

# Writing Works

## The Holiday Pen- "REFLECTIONS" of STI '06

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What is it about that special gift with the most appropriate message that can inspire one to *get moving*? It was an unusually mild December morning as I struggled with all of my extra books and holiday packages. Fumbling to unlock the door with one hand while trying to keep from losing my grip on the heavy load, I made my way into the building and toward the office to sign in and check my mailbox for messages. I passed one of my co-workers and exchanged "good mornings" as I continued to balance my load hoping that it would not give way. Finally I approached the office, let go of just enough stuff to scribble my initials into the sign-in book and turned to retrieve messages from my box.

Peeking out just over the edge I discovered a small rectangular box adorned in brightly colored Christmas wrap accompanied by a small white envelope with my name etched across the front. Now as most of us know, surprises in one's mailbox do not always take the form of neatly and beautifully wrapped gifts. Thoughts of what transpired yesterday at the IEP meeting along with the hustle bustle feeling of holiday stress that had consumed my thoughts on the drive in now take a back seat to this special little surprise.

Clutching my special package, the journey to my room took me down the never-ending hallway of the primary building where the bulletin boards on either side scream with Christmas art and holiday writings. I reached for the light switch at the entrance to the dark annex and continued around the narrow hall then up the steps and into my Enrichment Reading Room. Managing to warm my small square white space with a holiday glow, the bright morning sun was peeking through the half-closed blinds as it reflected the colored twinkle lights I had strung around my bulletin board just the day before.

Releasing my grip on the bags that had now caused a bit of numbness in my hands, I hung my coat behind the door and proceeded to unpack my books and packages. I carefully placed the special package on my desk and was now anxious to open it up and read the message. Finally, feeling organized and settled (anyone who knows me knows my need to be organized) I allowed myself to bask in the stillness and quiet of the early morning hour and welcomed the opportunity for this special moment



Ann Stone

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# The Holiday Pen—"REFLECTIONS" of STI '06

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before the bell rings and the multitude of angels descends upon us. I'm not sure how others approach opening gifts and cards...my philosophy is open the gift first because the card can sometimes reveal the surprise within.

Unwrapping the package gently, I discovered a black hinged box and carefully flipped the lid up and open to reveal a shiny smoky brown-colored pen trimmed in gold and nestled tightly within a light tan velvet base. Studying this beautiful gift my eyes were summoned to the gold letters on the black silk lining within the lid of the box. The words leaped out at me like an acrobat into a net below...and there it was in huge gold capital letters..."REFLECTIONS by *Things Remembered*." I sat for just a moment admiring the pen and then finally reached for the card (even though I knew immediately who it was from.

The glossy light sky-blue background of the half-folded card was dotted with muted white snowflakes and along the spine was tied a thin silver beaded marker, each end secured with one white and one clear oblong bead just above the knots. Knowing the sender as I do and her love for writing, I was anxious to read the message. I folded the card open and in her beautiful script I first noticed in the top right hand corner..."Christmas 2006," and the rest of the greeting goes as follows:

*Ann-*

*STI 2006 was a highlight of my life—and partly because I had you to share it with me! I hope this pen reminds you of that wonderful experience, my dear friend. "Merry Christmas to all and to all a Good Write!" (hee,hee)*

*Love,  
Patty*

Just as I was planning my escape in Santa's sleigh to some far off tropical island in an effort to ward off the holiday woes, I was stopped dead in my tracks by this beautiful gift with the powerful golden words on the black silk lining..."REFLECTIONS by *Things Remembered*."

I was summoned back in time by the soothing sounds of Nina's bells calling together for the morning writing circle, our talented and closely bound group of teachers, writers, friends. I remember how our pens danced word

parades across the pages of our daybooks and how those words reached out to touch each and every writer as we shared our written thoughts. Recalling the anticipation of time and hoping that Cheryl's timer would not sound until all the words were captured on my page I knew I would never finish...and so it was.

The warm summer days passed too quickly as our voices grew louder and our messages were well received. I remember being captivated by the online blackboard as fellow T-Cs would speak to one another's messages while offering words of encouragement.

I recall reading the fall '06 copy of *Writing Works*. Bridget Patton (fellow T-C '06), and how her words captured the essence of my thoughts regarding STI in her article *The Real World, MWP Style*. She writes, "I long for the community of teachers, fellows and friends who I relied on for inspiration, encouragement and feedback." Indeed.

I go back to an early dismissal day in the beginning of the school year when Patty Gillam (my gift giver and fellow T-C '06) and I facilitated a daybook afternoon with our faculty. Each teacher was presented with a journal and of course Patty's famous daybook entry...SPOONS. I think about how privileged I was this fall to join both Cheryl and Nina as we took our presentations on the road and sang the praises of the MWP-STI. I remember how Patty and I reveled yet again in being co-presenters for the October Write-to-Learn Saturday at Towson University.

But by far, it is the circle—a very special circle of teachers, writers, "friends" that draws me back in time yet again. The silence that filled the small room on Visitors' Day as we gathered hand in hand for one last time...a spiritual boost.

Suddenly I am jolted back to reality by the morning greeting on the school intercom. As I neatly tuck my special gift back into its box I finally realize that there is no shame in being *Unwritten*. The shame rears its ugly head when pens stop and voices hide. I give thanks for my dear friend Patty who inspired me to make my Holiday Pen get moving as it danced to the lyrics of the golden words on the black silk lining: "REFLECTIONS by *Things Remembered*."