

*A note from the 2011 president,
Marsha West*

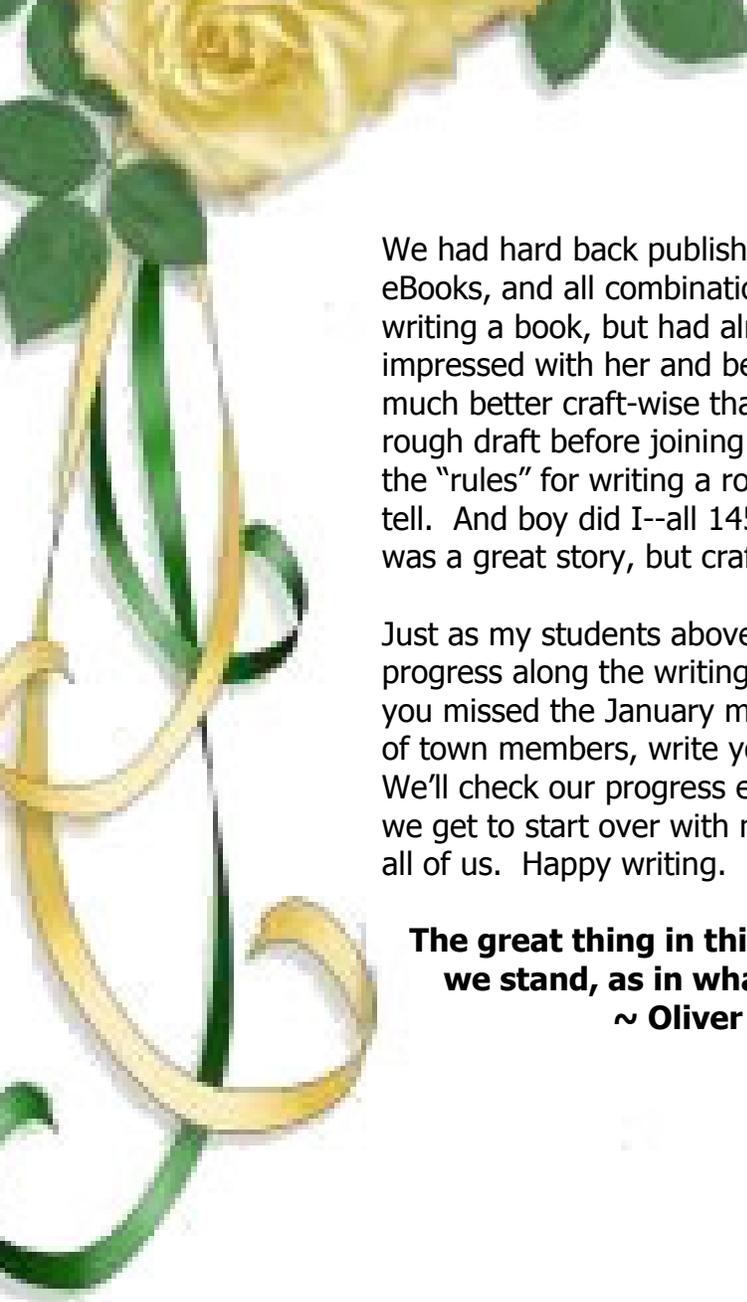
The past month was one of the busiest Januarys of my life, and I've had some busy ones. I've always loved the starting over aspect of a new year. As a teacher and principal, I had lots of "do overs." Not just in January, but every August, every semester, every six weeks. In fact, every week when new lesson plans were due offered another opportunity to do over. However far I'd planned to get was almost never as far as the kids and I would. (I taught in high school, but was a principal in the elementary setting, so I have a variety of perspectives. "Kids" in this instance refers to my high school theatre arts and English students.)

Sometimes it took longer for them to make the progress I wanted. Sometimes other things interrupted the process: unexpected fire drills, bomb scares, deaths of students, longer than intended pep rallies. . . Or just the basics: we all learn at our own rate, and I'd misjudged how long it would take for them to get it.

Bear with me. This all does connect. On one of the loops I'm on, we've been going through an introduction exercise. It's been fascinating to see the wide spectrum of writers in every step of the profession and to hear how they juggle interruptions and what they do when they get stuck. I loved the person who said they took a shower, and somehow that released her creativity. My theory on that is like child rearing, you do whatever works.

Some on the loop had lots of books pubbed. Some had only been writing for a few years, but had a book or books published. Others had been writing for many years and hadn't received the magic call yet. Some authors hadn't entered a single contest or submitted even once, but had lots of books (or parts of books) completed. And then those shining stars who'd hooked the brass ring with their first attempt.





We had hard back published authors, paperbacks only, eBooks, and all combinations. One person hadn't started writing a book, but had already joined the loop. I was so impressed with her and believe her first attempt will be much better craft-wise than my own. I'd almost finished the rough draft before joining RWA or NT—knew nothing about the "rules" for writing a romance novel. I just had a story to tell. And boy did I--all 145,000 words. I still believe this was a great story, but craft-wise, it was pretty rank.

Just as my students above learned at different rates, we all progress along the writing continuum at our own pace. If you missed the January meeting or if you're one of our out of town members, write your goals and keep them nearby. We'll check our progress every quarter. It's a new year and we get to start over with new goals and new possibilities for all of us. Happy writing.

The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.
~ Oliver Wendell Holmes

