



## As The Author Learns

*Bits and Tidbits about the Publishing Process*

*from J L Wilson*

*author of mysteries, paranormal romances &*

*books that defy categorizing*

### What's Happening?

This has been a very busy month and yet a long month, too. January always feels like it drags on and on. Of course, winter feels like it drags on and on, doesn't it? And then we get to February, which is supposed to be the shortest month, but here in the upper Midwest - it feels pretty darn long, let me tell you.

I had a bit of a surprise this month. My aunt passed away. She was 100 years old, so it wasn't a surprise that she died and really, not a cause for grief. She led a full life and I have so many fond memories of her. But I realized after she died that it's because of her that I started writing the kind of mysteries I do. I never realized it before, but her death made me stop and reflect on it.

Here's how it happened: eighteen years ago my aunt was living in a quiet little neighborhood in a typical America town. It wasn't a big city but a nice-sized large town in the Midwest. She had lived there for decades and had a great friend who lived next door (in an equally charming little house in this charming little neighborhood).



Eighteen years ago that neighbor was murdered in her home. It was a totally random event. Teenagers gained entrance to the home and killed the elderly lady living there. It's the sort of story you read about in newspapers or hear about on the news. Unfortunately our society has become somewhat accustomed to this kind of tragedy and I don't think we even hear the details any more when it's announced on television or we see it in a paper.

That murder and its aftermath really resonated with me. The murderers (teenagers!) were caught, went to trial, and went to prison. My aunt eventually moved away from the neighborhood. Life went on. But I thought about that tragedy now and again. When I started to write mysteries, I decided to write about every-day people who are thrown into unusual circumstances, tossed into events that take them out of their normal lives -- something like what happened to the people who lived in that charming little neighborhood. My stories are far lighter and I don't delve into the tragedy but I try to stay true to "what would happen...if."

## In Other News

I'm having a great time co-teaching a Community Education class here in the Twin Cities. Our writing-for-publication class has only four people in it, but I'm glad we have such a small group. It's the first time my critique partner and I have taught the class, so those four people are our guinea pigs.

I've discovered a lot of techniques and ideas that I lost track of as I was writing and having books published. It's gratifying to see that a lot of the techniques are things that I do naturally now (for example, limit the use of adjectives, or nip the use of adverbs in the bud). But some other tips and techniques are like old friends that I've re-discovered.

Equally gratifying is the realization of how much I've learned since I began this odd journey of 'writing for publication'. The industry has changed radically in that time. It used to be that the only 'real' route to publication was the tried-and-true method of finding a big New York publisher. Now those publishers are cutting back or folding. Many of them are offering self-publishing options because that's a sure-fired way to bring money in. Bookstores are closing and the whole publishing model -- the old-fashioned model of advances, royalties, and bookstore distribution -- is changing. It will be fascinating to see where we all land.

## What's Next?

Soon I'll be submitting three books to my editor at Wild Rose for consideration in their 2011 schedule. I've already got two books slated for next year, but I'd like to find a home for these three mysteries.



I'm continuing my work on my multi-generational series but I'm nipping away at my ghost story, too. I'd like to wrap it up this spring then I can submit it and two other books for consideration on the 2012 release schedule.

Then I'm off to New Orleans in a couple of weeks - whooee! I'm heading to the EpiCon conference where my time travel book, *Endurance*, is up for best Science Fiction Romance book. I won my category last year with *If Not For You* (my romantic suspense book), so I'm hoping I have good luck again this year. I will report back on all the fun in my newsletter.

My critique partner and I are traveling together to this conference and we're going a bit early to take in some sightseeing. I plan to eat beignets at Café du Monde and relax in the warmth (surely it will be warmer than Minnesota!) It's been about ten or twelve years since I've been to New Orleans. I know it's changed drastically but I'm sure I can still get good shrimp etouffee or maybe a muffaletta somewhere in the Quarter.

Send good vibes my way on the evening of March 6<sup>th</sup> - I'll be waiting to see if I won!

