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Find your Happy Medium!



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## Letter from the President

### THAT HAPPY MEDIUM

Is it July already? Just three more months of hot? Back in the winter we couldn't get warm and longed for the hot days of summer. Normally at this time of year, we can't step outside without a heatstroke and long for the cold days of winter. It's hard to find that happy medium (unless you live in San Diego LOL).

How does the weather have anything to do with writing? It's that age-old problem of finding the happy medium. The place where a writer is going to be HAPPY.

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Before we're published, we hear those who are whining about their deadlines, copy edits, promotion, book covers... We long to have those problems. We swear we'll never complain. We swear. :-)

After we're published, we're worried about royalties, deadlines, contractual obligations, creating the next characters, writing the next book, editing this one... We long for the fun of writing again. We remember we swore we'd never complain. We hope. :-)

Reaching that HAPPY place takes a lot of work, in life and in writing. It's an individual thing, found only through yourself. No one can define it for you. My writer friends and I chat on-line and have an exercise we call SPRINTING. We write for twenty-five minutes, then chat for five. Each time we come back from a sprint, we report how many words we've written or perhaps it's how many pages edited.

When we first began I was truly intimidated by my low word count --normally less than 200 while everyone soars into 300 or even 500 words. Wow. It was really hard to be honest and not add an extra 100 or so words to mine. But who cared? Just me. I had 200 excellent words. And then the next Sprint I had another couple of hundred. By the end of the day, with the support of friends sprinting...I'd achieved one of the highest word counts for a day of writing. It may not seem like much, but I wrote my second book (.38 Caliber Cover-Up) in less than 6 weeks by daily sprints and a lot of help from my friends.

I tend to do almost everything now focused for a time, then taking a scheduled break. Social Media, returning calls, checking email...it's a scheduled time period.

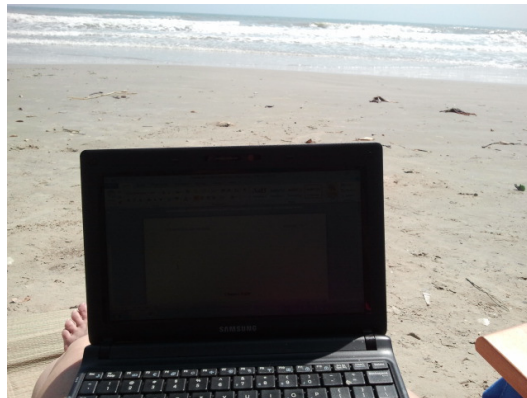
My point? Find your HAPPY MEDIUM--the place that's right for you. Continually longing for summer during winter and vice versa...well, you'll never truly enjoy where you are. Same with the writing. ENJOY what you're doing and you'll never work a day in your life.

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Keep writing!

~Angi

*Angi Morgan is the author of Intrigues where honor and danger collide with love. She combines actual Texas settings with characters who are in realistic and dangerous situations. Her debut Harlequin Intrigue, Hill Country Holdup, is her Golden Heart winning manuscript and also an RT & Booksellers' Best Award nominee.*



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## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social Media is important to a writer's world. Complete the social media form <http://ntrwagreatexpectations.blogspot.com/p/ntrwa-social-media-form.html> and get connected with other NT members.

## **FOLLOW ON TWITTER**

Let us know if you have a # (hashtag) specific to promoting North Texas authors. Share

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Other hashtags on our loop or with the hashtags below.

#TXauthors

#ntrwa-gecontest

#dara-ntrwa-pals



## **MEMBER NEWS**

**Linda LaRoque has a new release.**

Sarah Lawson's fiancé Logan Miller died in Afghanistan. She receives a text from one of his war buddies, Brandon Perdue, who wants to meet and deliver a message from Logan.

Physically and emotionally scarred, Brandon values Sarah's friendship. In time Sarah finds herself attracted to him and wants their relationship to deepen, but he fears she's projecting her feelings for Logan on to him.

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*Want to know what PRO is? From the RWA website:*

## About the PRO Community

RWA welcomes writers at all stages of their careers from the unpublished, to the "almost" published, to the published and the multipublished. In an effort to meet the needs of all its members, RWA has several Communities of Practice (CoP) which are communities of people who come together with a common interest to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations.

The purpose of the PRO Community of Practice is to establish within RWA a network of communication and support to effectively promote and protect the interests of romance writers in the areas between manuscript completion and PAN eligibility.

PRO focuses on the business side of writing rather than craft. To be eligible to join the PRO community, RWA members must submit an application and a digital copy of the qualifying work(s) to the RWA Office.

### PRO Eligibility

This program is available to any active General or Honorary member who: (1) is not PAN-eligible and (2) has one complete original work of romance fiction of at least 20,000 words, or multiple complete original works of romance fiction which combine for a total of at least 20,000 words.

[Membership in the PRO Community of Practice](#) is available only for active RWA members.

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*The following article appeared in the June 2015 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor. It may be reused by RWA chapters with appropriate credit to the author and chapter. Permission form is on file with the editor.*

## Candace Havens Helped Me Get My Mojo Back

**By Michelle Graham**

We've all had those moments of writer's block or insecurity when we're convinced nothing we come up with is any good. Sometimes they're minor blips, and other times it's devastating. It's those major ones that can make us feel like we've lost our writing mojo. It happened to me. A bad experience with an editor left me with a really negative inner editor and it started to take me a lot longer to write as I agonized over every word choice and sentence construction.

Then I started in a new position at work. Stressful enough, but shortly after that my dad was diagnosed with cancer. I took some time off work and managed to get some writing done, but not too much. When I finally did go back to work, it was harder than ever. The writing started to slide further and further down my list of priorities. And the more I didn't do it, the more I made excuses. "My muse is on strike." "I have too much housework to do." "We absolutely must watch four seasons of *Game of Thrones*."

I still wanted to write, so I tried several things to help motivate me. I went on a writing retreat, made plans to pitch agents, spent an unbelievable amount of time allowing ideas to percolate, but nothing seemed to be helping. Workshops, books, blogs – anything I could do to help my writing I did. Mostly to no avail.

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Then I noticed that our NWA Chapter was hosting tv/film critic, editor, and author Candace Havens to teach us about her “Fast Draft” process. I was skeptical but I attended anyway hoping to pick up some tips I could use.

Best. Decision. Ever.

I won't go into Candace's process in too much detail here, because she teaches it much better than I ever could (check out [www.CandaceHavens.com](http://www.CandaceHavens.com)). But suddenly a bunch of pieces fell into place for me, and it clicked. Perhaps one of the most powerful things she said that day was that writer's block was just fear.

To my shock, I realized she was right. I was afraid.

Candace went through a lot of steps necessary to get yourself ready to overcome that fear and succeed at Fast Draft, plus a bunch of rules to keep you moving forward. Another key message: Keep the forward momentum going always. Don't look back at your work until you're ready to revise. The goal in fast draft is to write 20 pages every day. Reality check. I'm a busy person (not as busy as Candace) and that seemed like a huge commitment, especially when I was so out of practice. I really wanted to get back into writing but I was afraid I couldn't do it. There's that fear creeping in again.

How to overcome the fear?

I needed to give myself a goal that was challenging, but still attainable. So I decided I would try for a thousand words a day. If I could do more, that would be great, but even if I only did the minimum, that's 365,000 words in a year. I also needed support. Though my family tries, they don't understand writing. So I went public on Facebook with my goal and the instructions to my friends that they were free to kick my ass if I didn't post a word count every day.

The day of the workshop, I went home and wrote 1100 words. The next day I wrote 1300. The day after that almost 2000. On the third day, I wrote 1400 words and did something I hadn't done in almost a year. I finished a story. It was a short one I'd started for an anthology and it came in at just over 10k. In about a week, I'd written more than I had in the previous eight months. And I kept going. By the end of April, I'd written more than 20k, more than the whole year before it. My short story was accepted, and I'd made huge gains on another project.

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If you're struggling to find your mojo, and you're not quite ready to go the Fast Draft route, just set your own personal goal, find someone to be accountable to, and give yourself permission to write crap. You can always fix crap but you can't fix nothing at all.

Will it be smooth sailing? No. Like any journey, there will always be rough waters. There have been days I didn't make my goal, but I got something done, even if it was just a couple hundred words. Thanks to Candace, I've found my writing mojo again, and I'm still going strong. When summer comes, I'll be ready to tackle Fast Draft and know that I can succeed. ©

*In between reading and writing romance stories of all kinds, Michelle Graham works in a highly classified day job, and also acts as wife, mother, pet owner, taxi driver, chef, and housekeeper. You can find Michelle's books at [www.MichelleGrahamBooks.com](http://www.MichelleGrahamBooks.com). ©*

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*The following article first appeared in the June 2015 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.*

## **I CRITIQUE, THEREFORE I AM...A WRITER**

by Dawn Temple

One of the most vital tools for successful writing is a trusted, knowledgeable critique partner. Or if you're lucky (like me!) PARTNERS. Problem is, whether it's one or six, finding a critique partner that suits you is one of the trickiest parts of a very tricky career.



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A decade ago, about the time I sold my first book to *Silhouette Special Edition*, I was meeting regularly with a fantastic critique group, and that four-year period was the most productive of my career. I was putting out a viable 18-25 page chapter each week while also finding time to read and critique for three very distinctive writing voices. My personal life was at its most hectic: my husband had just quit his steady-paying corporate job to go into business for himself and we had twin boys just starting school, but despite all the demands on my time, I always found a way to make my writing a priority. Mainly, because I didn't want to disappoint my critique partners or waste their time.

But unfortunately, as it does, life got in the way. Collectively, our output dwindled and writing got pushed to the back burner. Years passed, and while I never quit saying I was a writer, I DID stop writing. I have a list as long as my arm to justify my writing pause, but the long and the short of it is: I liked being a writer, but I had lost my love for writing. And honestly, it's kinda hard to be a writer who doesn't write.

Fast-forward to early 2014. I got a wild hair and double-clicked on my languishing WIP. Over two years had passed since the "date last modified." Wow! This was the moment I realized I wasn't a writer in any sense of the word. I was an addicted reader who like to tell herself that the 6-10 books she read per week were market research. (In fact, if you ask the IRS, that's what they'd say.)

Then comes October 2014 when fellow writer (and new critique partner) Terri Richison pops off with her wonderful/maniacal ICE BATH BIKINI CHALLENGE which lead not only to the creation of a group blog called WRITE OR CONSEQUENCES but also the start of a newly-formed weekly critique group. Once again, I'm a productive writer!

So, my greatest piece of writing advice is to find yourself at least one critique partner. Personally, I think a group of four is ideal. That's three different skill sets, three different point-of-views and three different sets of eyes reviewing every word you write. Also, in my long-ago group, all four of us wrote in different genres. Talk about getting a fresh perspective!

How do you find the right critique partners, you ask? Unfortunately, there isn't one golden rule on forming a critique group. It generally happens through trial and error. What I do

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know is that if you take your time and get it right, it will make all the difference in the quality and quantity of your writing output.

Here's what I think are some keys that make the four us click as critiquers:

**Session Rules.** Yes, we are all friends, and yes, whenever we sit around a table, there is bound to be personal discussion, but despite that, our critique sessions operate on our own version of Robert's Rules of Order. These are critical to keeping us on task and on schedule, and they have evolved over time. Once you start a group, start with basic rules as well as the understanding that the rules will change as your group matures.

**Complete Trust.** Showing a rough, raw first draft to someone takes guts, and you have to have complete trust and faith in the people you are sharing your baby with. If you have any doubt about a person, they are not proper critique material. (Also, you will need personal courage. You can be a writer in the safety of your own laptop, but if you want to be an author, you will have to allow people to read what you write.)

**Complete Honesty.** It's nice to hear people say good things about your writing, but a critique partner is only going to be helpful if the relationship is grounded in complete honesty. You must be willing to speak the truth, and even more difficult, you must be willing to hear the truth.

**Complete Respect.** You must respect the work you are reading and critiquing, and you must respect the person who is offering you the same service. They have invested their time and energy into giving you valuable, constructive criticism.

**Leave Your Ego at the Door.** Turning in a page with fifty typos is not something to be embarrassed about, just as finding fifty typos in someone's work isn't something to brag about. Critiquing is not about who's the better writer or proofer or anything else. Critiquing is about putting out the best story. Period.

**Have Fun.** Writing is a creative field, and creativity should be joyous. Sure, creating often sucks, but if you can't find the joy, then why bother?

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*Dawn Temple is a retired stay-at-home mom who has finally found the time and the drive to return to her pursuit of a financially viable writing career. This time around, she has decided to forego New York and take her work directly to the people via self-publishing. She's currently halfway through a three-book collection she plans to release early 2016. See more of Dawn's – and Sandra K. Moore's and Ann Peake's and Terri's Richison's – writing pearls at [www.writeorconsequences.com](http://www.writeorconsequences.com).*

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### **A Note from the Newsletter Editor:**

Please note photos included in the newsletter are provided by the members. Any photos you'd like to include can be sent to [newsletter@ntrwa.org](mailto:newsletter@ntrwa.org). It is at the discretion of the newsletter editor as to which photos will be included in the newsletter. Thank you.

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### **June 2015 Meeting Minutes:**

#### **CALL TO ORDER:**

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, June 20, 2015 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and the Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:34 a.m. The minutes for the April 18, 2015 meeting and the May 9, 2015 meeting were approved.

#### **OFFICER REPORTS:**

##### **President: Angi Morgan reported:**

- No report.

##### **President-Elect: Suzan Butler was not present:**

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- April and May minutes approved and filed for audit.

**Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- The Treasurer's report was presented and filed for audit.

**Program Director: Lara Lacombe was not present.**

- No report.

**Website Director:****COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:****Membership Director: Gina Nelson reported:**

- 59 Members to date.

**Communications Director: Kim Miller reported:**

- Send information / articles / photos for inclusion in the newsletter to [newsletter@NTRWA.org](mailto:newsletter@NTRWA.org) by June 28, 2015.

**PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek reported:**

- Addison Fox and CM Doporto and Ally Broadfield made PAN.
- Pencil presented to Krystal Shannan: *My Eternal Soldier*

**PRO Liaison: Dakota Byrd was not present. Clover Autrey presented:**

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- No report.

**Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- No report.

**Hospitality: Michelle Welsh reported:**

- No report.

**Audio Librarian: Debra Owens was not present:**

- No Report.

**Writing Incentives: Christine Crocker was not present. Angi Morgan reported:**

- Presented the report.
  - Pages written / edited:
    - Top 5 Most written:
      - This Month:
        - Christi Doport: 268
        - Angi Morgan: 173
        - Rita Ward: 170
        - Cindy Dees: 120
        - Elizabeth Webb and Faith Stencel: 86
      - Top 5 Most edited:
        - This Month:
          - Carolyn Rae Williamson: 867
          - Gina Nelson: 412
          - Angi Morgan: 346
          - Kym Roberts: 287
          - Jerrie Alexander: 260

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- Kim Roberts: *Flirting with the Devil*
- Jerrie Alexander: *Flirting with Fate*
- Cindy Dees: *Warrior Seals*
- Submitted:
  - Connie Bowen: *Prophecy-Soul of the Witch*
- Sold:
  - Kristal Shannan: *My Eternal Soldier*

**Bylaws: Angi Morgan reported:**

- No Report.

**Spotlights: Marty Tidwell reported:**

- Amanda McMurrey is our spotlight.

**Unfinished Business:**

- No unfinished business to report.

**New Business:**

- No new business to report.

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*Email questions, comments, or articles to [newsletter@ntrwa.org](mailto:newsletter@ntrwa.org).*

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