



# *Story Circle Journal*

Volume 7 Number 4, December, 2003

The newsletter for women with stories to tell...

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## *Stories from the Heart II* *The Story Circle Network National Conference*

**February 6 – 8, 2004**  
**Red Lion Hotel**  
**Austin, Texas**

**Plan now to join us in Austin for the *second* national conference  
of the Story Circle Network!**

*Stories from the Heart* is a unique and magical event.

The conference will bring women from around the country to honor women's stories and celebrate women's lives. Through writing, reading, listening, and sharing, we will discover how personal narrative can be a healing art, how we can gather our memories, and how we can tell our stories.

Join us for interesting workshops, informative panel presentations, inspiring speakers, delightful entertainment, an Open Mike, a Story Wall, a Works of the Heart Marketplace, an Internet Chapter reception, a chance to meet other SCN members, and much more!

We welcome writers, readers, storytellers,  
and any woman with a past, a present, and a future!

## A Letter from SCN's President...



Hello, everyone—

For seven years, since Story Circle's beginning, I have had the wonderful privilege of serving as the President of its Board of Directors.

During that period of time, I have watched this little organization grow and blossom into something large and important, powered by the energies and imaginations of a group of tireless women. The Story Circle Network has helped women around the country—and in such far-away places as Canada, England, Italy, Iraq, and Australia—to find their voices, tell their stories, discover an audience. Starting with nothing in our pockets but with abundance of hopes and dreams in our hearts, we have conducted classes and workshops, developed grant proposals and carried out funded projects, built an award-winning website, created a unique national women's memoir conference, raised the necessary funds to hire our first staff member and establish a national office, published several books and anthologies, and sent out 28 issues of this quarterly newsletter to a growing membership. It's been a big job, but—working together, working with commitment and enthusiasm and respect for one another and for the work itself—we have been equal to the task, and more. What a joy this has been, for me, for all of us!

Over this seven years, Story Circle has played an important role in my life, and in my story. Volunteering to teach in SCN's programs has helped me understand the importance of women's stories in a new and vital way; volunteering to serve on SCN's board has given me the chance to work with many marvelous women. I will always be grateful for this opportunity, and for the soul-challenges that have required me to grow in more ways than I can count, deep down inside, where it really matters!

However, it is time—both for Story Circle and for me—that I step aside and allow someone else to carry on this work, someone with a new vision and new energies. The SCN board and I began to discuss this important change earlier this year, and to think about how we would accomplish it. At the October meeting, Judith Helburn was elected to serve as President for a two-year term, 2004-2005, with Leilani Rose serving as Vice President and President Elect. In this way, the board has established an important continuity, ensuring SCN's leadership into the future.

I will still continue, proudly, as an SCN volunteer. I'll still edit this *Journal*, teach classes and workshops, and offer my services to Judith and Leilani and the board. In the next issue of the *Journal*, though, Judith will be writing the President's Letter. Welcome, Judith—I know you'll do a terrific job, and that under your guidance, SCN will continue to bloom and grow.

And to all of you, thanks for your caring support and your loving friendship. I hope that our paths will cross (you are coming to the conference, aren't you?) Above all, I wish you the continuing joy of self-discovery for this marvelous story that is our life.

*Susan Albert*

## Story Circle Journal

STORY CIRCLE is a quarterly newsletter, published in March, June, September, and December. 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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*LifeStory Lite ...stories to make you smile*

*Some of us lead funny lives. Or maybe, when we write about our lives, it just sounds funny. Story Circle member Pamela Troeppl-Kinnaird is a freelance writer in Shoreline WA.. Her work has been published in the Chicago Tribune, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and other major newspapers. She is the mother of four children from four to 14. We'll be publishing several excerpts from her humorous life stories; you can find lots more at <http://www.pamela-troeppl.com>. "The world needs more laughter," Pamela says, and we agree—especially Pamela's brand of laughter! This piece is entitled "Christmas Column, 2002."*

I don't want to whine about the holiday season that's upon us, but I will anyway. I can't help it. Okay, yes I can, I simply don't want to; whining is good for the complexion, if not the very soul. It lets out all those dark toxins that have been building up in my psyche since the previous holiday season.

I dread the holidays for so many reasons. Don't get me wrong, I'm not a Scrooge-wanna-be. Nope, not at all. I am a full-fledged, card carrying, flag waving, bonified Scroogette. I just don't get it. Oh, I get the birth of Jesus part; I'm totally in support of celebrating His birth, because it's worth celebrating. No, it's all the other Hallmark-moment items that have sprung up around this holiday. They're like weeds that have proliferated, taken over and finally choked the life out of what should be a very simple, religious observance. It's certainly choked the holiday spirit right out of me. This is why I've turned to whining about it. Plus, I could use a good exfoliation right about now.

Why do we sit around a dead tree and eat candy out of our socks once a year? Where did that come from? I do love the smell of decaying pine tree wafting through my home, I really do. I even purchase pine tree scented candles so I can pretend I have a dead tree in my house when I actually don't. So it's not the dead tree itself that bothers me, it's finding dead pine needles for the rest of the year that irritates me. I vacuum and I sweep and somehow I always manage to find one in April when I'm in bare feet. This does not endear the dead tree thing to me.

I've managed to solve this issue by purchasing, yes, an artificial dead tree. No longer do I have to go out in the pouring rain to purchase a waterlogged tree in a muddy field. I don't have to hand over my first-born as payment either. "But where is the scent of pine that so clearly indicates that the holiday spirit has arrived in your hearth and home?" you might ask. "That's none of your blankety-blank business," I might reply. (I use the words 'blankety-blank' to indicate a forceful response.) "And besides," I might add, "can't you smell the pine-scented candles wafting through the house?" Cheaper, drier, and I've never gotten one stuck in my foot when walking around in my bare feet.

I practice the Law of Re-Gifting like a religious zealot. You know what I'm talking about, don't you? Admit it. At one time or another, you've gotten a gift that you have

subsequently re-wrapped and given to someone else. This is called re-gifting. I'm not saying it's wrong, quite the contrary; re-gifting is right in oh so many ways. Here are some reasons why re-gifting is a good idea:

- First and most importantly, it saves you money. Who needs to go out into crowded malls when you have your own little shopping center right there in your closet?
- You are able to get rid of something that has cluttered up your house for the past year. I consider this a cleansing experience.
- If the Chia Pet you gave your brother in law last year was a hit, re-gift him the Chia Head that your second cousin dumped on you for your birthday. By pretending to remember what he likes, he'll mistakenly believe that you like him. You are fostering good family relations.
- You can give yourself a huge tree-hugging-pat-on-the-back because you are doing something that is considered sacred in these parts; you, my eco-minded friend, are a recycler.

There are rules to re-gifting that must be followed. If you don't adhere to the rules, then you'd better be a fast talker. Lets say that you forget that it was Aunt Ethel who gave you that toaster cozy last year. Poor Aunt Ethel nearly stroked out when she opened her gift this year and discovered the toaster cozy she'd knitted especially for you. How do you get out of this one? If you are a quick thinker, you tell her that you liked the cozy she made for you last year so very much that you wanted to give it back to her so she could make you another one with the exact same colors. On second thought, this is fibbing and I can't encourage that sort of behavior. You should offer her your artificial dead tree instead.

This is why it is vitally important to remember who gave you what so you don't re-gift someone something that they gave you. My only re-gifting-whine is that sometimes I've actually had to buy presents. I hate when that happens.

Remember folks, whining is a good thing, but like all good things, it's best done in moderation. It's even more important to do it where Santa can't hear you. You know that note-taking thing he always does. Besides, I need his gifts for my re-gifting frenzy during the coming year.

*Dreaming Your Life*

# Dream Writing

*Dreams are like little stories within our larger life story. Donna Remmert, of Austin TX, frequently teaches classes on writing about dreams. This is the first of several articles by Donna designed to introduce you to the importance of dreams in your life. Donna is the author of The Littlest Big Kid and Jitterbug Girl, a member of the SCN Board of Directors, and a Story Circle facilitator. Mary Ann Reynolds is a new SCN board member.*

**Found in New York City**

by Mary Ann Reynolds  
Austin TX

*Mary Ann recorded and worked with this dream after participating in one of Donna's classes*

In my dream, I am in a relationship with a professor. We've been camping with his students in the woods. I wake up one morning to discover that he and his students have taken off without a word. Not only that, but the woods dissolve, and I'm in New York City, with only the t-shirt I slept in and a towel!

I wrap the towel around my waist and begin walking through the city. People ignore me. I see an old friend, all dressed up, going into a building with a group of people. They're laughing and talking. I don't want her to see me like this. I hide and then continue walking. I take a shortcut through a hotel lobby and overhear someone mention the professor's name. It's the concierge, talking on the phone—he's got a room in the hotel. I approach the concierge, tell her I'm a former student of the professor's, and ask for a key to his room. I want to get my stuff, get dressed, and get out of there. She's kind. Her eyes twinkle.

**The Connection with My Life**

In the last two years, I've been examining the impact on my life of a traumatic event that occurred when I was 11—the rape and murder of my sister. I felt vulnerable, terrified, and helpless.

In my dream, I find myself dependent on someone and then abandoned. I am exposed and vulnerable, but I use my wits to survive. I don't panic—I face the situation I am in. I figure out what I need and who I can trust. I find someone who can give me the key so that I can get dressed and be on the same footing with everyone else. In my dreams, I can triumph over adversity.

When Carl Jung was asked the primary purpose of life, he answered that striving toward complete consciousness is the most worthy of all purposes. He named this the *individuation process*, and wrote volumes on its value to the individual and to society. One important part of this process is developing a relationship to the *unconscious*, since this is where the unknown aspects of an individual's nature are stored. My way of accessing my unconscious and using this information for promoting the individuation process within me is through *dream writing*.

In a nutshell, this is how it happens for me. When I wake up from a dream, I don't open my eyes or move until my conscious mind has registered the details of the dream. Even when recording these details, I keep my eyes almost closed, trying to stay in-between consciousness and unconsciousness. I try to use the exact words I recall using in the dream, and I write in a first-person, present-tense voice, as if the dream is happening in the moment. The dream is now safely recorded, and I am free to go through my morning routine thinking about possible interpretations. When this "marinating" process has produced insights worth noting, I return to my journal to write answers to these questions:

- What were the feelings I experienced in the dream?
- What symbolic associations do I have for the images in the dream?
- How do these feelings and symbolic associations relate to my present life?
- What is the message of my dream?
- What kind of a person needs a dream like this?
- How can this message help me grow or heal?

My answers don't come in an orderly fashion. In fact, stream-of-consciousness thinking often produces the most insight. Dreams are raw, uncensored, amoral data about the dreamer that is somehow related to what's going on in her life at the time of the dream. It's not surprising, therefore, that I'm often deeply surprised at things I dream (and then write) about myself.

Dreams sometimes have layers of meanings that will occur to the dreamer at a later date. I leave lots of space in my journal for additional entries, because there is no end to the amount of creative writing that can come from just one dream. My dream writing has, in fact, been the origin of many stories I've written as memoir.

Some people complain that they almost never remember their dreams. If you'd like to remember more of your dreams, you can read books on the subject, perform a bedtime ritual asking for dream recall and/or participate in dream study groups. When working on your dreams in a group, it is essential to realize that while others can offer suggestions for the possible meanings of imagery, only you can determine the actual meaning of your dreams. It is often realized as an *aha!* experience.

Working to understand a dream and to incorporate it in a wider understanding of our life story is a creative process that has enormous benefits. And dream-researchers tell us that our dreams help balance our psyches even when we don't remember them or when we ignore them—altogether, a win-win situation! I hope you'll want to learn from this mysterious and wonderful psychic phenomenon and incorporate it in your life stories.—*Donna Remmert*

*A Reader Tells Her Story**Thanksgiving for the Beach*

*Erin Declan Philbin was born the fourth of five daughters to a loving Irish Catholic family. She has been married for 17 years and has two sons, age eight and four. Erin lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she is a speech-language pathologist working in a rehabilitation center. She is a member of E-circle 2 and feels privileged to share her stories with our Story Circle members.*

It's only recently that I've thought of the beach as a summertime place. I grew up in the Pocono Mountains, and spent summer Sundays exploring beautiful parks and trails. We never did a beach vacation.

Ten years ago, my in-laws, Sally and Dick Boyle, moved to Virginia Beach, about ten miles from the ocean. Summertime meant heavy traffic, so eight years passed and I never made it to the beach in the summer.

Thanksgiving, however, was a different matter. As many family members as possible gather at the Boyles for Thanksgiving. There are always too many of us to stay at the house (last year we had four generations), so Sally rents most of us rooms on the beach. In this way, I have been blessed to know the beach in November.

I awake while it is still black outside, pull on a pair of jeans, and a sweatshirt, and slip outdoors before anyone else wakes. I love walking the beach while it is still dark, listening to the rush of the water, and seeing the white cap of the waves as the day lightens. I march down the boardwalk, past the largely vacant hotels, closed t-shirt and taffy shops, and ice cream stands. The boardwalk goes from Fortieth Street down to First Street, and I want to walk all of it. I count down the streets while I watch for the sunrise.

Although the beach is largely deserted, there are always a few people to share the sunrise. Without exception, they nod, and say "Good morning." We share a conspiratorial smile. It's November and we're on the beach for sunrise!

As the sun peeks over the horizon, I make it to the end of the boardwalk and look out over the water. Yes! That's what I've been waiting for. It's Thanksgiving morning, and there are the surfers, their bodies lithe and graceful in the water. I feel the sun warm on my face and give a prayer of Thanksgiving.

Last April, my in-laws moved from their home to a condo a half-mile from the beach. One night in June, we got a call from Dick saying that Sally had been having trouble breathing and had been taken to the hospital. By that evening, she was on a respirator and in intensive care. My husband Chris left immediately to be with her. After several very scary days, she was able to be weaned off the respirator and was sent to a nursing home to further recuperate. Chris returned to Pittsburgh with instructions from Sally to "bring the kids as soon as possible."

We arrived in Virginia shortly before midnight to learn that Sally had checked herself out of the nursing home against medical advice. She was too weak to get out of bed to greet us.

In the morning, I awoke around five, too concerned to sleep well. When I walked into the living room, I found my mother-in-law already awake, a walker beside her chair. After warning me against fussing about her, she suggested that I

take a walk on the beach. Although my mind was on my mother-in-law, I headed toward the beach to see the surfers.

The ocean was beautiful in the summer. I was amazed at how warm it was so early in the morning. I was also surprised that so few people were out witnessing the sunrise.

After I made it to the end of the boardwalk, I hurried back to Sally. She was sitting in the chair as I left her, and the rest of the family was still asleep. She was sicker than she wanted to admit. She was having trouble breathing, and her legs were so swollen she couldn't bend her knees. That night, she fell trying to get into bed, and it took Chris, his sister Debbie and I working together to get her off the floor. The next morning her little dog, Cody, scratched her leg accidentally, just getting down from her lap. The cut drained for the entire time we were there, refusing to close.

For a week, my routine didn't vary. When I heard Sally rise early in the morning, I would get up too, and head out for my walk. The beach became my refuge: a place to be alone, cry a bit, and pray for Sally and the family.

One morning, I didn't travel the boardwalk at all. I sat on a bench with a cup of coffee from the 7-11, facing the ocean just watching the waves until it was time to head back to the condo. I was grateful to have the beach mostly to myself. The ocean gave me strength and a sense of calm. By the time I was back at the condo, I was ready to face another day of breathing treatments, visiting nurses, therapists, cooped-up kids, and worry.

I'm happy to report that we made it to the beach again this summer. Sally's health has stabilized. She's lost over fifty pounds and is now able to work out with a trainer three times a week. We made up for lost time: shopping, doing needlepoint, going out to lunch during the day, and drinking champagne at night.

*"I only buy champagne when you're here, Erin. I know you like it, and there's no one else to drink it with me. We wouldn't want to waste it would we?"*

I walked on the beach every morning for sunrise. This year, my husband even joined me a few days. I didn't walk as far, but I enjoyed myself more. I watched the pelicans and gulls, and saw dolphins for the first time.

On our last day of vacation, I walked past the pier, did my silent salute to the sun and offered up a prayer: "See you at Thanksgiving."

*A mother is not a person to lean on  
But a person to make leaning  
unnecessary.*

—Dorothy Canfield Fisher

*Meet Other Life-Writers and Learn from Their Stories...*

## *Liz Carpenter: A Texas Wise Woman Speaks*

*In the fall of 2002, the University of Texas Press published PJ Pierce's ground-breaking book, Let Me Tell You What I Know: Texas Wisewomen Speak (see our book review and interview with PJ in the March 2003 issue of the SC Journal). Leading the distinguished assembly of notable Texas women featured in the book is Liz Carpenter, veteran political journalist, onetime right-arm to a U.S. vice president and a First Lady, equal rights activist, writer, and public speaker. And thanks to PJ and her book, a new collaboration was born between the ever-energetic Liz Carpenter and Story Circle Network.*

*For attendees at the February 2004 SCN conference, a treat is in store: Liz Carpenter will give the keynote address and offer a sampling from her wealth of extraordinary wisdom. To whet your appetite, here is an excerpt from Liz Carpenter's wise words as*

*I think Texas women have strong genes. But then, I have known some other very strong women who didn't have the benefit of growing up in Texas.*

—Liz Carpenter

*I survived two White House weddings, five White House dogs, and raft rides down the Snake River with cabinet members. I danced in the East Room with two presidents, a king or two, and innumerable prime ministers and ambassadors. Heady stuff for a girl from Salado.*

—Liz Carpenter

Liz Carpenter is a descendant of six generations of Texans. She was born the middle child in a family of five children in Salado, TX, a small town close to Austin. Shortly after graduating from the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in journalism, Liz began her journalism career in Washington, D.C., at age 21.

TEXAS WOMEN: My mother always admonished me: "Remember who you are. Make something of yourself." She was really proud of her family that was here in Texas in 1829. She was a very calm woman of faith. I knew something was expected of me.

We Texas women are close to our history—to those women who came across the river carrying a rifle. The ranch woman is in all of us to a degree. Women on the frontier were in charge because we had to be. The open spaces made us a lot spunkier. I think Texans are shaped by blue skies, optimism, and more space. And I think Texas men like spunky women.

MENTORS: I seem to have chosen as mentors outspoken women who worked to change things for everybody, rather than women who quietly followed the rules and worked to change things just for themselves.

Minnie Fisher Cunningham of Waller, Texas, who was active in the suffrage movement, told me all about it so vividly that I thought I had been there. (Texas made women's suffrage legal before it became legal nationally.)

She told me, "To have a stepping-stone, you have to be one." It is glorious when you make the phone call that gets somebody the interview. My first boss—a woman—taught me lots of things. One that has stuck with me through the years: Never make a decision solely on the basis of

Liz and husband, Les, operated their own news bureau in Washington from the time they married in 1944 until 1961, when Liz became then Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson's executive assistant. During LBJ's years as president, 1963–1968, Liz served as press secretary and staff director for Lady Bird Johnson.

Liz was one of 271 founders of the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971 and emerged as spokeswoman for the organization. The group's purpose was to organize caucuses in Texas and other states to urge women to run for office and to help get them elected. She was co-chairperson of the Equal Rights Amendment Initiative in 1976–1981 and served as assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Education in 1980–1981 during the Carter administration.—

money. If you really want strawberries and they are \$5 a pound, get the strawberries!

POLITICS: During my Washington years, I began to realize that it will take women to make important changes in society because we are the nurturers. We make a difference in politics when we speak up, because we try to find the commonsense basis for doing things.

I watched and learned from Frances Perkins, secretary of labor under Franklin Roosevelt. Frances used common sense and created most of the New Deal legislation. She walked into FDR's office with a little handwritten list: unemployment compensation, minimum wage. All those things made up the New Deal. And it wasn't all those swashbuckling Harvardites that pushed it through the Hill. Instead, it was a woman who insisted on it. Most people don't know that.

And then during the 1970s and 80s, we campaigned for the Equal Rights Amendment. We came to understand that we couldn't realize our

feminist potential unless we did it through politics. We had to have more clout.

So Shana Alexander summoned me to that meeting at the Statler Hilton in July 1971 where 271 women founded the National Women's Political Caucus. Our mission was to urge women to run for office, to get the Equal Rights Amendment passed, and to organize caucuses in all the states. I was put in charge of handling the press and getting what was said by these women leaders into the newspapers—Betty Friedan, Shirley Chisholm, Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, Virginia Allen.

I remember saying to Shana, "These women shouldn't be using such strong words." And she said, looking philosophical and beautiful, "But these are strong times!"

And that convinced me that the ERA movement would soon find its way into the population. And it did—to such an extent that I doubt that young women today have any idea of how much sweat and sacrifice was given.

Campaigning for the ERA went on for about 15 years. It was the most exciting thing that I had ever done because it was such a gamble. I was terribly disappointed when the ERA didn't pass. But still I have faith that it will pass because it is right. I think it will probably pass in a whisper sometime.

ANGER: Anger is a good motivator. You need to use the adrenaline that anger engenders in a constructive way. Women used to be taught to take whatever is said to them and remain silent. But you need to talk back. You shouldn't take somebody's orders or arguments, simply to be polite, when you know what has been said is unfair and untrue. If you can do it with humor, you do better.

For example, when Pat Schroeder of Colorado was a young woman in the U.S. Congress in the 1970s, a male representative said to her, "How can you be a congressman and the mother of two small children?"

Schroeder said: "Because I have a brain and a uterus, and I use both!"

PRINCIPLES I LIVE BY: "See humor in the situation," my mother would tell me. She had a good sense of humor and valued it. So humor has always been a part of my life, maybe because you needed it in such a big family. And you certainly need it in politics and in all of the other fields I have been associated with.

Hate will devour you if you let it. I don't allow myself to hate people.

Be there for others. It's a pleasure to share other people's needs. It's the sins of omission that haunt people.

Be loyal to your friends. I'm heavy on loyalty and on not letting people down. Lyndon Johnson reinforced that lesson in me. He never asked you to do something he wasn't willing to do. He gave friendship and he got it.

CAREERS: I went into Washington when World War II was underway, in June 1942, and men were leaving. So, for the first time, a newswoman could get a job doing something other than being a society reporter. We knew that Eleanor Roosevelt had made it possible for us to have a job because she made news, and

Liz moved back to Austin in 1976, two years after Les died. The couple had raised two children, Scott and Christy. In 1991, Liz took on the job of rearing her two nieces and one nephew, all teenagers, whom she "inherited" after her oldest brother, Tom, died.—PJP

she held press conferences that were limited to women. By discriminating in this way, she forced newspapers to hire women reporters to cover her. In my generation, you just walked through the open door or backed away from it. And I generally walked through it.

FAITH: When my plans start falling into place, I begin to think that it must be an affirmation from God or from some spirit greater than myself, telling me that I am on the right track. When nothing is going right, I begin to question whether I have made the right decision. When everything starts getting in your way, that may be a way of telling you, "Kid, you are on the wrong path."

So many things I need fall right into my hand, unexplained: a book that tells me something I didn't even know I was looking for or a phrase in a paper. I listen for words because that is my business. And they come my way, so I know that it's not just an accident. It happens too often.

I am surprised that some of my contemporaries are agnostics and atheists. I think that they just haven't realized that there is some order to the universe. I've always had faith that there is a God, and the closer I get to what hopefully will be heaven, the more I listen for it. You are better off if you walk hand in hand with the universe.

*If the generations  
are going to be there  
for each other, it will be  
because women did it.  
We're not going to get  
anywhere on world  
peace if we keep  
looking at Brooks  
Brothers suits walking  
out of a summit  
meeting. That scene  
offends me so I can  
hardly keep from  
throwing something at  
the television set!*  
—Liz Carpenter

*I plan to haunt  
this planet—swing  
from the chandeliers of  
the White House.  
Hopefully I'll be able  
to impart some golden  
knowledge back  
between heaven and  
earth.*  
—Liz Carpenter

*I hate to say this  
since I am so close to  
the cemetery, but I  
think God should  
have done it  
differently. He made  
a mistake by having  
our reproductive life  
last till only about  
age 40. After 40, you  
are ready to spend  
time with the  
children, and you  
don't resent the time  
away from work.*  
—Liz Carpenter

**FRIENDSHIP:** Without all of my good friends, life wouldn't be nearly as grand. Families are often not around to be supportive when you need them, and friends have been a salvation to me.

You have to create a network of friends or you can't operate in the world. Wherever I have lived, I have always had good neighbors. Networking was important before it was a word. I could call my neighbor and say, "Go pick up Christy. She's sick." We did that for each other. It was about being a friend.

I count among my good friends both men and women. My group of singers (Getting Better All the Time Singers—GBATS)—our bodies are beginning to fall apart, and we are trying to be there for each other.

I have four really good male friends. But women friends are usually my first choice because I can talk about anything with them. We women have gotten to where we really bare our souls with each other, and men have a harder time doing that. Women have discovered that women friends are the best friends. However, females seem to be associating more with males on a platonic level today. That's good. Since I have been raising my two teenage nieces and my nephew, I have seen young men—like my nephew, Tommy—becoming gender blind and color blind. He has friends of both sexes and all colors. I know because they are around my house all the time.

**MARRIAGE:** I was lucky to have been married to my best friend. We worked together and we played together in Washington, but we also gave each other some space to do our own thing. I learned some things a long time ago from psychologists who were gathered at Betty Friedan's house. (She always had a lot of psychologists around her; they liked to study her.) I said, "What's the main cause for divorce?" They said, "Two people who don't grow at the same rate." I

saw that problem happen especially with marriages in the political arena.

**WIDOWHOOD:** When Les died, I spent two unsettling years trying to deal with life without him. Then someone gave me the best advice I ever got about being widowed:

At age 80, in 2001, Liz became one of the 14 new members of the elite Texas Institute of Letters, an honorary organization for writers. Liz is a member of the Texas Philosophical Society, she is a Distinguished Alumnus of the University of Texas, and she was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame by Governor Mark White.—  
*PJP*

"God has given you a chance at a second life." (Since then, I have passed that message of freedom on to a lot of other widows.) Death had robbed me of my husband. But it also allowed me to change my life.

During my marriage, I got cut off from some real characters I enjoyed whom Les didn't like. After Les died, I began inviting some of those characters into my house and life. By having them at my house, I felt almost like I was getting back at death. That sounds heartless to say, but it's true. It's a way to cope.

**GETTING OLDER:** I have just been to the White House Conference on Aging. The fastest-growing age group in America is the 80-and-up group. And they are staying vital longer. There are 34 million people over 65 and only 5% are in rest homes. So we are living vitally and changing, and are able to follow our bliss longer. I think it is a market that hasn't been recognized. I try to sell magazine stories about people who are as old as I am. The editors say, "Oh, that



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## Books for the Journey

In this issue, we're reviewing three memoirs by our featured lifewriter and 2004 conference key-noter, Liz Carpenter. Also by Liz: **Start With a Laugh** (Eakin Press, 2000)



*By heritage and by profession, I am a storyteller. Like all good Southerners, I can spin a yarn on any occasion with only a hint of an invitation.*

—Unplanned Parenthood

*The Homeplace built and occupied by my forebears for six generations cast a spell upon all those it had touched. For me, it is still like the rose petals in a lovely old earthen ware jar.*

*Every corner is fragrant with memories. Dozens of cousins on pallets in the summertime . . .*

*The cool dignity of the old parlor where my mother and father were married. . . Cutting down your own cedar tree in the back pasture for Christmas. Feeding baby lambs in spring with a bottle. My uncle saddling up the tamest mare so I could ride to Norwood's Store for the mail.*

—Ruffles and Flourishes

*I am trying to honestly appraise what I have been, the bad along with the good. I find I was always more confident than I remembered, arrogant at times,*

*pushing forward too much to the next deadline. . . I was a better daughter than I remembered in the flush of guilt at the times of my parents' death. I shared my life with them while I was away.*

*My letter-writing mother and I were good companions, at home with one another on paper. It is deeply comforting to me to rediscover this.*

—Getting Better All the Time

### ***Ruffles and Flourishes: The warm and tender story of a simple girl who found adventure in the White House. Pocket Books, 1970.***

This is Liz Carpenter's first memoir, a witty and intimate chronicle of life behind-the-scenes in the West Wing when the days when Liz was press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson. From the first phrase—"I was sitting at my desk in the White House, minding everybody's business and thoroughly enjoying it"—to the "Notice to Congress" at the end, you'll find something to smile about or be moved by on every page.

But Liz Carpenter didn't begin life at the White House; she started life at the Homeplace, near Salado TX, home to six generations of her family. Her memoir takes her from there to the University of Texas (where she earned her journalism degree), to her life as a journalist in Washington. And then there was marriage to another newspaperman, two children ("Well," Liz says, "it does build character"), and life in the maelstrom of American politics. And then there were the Johnsons, through the vice-presidential years and the tragedy of the Kennedy assassination. And then the LBJ presidency, with Liz doing her best to do her job as Mrs. Johnson's press secretary. It was a tumultuous life that would have worn down the best of us (how would you like to meet the press regarding not just one but two White House weddings?). But Liz manages to hang on to her sanity and her sense of humor. *Ruffles and Flourishes* is not a sensational tell-all memoir, but it tells enough to bring the Washington political scene to life and to show us how it felt—how it *really* felt—to live through it all (with a husband and kids, to boot).

### ***Getting Better All the Time, Simon and Schuster, 1987.***

Liz's second memoir, begun on her sixty-fifth birthday, tells the story of her life after the LBJ years, after her husband's death at 53, after Washington political life. It's full of memories of her early life and her roots in Texas; her memories of her family; her views on life as a widow; her recommendations for staying young ("Do something new each week!").

But what is best about the book, for me, are her sharply observant vignettes of women doing things they probably shouldn't. There's Fannie Lou, a black woman running for the state senate in Mississippi, who campaigned through the cotton fields in a Winnebago camper plastered with pictures of her heroes (RFK, MLK, and Jesus), her campaign war chest of \$2,000 "wrapped up in an old handkerchief, to pay for air time." Then there's campaigning for the ERA with Erma Bombeck (can you *imagine?*). And Edna Whyte—a pilot and long-time owner of a flying school—who at 83 was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame and piloted her own plane to the ceremony.

Getting better all the time? Oh, you bet. You bet!

### ***UnPlanned Parenthood: The Confessions of a SeventySomething Surrogate Mother, Fawcett Columbine, 1994.***

And just when you think Liz's life must surely settle into some smooth sailing, she inherits her brothers three noisy, undisciplined teenagers. At 73, Liz is a mom again, opening her home and her heart, helping these kids chart the course to a new life—across a generation gap she says is "wider than the Grand Canyon." Facing drugs, sex, fast cars, punk rock, junk food, and the Bay of Pigs (her house), she manages to keep her cool, holding social discussions at the dinner table, confronting Puff the Magic Dragon (marijuana) head-on and no-holds barred, and managing to have a significant talk about the meaning of life with a 14-year-old on an exercise bike.

The job this Surrogate Mom took on isn't for everybody. Only someone as stout-hearted, quick-witted, nimble-footed, and smart-talking as Liz Carpenter could have done it. Thank heavens she did—and lived to tell the tale to the rest of us. It's nothing short of *inspiring*. Thanks, Liz!—Susan Wittig Albert



## 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. The theme of this issue's True Words section is "Saving Time."

### Emotional Masquerade

In 1977 I raced to the hospital, and was approached by a cardiologist. "Are you Cathy Warren's mother?"

I nodded.

"Your daughter is critically ill with asthma. She went into static arrest while in the ambulance, and we lost her a couple of times. We have her stabilized now, and you may go in for a couple of minutes. However, you can enter only if you promise to hide your emotions. If you get emotional, you might trigger another attack, and you'll be told to leave. Can you promise?"

Again I nodded. I fought for composure, and frantically tried to think of funny things to say to her each time I entered the critical care unit. I sat beside her, held her hand, and I silently prayed our little girl would come home.

Eighteen long hours later, Cathy was out of danger, and I was advised to leave. I cried all the way home. I cried when I told her dad. I cried myself to sleep. Crying after I left Cathy became my ritual, but I never told her. I wrapped my fright and kept it out of Cathy's sight at each of her many hospital stays over the years.

Fast forward to 2001, when at Christmas Cathy asked, "Mom, do you love me?"

I was shocked and sputtered, "Cathy Ann, why on earth would you have to ask?"

"Whenever you came to see me when I was in a hospital, you never looked sad or cried or even acted worried. So I thought you didn't care."

Because I kept my fears well camouflaged, I had driven my child to doubt my love for her for nearly twenty-five years. I learned that decision to hide my true feelings had become my enemy. What a great actress I had been.

In March, 2003, I raced once again to Cathy's bedside. I brought chocolates, and crawled onto her bed. This time I shared my fears and told her again that I loved her.

In May, 2003, Cathy died. But not, thank God, before she knew she was loved.

Sandra J. Gaylor  
Lafayette IN

### Baubles, Bangles and Beads

Twelve years of my life was devoted to instilling dance culture into young children. Pupils ranged from four-year-old "babies," who didn't understand why they were there, to eager young girls whose mothers sought "poise and grace" for them. There were also the children of ambitious "stage-mothers"

who occasionally needed reminding that mine, instead of Mother's, was the designated voice of the hour.

Little black leotards and dance slippers began the transformation. Budding ballerinas bloomed, and intricate rhythms clicked through the minds and feet of tap dancers. September performed a quick *glissade* toward January. The promise of a "wonderful Big Show for your parents" was dangled before pupils whenever retention-or attention-spans waned. It was the Big Dance Recital!

Soon it was time to design costumes, paint scenery, order hundreds of yards of shiny, glittering material, sequins, ribbons, feathers, hats, tambourines, parasols—the accoutrements and trappings to enhance the production. A theater was rented; tickets and programs were printed. The Big Recital was at hand. My husband's advanced tap-dancers would add a note of professionalism and inspiration for all.

Music! Lights! Action! The velvet curtain opened. For a second my mind flashed back to a remark a child once made during class: "Teacher, this practice is so-o-monopolous." On this night she and the others were little coiled springs waiting to unwind in a wonderland of lipstick, lights and laughter. Costumes, makeup and a great performance heightened their self-esteem and confidence. On this night they were free to set new goals. Their proud parents applauded and beamed approval. Fathers, busy with cameras, realized money for dance instruction had been well spent.

Perhaps only a few children would actually pursue theatrical careers. Our hope, however, was that all the children understood that a little monotonous practice and perseverance could overcome life's challenges. Their futures were unlimited. They could become great actors, dancers, sports stars, writers or communicators. On this enchanted evening they were all bright stars—in a galaxy of stars!

Pat O'Toole  
Sun City AZ

### Heirloom Memoirs

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## A Senior Prom Disaster

There are several things in life that are considered a rite of passage but perhaps none more so than the Senior Prom. My friend, Patsy and I spent hours talking and dreaming of the big night. So many details. There were our dresses and how many stiff crinoline skirts to wear underneath. Then there were the shoes and the long gloves which had to be the perfect color match. In those days it seemed that everything had to match.

Finally our attention focused on our hair. Three days before the night to end all nights Patsy and I determined that our hairstyles needed a lift. At the corner drug store our eyes scanned all the hair products shelves back and forth. Finally after much trepidation, Patsy decided on a home permanent and I, believing that blondes did indeed have more fun, was armed with peroxide and golden color.

The following day after class we descended into my cellar and spent hours with end papers, curlers, solutions and neutralizers that mingled with the pungent odor of peroxide and drifted upstairs, much to my parents' chagrin. After hours of burning eyes and stinging scalps, we stood in front of the mirror. We hardly recognized ourselves and dissolved into tears.

Patsy's hair was all frizz. Actually she looked as if she'd been caught in an electrical storm. I sported a head full of brass. At school, to our surprise, we weren't the only ones whose home hair makeovers had been a disaster. Fortunately, one of the girls had a cousin who operated a beauty shop where we stood in line as the beauticians tried somewhat unsuccessfully to hide their laughter.

Patsy's hair was clipped and styled close to the scalp and camouflaged with a few well-placed flowers to match her dress. My hair was toned down, pulled back and camouflaged in a chignon (of course the same color as my dress). To me, I still looked awful.

Patsy and I still laugh at how we tried to act so nonchalant when we received "compliments" on our "new and divine" hairstyles.

Trudie M. Eklund  
Austin TX

## Camouflage

I'm giving my life away, one piece at a time, mostly to Goodwill Industries. With every box of books I can't remember why I bought, every table I don't need any more, and every bag of clothes I have worn too long or not at all, I'm boxing up my memories and giving them to someone else.

Some of the items I give away are almost new. Others seem a bit travel-worn since I have packed and unpacked them the last five times I moved. Their purpose for being in my possession no longer exists.

The oak table once looked great in my small frame house, which is now torn down and replaced by a 3700 square foot townhouse. The large, concrete green frog originally guarded a boat dock that no longer belongs to me. The beautiful silk flower arrangements my sister made no longer match my color scheme. These possessions and their attached memories belong to another life, one far away from the one I live now.

My mother disposed of all of her possessions the month before she moved to a nursing home. She took only a few clothes, a rocking chair, and a television set. On the other hand, my sister died unexpectedly after heart surgery, and she didn't get the chance to clean out her refrigerator, straighten her closets, or organize her desk drawers. That task is now left to her daughter, and it pains her to even think of breaking up her mother's possessions. She keeps saying, "I don't know where to start."

All of these reasons point to my emphasis on cleaning up the clutter and clearing out the space of my current home. I don't want to pass on this chore to those who survive me. I'm not sure I am comfortable with someone else reading my journals, searching my Word documents on the computer, and puzzling over my writing idea files. I grimace at the thought of their going through my closet and seeing all my square dance clothes.

These books, lamps, and bags of clothing I give to friends or donate to Goodwill look to be ordinary, even colorful, items. I alone see the camouflage of forty years of life memories.

Jackie Woolley  
Round Rock TX

## Looking Ahead

Each issue of the *SCJ* 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.** We're looking for stories rich in evocative detail, showing something of the struggles, challenges, and resolutions of real people living real lives. We're not looking for generalized, abstract truths about life. We want to read your stories, not your essays! Please make sure that your stories are **350 words** or less. We may edit your submissions for grammar and spelling. Here are the upcoming topics and deadlines:

***Black and White***—March 2004 (due January 15)

***Sidewalks***—June 2004 (due April 15)

***In the Kitchen***—September 2004 (due July 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 do 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 . . .

### MotherLines

The circle is called,  
 the names spoken and unspoken  
 in the soft, safe darkness.  
 They lean forward over our shoulders,  
 the named and the nameless ones,  
 whispering,  
 “What will you say?  
 What will you tell?  
 Will I be remembered in your tale?”  
 I reach back in time,  
 but the darkness is too thick,  
 the memories too thin.  
 I feel your hunger to be known,  
 acknowledged, recognized.  
 “Tell them how hard we worked.  
 Tell them how much we hurt,  
 how despairingly we wept.  
 Tell them how we danced  
 and humped and gritted our teeth  
 in childbirth — hear our screams.  
 Tell them how we married and buried  
 and planted and stitched,  
 and laid down too tired to die sometimes.  
 But rise we did, or you wouldn't be here.  
 Tell them, ‘You're here now  
 because we did,  
 because of what we did.’  
 Speak for us.  
 Speak from us.  
 Tell them that we mattered.”  
 And so we write.

Carolyn Blankenship  
 Austin TX

### Ode to Apples

Fresh-picked apples, Mother Nature's mason jars,  
 Firm-skinned fruit, mid-autumn's rich treasure,  
 You and the harvest moon under the stars  
 Conspired together to capture the leisure  
 Of long, languid days and short, balmy nights  
 In summer-soaked cells of heavy sweet waters.  
 You hung there on branches that reached for the heights  
 Growing more like the moon, her dear round daughters.  
 You will fill dry souls with memories fair  
 And outlive the season, your seeds shed somewhere.

Leslea Smith  
 Hillsboro OR

### Aging

Aging is an issue often on my mind. I can't stop it so acceptance seems the only answer. As I look in the mirror I see only a shadow of the girl I once was. There are gray hairs mixed into what was once ash-blond. Has my neck always been this long and thin? My eyes are sinking deeper, the circles are getting darker, and there are deep frown lines around my mouth.

My ego has problems with the reflection I see, but with age my eyesight gets worse so I don't have to acknowledge the woman staring at me.

My days are full and I feel good about life. There are no regrets about the past. I had to climb the mountain to view the valley on the other side.

Judy Watkins  
 Hillsboro OR

### Kidding about Time

“Mother?” My three-and-a-half-year-old said as I set down my dishrag and turned, openmouthed, to look at him. “Mother, do you need me for anything?”

Tedder had been through the move to the university where I'd updated genetics and physics courses I'd first taken a decade ago. He'd understood that I left the nursing program and was applying to medical schools. He'd cringed with me as I opened rejection letters. *A woman alone with three small kids going through medical school? Impossible!*

But we'd found one willing to let us try. We'd made it into medical school and were all four chin-deep in studies and elementary and medical school routines. Tedder followed his young man nursery school teacher around like a puppy.

About the only time we had really together was over baked beans and hot dogs or fruit-cocktail rice casseroles. And then at bedtime when we read or sang and whispered secrets before I went back to the hundreds of pages each professor assigned for his next class. But I wasn't prepared for so formal an address by my son who came to my waist.

“Uh, no, I can't think of anything right now.”

“Well, if you do, I'll be in my room.”

“Uh, thanks, honey,” I called after him as he trooped up the stairs. I picked up the dishcloth and stood a moment with soapy water trickling down my arm.

“Too heavy on the studying, MJ,” I told myself. “You told yourself that we'd all four make it through this together or it wasn't worth it, remember? It's time for some fun.”

That weekend we got away camping in the Missouri hills. We laughed over hot dogs roasted on sticks and baked beans burned on the bottom and cold on the top of their open can. We flamed marshmallows and squished black flakes and goo over chocolate pieces on graham crackers. Rain deluged us in the night and the wind blew our pup tents over on top of us, and we loved it.

And to my little guy, I was “Mom” again.

Mary Jane Nordgren  
 Forest Grove OR

### Love at Taco Bell

I met my love at Taco Bell  
He was really something to see  
Cowboy boots, jeans, and smell  
This was the one for me

Big and tall, lean and tan  
I knew at a glance  
That he was the cowboy man.  
I never had a chance

He looked at me and grinned  
My red hair shining in the sun  
Said "Let's go Red, into Taco Bell  
Where we can talk and have fun."

There we sat for five hours  
Drinking our Mountain Dew  
He never stopped talking.  
I knew I'd met my Waterloo

As the years go by  
he still has that smell  
I wonder "What was I thinking?"  
That fateful day at Taco Bell

Sandra A Wernsing  
Las Vegas NV

### If Only I Had the Time

I recently did some simple arithmetic and found out that in one year there are 365 days, 52 weeks, 8760 hours, 525,600 minutes and over 31 million seconds.

Within this framework, I probably have showered or taken a bath at least 300 times, and perhaps only sponged off my face on another 65 of those days I didn't feel like getting wet.

I brushed my teeth over 700 times, and flushed the toilet at least 2400 times, including those occasions when I did it for other members of the family who "forgot."

I slept approximately 2800 hours, made the bed at least 300 times, and just straightened out the sheets another 65 times.

The dishwasher got my attention least 180 times and I washed and dried 250 loads of laundry during the year.

In addition, I gassed up my car 50 times, and visited my hair stylist every second month.

The grocery store was on my list at least 100 times and cooking a meal or buying take-out happened 900 to 1000 times.

Oh, I forgot to mention vacuuming, dusting, window washing, yard care, weeding, and all those other time-eaters.

I'm beginning to feel exhausted already. And I haven't mentioned going to and from my "real" job 250 times, nor picking up and delivering teenagers too many times to count.

On my next trip to the bookstore as I walk past one of those "How to Save Time" books and it waves seductively at me, perhaps I should consider writing such a book, *if only I had the time.*

Jackie Newman  
Austin TX

### Dress Code

I woke this morning to find myself in the corporate world. I'm uncertain how this happened, and even more uncertain how to survive. I've decided to try camouflage for safety and attempt to follow the dress code. To my amazement, this memo is several pages of single-spaced, typed information. I find myself questioning several of the more interesting rules.

#### All staff must wear underwear.

As a woman who has difficulty undressing for a shower, I find it amazing that there could be people walking around without underpants. Even more curious: how is this enforced? Are random spot checks conducted? Perhaps there is an undercover underwear squad walking up the stairs behind me verifying that I have a visible panty line.

#### Skirts can be no more than two inches above the knee.

Again, this seems difficult to enforce. In Catholic school, my uniform was expected to touch the floor when I kneeled. Can they now demand that I kneel during staff meetings, or would that be a problem with the separation of church and state?

#### No denim is allowed.

I thought I understood this one: no blue jeans. But I've discovered that what it really means is no DENIM. This includes no jumpers, no denim shirts, no denim vests, and no denim appliques on collars. On Casual Fridays, however, all denim is allowed, including bell-bottom hip-huggers.

#### No shorts, split skirts or skorts

I have just one question. What the hell is a skort, and am I likely to wear one accidentally?

As I walk down the hall, I hear someone yell, "Hey, Philbin, are those capri pants?"

I freeze. I'm a deer caught in the headlights. I'm the little brown bunny frozen in the back yard while the kids played baseball.

*I'm not here. Don't see me. Please don't see me.*

I hear my voice squeak: "Capri's? Heck no! These are khakis. It's just that I've gained some weight and it makes them seem shorter. I must have thrown them in the wash and they shrunk..."

My accuser's eyes narrow as I'm approached.

*Uh-oh, I hope I wearing clean underwear.*

Erin Declan Philbin  
Pittsburgh PA

## More women write . . .

The two pieces on this page were read by Austin Chapter writers at recent circles. We know you'll like them as much as we did!

### Doris & Kandinski

by Theresa May, Austin TX

The way I see it, he might have just been mental, or a Roaring Twenties *avant garde* blowhard, merely claiming to hear sounds when he saw colors. But the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky swore by his synesthesia. For him, yellow was the high brass, all trumpets and fanfares. Crimson red, a drum-roll, or the horns. Violet, a bagpipe. Orange, the middle bells of the church or a strong contralto voice. Every canvas also a choir.

Kandinsky's colors were always singing, and I half believe him today, walking down this island street with its brightly painted row houses in full chorus. They're a tropical marimba of heliotrope, orchid, pomegranate, mustard and mango, sage green with magenta trim, clotted cream and colonial blue and spicy shrimp creole all cobbled together in an eye-boggling cascade of the happiest dwellings I've ever seen. The ones facing the ocean are upscale, of course--pristine and promiscuous at the same time, parading themselves before the monochrome sea and the cloud-pocked sky with French doll house façades, fancy-work doors, and second-story gardens in flagrant bloom. Farther into the city, the houses are dingy--patched and peeling; it's a sadder song there, about life in a different key.

I think of my mother, Doris, born in 1922, the year Kandinsky began painting his Bauhaus series, *Kleine Welte* (*Small World*). She would be a beautiful woman, with dark hair and blue-gray eyes and luminous skin, but her tall frame and big feet embarrassed even a family of farmers. Her teenage years coincided with the Great Depression, and in her high school pictures, she's wearing homemade dresses and too-small shoes. In that faded time, she hoarded her gifts--a voice always hungry for music, and a color memory so accurate, she could match something precisely months or even years later, after having seen it only once.

In a fairer world, she could have turned either one of her talents into a million bucks. Instead, she spent them on me. An older friend made her learn to sew when I was a baby, and from that moment on, I was her anti-Depression billboard. We were always looking for, in her words, "something a little more unusual."

Instead of the gray suede penny loafers I wanted--just like everybody else's--she bought me robin's egg blue, spool-heeled leather shoes, with cutwork and grosgrain ribbon ties. They matched the linen A-line Easter dress she designed when I was a sophomore in high school. Hand crafted, not homemade. My junior year, it was an avocado silk blouse with black polka dots, a black raw silk jumper, and matching hat, a Mr. John Jr. straw roller. To the football games, I wore hand-pleated plaid wool skirts with perfectly coordinated sweaters and high heels.

I had the same custom-made dress as all the other girls in my vocal group, but my edge was underwear, royal blue, dyed to match. I was my mother's Barbie, her *ikebana*, her work of art.

Today, if you walked out of your house in this rich port town, my mother could pick you out a pair of pumps the exact shade of the flowers spilling off your balcony. Later, when you looked out over the railing in the early evening light to call down to your friend in the street below, wearing your new shoes and leaning way over to the side so the bougainvillea wouldn't scratch you, with your forearms resting on the balcony rail and all your weight on your right leg, your left leg cocked a little flirtatiously behind, and the fuschia shoe half off and dangling from your left foot like a decorative counterweight

--at that moment, it would appear to any passerby that you and the shoe and the flowers had been painted by the same hand, by Kandinsky, the man who could hear purple, or by my mother, who could match it tone for tone.

### Belief in Me

by Lisa Belli, Austin TX

I used to believe that my happiness, my wholeness, could wait until he came back from work at five;  
Now, I know that my happiness, my wholeness, is right here inside of me, twenty-four-seven;

I used to believe that wire extensions protruding from the wheels of a Lincoln-Mercury were there so that a blind driver could negotiate the curves on the streets better;  
Now, I know that my uncle was just teasing me.

I used to believe that it was my job to save Leslie, first, from her mother; then, from her illness.  
I used to believe that I could make her strong enough to fly on her own.  
Now, I know that I am only responsible for my own soaring.

I used to believe that I could only be "good enough" by being "good";  
I am already good enough.

I used to believe that in order to start something I had to know how to finish it, perfectly.  
Now, I know that the best laid plans are doomed to fail, that "no good deed goes unpunished," and that "virtue is its own reward."

I used to believe that if I was charming, a man would take care of me;  
Now, I know that my charms are not for sale or trade; and that a man, especially a man, can never take care of me.  
Only I can.

*Kitchen-Table Stories****DUMPLINGS COME TO TOWN***

*In this issue, we're beginning a series of Kitchen-Table Stories. The series will be edited by Patricia Pando, who writes a weekly column on food and local history called "Stirring Up Memories," for the Bainbridge GA Post-Searchlight. Patricia wrote this piece, and she has plenty more stories in the oven.*

*But we'd like to print your kitchen-table stories, too! (800 words maximum, including recipe.) Please send via email or as a Word attachment to patriciapando@yahoo.com. If you have no computer, type or write your story legibly and mail to Patricia*

The bright blue Buick eased to a stop under the tall bois d'arc tree dwarfing the tiny white bungalow. It seemed strange to be going to see my grandparents at their new house in town. Always before we'd gone down the dirt road, waited while Mother opened the gate and Daddy pulled the car through; then we drove the rest of the way to the farmhouse with the cackling chickens, bawling calves and creaky windmill, but no electricity, no bathroom, no running water. But now things were different.

Daddy glanced at his wristwatch. "And just in time. They'll be sitting down about now." Of course, he meant that the men would be sitting down. We'd driven over 200 miles for Sunday dinner at my grandparents and to see all the aunts and uncles and cousins. It was our first visit since Grandfather and Grandmother had moved to town, and Daddy wanted to show off his new car. I held a gift-wrapped box full of fluffy pink towels for Grandmother Nordyke's first bathroom.

"She promised chicken and dumplings." Daddy rubbed his hands together.

Mother looked pained. Chicken and dumplings had always been a sore point between them. No matter that Mother copied the recipe exactly from the notes she took while, as a bride, she watched Grandmother Nordyke make them. No matter that she followed it exactly, until the card was smudged and torn.

"Don't Stir," was written firmly in black pencil and underlined. "Don't put lid on!" Underlined twice. But it didn't matter. Mother's dumplings were never as good as Grandmother's—at least not to Daddy.

We trooped in the front door. After all the hugging and kissing, Daddy plopped down in the one empty chair at the table. "Pass me those chicken and dumplings," he crowed.

Mother and I fled to the kitchen where Mother eyed a second batch of dumplings, freshly made, dusty with flour lying on a towel made of neatly hemmed cotton feed sacks. She slumped.

Just then, Daddy stuck his head through the kitchen door. "Mama! You've done it again. Those chicken and dumplings..." Then he looked at Mother. She looked away. After dinner, the men headed to the clearing under the cottonwoods and the women took their turn. They'd quickly wash and dry some dinner plates, and unbutton the top button of their flowered rayon dresses (some even rolled their stockings down around the tight garters that held them up during church). Choice pieces of chicken and pies, somehow overlooked when the men were eating, made their way to the table. I kept quiet and listened to talk about new babies, long-lost nephews, and naughty Aunt Thelma who moved to Phoenix.

This afternoon, Mother took a few extra minutes to dry the last set of saucers and coffee cups. It was almost time for the aunts to come in and set out the leftovers for supper. Chicken and dumplings, those wonderful dumplings, both batches, were all gone.

"Mrs. Nordyke," Mother began hesitantly, "I'm still trying on the dumplings. I just can't get them right

"Did you stir them? I told you, never stir."

"No, ma'am. I only stirred that one time."

"And the lid?"

"Not once."

"Well, Dottie." Grandmother patted Mother's hand. "You know, I changed the recipe as soon as we left the farm, and no one's even noticed. Maybe that will help."

"What do you do different?"

Grandmother smiled and went to her shining new refrigerator, opened the door, and pulled out a can of Pillsbury biscuits. She handed it to Mother.

"Roll 'em out with lots of flour, lots of flour, 'til they won't hold anymore, then cut 'em in strips. Hide the can at the bottom of the trash."

"Mrs. Nordyke!" Mother's jaw dropped. "Not canned biscuits!"

"I lived without electricity or even an icebox for fifty years. I've got 'em now and I'm not going to make a biscuit—or a dumpling—from scratch again, ever."

Grandmother Nordyke put the can in the refrigerator, way back behind the eggs, and headed for the front porch.

**Grandmother Nordyke's Dumplings**

2 T. shortening

1 1/2 cup milk

1/4 t. soda

1 t. baking powder

1 t. salt

about 2 cups flour

Mix as for pie dough only lots, lots stiffer [or open one can of biscuits]—work in as much flour as possible and then let stand and dry out about 30 min. Put 1 or 2 cups sweet milk in boiling chicken and broth and let boil again—then cut dough in 2-inch squares and drop in—mash down but **DON'T STIR**. And **DON'T** put a lid on!

*More Writing from the Fourth Annual  
Carol W. Landherr Life-Writing Competition*

*The topic for the 2004 life-writing competition focused on our sense of place and the power of the environments in which we live. Sallie Tisdale has said: "As much as we live in a place, we live in place; we inhabit a condition of the soul. We live where we have made definitions, and in the process of making definitions, we create a place in which to live." In this issue, we present another of the truly outstanding entries we received, Linda Wisniewski's gentle, perceptive memoir of a woods that gave her refuge.*

***Partyka's Woods***

by Linda Wisniewski  
Doylestown PA

We called them Partyka's woods, after the family that lived in the little white house where the pavement stopped and the trees began. In the 1950s, my sister, Judy and I and our little friends fearlessly walked or rode bikes wherever we wanted to go. After school, we changed into play clothes and ran out the door, calling out to our mothers, "We're goin' down to Partyka's woods." We walked east, a half block to the corner, then across the street and a full block to our refuge, where we roamed almost every day of my childhood.

There was no path and the thickest section of trees, sugar maples, oak and white pine, covered less than an acre, opening out on the far side to a much larger field of hay and wildflowers. Beyond it, Widow Susan Road followed the long hill out of town.

In spring, the light in the woods was new and clean, filtered through young leaves, like us not fully unfurled. We sat on a hill covered with May apples and looked up through the canopy to see what we could see.

Grownups were never seen in this little part of our world. Adults were working at home or in the carpet factories with no time to walk in the woods. This was a place that was ours alone.

Sometimes it was a quiet cathedral, its ceiling the maple and oak branches thick with leaves. Sometimes it was the noisy church at Christmas, filled with bird songs. Tranquil or clamorous, it was nothing like the church we attended.

The old brick building had a stunningly beautiful, white and gold interior. Its three altars were often decorated with huge floral bouquets. A choir sang, bells tinkled and the aroma of incense and candle wax drifted to every corner. Family, friends and schoolmates were all around me. Our parochial school class sat together in that church several times a month. But I didn't feel safe there, not like I did in Partyka's woods.

My mother said I sat in the pew unmoving, like a statue. "Loosen up," she'd say. "Look like you're breathing." But the story she told of the frightening old priest from her childhood had scared me. During a fire-and-brimstone sermon, he had pointed randomly at a little girl in the congregation, and she'd been so frightened she cried out.

The nuns who taught in my school scared me, too. When we were "bad," they put their black habit hoods over their faces, pretending to be the devil. They read us stories of saintly martyrs who'd met gruesome deaths. The walls of the

beautiful church sanctuary itself were decorated with three-dimensional carvings of the Stations of the Cross, Jesus' tortured walk to his crucifixion. The air itself hung heavy with guilt and fear.

The atmosphere in the woods was completely different, light and free and set apart. In the eyes of my memory, I can see the view from that wooded hillside. I can see the endless flood of May apples and feel the safety there, away from judging eyes.

One day, Judy and I picked armloads of wildflowers and brought them home. Mom put them in water-filled jars. The next day, they had wilted and looked nothing like the beautiful blossoms of the day before. We learned that wildflowers are not meant to be picked and brought indoors. They wanted the woods, Partyka's woods, just as I did.

I wanted my refuge in the woods when life at home got noisy. My parents' arguments were frequent and loud. Their angry words often spilled over onto Judy and me, for whatever transgressions little girls do. But the nuns at school taught that anger was a sin. Every Saturday afternoon, I confessed to a priest who gave me absolution.

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I was angry five times."

His face a dark shape behind the screen of the confessional, his monotonous voice droned the response in one long breath. "Say five Hail Marys and now let me hear your Act of Contrition."

"Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee."

In Partyka's woods, I was neither ashamed nor contrite. Though I was often alone, I felt safe there among the leaves and flowers, safer than I felt at home. My parents were troubled people. Unable to meet their own emotional needs, they neglected and abused both their daughters. My father was especially angry; his alcoholic father beat him and died when Dad was only twelve. In the woods, no one yelled at me. I found a place where I belonged. I discovered the healing arms of solitude among the flowers and trees. I felt delicate there, even pretty. Sensitive and soft. Quiet. Like the wildflowers, at home only in the woods.

Many years later, and many miles away in southeastern Pennsylvania, I live with my husband and son on an acre of wooded land where May apples grow wild each spring. In the backyard, I have created a quiet little refuge, a meditation garden under tall hickory trees looking east toward a thicker woods.

One day as I walked toward my wooden bench, the unexpected happened. I heard the loud crack of a gunshot. A

deer crashed through the deep woods and into our yard. She saw me and stopped, stymied. I imagined her thought process: "Human to the rear, human to the front." She chose the woods again, running at a sharp angle from where she had come. I called the police and learned that it was small game season. The hunter could only use small pellets and could not have killed the deer or me.

"It would sting pretty bad, though," the officer said. "Better make a lot of noise when you're back there." In my quiet refuge, my meditation garden? I don't think so.

I complained to the owner of the back woods, and it's been years since I heard gunshots in my meditation garden. As grownups, we create our own safety, the safety we often had to find, as children, in natural places. I like it that the spot I've made has May apples in it, like Partyka's woods long ago.

When the weather allows, I brush the twigs off my bench, sit down and wait in silence for peace to settle on the woods and me. Many things have changed over the years and some things not at all. I still like to look up through the canopy, to see what I can see. I still feel sheltered by the trees.

*Linda C. Wisniewski is a former librarian who lives with her family in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where she facilitates memoir workshops for women and volunteers at the local library. She also likes to read mystery novels and watch her retired scientist husband cook fabulous gourmet meals. Her work has appeared in Christian Science Monitor, Chocolate for the Woman's Soul, and Grit magazine. Her memoir, My Body My Self, has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize for 2003. The Pushcart Prize is characterized by the New York Times Book Review as the single best measure of the state of affairs in American literature today." Linda's story was published in volume III, 2003 of Mindprints, literary magazine of Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria, CA.*

*Suppose we are already home  
And this is what home looks like.  
—Dianne Connelly*

### ***Editing Assistance***

Jane Ross, Assistant Editor of the *Story Circle Journal* and editor of the 2003 *True Words Anthology*, is available for private editing services.

Jane has worked in publishing for nearly twenty years and has worked on dozens of books as a copyeditor and proof reader.

Short works to book length manuscripts

Contact Jane at

Phone (512) 451-3129

5802 Wynona Ave. Austin, TX 78756

mjr@io.com.

Website: [www.io.com/~mjr](http://www.io.com/~mjr)

## ***Truth Be Told A Program for Women in Prison***

At our *Stories From the Heart* conference in February, you'll meet three wonderful women who are committed to helping other women tell their stories—in a powerful and important way. **Nathalie Sorrell, Carol Waid, and Suzanne Armistead** work with women in prison. The name of their empowering enterprise is *Truth Be Told*.

**Nathalie**, founder of the non-profit *Truth Be Told*, came to the Lockhart Women's Correctional Facility in early 2000 in response to a spiritual call to service. A warden's desire to have female inmates tell their stories to juveniles on probation, in combination with Nathalie's interest in speaking, resulted in the development of the *Talk To Me* classes. Later, a Hobby Prison chaplain asked Nathalie to help inmates improve reading and writing skills, and she started a class there as well.

Coming to share her story with the women of Lockhart prison in spring of 2000, **Carol** felt her own call to service. Together, Carol and Nathalie developed the *Discovery* class for *Talk To Me* graduates and incorporated *Exploring Creativity* workshops. At the request of a warden, Carol developed *Short Timing*, a class for inmates being released in nine months or less.

In late 2001, **Suzanne**, a dance artist and life coach, was invited to lead an *Exploring Creativity* session. She joined the team as the third partner. Suzanne developed *Talk To Me Movement*, the third in the *Talk To Me* series. At the warden's request, Suzanne has created *Show Me Spirit!* - a movement and creativity class that reaches out to inmates not enrolled in the *Talk To Me* program.

Recently, Story Circle board member Catherine Cogburn visited with 18 women prisoners in the *Truth Be Told* programs. Catherine led the group through a discussion and some basic exercises for coping with grief and loss, major issues for many of the women in the program.

"I was very moved by the honesty of the women there, and their devotion to helping themselves and each other," Catherine said. "Carol, Nathalie, and Suzanne have created an effective program for these women, and work hard to keep it going."

Membership in SCN is open to women in the *Truth Be Told* program, and to other women in prison. At the present time, nine SCN members are prisoners. The cost of their membership is supported by SCN's *Sugar Bowl Program*—gifts from generous SCN members who want to support other, less fortunate women in their search for their own stories and their own voices.

At the February conference, Nathalie, Carol, and Suzanne will be talking about their program and discussing ways in which similar activities can be used to help women prisoners. You can also find out more about *Truth Be Told* on the program's website, at <http://www.truth-be-told.com/index.htm>.

## Take a Bow ! Spotlighting Our Story Circle Volunteers

### Carolyn Blankenship: A Healing Attitude

In this article, we feature SCN Board member Carolyn Blankenship. After two very active years that included leading numerous workshops, editing a True Words anthology, and writing a facilitator's manual, Carolyn is retiring from the board at the end of this year to spend more time writing. We wish her well! (You can read Carolyn's poem, "MotherLines," on page 12.)



A lifetime resident of Austin TX, Carolyn Blankenship facilitates the monthly *Write On!* Circle and has facilitated Older Women's Legacy (OWL) circles, Writing from Life sessions, Be Our Guest programs, Schmooze the Muse workshops, and a session at the first SCN National Conference. She is the author of *From the Heart: A Manual for Facilitators*.

Most recently, Carolyn was a presenter at a *Writing from Life* weekend workshop offered by SCN in Austin, where she lead participants through a process she calls "Writing Our Way Through." In her workshop, Carolyn invited the participants to look at the role of chaos and change in their lives and discover how journal writing can be used as a tool for insight and personal growth. She has also presented WFL sessions on the Magic of Myth and Metaphor and Inward Bound: The Spiritual Quest.

Carolyn was nudged into SCN by her good friend, Catherine Cogburn in 1999. Catherine held out the carrot of facilitating an OWL-Circle group, which she knew Carolyn would love, and cajoled her into joining the Board in 2001. It is a mark of Carolyn's infatuation with her group of ladies that they met not just for five weeks but for over a year. One of her favorite memories is of a group member whose arthritis and difficulty in hearing made participation a real challenge. Though the member claimed that her life was not that interesting, she persisted, and when she received the printed booklet of her life stories, a huge smile split her face and she said, "I lived one heck of a life, didn't I!"

Carolyn says that Story Circle has introduced her to the most amazing women and she couldn't resist joining the Board to get to know some of them better. "Working on the journal, anthology, and newsletters have given me a chance to express my creativity," says Carolyn. "Helping other women recognize the value of telling their story has been one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. I am so grateful to Story Circle for giving me the opportunity to both tell my story and hear others' stories. It has deepened my understanding and appreciation of my own life journey as well as the journeys of the women upon whose shoulders I stand. Having two daughters and two granddaughters (and one new grandson) keeps me especially aware of what I want to pass on. More than anything, I appreciate the women I have met and the stories we have shared from our hearts."

Besides raising her two daughters, Carolyn has worked at a variety of occupations, both paid and volunteer. Over the

past 25 years, she has developed and taught training programs for volunteer facilitators, led grief and loss support groups, and given a wide variety of presentations to corporations, public schools, the University of Texas Nursing School and Informal Classes, Brackenridge Hospital, the Breast Cancer Resource Center, City of Austin Health+ Program, churches, nursing homes, federal prisons, and the general public.

From the late 1970s through the early 90s, Carolyn was involved in the Austin-based *Center for Attitudinal Healing*. Attitudinal Healing is a philosophy and practice that suggests that our attitudes play a primary role in determining our experience. Carolyn has always been inspired by the words of Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl: "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the ones who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances."

Says Carolyn, "Working at the Center with people of all ages who were struggling with illness and grief taught me the value of truly listening to another person. I learned that I have no answers for anyone else, but when we offer to others a safe and accepting environment where each person is encouraged to find their own answers, we are often able to release limiting, outworn beliefs and find a sense of guidance, compassion, and wisdom within."

Carolyn currently works part-time as a desk-top publisher to fund her "real life," which includes grandchildren, gardening, sculpting, photography, journaling, facilitating a writing circle, writing family history, and as much travel as time and money allow.

Above all, Carolyn says, she is committed to genuine interaction and connection with others, to empowering herself and others to live fully from the heart, and to discovering the joy and healing available in sharing our stories. She is currently involved in writing family history and developing her skills through the National Association of Personal Historians. She began by writing her father's story for her two nieces who were born after his death. Recently she dove into writing her 88-year-old aunt's life story, as a way of capturing the memories that her own mother she was no longer mentally capable of sharing. Currently, she is working with her husband's 99-year-old grandmother on her family stories, and putting stories from her own childhood into handmade books for her grandchildren. In the future, Carolyn hopes to turn this avocation into a vocation.—*article by Jane Ross*

## ***An Internet Star: The SCN Book Review Site***

*by Book Review Editor Paula Yost*

Thanks to our talented team of volunteer reviewers, the Story Circle Network Book Review (SCNBR) web site at [www.storycircle.org/BookReviews](http://www.storycircle.org/BookReviews) has grown by leaps and bounds. Our reputation is spreading as one of the best sources for reviews of books about, for and by fascinating women.

Over the last year, our audience has expanded considerably. On an average day, the site is visited 26 times as compared to an average of seven daily visits in 2001. Visitors now view a cumulative average of 66 pages each day, up from 26 in the same time period. Obviously, they like what they see. If you'll indulge my pride as SCNBR editor, I would like to share a few of the reasons for our success.

With over 110 informative reviews of a tempting variety of bestsellers, debut novels, poetry and short-story collections, the site offers readers a delightful sneak peek at current or newly released publications as well as a few old favorites. Selections are available in nine genres: Memoirs, Autobiographies & Journals; The Writing Life; Writing, Healing & Discovering; Women's History; Women's Health; Biographies; Fiction; Essays; Poetry; and Young Adults.

Many of the extraordinary books reviewed recently will please the taste of even the most discriminating reader. To name a few: *Change Me Into Zeus's Daughter* by Barbara Moss, a powerful and poignant story of impoverished life; *The Shadow Women* by Angela Elwell Hunt, the rich dramatization of the lives of five women from the Bible; *Small Wonders*, a mesmerizing collection of essays by Barbara Kingsolver; and *We Are the Stories We Tell: The Best Short Stories by North American Women Since 1945*, edited by Wendy Martin.

We encourage all SCN members to join our team of 30 reviewers who write reviews for publication on the site. (Not only is it fun and simple, it looks great on your writing resume.) Our automated, on-line book review form makes writing a review and submitting it easier than ever. Just check out the Reviewers' Guidelines and tell us all about your latest favorites.

Add character to your nightstand by simply clicking on any book cover within the book review site and ordering it directly from Amazon.com. A portion of the sale will be donated to Story Circle Network. If you're already a fan of this enlightening site, stay tuned for even more improvements and excitement. If it's been a while since your last visit, you're missing something special. Don't delay another minute! Get the scoop about an array of engaging books, give in to temptation by ordering your favorites, and prepare for hours

*Books are like lobster shells. We surround ourselves with them, then we grow out of them and leave them behind, as evidence of our earlier stages of development.*—Dorothy L. Sayers

## ***New Memoir Collection Launched at Book Party More Events Planned***

Over 90 people attended the party celebrating SCN's new memoir collection, *With Courage and Common Sense*, at St. John Neumann's Church in Austin TX on Sunday, November 16. Four of the contributing authors read their work: Sherlie Hurwitz, Billie Grace Herring, Jeanie Forsyth, and Bobbye Jo Barker. Susan Wittig Albert, one of the book's two editors, introduced the people who have made the OWL-Circle project possible: Catherine Cogburn, grant program director; Mary Jane Marks, grant program director; Pat Flathouse, current Austin OWL-Circle coordinator.

SCN is planning a series of events to introduce the anthology to the Austin community. If you participated in the OWL-Circle workshops in 1999-2000, this is *your* book, so please come to one of these events and bring your family and friends. Each program will include a brief introduction to the OWL-Circle Memoir Program, readings from the book, and a discussion of the importance of writing about our lives.

Dec. 26, noon and 9 p.m., Dec. 28, 5:30 p.m. KLRU-TV Austin. Pat Flathouse and Susan Albert discuss SCN's new book and the OWL-Circle program with TV host Tom Spencer.

Jan. 11, 2004, 2-3:30 p.m., Barnes and Noble Westlake, 701 S. Capital of Texas Hwy, Austin TX. For more information, phone 512-328-3155.

Jan. 15, 2004, 10:30 a.m. through lunch. Smith Auditorium, Congregation Beth Israel, 3801 Shoal Creek, Austin TX. For lunch reservations, phone 454-6806. Lunch cost: suggested donation of \$5-\$6.

Jan. 18, 2004, 2-4 p.m. Elderhaven Room, AGE Building, 3710 Cedar St., Austin TX

Jan. 31, 2-3:30 p.m., Barnes and Noble Round Rock, 2701 Parker Dr. Round Rock TX.

Feb. 7, 12:15-2:15 p.m., lunch, *Stories From the Heart II National Women's Memoir Conference*, Red Lion Hotel, 6121 North I-35 at Highway 290 Austin, TX. Readings from the book by Austin actresses Ann Edwards, Adrienne Harrell, and Nancy Groblewski. Lunch, \$25 (\$30 after Jan. 1)

Feb. 11, 1:30-3 p.m. St. Matthews Episcopal Church, 8134 Mesa Dr. Austin TX.

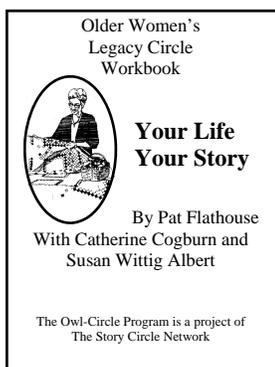
Feb. 27, 10-11:30 a.m. Morris Hall, St. John Neumann Catholic church, 5455 Bee Caves Rd, Austin TX 78746

March 22, 12-1 p.m. Seton Cove Spirituality Center, 3708 Crawford Ave. (between 35th & 38th), Austin TX. \$15.00 including lunch. To register, call 451-0272

## Neat Stuff for Life Writers (for gifts, too!)

**Discoveries: A blank journal just for women, with covers hand-crafted by the women of Story Circle.** Introduction by Susan Wittig Albert.

As we become conscious of our journey, we also become conscious of the importance of recording what we learn along the way. **Discoveries** can become your map and can help you tell the story of your own life's journey. And because writing is often easier when someone gives us a warm hug and a whisper of support, we've added some women's wise words to its pages, reminding us that wherever our journey takes us, we are not alone. Perfectly purse-sized at 6"x8," spiral-bound to open flat. 208 unruled pages. For a photo, go to <http://www.storycircle.org/frmdiscoveries.shtml>. **\$15.**



### Your Life, Your Story: A Book to Help you Capture Your Memories

by Pat Flathouse, with Catherine  
Cogburn. Introduction by Susan  
Wittig Albert

Are you writing your life story?  
This book contains five chapters  
with suggestions, ideas, ways to  
organize your material, and  
writing helps. A final chapter on

various aspects of lifewriting by Story Circle authors, including tips for writing, capturing memories, using photos, interviewing, creating a family cookbook, and scrapbooking. A valuable resource for any woman who wants to tell the story of her life, but especially written for women over 60. Based on the highly successful, widely acclaimed Older Women's Legacy Circle workshop program of the Story Circle Network. Sturdily bound in plastic with a coil binding that allows the book to lay flat. A helpful resource, a wonderful gift. **\$15**

**With Courage and Common Sense: Memoirs from the Older Women's Legacy Circles.** Foreword by Liz Carpenter, edited by Susan Wittig Albert and Dayna Finet

*With Courage and Common Sense* presents an extensive selection of memoirs from the OWL Circle project. Organized thematically, they describe women's experiences of identity, place, work, family life, love and marriage, loss and healing, adventures great and small, major historical events, and legacies to keep and pass along. Taken as a whole, the memoirs chronicle far-reaching changes in the ways that women participated in the world during the twentieth century. They show how women learned to surmount obstacles, to courageously make the most of the opportunities that came their way, and to move quietly and wisely beyond the limits that were imposed upon them. Paperback **\$18.** Hardcover **\$40.**

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

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### SCN Order Form

- \_\_\_ Send me \_\_\_ copy/copies of *Discoveries*, at \$15  
 \_\_\_ Send me \_\_\_ copy/copies of *Your Life, Your Story*, at \$15.  
 \_\_\_ Send me \_\_\_ paperback copy/copies of *With Courage and Common Sense*, at \$18.  
 \_\_\_ Send me \_\_\_ hardcover copy/copies of *With Courage and Common Sense*, at \$40.\

Shipping/handling: For the first item, \$4. For each additional item, add \$1. Mail your check to Story Circle Network  
PO Box 500127, Austin TX 78750-0127

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

## *A Story Circle News Roundup*

*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@tstar.net*

### ***SCN Board Elects New Members, 2004 Officers***

At its October meeting, the Story Circle board elected three new women to the board, for three-year terms: Mary Elizabeth, Marilyn McConnell, Diana McDaniel, and Mary Ann Reynolds. Jackie Newman will join the board as the new president of the Austin Chapter; and Lee Ambrose as the new president of the Internet Chapter. The new officers for 2004 are: President, Judith Helburn; Vice President, Leilani Rose; Secretary-Treasurer, Penny Appleby. Retiring board members Susan Albert, Carolyn Blankenship, PJ Pierce, and Carolyn Scheider were honored with gifts of appreciation and plaques hand-lettered by Melanie Alberts.

The board took up a number of issues at the meeting. It approved new membership categories and reviewed membership statistics; membership is up about 15% over this time last year. Executive Director Peggy Moody reported that she had begun sending out email reminders of membership expiration dates. Susan Albert reported that our eletter subscriptions have all increased substantially, and that we are now receiving around 63 visits a day to our web site. She also reported on submissions already arriving for the new memoir anthology, *Women Write About the Southwest*, under contract to U.T. Press.

The board also discussed the Writing Austin Lives project, the upcoming *Stories From the Heart* conference, and on-going fundraising activities.

Board members have contributed nearly 2200 volunteer hours in the first three quarters of 2003. Many thanks to all of the board members who devote so much time and energy to making SCN a thriving organization!

### ***Susan Albert Steps Down as Board President***

The board gave a warm farewell to Susan Wittig Albert, who has retired from the board at the end of her sixth year as President of the Story Circle Network. Susan founded SCN in March, 1997.

"SCN has enriched my life enormously," she said. "Of all the positions I have held, being president of this board has been the most rewarding. Best of all has been the opportunity to work with the wonderful women who give so much of themselves to support SCN—each one is a treasure. I've also been thrilled to watch our programs grow, reaching women not only in the United States, but—through the magic of the Internet—in foreign countries, as well. It's really true: women are beginning to recognize the value and importance of their stories, not just to themselves, but to others as well. And Story Circle is there to help. Thanks to all who have made this possible. And thanks for making the last six years such an amazing, joyful journey!"

### ***SCN Sponsors Booth at Texas Book Festival***

It was chilly and drizzly, but the light rain didn't dampen the spirits of the people who attended the Texas Book Festival at the Capital Complex in Austin November 8-9. And one of the brightest spots in Tent C was the Story Circle booth, staffed by our hardy band of volunteers: Susan Albert, Penny Appleby, Judith Helburn, Jazz Jaeschke, Linda Jones, Diana McDaniel, Peggy Moody, Mary Ann Reynolds, Leilani Rose, Danelle Sasser, and Ellen Walroth. We sold nearly \$400 of books, gave away lots of SCN brochures and conference brochures, and talked to many potential new members. Thanks to all those who gave up a part of their weekend to help!

### ***SCN Board Hosts Special Guests at Potluck Dinner***

The SCN board held its second get-together of the year on October 20, at the home of Jackie Newman, Austin Chapter president-elect. Special guests included Betty Sue Flowers, Theresa May, Sherryl Rogers, and B.J. Taylor. After dinner (wonderful food, with several chocolate desserts!) Carolyn Blankenship led a writing program, and board members and guests read their work—surprised, as usual, by the kind of writing that happens when women get together to write about their lives. Many thanks to Jackie for the use of her fabulous house (and Tim Newman, for his photographs)! And , of course, to all those who brought food and shared their writing. It was a wonderful evening.

### ***Austin Chapter Update***

The Austin Chapter (now at 188 members) is planning a holiday party. This year's event, which will be held on December 7, will be a Creativity Bazaar. Member-artists will showcase and sell their work: books, jewelry, greeting cards, pottery, quilted art pieces, collages, painted boxes, stained glass, and more. For information about the chapter's activities, or to join, go to the SCN website, at [www.storycircle.org](http://www.storycircle.org), or call the SCN office, at 512-454-9833.

### ***Owl Circles in Avon, IN***

Lynn Mills just completed her fourth OWL-Circle class, jointly sponsored by the library where she works (the Avon-Washington Township Library) and the local senior center. She is completing a booklet of stories from the group. Lynn is leading a Continuing OWL Circle as well, and reports that the participants find it deeply enriching. Reach Lynn at [Mills@avol.lib.in.us](mailto:Mills@avol.lib.in.us).

## ***Story Circle Members in Print, On the Web, & in the News***

Send news of your publications and writing-related activities to Nancy Rigg at [njrigg@mediaone.net](mailto:njrigg@mediaone.net), or to Peggy Moody at [news@storycircle.org](mailto:news@storycircle.org) for posting on our website.

**Mary Faloon's** entry in the "Writing Austin's Lives" project has been chosen as one of the award winners from among nearly 800 stories submitted to the University of Texas Humanities Institute's community discovery project.

**Linda Wisniewski's** memoir, "My Body My Self," which appeared in Volume 3 of *Mindprints* literary magazine, has been nominated by the magazine's editor for a prestigious Pushcart Prize. Linda was also featured in a full page article on Sept. 3 in the *Perkasie News Herald* (Perkasie, PA).

The University of Texas Press recently published SCN's first collection of memoirs, *With Courage and Common Sense: Memoirs from the Older Women's Legacy Circles*. To order the book, see page 20 or go to: [www.storycircle.org/owlcircle/withcourage](http://www.storycircle.org/owlcircle/withcourage).

**Karen Ryan's** article, entitled "Welcoming Winter," was published on Oct. 19 in the *Fort Myer's News-Press* (Fort Myers, FL). Karen is also the new editor for Jennifer Loudon's Comfort Queen website: <http://comfortqueen.com/>.

**Helen Ginger** has been selected as full-time Executive Director of the 1200-member Writers' League of Texas.

**Trudie Eklund** has signed a contract with Hamilton Books, a subsidiary of Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, for her new book *Sisters around the World: The Global Struggle for Female Equality*.

**Patricia Fiske** performed on Sept. 25 at Antones in Austin, TX with her Word Jazz group, which does spoken word accompanied by a band called Diverse Arts.

**Pamela Troeppel-Kinnaird** has a new website, [www.pamelatroeppel.com](http://www.pamelatroeppel.com), where you can sign up to receive her regular newspaper columns. One of Pamela's stories appears on page 3 of this issue.

**Renee Cassese's** essay about her Story Circle was included in *The Writing Group Book: Creating and Sustaining a Successful Writing Group*, edited by Lisa Rosenthal and published recently by Chicago Review Press.

**Paula Stallings Yost** recently presented two workshops at the StoryKeepers' Festival in Missoula, MT. Paula's presentations covered "The Healing Power of Stories" and "Story Circles," in which she talked about the success of SCN's Story Circles

## ***Women Write about the Southwest: A Call for Submissions***

The Story Circle Network is preparing a selected collection of writings by women, celebrating their experiences in the natural world of the Southwest. As a whole, these writings will demonstrate and illuminate not only the rich diversity of landscapes and environments of the Southwest, but the extraordinary range of women's voices and women's experiences of the land. The collection will be made up of a variety of literary forms—memoir, creative non-fiction, essay, poetry—and will include pieces by both established and new writers. To achieve the broadest geographical coverage, the editors have defined the Southwest Region as extending from the Gulf Coast across the Texas Hill Country to the dry deserts of west Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, southern Colorado, and southern California. The completed collection will be submitted to the University of Texas Press.

For details, rules, and information about the submission and selection process, go to <http://www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/> or write to SCN, PO Box 500127, Austin TX

## ***Life Writers' Market Watch: Opportunities for Publishing***

*A Cup of Comfort* book series is seeking submissions of 1000–2000 word stories for the following anthologies: *A Cup of Comfort for Spirituality*, deadline Dec. 31, 2003; *A Cup of Comfort for Mothers and Sons*, deadline Jan. 31, 2004. For guidelines: email [wordsinger@aol.com](mailto:wordsinger@aol.com); or send SASE to P.O. Box 863, Eugene, Oregon 97440, USA; or visit the website at [www.cupofcomfort.com](http://www.cupofcomfort.com).

*Wild Plum's* first annual international poetry competition is accepting submissions. Grand prize \$1,000. Winning poems published on our website in March of 2004 and in our premiere issue, set for June of 2004. Complete contest guidelines at [www.wildplumpoetry.com](http://www.wildplumpoetry.com). Deadline: Jan. 15, 2004

*Living Stupid:* Stephanie Marston, co-author of a title in the Chicken Soup series, is seeking stories of up to 1200 words for *Living Stupid: Dumb Things Smart People Do*. Chapter headings include At Work, Around the House, At Play, In Love, Outdoors, On Vacation, In Friendship, With Children, With Your Parents, With Your Pets, By Yourself, During Sex. The more outrageous the better, but keep it clean. Fee of \$100 paid for selected stories. Send stories to Living Stupid, P.O. Box 31453, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87594-1453. Please keep a copy of your story, as submissions cannot be returned. Or email stories to [smarston@earthlink.net](mailto:smarston@earthlink.net). (We prefer emails!) Deadline: March 15, 2004

# *Stories from the Heart II*

## The Story Circle Network National Conference

February 6–8, 2004

Red Lion Hotel

Austin, Texas

**Mark your calendars and start making plans now to join us in Austin for the *second* 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 can be a healing art, how we can gather our memories, and how we can tell our stories.

Join us for interesting workshops, informative panel presentations, inspiring speakers, delightful entertainment, an Open Mike, a Story Wall, a Story Circle Marketplace, an Internet Chapter reception, the chance to meet other SCN members, and much more!



### *Our Speakers*

We are proud to introduce our major speakers—two women with some of the best stories you've ever heard! Our Friday night keynoter is Liz Carpenter—nationally-known writer, journalist, memoirist, and former press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson.

At lunch on Sunday, we will hear from Wilhelmina Delco, former member of the Texas State Legislature and admired educator and civil rights activist.



### *Our Hotel*

**The Red Lion Hotel**  
**6121 North I-35 at Highway 290**  
**Austin, TX 78752**  
**512-323-5466; 800-RED-LION**

To receive the *low* conference rate (\$85/night plus tax, double occupancy) call the hotel directly (512-323-5466 or 1-800-RED LION) and make your reservations no later than January 29, 2004.

#### **Looking for a roommate?**

Go to our website, <http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/roommates.shtml> or write to the office and we'll post your information for you.

### *Works of Heart: Our Story Circle Marketplace*

Our Works of Heart Marketplace will feature books, paper products, print-related services, and writing-related items. If you're a writer, artist, crafter, or small publisher with published/self-published books; artist-made paper, books, and cards; or other writing-related items to sell, we welcome you to apply for space in Works of Heart. We'll have a limited number of tables available in a hallway area, directly adjacent to meeting rooms, for Saturday only. Deadline for vendor applications is December 1, 2000. The application form as well as vendor guidelines, can be found on our website, at <http://storycircle.org/Conference/frmvendor.shtml>. Vendors must be members of SCN.

### *Visit our Conference Web Page*

To register, sign up for our Conference E-Letter, or catch up on conference news, visit our website:  
<http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/>

## *Stories from the Heart II* *Preliminary Conference Program*

**All sessions and participants are tentative)**  
**Friday, February 6**

**12 p.m. Registration opens**

**1:30-3:30 p.m. Pre-Conference Panel Discussion:** *So You Want to Publish Your Own Story!* Jan Seale, McAllen TX, Chair (*A Nuts & Bolts Guide to Writing*), Linda Myers (*Becoming Whole: Writing Your Healing Story*), Patti Pfeiffer (*Bearing the Big H*), EJ Phillips (*Woman: What She Has Done With Where She Has Been*), Donna Remmert (*Littlest Big Kid* and *Jitterbug Girl*) The pros and cons of self-publishing, discussed by self-publishers.

**3:30-4 p.m. Break**

**4-5 p.m. Opening Session:** Susan Wittig Albert

**5:30-7:30 p.m. Dutch-treat dinner,** Red Lion Hotel restaurant, hosted by Austin Chapter members

**7:30 p.m. Opening talk:** Liz Carpenter, *Laughing Along with Life* (Dessert reception following; included in registration fee.)

### **Saturday, February 7**

**8:30 a.m. Registration opens.** Hospitality Suite open (check registration desk for times)

**9-10:30 Session 1, Tracks A, B, C, D**

**A. Finding Your Voice:** *The Heart's Gift.* Jodi Davis, Minneapolis MN. Life offers us gifts through our experience. We'll write about experiences as gifts. What gifts did we receive from this experience? How can we use these gifts to reframe difficult experiences?

**B. Magical Methods of Storytelling:** *When You Shake the Family Tree.* Sherryl Rogers, Austin TX .In searching for our roots, we sometimes discover disturbing information about our family. Learn to move beyond the pain to achieve wholeness.

**C. Serious Stuff:** *The Healing Power of Journaling.* Kathleen Baker, Tampa FL. Using a "structured method" of journaling, we will discover how lifewriting heals and helps us acknowledge our creativity, spirituality, and values.

**D. Stories in Many Voices:** *Voices from the Natural World.* Susan Hanson, San Marcos TX; Susan Albert, Bertram TX. We will use the techniques of lifewriting to explore the natural world that is the context of our lives. Also: how to contribute to SCN's new memoir anthology: *Women Write About the Southwest.*

**10:30-10:45 a.m. Coffee/Tea Break**

**10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Session 2, Tracks A, B, C, Panel Discussion**

**A. Finding Your Voice:** *Writing as Spiritual Practice.* Lana Landaverde, Daly City CA. Centering exercises help us hear the voice of the Spirit. We will explore ways in which daily writing enables us to tap the wisdom lying just beneath the surface of our experience.

**B. Magical Methods of Storytelling:** *Bringing Her to Life: From Memoir to Monologue.* Naomi Sandweiss, Albuquerque NM. Stage your life story! Discover how to transform your memoir into a monologue, a Chautauqua presentation, and other first-person portrayals.

**C. Serious Stuff:** *Writing Women's Biography*: PJ Pierce, Austin TX For women who want to tell other women's stories. A review of biography basics: techniques for interviewing your subject, writing for publication, querying a publisher.

### **Saturday February 7, continued**

**Panel Discussion:** *Older Women's Legacy (OWL) Circles*. Pat Flathouse. Chair (Austin OWL coordinator and author of "Your Life, Your Story"), Catherine Cogburn, Lita de los Santos, Carolyn Blankenship. Starting, managing, and facilitating OWL-Circles in your community.

**12:15-2:15 p.m. Lunch** (included in registration fee). Readings by Ann Edwards, Adrienne Harrell, and Nancy Groblewski from SCN's new anthology, *With Courage and Common Sense: Memoirs from the Older Women's Legacy Circles*.

#### **2:15-3:45 p.m. Session Three, Tracks A, B, C, D**

**A. Finding Your Voice.** *Kick-Starting Creativity: Fun and Games to Add Depth to Your Writing*: Jean McGroarty, Battle Ground IN. Get ready for new ideas with exercises, activities, and tips to enhance your memoir writing. Have fun and gain fresh perspective!

**B. Magical Methods of Storytelling:** *Quilting Your Legacy*. Janie York, Ithaca NE. Many women have told their stories in quilts. Learn to incorporate photographs, text into a simple quilt to tell your story, or the story of your family, church, or community. A Make-and-Take Session.

**C. Serious Stuff:** *Becoming Whole: Writing Stories to Heal the Self, Soul, and Family*. Linda Myers, Richmond CA. Writing about the layers of self through time—past, present, future—enables us to see our whole selves and our families in a healing context.

**D. Stories in Many Voices:** *Truth Be Told: Stories of Women in Prison*. Natalie Sorrell, Carol Waid, Suzanne Armistead, Austin TX. Natalie, Carol, and Suzanne demonstrate how they use stories in their Talk To Me classes with women in prison.

**3:45-4 p.m.** Drinks and light refreshments

#### **4-5:30 p.m. Session Four, Tracks A, B, C, Panel Discussion**

**A. Finding Your Voice:** *You Can't Go Over It; You Can't Go Under It; You Have to Go Through It!* Frances Reynolds, Columbia MO. Children's literature/songs, as writing prompts, can unlock memories. You'll be surprised by what you can learn from the Itsy-Bitsy Spider!

**B. Magical Methods of Storytelling:** *Handmade Books to Tell Your Story*. Beck Whitehead, San Antonio TX. Write your story or keep your journal in book you've made. A hands-on session. You'll make a simple book with a slip-on cover. A Make-and-Take Session.

**C. Stories in Many Voices:** *A Priceless Legacy: Writing Your Family History*. Pat Flathouse, Austin TX. We know ourselves better when we know our families. Explore the legacy of family stories, construct a family tree, then write short family stories.

**Panel Discussion:** *The Power of Story: Using our Experience to Change Hearts and Lives* Nancy Rigg, Chair (After losing her fiancé in a drowning accident, Nancy now works to promote swift-water rescue.) Billie Davis, Jodi Davis, Anna Jaworski, Sharon Wildwind. We can use our personal experience to help educate others and change the way they think, feel and act about a particular subject.

**6-8 p.m. Dutch-treat dinner**, Red Lion Hotel restaurant. We will have several "Special Interest" tables, including: OWL-Circle, hosted by Pat Flathouse, an Internet Chapter, others. Or you can walk to nearby restaurants.

### ***Visit our Conference Web Page***

To register, sign up for our Conference E-Letter, or catch up on conference news, visit our website:  
<http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/>

## *Stories from the Heart II*

### *Preliminary Conference Program*

*continued*

**8-10 p.m. Open Mike:** *Storytelling from the Heart.* Donna Remmert, Mistress of Revels

**Sunday, February 10**

**9-10:30 a.m. Session Five, Tracks A, B, C, D**

**A. Finding Your Voice:** *Journaling a Fragmented Life.* Sharon Wildwind, Calgary CAN. Making time for journaling starts by looking at values and identifying the barriers to writing. Custom-fit your lifewriting to your life.

**B. Magical Methods of Storytelling:** *Presenting Your Story Creatively.* Suzanne Zoch, Ruidoso NM. Stories deserve to be shared. Learn how to use the art of collage to tell your story, and to present it theatrically and in an audio book.

**C. Stories in Many Voices:** *Mothers/Daughters: Connecting Through Our Stories.* Tina Dubin, Austin TX and a panel of mothers and daughters. Explore the multi-generational perspectives and family messages in mother-daughter stories.

**D. Serious Stuff:** *How to Be Your Own Editor.* Jane Ross, Austin TX. Find out what an editor does to turn a manuscript into a polished work. Improve your own writing using professional editing techniques.

**10:30-10:45 a.m.** Coffee/Tea Break

**10:45 a.m. -12:15 p.m. Session Six, Tracks A, B, C, Panel Discussion**

**A. Finding Your Voice:** *Your Life is Your Art! You Are the Artist.* Jeanne Ware, Austin TX You're an artist, your life is a work-in-progress. Explore your personal journey, discover your Self through the tools of "artist's dates" and journaling.

**B. Serious Stuff:** *Telling Our Stories Through Light-hearted Poems.* Jan Seale, McAllen TX. We'll explore the benefits of writing humorous autobiographical poems, study examples by women, and get quick tips for our humorous writing.

**C. Stories in Many Voices:** *Listening Others into Story.* Mary Jane Nordgren, Forest Grove OR . Sometimes we must help another woman tell her story. By interviewing each other, we'll hear and tell another woman's story. This requires us to wear many hats: Midwife, Guardian, Recorder, Listener, Narrator, even Sacrificial Parent.

### *Story-Telling From the Heart: Open Mike*

#### *Saturday Night Live in Austin TX*

To give each story-teller a chance to participate in our Open Mike Evening, we ask you to limit your reading to five minutes. Please sign up and give us a 3-line bio for your introduction when you pick up your registration materials. Bring a copy of your piece to post on the Story Wall and plan to email it to us, as well, for sharing with the attendees!

Remember that '60s song that began "When you come to San Francisco, be sure and wear flowers in your hair"? When you come to Austin, be sure to bring a story from your heart. We're eager to hear it, y'all!

### *Story Wall*

#### *Stories From the Heart II Scrapbook*

We'll set aside a section of hallway wall where we can post stories, photos, and other goodies that tell something about ourselves. Be sure to bring anything you'd like to post. You can take it home with you, or (better yet!) bequeath it to our creative Scrapbook Sisters, Carolyn Blankenship and Leilani Rose, who are in charge of our Stories From the Heart II Scrapbook.

*Our Keynote Address Sponsor*  
**The Wardrobe**  
 26 Doors Shopping Center 1206 West 38th Street  
 Austin Tx 78705. 512 . 458 . 3846  
[www.wardrobeboutique.com](http://www.wardrobeboutique.com)

## *Registration Form*

### *Stories from the Heart, February 6–8, 2004*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Story Circle Member? **yes no**

Session/Day	Membership Status	Early Registration (before 12/15/03)	Regular Registration (12/16/03–02/5/04)	Registration at the Door	Amount
<b>Full Session (Fri/Sat/Sun)</b>	Member	\$160	\$185	\$210	
	Non-Member*	\$210	\$235	\$260	
<b>Friday only (Keynote Speaker)</b>	Member & Non-Member/Guest	\$25	\$30	Not available	
<b>Saturday Session Only</b>	Member	\$75	\$100	\$125	
	Non-Member/Guest	\$100	\$125	\$150	
<b>Saturday Lunch Only (Register by 2/5/04)</b>	Member	\$25	\$30	Not available	
	Non-Member/Guest				
<b>Sunday Session Only</b>	Member	\$50	\$75	\$110	
	Non-Member/Guest	\$75	\$100	\$135	
<b>Sunday Lunch Only</b>	Member & Non-Member/Guest	\$25	\$30	Not available	
<b>Total Enclosed</b>					

- Non-Members who choose to join prior to the end of the conference on Sunday, February 8, 2004, will have a portion of their registration fee applied to their dues.
- Cancellations are accepted until January 15, 2004, and are subject to a cancellation fee of \$50 for a full conference registration or \$10 for a one-day registration. There is no refund for Friday's lecture/reception.

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/frmregister.shtml>.

#### **Sisters Helping Sisters**

If you are a member of SCN and have an annual family income of \$50,000 or less, you may apply for a conference scholarship. These will be awarded in amounts ranging from \$50 to the full conference cost, depending on need and the availability of funds. We are also willing to consider an additional \$50 for baby-sitting help. Additionally, we may be able to assist with travel/lodging (but we can't confirm the availability of travel/lodging money until January, 2004). To apply, go <http://www.storycircle.org/frmregister.shtml>. Or write to us, telling us how much aid you need (for registration, childcare, travel/lodging). Tell us about yourself and your reasons for applying for a scholarship. One of the objectives of Stories from the Heart II 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.

Scholarship awards will be based on perceived need, the thoughtfulness of your response, and your interest in sharing what you learn in your community (for example, by starting a Story Circle or developing other women's story-sharing activities). We want to encourage the attendance of a diverse group of women who want to share their stories and help other women enjoy the benefits of women's story-telling and story-sharing.

If you request a subsidy, you must pay a \$50 deposit towards your conference fees. If you receive a subsidy, you will then pay the remaining fee (the \$160 full conference fee, minus the subsidy, minus your \$50 deposit). This amount must be paid by **January 10, 2004**.



# Conference Highlights



Friday afternoon

Welcome Reception, with Susan Wittig Albert

Panel on Self-publishing, with women who have been there, done that!

Keynote talk by nationally-known journalist Liz Carpenter, with dessert reception

Saturday and Sunday

21 in-depth, thought-provoking workshops and presentations

Three panel discussions: learning from one another as we share our stories and experiences

Two make-and-take sessions

Opportunities to share your personal story: Story Wall, Open Mike

Works of Heart Marketplace

Saturday lunch with readings from SCN's new memoir collection: With Courage and Common Sense

Sunday lunch with Wilhelmina Delco, educator, civil-rights activist

Entertainment by P. Jae Stanley

***Register Now!***

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***Story Circle Network***

***PO Box 500127***

***Austin TX 78750-0127***

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It's time to start planning for  
*Stories from the Heart II*,  
SCN's second national women's  
life-writing conference!  
Register now!  
See pp. 18–20