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## MAPW Alumni Profile: Sally Kilpatrick

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# Sally Kilpatrick



Sally Kilpatrick

Sally Kilpatrick ('10) became acquainted with [Georgia Romance Writers](#) (GRW) because of a project in her PRWR 6000 course (Issues and Research in Professional Writing), and became interested in the organization. "By combining the camaraderie and practicality of GRW with the technique and artistry of my MAPW studies, my writing began to slowly but surely click," Sally said.

"For this reason I would encourage all students to find writing groups to complement their studies in the MAPW program. While MAPW taught me to hone my craft, GRW helped me look ahead to the business side of writing: query letters, submissions, agents, and editors. Also GRW taught me to pragmatically channel the elements of fine writing into a compelling story and, more importantly, I learned what I was writing. I refuse to sacrifice artistry for a commercial story but I also learned that all of the pretty sentences in the world won't do you any good without a compelling story underneath."

Sally has made invaluable industry connections through her roles at GRW as Conference Co-chair, Vice President of Programs, and then President. GWR is unique according to Sally because of its focus on romance and women's writing. It is primarily an organization of women. Also, "GRW truly believes in giving back and offer opportunities for unpublished authors to receive critiques and give feedback on contest entries from published authors."

## Q&A

### **Do you have any special stories to share about your MAPW experience?**

A memorable moment came in my first class with Tony Grooms. He asked me which draft I was on. I must've given him a really puzzled look because he went on to explain the concept of putting aside one draft and starting another from scratch. I had been tinkering with the same set of words in the same document. Putting that old draft to the side and rewriting with a blank document was, and still is, both freeing and terrifying. That said, it's such an important skill for writers, and I would've never been able to publish book two or three without redrafting.

### **Tell us about your writing projects, either those you pursue independently or those you pursue as a part of your job**

I've now embarked on a new chapter of my writing career: writing a manuscript on deadline. I sold book four based on a synopsis and first three chapters. Book five I sold totally blind. So, I'm working on Bless Her Heart, a story that centers on what happens when a jilted preacher's wife gives up church for Lent and then decides to sample the Seven Deadly Sins. I may have discovered that I'm a plotter, but my characters surprise me every day as I draft. Oh, and while I'm thinking about it, do remember to set a personal deadline before your professional deadline because, um, life.

### **What advice would you offer to current or prospective MAPW students?**

I have two more pieces of advice for my MAPW writers. One, keep writing. I started what would become The Happy Hour Choir the spring I graduated from the MAPW program. It took me two years to get an agent and another year beyond that to sell. While I was querying and later waiting while my agent shopped [Happy Hour](#) around, I wrote [Bittersweet Creek](#) and [Better Get to Livin'](#)—that's how I managed to have three books release in a little less than two years.

The key was that I had already written the first two and three-quarters of the third. Not only did that mean I had enough written for a three-book deal, but it also meant I could take some time to concentrate on revisions, copy editing, and page proofs without simultaneously being under deadline for a novel I had to write from scratch.

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