



Story Circle Journal

The newsletter for women with stories to tell...

Volume 5 Number 2, May 2001

Stories from the Inside Out

For the past year, Carol Waid has been listening to stories from the inside out—from within women's hearts and within prison walls. Working with a friend, this former Story Circle board member has created a very special story circle at the Lockhart Renaissance Facility, in Lockhart, TX—a model for women's story circles in institutions around the country.

The first program that Carol and Nathalie created was called Talk to Me, designed to help the inmates with their speaking and writing skills. "We have had three more classes since then," Carol says: "a creative writing class, a Talk to Me II class, and the class we just finished, which was about the discovery of self, relationships with others, and relationships with the outside world."

The most recent circles that Carol and Nathalie have facilitated have included many of the same women. "We had nine in this last class," Carol reports. "It has become an environment of safety for the women to speak truth, develop a voice that they have never used, rethink some of their bad choices, work on their creative sides, and to be able to be open with their feelings"—the same goals and strategies that shape all the circles in the Network.

The program was originally created to give women in prison the opportunity to share their experiences in an effort to keep younger women from making poor life choices. However, the prison authorities decided that it wasn't appropriate to allow girls under 18 into the facility. "So the women spoke to church members," Carol says, "friends and families of ours—still with the focus of helping others." Four of the original group have been released and continue to share their stories.

According to the National Women's Law Center of Washington D.C., women in prison represent the fastest-growing segment of America's prison population, tripling between 1980 and 1993. Women prisoners are disproportionately women of color, with African American and Hispanic women making up 60 percent of the population. Over half were unemployed prior to imprisonment, and most report significant histories of domestic abuse. Over two-thirds have children under 18, and their family stories also become stories of trauma and loss. Because there are fewer women's facilities, women are often imprisoned far away from their children and families, and this loss of contact deeply affects their lives. Carol says: "We have found that so many of these women have had very tragic lives and lived much of their life with the lack of love and care."

In the February issue of the *Journal*, we reported that the Story Circle Board of Directors has made available a number of free memberships for women in prison. The number has now grown to ten: one in Marlin TX, four in California, and five in the Lockhart facility. The board also created a Sugar Bowl Scholarship Fund to help pay for these memberships. To contribute, send a check to Sugar Bowl, Story Circle Network, PO Box 500127, Austin TX 78750-0127, or use the PayPals system on our web site.

If you are looking for a way to make a difference in the lives of others, consider creating a Story Circle program in a woman's prison facility in your community. You may discover that this work can make a difference in your life, as well. "Nathalie and I love what we do," Carol says. "We have found that this is where our passion lies, and we hope that others will find a love for women in prison. There is a great need for mentors and volunteers. One of the inmates said it best: 'We have made bad choices, but we are not bad people.' Working with these women has changed our lives."

(For several Stories from the Inside Out, turn to pages 14-15.)

*After a certain number of years
our faces become our
biographies. We get
to be responsible for our faces.*
—Cynthia Ozick

*I am not afraid of the pen, or
the scaffold, or the sword. I will
tell the truth wherever I please.*
—Mother Jones

*We must not, in trying to think
about how we can make a big
difference, ignore the small
daily differences we can make
which, over time, add up to big
differences that we
often cannot foresee.*
—Marian Wright Edelman



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The Story Circle Network

The Story Circle Network—What is it and who are the members?

The Story Circle Network is made up of women who want to explore their lives by exploring their stories.

What can I gain from the Network?

You will receive the following publications, information, and opportunities. These things won't be available all at once—we're just getting started! But as our membership grows, our activities will expand. You'll get:

- ◇ **four issues** of the 16- to 22-page newsletter, *Story Circle Journal*, with ideas for writing additional chapters of your life story, plus poetry and brief personal essays from subscribers
- ◇ **the opportunity to publish your writing** to the newsletter and other Network publications
- ◇ **a network guide** that will allow you to directly contact members with interests and experiences similar to yours (forthcoming, as the Network grows and members send us their information)
- ◇ **a report on the activities of Story Circles** across the country, in each issue of the newsletter
- ◇ **book reviews and a resource guide** listing groups, teachers, and publications that are committed to helping women tell their stories (in each newsletter)

What can I contribute to the Network?

The Story Circle Network is built out of our shared experiences. To it, we hope you will bring yourself and your willingness to share your life and what you have learned from it. If you wish, you may contribute some of your writing (poetry, prose, book reviews—ask for a copy of our writer's guidelines). If you are a teacher or group leader, you are invited to calendar your related events.

We also hope that many of you will decide to participate by leading a Story Circle in your community. It isn't hard, and it's enormously rewarding. Won't you give it a try?

How do I become a member?

That's the easiest part! You automatically become a member of the Network when you subscribe to *Story Circle Journal*. Annual memberships are \$24 in the United States and \$36 elsewhere. You will find a membership form at the back of this newsletter. Please join us and share your story.

*Hey! Where's your
Story Circle T-Shirt?*

Your purchase helps
women tell their
stories!



Story Circle

STORY CIRCLE is a quarterly newsletter, published in February, May, August, and November. It is written by and for women who want to share their experiences. Its purpose is to encourage readers to become writers, guide women to set down their true stories, and encourage the sharing of women's lives. This newsletter is provided for information and is not intended to replace qualified therapeutic assistance.

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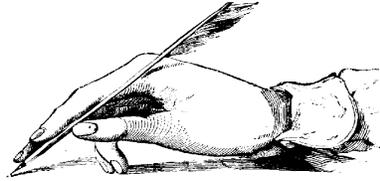
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Missed Issues: We try to ensure that *Story Circle Journal* arrives in your mailbox four times a year. If you miss an issue, send us a note and we'll mail you a replacement.

Change of address: If you move, please tell us. Unless you send us your new address, we can't guarantee that you'll receive your newsletter!

LifeStory Briefs: Practical How-to for Memoir Writers

Adding a Chapter on Ancestors



With the recent on-line publication of the 1892-1924 immigration records of Ellis Island, and with the increasing availability of useful genealogy sites in cyberspace, it is becoming easier than ever before to add a chapter about your ancestors to the story of your life.

Why is this important? There are the obvious reasons, of course. That my Grandpa Franklin was an interesting character. That your Great-Aunt Ruth was a pioneer doctor with a repertory of amazing achievements. That the family history can be traced back to the time of William the Conqueror, which means that we must be important people.

But beyond these, there is this: that the more we know about those who went before us, the more we understand about ourselves. That we are who we are because we come from a particular cultural heritage, from a tradition, from a tribe, from a clan. These affiliations may partially explain not just our genetic makeup, but our food, our clothing, the work we do, the way we raise our children, the deity we worship. You won't solve your personal enigmas by tracing them to your ancestors, but you will at least illuminate them.

Begin With Yourself

The best place to begin this search is with yourself. Write about your memories of family members in your parents' and grandparents' and great-grandparents' generations. Record their names, the dates of birth and death, the places they lived. Write down the facts, but also include your feelings about these people. They are part of *your* story.

Talk to Family Members

The next step is to talk with family members. Ask about family Bibles, marriage licenses, birth certificates, military records. In original or photocopy, these are important records. Find out if someone else in the family is doing genealogical research—if so, don't duplicate that work, choose another branch of the family tree to investigate.

But don't restrict yourself to the facts. Older family members have stories to tell about their own and previous generations. Gather those

stories and write them down. Some may be so interesting that they call out for further exploration. Did Great-Great-Grandpa Joe really ride with the Dalton Gang? What really happened to Miss Millie after she ran away from home? Many memoir writers have found that these ancestor tales greatly enhance their own stories.

Do On-Line and Field Research

To search out more facts, make a tour of the on-line genealogy sites. If you're just getting started, go to Roots Web, which is the oldest and largest free genealogy sites, at www.rootsweb.com. The goal of this site is to "provide a resource which can connect the family trees of everyone in the world" and they're making a good start, with Social Security records, surname look-ups, bulletin boards and mailing lists. They also host sites such as the US Genealogical and Historical Resources site, sites that post photos of tombstones, lists of immigrant ships, links to international sites, and so on.

You can also use your computer to keep track of your findings. Some software is free (www.familysearch.org), some can be purchased (Family Tree Maker, \$20). What you need depends on how you plan to use it.

But the Web isn't the last word in research. Visit your local library's genealogy collection, and the library in the town where your ancestors lived. Check the county courthouse. Take photos of family homes and family cemeteries. Visit your family's country of origin.

Focus on Story

When you're doing genealogical research, it's easy to get lost a forest of facts. But don't lose sight of your purpose: to explore the stories of your ancestors and to understand how their lives (lived in the past) intersect with the life you lead in the present. And always remember that your research and story-telling will create a priceless legacy for your own descendants, and become an integral and important part of their story, too!

Susan Wittig Albert

Stones That Tell Stories

If these were your family's tombstones, what fascinating stories could you create?

Margaret Daniels
Hollywood Cemetery,
Richmond, Virginia:

*She always said her feet
were killing her but nobody
believed her.*

John Barnes, Vermont
*Sacred to the memory of my
husband, John Barnes
who died*

*January 3, 1803
His comely young widow,
aged 23, has many
qualifications of a good
wife, and yearns to be
comforted.*

Anna Wallace,
Ribbesford, England
*The children of Israel
wanted bread
And the Lord sent them
manna,
Old clerk Wallace
wanted a wife,
And the Devil sent him
Anna.*

Anna Hopewell
Enosburg Falls, VT
*Here lies the body
of our Anna,
Done to death by a banana.
It wasn't the fruit that
laid her low
But the skin of the thing
that made her go.*

Writing and Healing

Writing as a Tool for Healing

Psychologists tell us that frequent, regular, uncensored writing about our daily lives can be profoundly therapeutic, especially when we connect with others through that writing. Debbie Tripp, M.A., is a freelance writer and teaches Writing for Healing and Self-discovery. She is a member of the National Assn. of Poetry Therapy and a recipient of the Wisconsin Regional Writers' Jade Ring Award for writing excellence. Email: debbietripp@hotmail.com.

The Clustering Technique A Tool for Discovery

The clustering technique was an invaluable tool for helping a friend with her life stories when she was told she had 90 days to live. We began with a single word in the center of a large sheet of paper. In her case, it was her name. (In other classes, we have used an event, emotion, dream image, etc.) Using Lura's name, we moved out across the paper, writing other words around the center words like a spider web. The key was to keep the ideas flowing. If one word outside the center stimulated more images we moved out again from that word. Soon we had a page filled with faith, children, marriage, village life, wedding, mother's death, first house, favorite foods, and hobbies. I wrote quickly as Lura free-associated from each of these words. Key points soon filled the sheet of paper.

Lura studied the paper and then selected the three words that for her were the most important stories she wanted to leave behind. Using the same selection technique, we were able to create three sheets with words to help us develop the key points in those stories.

Before Lura died, each story was completed. She even planned a chocolate buffet with live music for her memorial service. The musicians came to her house and played the songs she requested a few weeks before her death.

Clustering helps generate a flow of ideas, developing a picture of the truth as we experience it. The technique provides a great starting point for exploring any topic. I recommend *Pain and Possibility: Writing Your Way Through Personal Crises* by Gabriele Rico as a good reference for

My passion for healing writing was born out of my own chronic illness, my parents' adventure-seeking in their late 70's and a friend's terminal cancer. I had been journaling for years before I realized the impact of writing as a healing tool. With chronic pain, my journal became a place to whine, pray and release my frustration. When my parents retired and chose a sometimes downright dangerous lifestyle, I used these pages for worry and complaint. As I helped a dying friend with her life story, I learned the power of life story writing. My writing workshops got a big boost when the Journal of American Medical Association (April, 1999) published an article on the physical benefits of writing, based on a study with patients suffering from asthma or rheumatoid arthritis. The JAMA article came out about the same time the local paper did a feature article on my workshops at the hospital and public library.

I design my classes based on the participants needs, so the content changes every 6 weeks. I have worked with individuals experiencing chronic pain, depression, and cancer, as well as those seeking life-meaning and self-discovery. For each session, I bring a bag of props to use as a springboard for writing. I often select props to appeal to the senses. For example, vanilla, Vicks, and baby lotion all make great memory jogs, for each one has its own special associations of taste and touch, as well as scent. Sounds are also very powerful. I use a variety of sounds, from the rhythms of Native American music to the surprise sound of my key chain, which screams, "OH, No, Help Me" when I beat it on the desk.. Mindfully eating jelly bellies can be just the playful twist to bring out unexpected stories. I bring in a variety of fabrics and textures to appeal to the touch. Drawing with crayons can also access a wealth of memories. Word writing prompts, such as a poem or an open-ended sentence, also work well.

Although I sometimes feel silly hauling stuffed animals and other visual props to class, I am truly astounded by the stories and personal insights they evoke. One class member was suffering with RSD, a condition of intense pain which is difficult to control even with morphine. Most of her writing was grieving the many losses this condition caused. One day I brought in a three-foot gorilla, along with other stuffed animals. I asked members to pretend that one of these items had a message for them. Betty wrote a wonderful, playful message from the gorilla. It was written in an English accent and suggested specific ways she could still play despite her pain and low energy.

Healing writing can take many forms. It can be a beat-up spiral notebook of inch-high scrawls, or it can be the magazine article I wrote while attempting to deal with my parent's adventures in a Mexican jail and a village hospital. I remind participants that note cards hastily written at red lights can be a form of journaling. Healing writing circles focus on exploring the relationships between pain or trauma and emotion. It is important that the past emotions as well as the present ones are included. These two aspects have been clinically linked to an improvement in symptoms.

In my workshops, I stress that it is the act of writing that is important. I demonstrate the clustering technique (also called mind-mapping) we used with my friend with cancer. It helped her determine which stories were most important to her during her last few months. The essentials are a playful attitude and a sense of humor and adventure. The only skill required is a willingness to explore. The only mistake is not to write. The opening of the heart as our stories are shared is the beginning of healing.



A Reader Tells Her Story

A Knowledge As Heavy As Lead

Susan Hanson is a long-time member of the English faculty at Southwest Texas State University, where she teaches composition and nature writing. A newspaper journalist for 20 years, she has received numerous awards from the Associated Press and has published work in a variety of magazines. She is married and lives in San Marcos, Texas.

I was lying on the couch reading a detective novel when my husband approached with an open magazine in hand.

"Have you seen this?" he asked, holding it out for me to take. I glanced at the title, "My Summer Scare," and felt a chill of recognition. Only days before, I'd been through the very same thing. "Like millions of American women," medical reporter Janice M. Horowitz wrote, "I go faithfully to the radiologist for my annual mammogram. Unlike most women, I got a bad report last month."

Bad report. That sounds like something you'd say to describe your child's failing grade in math, or the mechanic's take on that funny sound in your engine, or the reason the department store won't let you charge a \$1200 sofa to your account. As language goes, *bad report* simply doesn't carry enough weight. It isn't somber enough. It lacks gravity. It doesn't sound like the sort of thing that would scare you out of your wits. *We'll need to biopsy this.* Now *there's* a statement with some punch.

Given that this was supposed to be an ordinary day—breakfast at 7:00, mammogram at 9:30, haircut at 1:00—I was more than a little distressed when I learned there was something wrong. "The doctor wants another set of films," the technician had said when she finally got me on the phone. "We can work you in if you want to come back right now."

Within minutes, I had hurriedly eaten the last of my lunch and was driving headlong toward town. Somewhere deep in the pit of my stomach, a heaviness collected itself like lead. My rational self was merely annoyed by what it took to be a necessary bother. My more primitive self, the one who worries about lightning storms and bridges spanning miles of open water—*this* self was definitely unnerved.

"There's an area that didn't show up very well," the technician explained as she ushered me into the room. "I need to see if I can get a better shot."

There was no small talk this time around, no pretending to be nonchalant, no casually flipping through a well-worn magazine while waiting to get the report. No, this time I preferred to sit and stare at the wall—or better yet, at the set of films still lit up on the X-ray screen to my left.

"It's this area right here," the technician had said, pointing to a blur up in the corner. "Can you see it?" I looked at her blankly. I couldn't see a thing.

When the technician returned after yet another conference with the doctor, I could tell I wasn't going to be happy with what she had to say. "He wants to do an ultrasound," she told me. The chunk of lead in my stomach grew. It would be a while before they could fit me in, so the technician suggested that I keep my one o'clock appointment with the hairdresser. I concurred. After all, it might help me to relax, to take my mind off all the dire scenes that were playing in my head.

Or not.

I returned as quickly as I could.

The adventure I'd begun so innocently that morning finally ended sometime after 4:00. After doing a second ultrasound himself, the doctor gave me two choices, neither of which I liked: I could opt for a traditional biopsy, in which a surgeon would remove a section of tissue for a pathology exam, or I could choose to have a needle biopsy which, as gruesome as it sounded, would be far less painful and much more simple to perform. The decision was easy to make.

The hard part was dealing with the sense that I was caught up in a process that I couldn't stop. Perched on the edge of a slippery slope, I had taken that first big step. And now I felt myself careening toward the bottom, careening toward an answer that I might not want to know.

In the 36 hours that followed, I imagined the very worst. Forget the fact that eighty percent of all women who have breast biopsies get a *good* report. Forget the fact that breast cancer doesn't run in my family. Forget the fact that we were merely being cautious here. This was my *body* we were talking about. I was entitled to get worked up.

What came next was both better and worse than I thought—better because the biopsy really *didn't* hurt, worse because the suspicious-looking lesion moved each time the needle came too close.

"That's actually a good sign," a doctor friend assured me afterward. "That means it's probably a cyst."

Four days later, I went through the process again, this time with better results. In all likelihood, the doctor said, it *was* just a cyst; she was 99.9% sure. Less than an hour after walking in, I was merrily on my way.

Merrily? Why didn't I feel relieved? Granted, my rational self was celebrating the fact that, from the looks of things, I was going to be ok. But just as it had been before, my more primitive self wasn't sure.

I had done the right thing, I believed, but I felt uneasy just the same. Call it a loss of innocence. A sense of my own mortality. A chill of recognition.

Call it a knowledge that's hard to shake.

Were it possible for us to see further than our knowledge reaches, and yet a little way beyond the outworks of our divining, perhaps we would endure our sadnesses with greater confidence than our joys. For they are the moments when something new has entered into us, something unknown.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

Meet Other Life-Writers

A Journey into the Self An Interview with Ann Linnea

Ann Linnea has been a naturalist and teacher of outdoor skills for three decades. As a high school student, she led grade school children on canoe trips in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. In her twenties she took high school biology students and Youth Conservation Corps students into the mountains of Utah, for environmental education. In her thirties she developed *Sense of Wonder Workshops* which led teachers and families outdoors in a spirit of curiosity, exploration and discovery. In her forties and fifties, she has continued to lead people into the wilderness on foot, in canoe, by kayak, and via dogsled. Author of a hiking and skiing guide during her years as US Forest Service naturalist in the 1970's, Ann also co-authored the award-winning *Teaching Kids to Love the Earth* (1991 Pfeifer-Hamilton). In the early 1990's, she began co-leading workshops with Christina Baldwin (author of the popular journaling guide, *Life's Companion*) that focus on creating community, gentle exploration of the natural world, rites of passage, and returning gifts to the planet. This work led her to design her own mid-life rite of passage--circumnavigating Lake Superior by sea kayak. *Deep Water Passage, A Spiritual Journey at Mid-Life*, (Little, Brown, 1995, Pocketbooks 1997) portrays her courage and willingness to honestly review and change her life. Together, Ann and Christina founded PeerSpirit, an educational company that offers Circle Practicum, Wilderness Adventures, and Writing Seminars. Ann lives in the state of Washington..

When we deliberately leave the safety of the shore of our lives, we surrender to a mystery beyond our intent.

In that moment I surrendered further to Mystery, forgot the fear and discomfort of the last few days, knew my commitment to transformation was as ancient a calling as the grooves on the rock before me.

You have two jobs: to use your training to stay safe every day, and to use your spirit to stay connected to your purpose--even when you don't know what your purpose is.

In my mind I began to take responsibility for the risks I was taking, for the hopes and expectations I had for the journey. I chanted in time to my paddling -- quest, live, quest, live. Quest. Live. I knew I could do both..

Story Circle: *Deep-Water Passage* grew out of a challenging adventure. Did you undertake your kayak journey with a memoir in mind, or did the book grow out of the adventure? How did your story become a book?

Ann: I didn't start out planning to write a book. I simply wrote about my journey after the fact, trying to articulate what had happened to me. During the trip, I was so much in a raw survival mode that there was scarcely time for reflection. I wrote to save the life I had found out there on the lake.

As to how it became a book—I would read selections from my journal to friends and they suggested that the writing was meant for a larger audience. One friend gave me a flyer about submitting an essay to an anthology of women's outdoor stories. My writing was accepted enthusiastically by the editor and so I was encouraged to attempt an entire book.

SC: *Your journey around the lake is a physical challenge, but a spiritual one as well. Was the spiritual journey a part of your original plan? And can you tell us something about the process of writing the book?*

Ann: From the very beginning of the trip I set a spiritual intent. I set it up as a midlife rite of passage to answer some important questions. What should I do next in my life? How can I listen to the larger (divine) plan

for my life? And most certainly writing helped me deepen that spiritual journey. In fact, I would say that it was at least as difficult a journey to write the book as it was to paddle around the lake. Over and over again I revisited different moments and turning places, holding them gently like the favorite pocket rock I always carry. With each visitation came new insight, deeper reflection and often considerable emotion. I might add that the arts were incredibly helpful in tapping into those places of deeper insight and spiritual dimension—music, literature, film, theater. For example, the movie, "The Piano," opened a floodgate. The scene near the end where the woman slips her foot into the rope, goes overboard, and then reverses her decision and fights to swim to the surface enabled me to write the storm scene as though I literally was reliving it.

SC: *You were alone in your kayak, but others—Paul, your paddling partner, and women supporters—enabled you to complete the journey. How did they help? How do you think women help us in our life journeys?*

In the writing of the book Betty [a friend who died before the journey] was my ever-present angel. Fran listened to journal entries and encouraged me to seek a wider audience, and Christina provided insightful critique and editing. I can't comment on the journeys that

other women take. I only know that for my entire life—beginning with the incredible support and wisdom of my own mother—I have sought and found amazing support from other women. Women are taught to be the nurturers, the listeners, the seekers. It's important to me to add, though, that many men carry those attributes as Paul so well exemplifies. The real key to support in my life is that I deeply value and honor friendships and work hard to sustain and maintain them.

SC: Writing a book is also a journey. Can you tell us about that part of your adventure? You kept a journal of the passage—did that help to guide you?

Ann: Every day that I wrote *Deep Water Passage* I would light a candle and carefully place next to it my journals and my charts from the trip. They held the outline, the essence of what happened. Studying them I could revisit different scenes. My next step was to write down a list of questions that came to mind from reading that day's journal. Questions are so important. "Quest" is, after all, the root of the word question. If my answers to the questions seemed superficial, I often wrote in the third person. "Once there was a woman who camped in a place that ancient peoples had camped on for centuries . . ." It is a technique that has often helped me write down into the layer below my daily consciousness. In my journey around the lake I made sure to write something in my journal each night—even if it was only the bare-bones facts about the day, even if I was exhausted and freezing. I set a powerful intention about that trip and I knew journal writing was going to be key in meeting that intention. In my ordinary life I don't journal every day. Sometimes a couple of weeks will go by without writing, but if that happens a little internal beeper goes off and I find a way to return to the wisdom of the page.

SC: Many of us have taken perilous journeys, and some of us feel compelled to write about them. What advice can you offer?

Ann: I want to say to each person, "Your

story is a journey. It has incredible value to you and to those around you. To write your story is a gift you must give yourself." Most of the love letters to *Deep Water Passage* that I have gotten over the years begin by thanking me for writing the book and then launch into a dissertation about the writer's own life story. This is wonderful! It is exactly why I wrote the book—to encourage each of us to claim our lives as journeys. Whether we paddle around Lake Superior or take care of our aging parents or help our teens get through depression or go through divorce or lose a job or whatever, we are on a journey of courage, spirituality and inspiration. Christina teaches a wonderful five-day writing class entitled, "Self as the Source of the Story." She has had agents ask, "How do you get so many published books out of a class for beginners?" Her response is simply, "They immerse themselves in an environment of safe listening so they can tap into their true stories. With a little bit of structure, amazing stories come forth."

SC: What have been the gifts of your journey? And what would you do differently, if you were to do it over again?

Ann: The gifts of my journey were many, but three major ones come to mind. First, I can now usually center myself spiritually simply by going outdoors and being still. Second, I found an inner courage that I know is there no matter what comes up. And finally, I have a reverence for and humility about life that are my beacons for living. I'm not sure it's relevant to speak about how one might do a journey differently. In the moment of all our trials—death, job loss, disease—we take the journeys the best we know how. Then if we can learn from what we did or did not do, we have grown and that is as much as we can ask. People have asked, "What is your next long trip?" My response is, "I don't need to do another grueling physical adventure. I was very lucky to survive. I know that. And I appreciate that I found what I was looking for. God willing, I will be around for the long haul. The adventure of life itself will continue to provide me many journeys."

I'm going to do this, my friend. I'm going to make it all the way around this lake. And I am going to come back so different, so changed that the fibers on my insides won't ever again allow doubt to come in and dissolve my ability to live life as fully as I can.

I do not have false pride. The lake will humble me tomorrow and the next day and the next. What I do have is an enormous growth in confidence...and that is the transformation that will enable me to return.

Knowing how to help myself find and sustain that sense of reverence is the single most important gift I received from my trip around the lake. It was not a gift I had immediate understanding of, nor one I can always easily find. But it has become the guiding hand of my life.

This sense of inferiority is not a solitary battle—every female faces some form of it. The struggle to claim ourselves as the authority in our own lives, while living in a culture where we are conditioned to give men our authority, is basic to our freedom. Circling the lake was my path to freedom.

SC: *You've said that your book began as an essay in an anthology. What's the rest of the story? How did it get published? What happened after that?*

Ann: It took me about three years to write the book. Four or five agents rejected the manuscript. The right agent had me in New York talking to publishers one month after she took on the project. The book was published nine months later. What I did not understand at the time was that the journey of *Deep Water Passage* was just beginning with publication. The real journey for a book's longevity (next to the quality of writing, of course) is to keep the book in print! If your house decides to put you on the remainder list, your book is dead. You have to continue to care and nurture and advocate for that book every day because no one believes in your "child" as you do. Public speaking, letters to your editor, book signings—all these become labors of love so your message can remain out there. I would highly recommend looking at regional and other small presses. Many of them with good track records only take on books they intend to keep in print. The publisher of my first book, *Teaching Kids to Love the Earth* (Pfeifer-Hamilton, Duluth, MN), is a fine example of that. In fact, I will first seek out a regional publisher for my next book.

SC: *Many people who take a difficult journey are changed by what happens to them—and by the process of writing about it, as well. Did that happen to you? How have you changed?*

Ann: I honestly don't believe that a person can write deeply personal material and not grow and change in significant ways. The life I am now living—co-owner of a small education company on an island in Puget Sound—is the direct result of my journey around the lake and the claiming of that journey by writing *Deep Water Passage*. Professionally, I have stepped deeper into the skills I have to offer. Personally, I have changed physical locations and partners, but I am still deeply

devoted to my parenting, to my love of adventure and the earth, and to my desire to be of service to God. And I have enormous humility about the ongoing challenge and growth that life presents us with.

I do want to say one last word about the importance of writing about one's life passage—about claiming one's story. It is an incredibly important gift to give yourself and the life you are trying to lead. Women from time immemorial have chronicled their stories. What an incredible gift this has been to us! Let us do likewise to the generations of women following in our footsteps.

SC: *Thank you, Ann!*

Book Review

Deep Water Passage: A Spiritual Journey at Midlife, by Ann Linnea, Pocket Books, NY 1993.
Reviewed by Susan Wittig Albert.

Our Story Circle Reading Circle (in Austin TX) read this book and thoroughly enjoyed it. It is the story of a 43-year old woman who kayaked around Lake Superior in search of the rest of her life. It was a summer-long journey—65 days of incredible challenge, of angry storms, high seas, and painful physical trials. But more than that, it is a journey into the soul of a woman who is willing to risk all that she already knows about herself (as a wife, a mother, a friend) in order to learn what she does *not* know about her own inner resources. "When we deliberately leave the safety of the shore of our lives," Linnea writes, "we surrender to a mystery beyond our intent." It is within the circle of those mysteries, beyond any willed intention on our parts, that transformation takes place. As readers of this memoir of courage and physical challenge, members of our Circle felt that we too had surrendered to the mystery of the journey, and were transformed by it.



Dear Pen Partner...

Stories mean a great deal more when they're shared with a pen partner—someone (or two or three) with whom you can trade letters and/or emails. If you'd like to be a pen partner, send us your name and address and we'll print it here. The rest is up to you!

Tamra Ellis #807516, PO Box 1300, Lockhart TX 78644 (Member, Inside Out Program)
Rebekah Lee Taylor W74876, Miller A-34-L, 16756 Chino Corona Rd, Corona CA 92880-9508 (Inside Out Program)
Cameo Victor, 2 Edgewater Place, Elkhart IN 46516

Books for the Journey

In each issue, we review books that teach us something important about women's stories. If you have a favorite book you'd like to share, send for our Reviewers Guide or go to <http://www.storycircle.org/ReviewersGuidelines.shtml>. We welcome your reviews!

I Could Tell You Stories: Sojourns in the Land of Memory, by Patricia Hampl, W.W. Norton & Co., 1999. Reviewed by Leslea Smith, Hillsboro, OR.

Patricia Hampl could read the first chapter of *I Could Tell You Stories* at a Story Circle meeting and fit right in. She describes a bus ride through the middle of the country, and a farm woman who tells her "I could tell you stories." Contemplating that tantalizing remark and the beauty of the dawn, Hampl hears the injunction:

"Remember!"

The book is a collection of essays, originally published in various journals and anthologies. The collection works well as a whole, tied together by the theme of the power of autobiographical writing. Hampl recounts her own stories as a way to explore the memoir genre: the connection between imagination and memory, what happens when our story takes us to dark places, and the conflict that arises when our stories reveal other people's secrets, for example. Mixed in with her own stories are powerful essays on the personal writing of a curious mix of authors: Edith Stein, Sylvia Plath, Augustine and Anne Frank. Each has lessons for the memorist.

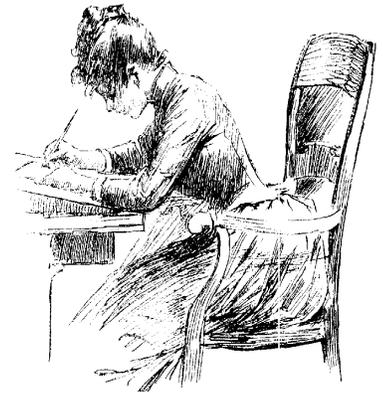
I read this book with my dictionary close at hand. Hampl is Regent's Professor at the University of Minnesota. Her writing is thick but worth the effort required to read it. Many of her dense, image-laden sentences sparkle. Her insights into personal writing ring true to me. For example, Hampl says "It still comes as a shock to realize that I don't write about what I know, but in order to find out what I know."

Welcome to Story Circle, Patricia.

Harvesting Your Journals: Writing Tools to Enhance Your Growth and Creativity, by Rosalie Deer Heart and Alison Strickland, Heartlink Publications, San Cristobal NM: 1999. Reviewed by Cassandra Jacobs, New Orleans LA.

Have you ever wondered what to do with those stacks of old journals you've been keeping under your bed or hiding in the back of your closet? Of course, all of us dip into our journals from time to time, pondering old passions and marveling at our personal ancient history. What we don't do, unfortunately, is to work systematically with our journals. That's what *Harvesting Your Journals* is all about—a guide to help you gather the experiences, hopes, dreams, and plans you have jotted down over the years, a way to help you map your life changes and gain a clearer sense of who you are. As you review your own journals, this book will help you strengthen your understanding of your own personal history and map the turning points of your journey.

I liked this book for several reasons. The first was the helpful advice the authors offer for "stepping into" our journals and examining our past lives. "You'll be encountering parts of yourself that can then be gathered in to make you more whole," they say, and suggest that we maintain a committed, curious, humorous, and compassionate attitude toward these old selves. They invite us to look to our journals for themes (such as body image, friendships, dreams, aging), questions (What accounts for love? How do I nourish my soul in the midst of life's demands?), and motifs (forgotten dreams, key turning points, times when you broke your silence and spoke your truth). I also like it because it is such a deeply personal book. The authors share not only their journals but also their deep friendship, and as a reader, I felt strengthened by both.



From *I Could Tell You Stories*

Memoir must be written because each of us must possess a created version of the past.... We must acquiesce to our experience and our gift to transform experience into meaning. You tell me your story, I'll tell you mine.

What is remembered is what becomes reality.... If we learn not only to tell our stories but to listen to what our stories tell us—to write the first draft and then return for the second draft—we are doing the work of memory.

The first commandment of fiction—Show, Don't Tell—is not part of the memorist's faith. Memoirists must show and tell. Memoir is a peculiarly open form, inviting broken and incomplete images, half-recollected fragments, all the mass (and mess) of detail. It offers to shape this confusion—and, in shaping, of course, it necessarily creates a work of art, not a legal document.

A memoirist must acquiesce to selectivity, like any artist. The version we dare to write is the only truth, the only relationship we can have with the past. Refuse to write your life and you have no life. That is the stern view of the memoirist.



True Words from Real Women

In this section of each Story Circle Journal, we publish members' contributions of poetry and prose. Write for our Writers' Guidelines, limber up your ballpoint pen (or your typewriter or computer) and send in your contributions. We want to hear your stories!

Discoveries

We make many discoveries as we take our place in the world. We discover the talents we have and don't have. We discover that our experience and abilities are not the same as anyone else's.

In my childhood, I discovered that I burned in the sun and my sister did not. I spent a cool, breezy, yet sunny afternoon mowing our three acres on the back of a new ride-on lawn mover. What a joy it was to control this marvelous machine. So what if it only went three miles an hour and only traversed the lawn. At the end of the day, I was flecked with grass and had a beautifully trimmed yard to show for it. I also had a great deal of pain. In addition to painful, sunburned skin is hot. Envious of my sister's tan, I pondered the benefits of having sunburn should I be stranded at the North Pole; as surely this burn would keep me warm even in that cold.

Later I discovered that my sister felt I had mechanical aptitude. Her radio had ceased to work and she handed it over to me to fix. Thinking I knew nothing about radios, I nevertheless opened the back. Examining it carefully, I noticed an antenna wire was loose. It was an easy fix to reattach it. I never revealed how simple the problem had been.

Later I discovered my love of nature and how much my mother had taught me. I was surprised to find out that my best friend did not know the names of all the trees and didn't care.

I also discovered that one of my friends had a beautiful voice and no matter how much I loved music and wanted to sing, I couldn't possibly do what she did.

I slowly discovered that each person is unique and blessed with a very special set of talents. We all search for a way to express what makes us who we are. At the same time, we are enriched by our contact with those different but unique people around us.

Iva Jean
Florida

Through the Kitchen Window, Unexpectedly

Glistening rainbow,
Soaring through the sky like a neon pathway
to heaven.
The heavy, humid September air
Now a little lighter,
Slightly more breathable,
Even a bit magical.
Your fleeting colors touch my heart
In this endless, searing red summer.
Hope walks the sky.

Charlotte Hamrick
New Orleans LA

Hand in Hand

soft skin and small fingers
my hand cupped in hers
staggered first steps with a balance
a support forever grows

years of loving and of caring
while she guided me through life
my support now offered to her
with a slow gait, she shows might

aged skin, crooked fingers
her hand now cupped in mine
ever changing, roles reversing
mother, daughter; a lifetime

Pat Mitchell
Mishawaka IN

Soulful Dahlias

I discovered my father's soul one August afternoon as I sat on the deck watching my flowers bloom. The sun was hot yellow and impatiens, geraniums, snapdragons, marigolds and petunias painted a late summer still life. And then there were the dahlias. Every summer I fill a long cedar planter with dahlia plants to celebrate my father. Dahlias were his favorite flowers and among the many plants in his beloved gardens.

This year's dahlias, however, had wilted after their initial first profusion of blossoms. I was saddened as I watched my tribute to Dad shrivel and turn brown. Over the proceeding few weeks I had contemplated tossing the dying plants and buying new ones to replace them. But as I sipped my iced tea and surveyed the summer flowers I noticed that some of the leaves on one of the dahlia plants had started to recover their verdancy. I also noticed that a small flower bud had started to grow, its face turned away from me to admire the sun.

Ironic that I had discovered this new bud on the sixth anniversary of Dad's death. His soul, his green thumb, his love of all that grows, triumphed over the shadow of dried up brown leaves. His heart and soul lived on in his favorite flowers as they do in my heart. Dad had returned to bring me a message of faith. The message to sit back and wait for the weak to have their day of victory, for flowers to bloom where others had died. He taught me to have faith in time and Mother Nature. I watered the new growth with tears of joy and sadness. I looked toward the pale blue sky with gratitude that Dad can still teach me about life even from his distant home in heaven.

Renee Howard Cassese
Seaford NY

My Dad

My earliest sensations of newsprint are associated with feelings of security and intrigue. The security came from sitting on Dad's lap while he read, and the intrigue was curiosity about what all those black squiggles on the page meant.

I don't know how old I was when we started our ritual. I do know it was before I could read because I was only able to recognize pictures, not words.

I'd devour all I could decipher, then wait for him to turn the page. It never happened quickly enough, of course, and eventually I'd start my cycle of questions.

"Are you ready to turn the page yet?" I'd ask. "No, not yet," he'd respond calmly.

I'd wait for what seemed like an eternity (but was more likely only two or three minutes), then pipe up again.

"Now are you ready?" I'd ask.

"No, not yet," he'd say in that same, calm voice.

On and on we'd go until finally he was ready to turn the page at which point the cycle of questions started anew. Eventually I learned to pick out words in the ink spots, but our routine remained the same: I'd get impatient; he'd remain calm.

If I had been him, I would have lost my cool long before we reached the third page. But not my dad. He never told me to be quiet, never lectured me on how my interrupting him only made it take longer. He just seemed content to have me there.

Now I understand how totally safe and accepted I felt. I had no way of knowing then what it would have been like to be without those feelings. It was a gift I never asked for, never had to earn, and have never been without. He's given it to me all my life, and I will carry it inside of me even after he's gone. Dad died in April, 2000.

Nancy Byrkit Malvin
Troy IL



She Moves

She moves
In the waters dark
She moves
Far below the surface
She moves
Singing in the deep places
She moves
Her voice only a murmur above
Her ways unseen, yet grace-filled
Unknown, unacknowledged.

Deep within the earth
She moves
Cracking stone like dry twigs
Restless in Her sleep now
Waking, yet to come forth
Shaken by Her movement
Trembling at Her impact
Catch at what is falling
For She moves.

Lie you down and feel Her
Let Her body lift you
Earth and water shifting
Air and fire waiting
In the depths
She moves.
Know Her not, but trust Her
Walk among the chasms
Fall and drown as need be
How can Her life not be?
How could you be "not we?"
Walking on the surface
Let the Deep receive you
Let the rhythm lead you
Let the dance unfold you
For She moves.

Carolyn Blankenship
Austin TX

Looking Ahead

True Words from Real Women is loosely organized around a particular theme. While we do accept non-thematic writing, we give precedence to stories written on the theme of a particular issue. **Members only, please.** And do make sure that your stories are **350** words or less. We receive so many contributions that we must now reject longer stories. Here are the upcoming topics and deadlines:

Masks—August, 2001 (due July 15)
Sisters—November, 2001 (due October 15)
Friendship—February, 2002 (due January 15)

If you can send your writing via email or as a Word attachment, the editors will love you. If you type your story on an Internet computer, all you need to do is **highlight** the text, **copy** it, and **paste** it directly into an email message. (This will eliminate lots of extra typing!) Send your work to Marie Buckley, marie@aracnet.com. If you submit typed or handwritten stories, please make sure that every word is legible. Mail to Marie Buckley, 1070 N.E. Sturgess St., Hillsboro, OR 97124-3330

More True Words

Spatterdock

Some memories from my childhood are so clear, they are etched in stone, unlike the muddy waters I used to wade through. I grew up in Miller Beach, an enclave of Gary, Indiana. This was a place filled with mysterious, gnarled old forests and amber sand dunes that embraced the shores of Lake Michigan.

One memory in particular, that I can easily recall, was a quaint pond that was located behind my house, at the far end of the block. On spring or summer days, at about ten years of age, when I was in one of my many adventurous moods, I would visit this sacred spot. One day in particular, I caught sight of the most beautiful water lily that I had ever seen. Its intricacy was like looking at poetry. It was located directly in the middle of the pond. All I knew was that I had to have this flower! I was not thinking of ruining the ecosystem at that point in time.

So as my everyday walking shoes quickly turned into beaten-up old play shoes, I waded through the murky, tadpole filled water in order to claim my treasure. This water gem contained a creamy yellow vase-like center, with noodle-looking golden sections surrounding it. Yellow bowl-like petals hugged the center of this elegant water lily. Upon retrieving it, I brought it home and placed it in a big glass of water. My family marveled over this miracle of nature, but not my shoes!

After looking through a number of flower books, I finally discovered the name of my flower. *Spatterdock* is the yellow water lily of the Northeast, where its platter-like leaves float on the quiet waters of ponds and sluggish rivers. It blooms from May to September across Canada and the Northern states.

The discovery of this flower opened up a new world to me. The serene pond offered me a haven in which to collect my thoughts. *Spatterdock* allowed me to appreciate the harmonious treasures that this tranquil spot had to offer.

Sharon Blumberg
Munster IN

Sailor

I'm used to seeing pictures of my ancestors looking like pictures of everyone else's: grim. I look at these family photos and try to learn something of my past- some important Life lesson. They tell me, "Life is hard. Rewards are for the good and the well-behaved." When my Uncle Bud tells me he's sending some pictures he's found of John Ginley, I can't wait to see them. "Sailor" was my grandmother's youngest brother. I know little about him. He never married and died when my mother was a young woman. I recall hearing some vague story about him joining the circus when he was young, but surely that can't be right, I thought.

Bud sends a note confirming that Sailor worked for Ringling Brothers for many years. The photos are beyond my wildest expectations. In one picture, Sailor is in wool chaps and a cowboy hat standing next to a beautiful girl. She has a dark bob and is wearing a safari suit and pith helmet. The hint of a smile

on Sailor is unmistakable. There are other treasures too: Sailor boxing, Sailor on a trapeze high up in a tree, Sailor wearing a gladiator costume and carrying a sword! In another picture, he's hanging out of a circus car, mugging it up for the camera behind an unsuspecting conductor.

Who is this man? Where did he come from? How could he possibly be part of my family? We're not circus people. We never even went to the circus. We are careful—cautious. We cross our *T*'s and dot our *I*'s. We look both ways before crossing the street; we wear bathing caps, holy medals and sensible shoes. We put the sign of the cross on our children before they head out the door. Our parting words are: "Have fun, but be careful!"

I'm a homebody by nature, and resistant to change. And yet, of late, I'm discovering a restlessness within me. I feel an urge to do something new, or maybe see something old in a new way. When I start to feel these stirrings, I'm learning not to panic or to feel contrite. I look at my pictures of Sailor and smile. I pick up my head, throw back my shoulders and embrace Life.

Erin Boyle
Pittsburgh PA

Everything Aches

Everything aches today. My back, my knees, my elbows, my wrists, my ankles. I deserve to ache, after the last two weeks of physical labor.

Dan and I moved all three six-foot bookcases out of our bedroom, after first carrying all the books upstairs. I moved all of the other things out of the overfull bedroom, including a Nordic Trak, a stepper, a sewing machine, a TV stand, VCR, and videos, two magazine racks, and lots of other miscellaneous stuff.

Then I spent time waiting: for the carpet cleaner, the carpet repairman, the mattress delivery, the thrift store pickup, the bed delivery. I painted the huge room all by myself in two days.

Then, while all the stuff that belongs in the room was still out, I went with my family to the lake for two days. I loaded cars and helped put two kayaks on and take them off the cars and carry them to the water. I spent a lot of time on the water, paddling against wind and waves and current. I spent time in the water, watching six 10-year-old boys climbing on the kayak and overturning it, and then I helped them flip it over. Over and over and over. I did more paddling and carrying and swimming and walking. Walking up and down the incredibly long and steep boat ramp to actually get to the water in the rain-starved lake. I returned from the lake to unload everything and put it away, then go to rehearsal and play flute and heavy alto flute for alto hours.

My house is still in upheaval, and everything in my body aches and aches and aches! But, the walls are clean and bright, the new bed is installed, we all had fun at the lake, and the whirlpool at the gym beckons. I'm ready to rest now.

Danelle Sasser
Austin TX

Transition

She didn't wave, she didn't turn
to watch us drive away;
her mind was on her classes
and all that she will do;
the thrill of life's adventures
that she'll be going through;
the challenges she's ready for
the boyfriend by her side...

We did look back while driving off
through tears that filled our eyes.
already hurt with missing her
an emptiness inside.

We made her part of what we are
so welcome in our life...

Time now for a transition,
to walk a different path;
though we expect good times to come,
we can't help looking back.

Alice Greko
Florida

Earth Sounds

I begin this late fall night literally listening to the turning of the earth—vibrations transposed by a German scientist into audible sound. C#, how fitting. Is it really what I hear? Earth's heartbeat, subtly throbbing from her depths? Or am I feeling my own heartbeat with the resonance of the haunting sound, the great turning that cannot be destroyed by human hands or mind or by all of the weapons ever made. This is the only place I have ever been where I can actually hear silence—often it shocks me in its wondrous mystery.

I have once again been saved by the dance, the Latvian Elm dance taught me by Joanna Macy. It is done all over the earth for the healing of peoples, forests, rivers, of the earth itself. Last week across the river a brutal raping of the earth began. Simply to connect two irrigation ditches, the owner decided to rip open the land, creating a 20-foot-wide, 35-foot-deep chasm. It was on a rock shelf, so a giant yellow dragon with a long bucket arm ripped the rock to shreds. I am a mile away trying to sculpt in peace and beauty and I hear and see the destruction, which goes on for weeks. It is not unlike the work that the railroad men did three years ago, laying fiber optic cables near the tracks. There too trees were shattered and ripped up along with the rock.

How can we still be so blinded by our mode of dominance of all that is not human? When did we lose so totally our cellular connection to all that is, our understanding of our essential connectedness? These are the questions that force me deeper by the day as I try to absorb the shadow side of the paradise where I live.

Amelie Starkey
Watrous NM

Italy

Over the years, when asked why I love Italy, I've find it difficult to describe my feelings in the few succinct words that seem demanded of me. I have lived in Italy altogether for more than twenty-six years, and my fascination with it only grows with time, absorbing and enjoying to the best of my ability its long history of literature, art, architecture and music. I mustn't slight another important consideration, the Italian attention to and enjoyment of good food and wine. There is even an organization here that encourages "Slow Food," as opposed to "Fast Food." (McDonald's in Rome retorted that their food is made and served fast, but can be consumed as slowly as one wished.)

Living in another culture gives you a different perspective of your own culture and of yourself. And living with a different language is a challenge requiring a change in your pattern of thinking and way of expressing yourself, something to keep your mind agile.

Lately I have found another positive reason for appreciating the environment in which I live, and that is its humaneness, symbolized for me by Italy's health care system. I must say at the outset that this program, just as any other human invention, is not perfect. But what it tries to do, and does so well in so many cases, is give health care to every man, woman, and child in Italy whether enrolled in the "l'Assistenza Sanitaria" or not. No one gets left out. I know personally of many Americans who have become ill or had accidents while traveling in Italy and who go away singing the praises for the care received from the doctors, nurses, and hospitals, and for the reasonable charge for this indispensable service. The cost to the government must be tremendous, but small in respect to the good it does. Add its humanity to my long list of reasons for being lucky enough to live in Italy, and in the home town of Dante, Botticelli, and Brunelleschi, to boot.

Martha King
Florence, Italy



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Stories from the Inside Out

These are some of the stories our Story Circle members have written from the inside out. Some were written by those who have joined the program in Lockhart TX, others come from our California members. As you read them, you'll remark on the intensity of these voices, their spontaneity and naturalness, their strength. These women write about the bad things that have happened to them, and the good. They write about emptiness, and about being filled with new strength. They write about their experience of spiritual faith, and about spiritual death. We may not always feature their work in a special section, but we wanted to collect them here so that you could hear their voices in an emphatic chorus and join with us in welcoming them to our Circle. And please don't forget—you can support their memberships in the Story Circle Network by contributing to our Sugar Bowl. See page one for details.

Discoveries

I've been trying to fill a void in my heart, in my knowledge, in my soul, in my life, in my very being. . . .

I have looked to sex, with anyone, anywhere, anyway. Still a void inside.

I've looked to men—friends, partners, My Man—ha! What a joke—still a void.

I've looked to dope—takin' it, snortin' it, smokin' it, shootin' it—still a void.

I've looked to books—reading, reading , looking—just not absorbing—still a VOID. Still a VOID.

I've even looked to self-mutilation—cutting, burning, biting, to release, in order to be filled—STILL A VOID INSIDE.

I failed to look within —

My void being filled
with God's love . . .
Unconditional love . . .
He was there waiting
on the porch of my heart . . .

My discovery is that
Every time I hurt
I will grow
Never having to regress again . . .

Dara Musick
Lockhart TX



Who I Am

I sit outside these prison doors looking over the barbed wire fence at the beautiful red and yellow roses, the cars passing by. I look back over my life, where I've been and where I am today. The sun beaming down on my face, I think about what brought me to prison more than once, and why.

It was the choices I made in my life: choices to steal and not to work, choices to sell drugs and use drugs. Now I choose to live my life as a recovering addict, free from drugs, free from stealing . . . to be a citizen in the community. One that will give back to the community by telling my story to others.

Let me share what has really helped me get where I am today. I made a decision to give my life and will over to the Lord. That was the first positive thing I did. Then I got in the *Talk to Me* Class. There, I started to open up and tell my feelings, to see who I was and what I wanted to do with my life. That's when I began to see where my life was going.

I learned how to write about things in my life, why some of them happened and how not for them to happen again. I had to learn how to be myself—how to love myself. I had to learn—am I letting someone else influence me? or will I influence myself? I learned what I wanted to express and how to express myself differently. I learned that I don't have to be who someone else wants me to be.

I know now that I was destined to come to Lockhart, that it was already planned out—so that I could work out the rough places in my life that I didn't know how to deal with.

I will close with this. It is Beautiful to Discover who you are really are. I give all Glory to my Lord and Savior and all the Beautiful things He creates.

Deborah Tunstle
Lockhart TX

Love

My discovery: I've discovered that I'm a bold yet shy, beautiful black woman full of love. I can and have done a 180 degree turn around. Where there was hatred, now there is love. Where there was emptiness, now there's a full life, full of pleasure, joy, happiness, peace of mind. Someone asked me, "Why don't you ever get angry?" I just say, "I am bigger than that."

My writing takes me away to my love for life and others. All of my writings are about love, because love has made me the person I'm becoming. You're in for a surprise because the woman before you is the real thing. The woman I left behind is the one you've never met, because she wasn't real. I've grown to be a woman who makes good choices for myself, not for anyone else.

God told me I could do anything with his strength, and I truly believe this is so. I'm so full of love now that I just see myself glowing when no one else does.

Debra Miller
Lockhart TX

How to Love

What is light without darkness? What is happiness without sadness? And how can I love if I haven't experienced hate?

This is the story of a very strong and faithful woman we all admire. A woman who is well-bred and well taught, furnished with additional accomplishments of knowledge and behavior, simply a creature without comparison. She was my All. Ladies, I present to you a woman who I loved so deep that I've never gotten over her death: my Grandmother "Pave." The late Marion Fontenot Ruth. What I've come to realize is that through this one woman's teachings and love I know how to give love to its fullest, and by all means I can receive it.

My grandmother reared nine children and she said she loved them all the same. I can remember just like it was yesterday when on her death bed she told my uncle to please look after me simply because I was different from her other grandchildren. Well, I've never gotten over her death and it's been almost 25 years. I do know that I have many fond memories of the late Marion Fontenot Ruth. A very strong and faithful woman we all admire.

My discovery? How to Love.

Troy Sawyer
Lockhart TX

Discoveries

Admitting to myself that I had to come to prison was the hardest challenge in my life. I had to physically be separated from my loving, charming, adoring daughter, who loves her mama so very, very much.

A daughter who never caused her mother one second of trouble. Yet she had to witness her mother being chained, shackled, and taken away by prison guards to a cold, brick building, surrounded by barbed wire, fences, and guard towers, with big men with rifles in their hands fiercely looking down at the women.

It was very intimidating, shocking, and abnormal for us. My beautiful daughter and I shared everything together. Being a professional truck driver and owning my own rig, I would take my daughter with me when I drove to Las Vegas, New York, Florida, Texas, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, Alaska. We would eat big juicy steaks, gamble in Las Vegas, pick peaches in Georgia...now we visit in prison...yet...in spite of our trials and tribulations, in the past four years we have grown mentally, physically, and spiritually. We have gotten closer, and are striving toward a nature-filled life in the forest, filled with bears, elk, deer, moose, fishing, hiking, and making stained glass objects.

We have both made wonderful discoveries about ourselves and others, as well. We have discovered the bond of love... how love survives all of life's sorrows. We have discovered ourselves. Never realizing that we could stand alone, separated from one another for so many years, with years to follow... We have discovered that the God that dwells in us is powerful, strong and a loving God. We discovered that life is so much more exciting than death.

We have discovered forgiveness of ourselves and others...to forgive is to release a very heavy burden of guilt, sorrow and pain and prepare to start new beginnings...

Rebekah Lee Taylor
Corona CA

Discoveries

Death and life are stages of life—form cycles in humans, animals and plants.

During rainy winter months, a smile from a kind person can be radiant sunshine to the soul. In nature, what is more panoramic than ebony silhouettes of leafless trees against a silver sky? Add a flock of white egrets, and one has an awesome view of a Southern California winter.

What is more precious than a warm spring day when the hills become a lush hue of emerald? This is also the time of year when one can joyfully observe baby finches and baby sparrows being nurtured maternally. Also, the numerous variations of flora and fauna explode with Technicolor!

Summer gives way to dandelions and mustard weeds filled with myriads of tiny white butterflies. With the passage of season, come the rite of passage into mature adulthood and deepened relationships.

Fall gives way, from the violet and golds of summer, to its own hues of russets; variations of golds, browns and terra cotta—autumn's paradoxical hues of simultaneous decay and beauty.

Every day is a novelty no matter where you are. I discovered in prison that real freedom lies in the heart; and with it, the appreciation of life and beauty in its diverse entirety.

Katherine S. Dillon
Corona CA

Smiles

When I was a little girl I was confused and had so many smiles to give. I would light up a room with my smile. I hid everything that was going on inside me. When I was a teenager, again, I hid it all with my smile. I never told a soul, as I thought I was grown. Once again, hid with a smile.

I have always, even today, hid what I feel inside with my smile. It's a smile that says, "I'm dying inside and no one knows it but me." Those are words to a song about someone that left him, someone he cared about. But for me, it means my life. My life has disappeared in a smile. Now that I realize this, I still smile, but I also work through my feelings. I have learned to adapt, over and over again.

Tamra Ellis
Lockhart TX



When you
open your
heart,
you open your
mind.
—Beth Mende Conny



The best and most
beautiful things in
this world cannot be
seen or even touched.
They must be felt
with the heart.
—Helen Keller

Stories from the Heart

Story Circle Network National Conference

February 8 – 10, 2002
Holiday Inn on Town Lake
Austin, Texas

Make plans now to join us in Austin for the first national conference of the Story Circle Network!

Stories from the Heart will bring women from around the country to celebrate our stories and our lives. Through writing, reading, listening, and sharing, we will discover how personal narrative is a healing art, how we can gather our memories, how we can tell our stories. We welcome readers, writers, storytellers, and any woman with a past, present, and future. There will be opportunities to explore difficult or hidden issues, expand our relationships with other women, and discover different modes and media—such as art, dance, and drama—for sharing our stories.



Our Keynoters

From our Friday night keynote speaker, Dr. Betty Sue Flowers, to our closing lunch on Sunday with Dr. Susan Wittig Albert, you will meet remarkable women discussing topics ranging from finding a publisher, to meeting ourselves anew, to creativity in the second half of life. Dr. Flowers is a Professor of English, a published poet, and has collaborated with Bill Moyers on *The Power of Myth* and other books. Dr. Albert is the founder of the Story Circle Network and national best-selling author of *Writing From Life: Telling Your Soul's Story*.



This is your conference and we need your help!

A Call for Presenters

Our conference program features 18 program sessions organized into three concurrent tracks, with six 90-minute sessions in each track. The track titles listed below are tentative and the topics are subject to change. The ideas sketched are just suggestions. Be creative as you think about the presentation *you'd* like to make!

- **Track A. Finding A Voice**
Some possibilities include using different voices to tell our stories; using a child's point of view; ways to explore voice; exploring significant events in our lives; writing about trauma; writing about the self and the natural world; using stories to reframe experience; techniques for writing memoirs (could include writing about particular topics), writing as healing; journaling.
- **Track B. Serious Stuff**
Some possibilities include finding a publisher; self publishing; using novelistic techniques; genre options for personal writing (autobiography, memoir, fiction); organizing and leading life writing and memoir workshops; feminist theory; narrative theory; writing a family history; doing genealogical research; gathering memories.
- **Track C. Stories in Many Voices, Many Media**
Some possibilities include telling stories that reflect multicultural experiences; telling another person's story (your mother's, grandmother's); using music, dance, or art to tell our personal stories; storytelling tradition and techniques; scrapbooking.

The program also includes a two-hour pre-conference workshop on Friday afternoon, on some aspect of story writing or storytelling technique. The workshop should be designed to help participants learn and practice specific methods for writing/telling their stories. The presenter of this session will be paid a fee based on the number of attendees. If you would like to suggest a topic for this workshop, use the form below. Each presenter will receive a \$30.00 discount from the full conference fee.

Submitting a Proposal

You'll may submit your proposal by using the form on our website, at <http://www.storycircle.org/frmpresenter.shtml>. Or you may send it in by mail. Please include the following information:

- 1) name
- 2) address
- 3) phone number
- 4) email address
- 5) title of your presentation
- 6) 100-word description of your presentation
- 7) the track(s) in which it seems to fit
- 8) AV equipment needed [if you need PowerPoint, you'll have to rent it]
- 9) preferred room arrangement [lecture style / tables and chairs / Other (please describe)]
- 10) a one-page description of your relevant experience.

Mail to: Story Circle Network, P.O. Box 500127, Austin, TX 78750-0127 or email to storycircle@storycircle.org

The deadline for all proposals is July 15, 2001



Registration Form

Stories from the Heart

Name _____ Phone _____
 Street Address _____ Email _____
 City, State, Zip _____ Story Circle Member? yes no

If attending on Sunday, please note your lunch preference: ___chicken___vegetarian

Payment Information

Session/Day	Membership Status	Early Registration (before 12/15/01)	Regular Registration (12/16/01 -02/07/02)	Amount
Full Session (Fri/Sat/Sun)	Member	\$150	\$175	
	Non-Member*	\$200	\$225	
Friday Session only (Pre-Conference Workshop)	Member & Non-Member/Guest	\$25	\$30	
Friday only (Keynote Speaker & Reception)	Member & Non-Member/Guest	\$25	\$30	
Saturday Session Only	Member	\$75	\$100	
	Non-Member/Guest	\$100	\$125	
Sunday Session Only	Member	\$50	\$75	
	Non-Member/Guest	\$75	\$100	
Total Enclosed				

❖ Non-Members who choose to join prior to the end of the conference on Sunday, February 10, 2002, will have a portion of their registration fee applied to their dues.

Copy this page and send with your check to Conference Registration, The Story Circle Network, PO Box 500127, Austin TX 78750. To register on-line and use your credit card, go to <http://www.storycircle.org/fmregister.shtml>.

Scholarship Aid

We are able to offer a limited number of scholarships in increments of \$50 up to \$200 for a full non-member conference fee to women who need help to meet the conference costs. We may also be able to offer an additional \$50 for baby sitting help. If you would like to apply for a scholarship, please give us the following information, on a separate sheet of paper:

- 1) How much aid you are requesting for either registration fees or child care
- 2) Tell us about yourself, including your reason for applying for a scholarship
- 3) One of the objectives of the conference is "to return to our communities and share our discoveries with others. In approximately 200 words, explain how you will help the Story Circle Network achieve this objective.

We will respond to your scholarship request on or before December 15, 2001

The Second Annual Carol W. Landherr Life-Writing Competition

The Story Circle Network is proud to announce its second annual Life-Writing Competition, dedicated to the memory of Carol W. Landherr. Carol was an enthusiastic and committed life-writer who inspired others to write and share their stories. She died on October 10, 1999 after a valiant fight with breast cancer, but the memory of her life remains bright and fresh in the hearts of all who knew her story.

Topic: May Sarton wrote, "To close the door on pain is to miss the chance for growth." What painful event brought new growth in your life?

Awards: One prize of \$50, two prizes of \$25 each. Winning stories will be published in a special section of the August *Story Circle Journal* and on the SC's web site. Upon the judges' recommendation, other entries may be published in later issues of the *Journal*. (Copyright will remain with the author.)

Rules: You must be a member of Story Circle Network to enter; winners of last year's competition are not eligible. You may email your entry (preferably as a Word attachment or copied into an email) or mail it (typed and *single-spaced*, on 8.5 x 11" paper). If you do not have access to a typewriter, we will accept entries that are *clearly handwritten in dark black ink*. Each entry must be titled, and *no longer than* 1200 words. To be eligible, the entry must be previously unpublished. Please be sure that your name and address appear on your entry (these will be removed for the judging process), and include a 100-word bio to be published with it if you win. Winners' stories must be available for publication; however, if you wish your story to be published anonymously, we will remove your name. Be sure and keep a copy of your entry.

Criteria and Judging. The judges will be looking for entries that are fresh and original, are written in a clear and authentic voice, and are responsive to the topic. Final "polish" is a fourth criterion. The judging team will include the winners of last year's competition and one or two published writers. No evaluations will be returned.

Deadline: July 15, 2001, Winners will be notified by August 15, 2001.

Email your entry to: storycircle@storycircle.org.

Mail your entry to: Life-Writing Competition, Story Circle Network, PO Box 500127, Austin TX, 78750-0127

To read last year's winning entries on our website, go to www.storycircle.org/Contests/0002.html. To read them in print, pull out the August and November 2000 issues of the *Story Circle Journal*. (If you don't have those issues, turn the page!)



This membership is a gift.
My name and address:

Please send me ____ free copies of the *Story Circle* brochure to share with family, friends, or clients.

Join the Story Circle Network!

____ Annual Membership: \$24 (prorated @ \$2/mo.); Canada & Mexico: \$30 (prorated @ \$2.50/mo);
International \$36 (\$3/mo. International MO only) *Membership Year is Jan. 1 through Dec. 31.*
____ Austin Chapter: \$12/yr (prorated @ \$1/mo)
____ Internet Chapter: \$12/yr (prorated @ \$1/mo)
____ Sample copy of the SCN Journal: \$5

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Mail your check to Story Circle Network, PO Box 500127, Austin TX 78750-0127
or use your credit card by going to www.storycircle.org and clicking on "Join"

Looking for Journal Back Issues? They're Here!

1.1 (2/97) Opening Our Lives, Sharing Our Stories; Passionate Attachments, Reviews: *The Knitting Sutra: Thoughts on Handcrafts, Nature, and Spirit* (Gordon), *Journeying in Place* (Norris)

1.2 (5/97) Story Circle Network Chartered; Closet of Memories; Review: *Enchanted Self* (Holstein)

1.3 (8/97) Story Circle Network Begins Developing Programs; Seniors, Stories, and Spirituality; All the Way to Heaven: A Spiritual Journey; Some Soul Stories to Read; Reviews: *List Yourself* (Segalove and Velick), *Nothing To Do But Stay* (Young)

1.4 (11/97) Widening Circles: The Network Grows; Scrapbooks and Memories; Journaling: A Valuable Tool for Memoir Writing; Gardens of Imagination and Memory; Readers' Favorite Books; Review: *Leaning Into the Wind* (Hasselstrom, Collier, Curtis)

2.1 (2/98) Story Circle Board Grows; Autobiography of a Diarist; Memory Books, Out of the Fire; True Words; Readers' Favorite Books; Review: *A Match to the Heart* (Ehrlich)

2.2 (5/98) Getting Our Act Together-Together; Seeing Double: Writing from Photographs; A Diarist's Year; Minding Our Own Business: Writing About Work; Telling Family Stories; Reviews: *Living to Tell the Tale* (McDonnell), *Reflections On Autobiography* (Conway); Reading Women's Lives

2.3 (8/98) A New Chapter in Our Story; Creating Your LifeLine; Discipline; Life with Father: Writing About Our Fathers; Reviews: *Prairie Reunion* (Scot); *Leaving My Father's House* (Woodman)

2.4 (11/98) Memoir Project Funded; Starting Cold? Warm Up First!; Writing the Holidays; Soul Food: Foods, Kitchens, and Cooks We Have Loved; My Grandmother's Beads; Review: *Steering the Craft* (LeGuin); LifeWriting for Publication

3.1 (2/99) Story Circle Stays Busy; Compiling A Family History Notebook; About Creativity; The Creative Woman; The Path of the Artist: Writing the Story of Our Creativity; Review: *Maps to Ecstasy and Sweat Your Prayers* (Roth); Publishing Your Writing on the Web

3.2 (5/99) From Inspiration to Reality; Writing About Real People; Spiritual Journaling; The Creativity Timeline; Mother, Mother: Writing About the Motherbond; Writing About Mother's Pretties; Reviews: *Harvesting Your Journals* (Deer

Heart and Strickland), *Deep Water Passage* (Linnea); A Primer for On-Line Journalers

3.3 (8/99) Story Circle Hosts A Gathering of Women; Variety: The Spice of Memoir; Who's Taking Notes?; Remember Me; LifeWriting as a Way to Wellness; Sisters and Sisterhood; Review: *Writing as a Way of Healing* (DeSalvo); Finding a Literary Agent...

3.4 (11/99) With Courage and Common Sense; The Millennium Memoir; New Beginnings (Journaling); A Gathering of Women (retrospective); Life Writing: A Tool to Discover Your Enchanted Self; Writing About Our New Beginnings; No Small Thing; Writing A Query Letter

4.1 (2/00) Internet Chapter Opens for Business; Details, Details, Details; Discipline and the Practice of Journaling; Between Generations: Women and Girls Sharing Our Stories; Listening to Our Stories; "Like Alice Down the Rabbit Hole": An Interview with Lisa Shumicky; The Carol Landherr LifeWriting Competition; Writing the Book Proposal

4.2 (5/00) Story Circle Gets Connected; Creating and Using Your LifeLine; Connecting with the Continuous Self; Granny's Gone Cyber; Where Is Our Real Story?" An Interview with Susan Albert; Reviews: *First They Killed My Father* (Ung), *Writing In Flow* (Perry); Copyright: What Is It and How Does It Work?

4.3 (8/00) Why We're Passionate About Women's Stories; Using Dialogue in Your Memoir; Peace, Healing, and Marilyn Monroe; Daydreaming in the Garden; Writing Peace At Heart: An Interview with Barbara Drake; Reviews: *Peace At Heart: (Drake)*, *Through the Kitchen Window* (Avakian); Winners of the Carol Landherr LifeWriting Competition;

4.4 (11/00) It's Time to Renew Our Commitment; Finding Your Voice; Relational Theory and E-Circles; "Mrs. Backus": Winner of LifeWriting Competition; The Littlest Big Kid: My Self-Publishing Experience; Reviews: *Tender at the Bone* (Reichl), *Miriam's Kitchen* (Ehrlich); Creating a Wisdom Circle

5.1 (2/01) OWL-Circle Memoir Project Goes National; Writing About Disaster; Can I Hold You--in Cyberspace?; No Time to Say Goodbye; Creating an Enchanted Self: An Interview with Barbara Becker Holstein; Reviews: *Life's Companion* (Baldwin), *Wisdom Circles* (Garfield, Spring, Cahill); Life A Teacher Reflects

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1 issue \$1; 2-5 issues \$3.50; 6+ issues \$6.00

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"What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life?
The world would split open."—Muriel Rukeyser

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Story Circle Network, PO Box 500127
Austin TX 78750-0127



A Story Circle News Roundup

If you'd like to share your writing-related news, or if you're facilitating or participating in a Story Circle, tell us about it! Write to Story Circle Roundup, PO Box 1616, Bertram TX, or email Susan Albert at china@star.net

Story Circle Network Wins Writers' Site Award

Story Circle's website (www.storycircle.org) has just been named to Writers' Digest list of 101 Best Internet Sites for Writers. The site is listed in the "Journaling and Memoir-Writing" category and was recognized for the many free services it offers to writers. If you haven't been to the website, check it out. You'll find information on how to start a circle and how to create a chapter, as well as LifeStory Briefs, the new Life-Writer's Notebook, and many quotations from women writers. You'll also find our Book Review there, as well.

Lubbock TX Circle Completed, Another Planned

Kathryn Oler has just finished facilitating an eight-week, eight-member Story Circle in Lubbock TX. She reports that five of the writers hope to continue meeting monthly, and that she plans to create another circle during the summer. She writes: "The materials that Story Circle has provided on-line helped me translate my prior experience as an English and reading teacher and my current experience as an artist and writer into an accessible plan for the session. It was wonderful to watch the writers cluster around the ideas and then *poof!* take off and scatter, blown by the breezes of memory and inspiration to land in very fertile minds."

Maggie Knorr Offers On-Line Lifewriting Help

In our last issue, we reported that **Maggie Knorr**, a West Virginia member, has created *The Kaleidoscope Journal*, an email list for young writers (kaleidoscopejournal.freemovepage.com). Now, Maggie tells us that she has just started a new website called *Writing for Life*. "I am focusing on journaling and writing stories from life experience," Maggie says. "There will be new tips and exercises added each month, as well as a monthly e-newsletter you can subscribe to. I have a huge page of resource links. Please check it out and feel free to send me other journaling/lifewriting links I don't have listed!" You can find Maggie's new website at www.geocities.com/mairearad.

Hillsboro OR Reading and Writing Circles Meet Environmental Lifewriting Class Begins

Marie Buckley is facilitating a Story Circle at Main Street Books in downtown Hillsboro, OR. Stories written by three Circle members were recently published in the bookstore newsletter. The monthly Reading Circle that Marie facilitates at the bookstore is thriving and plans to continue through the end of the year.

Marie also teaches a lifewriting class through Jackson Bottom Wetlands, in Hillsboro. The 11-member class meets for nine weeks at a Hillsboro park and writing topics connect events in the natural world with events in women's lives. Some of the topics: Buds and Blooms, Migrations and Journeys, and Storms and Disturbances. Each week includes a walk on the trails in the park. "Wetlands, birds, and the lowland forest all serve to inspire us in this beautiful location!" Marie says. Marie's story about growing up in Nebraska was recently published in *Environment/Life/Work*, a website that features stories about the sense of place. You can find it at http://environmental_lives.tripod.com/index.htm. Marie is associate editor of the *Story Circle Journal*.

Juanita Johnson Convenes Circle, Offers Workshop in Norwich NY

Juanita Johnson, a psychotherapist and storyteller in private practice, is facilitating Story Circles in Norwich NY. The first circle began March 5 and met six alternate Mondays. In April, Juanita, who is one of seven nationally certified grief therapists in New York State, also offered a two-day conference on coping with grief.

Juanita has produced an award-winning video on the grief of young people and facilitates support groups for adolescents and young adults. She is widely recognized for her use of stories and story-telling as an integral part of her presentations. Juanita is a contributing editor of the *Story Circle Journal*.

continued on page 22, col. 2

Special thanks to this Story Circle Journal Sponsor!

Reflections Outreach *Looking Back to Look Forward With Hope*

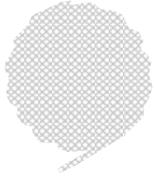
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The OWL-Circle Workshop—*Memoirs: Piecing Together the Patterns of Our Lives*—is Story Circle’s unique instructional program. We are making it available so that you or your church, women’s group, senior residence, or senior center can offer to senior women, over and over again, for free or for a fee.

The Older Women’s Legacy Circle Memoir Project was a two-year grant-funded project offering guided autobiography workshops for women over 60. The project funding allowed the Story Circle Network to develop the facilitator’s manual and workbook, to find and train facilitators, and offer nearly fifty workshops to over 500 women. Over a two-year period the materials were used, evaluated, and revised. Stories from each workshop were collected and published in booklet form and is being archived for the use of future historians. A larger collection of stories—*With Courage and Common Sense: Memoirs From the Older Women’s Legacy Circles*—is being considered for publication by the University of Texas Press.

Now that the grant-funded phase of the project has come to an end, both the facilitator’s manual and workbook are being made available nationwide, along with other support activities offered by the Story Circle Network through its OWL-Circle website (www.owlcircle.com).

The ready-to-use program spans five weekly sessions, 12.5 workshop hours. The easy-to-read workbook offers 10 topics that every woman can write about, plus ideas for between-session writing, as well as a graphic organizer to capture and prompt memories and create a personal history. The package includes a detailed facilitator’s manual that makes organizing and leading groups easy and fun. The \$100 purchase price (\$150 to non-members) includes the unlimited right to copy and distribute workbooks. The purchase includes a password-protected access to the OWL-Circle website, with updates, additional writing ideas, and suggestions for developing a workshop business. Telephone consultations are also available.

The field-tested materials, the low purchase price, and the ability to copy and re-use the workbook (although *not* the Facilitator’s Guide) makes this an excellent program for your church or senior group. Cathy Butler, of the Seton Healthcare Network of Austin, where the program was extensively field-tested, comments: "The OWL-Circle Legacy Project is a powerful tool which has important implications for the health of our elders and ultimately of ourselves. Research has shown that self revelation provides many direct mental and physical health benefits. The project was a perfect match for our holistic approach to wellness of body, mind and spirit."

We think it will be a perfect match for your church or women’s program, as well. For information, write to OWL-Circle Memoir Project, PO Box 500127, Austin TX 78750, or visit the website: www.owlcircle.com

More Story Circle Roundup News

Ann Arbor MI Circle Meets Monthly

Four women joined SC Inet Member Judy Fettman and Patt Kuessner, of the Association of Personal Historians, for six weeks in January and February for Ann Arbor’s first Story Circle. Growing out of this initial experience is an on-going women’s life writing group that meets once a month. Judy reports that one member of the group has found an agent and is working on the ninth chapter of her memoir about growing up as a hippie in the sixties.

Older Women’s Legacy Circles Planned

Our OWL Memoir Workshop Program continues to move forward. (See story on the left.) To date, the program package has been purchased by Story Circle members in Texas, Connecticut, Nebraska, Washington, Ohio, California, and Canada, and by a non-member in Wisconsin. In addition, Karen Leach is scheduling OWL-Circle workshops in Austin TX. For information, contact Karen at 512-454-9833, or email her at owlcircle@storycircle.org.

Internet Chapter Continues to Grow

Internet Chapter president Marie Buckley reports that the chapter now has 118 members, and that interest in the writing e-circles (Story Circles conducted via email) is particularly strong. "We now have a total of 10 writing e-circles," Marie says. "Five are for women who are willing to take writing risks. The total writing e-circle membership stands at 60, with some women participating in two (or even more!) different circles."

The chapter is reorganizing its reading e-circle, with Susan Albert volunteering to lead email discussions of a book each month for six months. At the present time, there are two groups, with eight in each group. They are using the Austin Chapter’s book list.

Austin Chapter Hosts Workshop

The Austin Chapter recently hosted the Story Circle’s popular memoir workshop, *Writing From Life*. Facilitators included Catherine Cogburn (chapter president), Susie Flatau, Judith Helburn, Donna Remmert, and Susan Albert. The two-day workshop gave 15 participants the opportunity to write on eight different topics, to view and discuss "*The Midwife’s Tale*," and take part in a session on creating and facilitating Story Circles.

The Austin Chapter is also preparing to host the National Conference next February. Judith Helburn, conference chair, is looking for helping hands. "We need workshop presenters, sponsors, greeters, folks to staff the registration desk, and more," Judith says. "You don’t have to live in Austin to help!" Let Judith know what kind of activity appeals to you and when you’re available. Write to her at 5914 Highland Hills Dr, Austin TX 78731, or email her at helburn@mail.utexas.edu.

***Are you wearing your Story Circle T-Shirt?
Purchase yours today!***