,' or a publishing house agreeing to print a poem," she recently told UCLA today. "I just wanted to express myself."

Her current collection is her first with a large publishing house, and was selected as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in Poetry and

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

the National Book Award in Poetry. A selection of her poetry can be found here: .

Perhaps the largest, most prolific group of poets are those who continue to tap their dreams into their home computers, content to share them only with friends, or perhaps a small writers' group. John Asconi, married with children and a teacher at a small Christian school, is one of these timeless, humble poets. His passion for poetry has led him through self-study of the classics and to an online writers' group at . There he shares his recent inspirations. Now 47, he says it wasn't until three years ago that he took his writing seriously. He says he was always a "punster" – something that helped in his writing.

"But it was this particular Sunday School class, in which we had to write a few paragraphs about God, that the writing path became clear," John says. "We drove home that afternoon, and, in the car, on the way, I wrote my first poem. They've been coming ever since."

Annette Dammer runs www.writershelper.org, an online school for Christian writers, serves as Publisher for TEEN LIGHT Magazine (www.teenlight.org), is a journalist and Christian writer. Her book, **READY, SET, GO!: A Year of Object Lessons for Kids, was published by Baker Books (2003). Annette can be reached at publisher@teenlight.org**

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**TyWebbin. If we build it,
they will come.**

*Like the susurrant breezes on a warm
summer night, you wash over me.
Enticing, engaging my senses,
producing in my soul a jubilee.*

*Together, we are invincible. Much
passion, much power hour by hour.
Our love grows exponentially,
gaining strength as it continues to flower.*

*Ever shall the griots tell the tale of
how a black prince refused the glory.
And, instead, transformed the shy maiden
into the heroine of the story.*

---The Book of Counted Joys---

SELF PUBLISHED AUTHOR

Shades Of Romance Magazine: Tell us a little about you the person and the writer?

Denise Campbell: Well, I was born in Jamaica and came to this country originally at 14 years old with my two sisters. I attended high school in Brooklyn, New York, and left to attend college upstate and abroad. I have been writing for as long as I can remember. I never considered writing as a career until recently. I have always just done it for fun and because it helped me to feel better about myself and as an individual. When I returned to New York three years ago, I felt like my entire world fell apart. Family bonds were broken, my life was shaken and I lost that familiar place of support and comfort I thought I had. I again turned to words and writing to lift and build me, and so here I am. Writing and hoping that I can offer readers some comfort and escape while finding my niche as a writer.

SORMAG: Tell us about your book?

CAMPBELL: Well, I currently have two published books. Currently I have *Spanish Eyes*, which is a novel and *Ebony Passion*, which is poetry. *Spanish Eyes* is about a girl who was looking for love. Of course, you never know the kind of baggage that wishes will bring. When she finally finds it, her life gets caught in a roller coaster of lies, deceit, homosexuality, identity crisis, sexual promiscuity and all the other things that we face when we carelessly and thoughtlessly jump into certain situations. *Ebony Passion* on the other hand, spans across

emotions as a whole, dealing with love, lost, anger, jealousy, passion and sexual excitement. In the Spoken Word section of the book, I inserted comic pieces that would make you laugh, and cry...pieces that deal with the heart of our people, stereotypes and innuendoes.

I am in the process of sending to print my third novel, *Love Thy Sister Watch Thy Back* of which I am very proud. This book I think shows me as a seasoned yet blossoming writer. I am very excited and cannot wait to hear what readers have to say about it. This book is about five main characters from completely different backgrounds but all of who are good friends. There is backstabbing, jealousy, rage, murder, drugs, sex and everything that makes a good book but destroys friendship. This book is about knowing your friends and your enemies. Unfortunately sometimes, your friends are your enemies.

Then I am dabbling by putting together a children's poetry adventure book called, *Rhythm Rhyme and Playtime*, and a Sci-fi book called *Half-breed* that I cannot believe I am venturing to write, but it has excited a new kind of literary desire in me that is almost inexplicable.

SORMAG: Why did you choose to self-publish?

CAMPBELL: I decided to self-publish because I could not wait for the conventional publishers to tell me over and over again that I was not good enough or worthy to write. That's not what it's about. If anyone has something to say, they are worthy. And if they took the time to put it down on paper and labored over it, they have the right to share it. That's the freedom that self-publishing has given to writers.

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Besides, being able to self-publish also saved my life at a time when I thought I had lost everything. All I felt I had left were my desire to write and words. I had already completed *Spanish Eyes* four years previously, so I decided to publish as a means of rebuilding proclaiming my independence.

SORMAG: What is the most gratifying thing about self-publishing?

CAMPBELL: Wow! For me, the most gratifying thing about self-publishing was seeing my name in print. I remember as if it was yesterday the feeling of anxiety and joy I felt waiting for my galley proof in the mail. There were so many things wrong with the book that I didn't see in the first printing because all I could see was that my name was inscribed on the cover of a perfectly bound printed work that was all mine and mine alone. You don't have to wait a year to get your book published and you have all the control and decision making for things regarding your work and you get to keep all your copyrights, which is very important in this business when self-publishing.

SORMAG: What is the biggest problem you faced as a self-publisher?

CAMPBELL: I guess distribution is the biggest obstacle for all self-published authors. It's very hard to get your work out there in the bookstores. A lot of stores won't take your books unless they can get it from the big distributors. Some will get your books if you are willing to give it to them on consignment, but that presents a whole new slew of problems. You never get paid on time and you take the risk of losing it all, because these stores are small, independent stores. If they go under, you

those books off as a loss. However, we now have black distributors like Culture Plus and A&B Distributors. These are distributors in our own community working on behalf of minority writers to get our books into the stores and on the street with street vendors.

SORMAG: Did you assemble a team to work with you (i.e. editor, printer, publicists, etc)?

CAMPBELL: Well, not right away. At first, I did everything on my own. I was working part-time and my sales manager was a webmaster who offered to design a website to for me once I decided to publish. He is still a member of my team at www.Graphic-Effects.com. I had the help of friends and family and the people who stayed closest to me like my sister, became a silent partner and helped me with publicity, marketing and distributing of bookmarks and business cards. Calvin, a good friend who would show up at all my events, made sure I ate and had everything I needed and some things I didn't know I needed, became my publicist at www.CGMediaPublications.com. As time went on, another friend joined our team, a wonderful young man who loved graphics. He is now my typesetter, my graphic designer designing my book covers, bookmarks, business cards, posters, postcards and flyers. He is now running his very own graphic design company at www.JigglyHouseOfDesign.com. So that's my team. Anything else, like printers, photographers, touch-up artists, editors and models I use on an as-needed basis. I do have a few people I tend to work and stay with. It's good to find people you like to work with and stick with those people. Its very hard to find people to trust and work with, when you do, don't let go of them and do right by them so they will be willing to continue working with you.

SORMAG: How did you decide about the pricing for your book?

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CAMPBELL: Unfortunately, because I first self-published with a POD (Print On Demand) company, I made a few mistakes and was not in control of the pricing and therefore I didn't like the way the pricing was done. But since then, I have bought my own imprint, Universal Write Publications. Then I got my own ISBN's and in the process of publishing my own books in the true name of self-publishing where I will have complete control of everything. At this point, I will decide the pricing according to the industry, size, pages, type of work, paperback vs. hardcover.

SORMAG: What strategies did you decide to use to promote your book?

CAMPBELL: Everything possible. Because I am working on a practically nonexistent marketing budget, I knew that I had to take advantage of any and every opportunity that presented itself. That meant talking to any and everybody I came into contact with everyday in the streets, on the train. You cannot be embarrassed about something you are proud about doing. I joined online writers groups everywhere across the country. I set up book signing at local bookstores, teamed up with other authors, volunteered my services, gave away free copies at a financial loss and attended literary and networking writer's events. You just have to get out there.

SORMAG: How did you get your book reviewed?

CAMPBELL: Through my online writers groups, sometimes they have featured authors and they would interview you. Sometimes they would have a chat night where others can join and ask you questions. I also joined other marketing groups for a price who help to promote you and in most of these cases, you would have to ship off a book or two for free and then get them reviewed.

SORMAG: Did you use the Internet to promote your book, if so how?

CAMPBELL: I also joined online marketing groups. Places that promote your work for a one time fee, and get your listed in search engines on the Internet. It's really great-the Internet. That's what is really helping self-published authors to survive today.

SORMAG: What advice would you give to the self-publishers?

CAMPBELL: Do anything and everything you can to get your work out there if you want to share your work. Never turn up your nose at anyone or any opportunity. Life is short and the world is small. You never know whom you know or who is watching you. People are always looking for an opportunity to bring you down if you are not careful. Give and you shall receive. Be willing to share yourself and your work even if it seems there might be nothing in it for you and thank God for little blessings even if it doesn't seem like one. Get out there and talk to anyone who is willing to listen. Like **SORMAG** :) They are a great source of information and getting the word out there.

SORMAG: How can readers reach you (mail, email, website)?

CAMPBELL: Oh, that's easy:
www.UniversalWritePublications.com or
www.DeniseCampbell.com.

My mailing address is:
Universal Write Publication
P.O Box 1432
Valley Stream, NY 11582
Phone: (212) 592-4523

