



# Story Circle Journal

Vol. 10 No. 4, December, 2006

The newsletter for women with stories to tell...

## Writing For Their Lives

*Writing from Life has become a Story Circle Network signature event that wins wide praise from those who attend. This weekend writing workshop brings together inspiring SCN facilitators with eager women writers to create a unique writing and sharing experience. Carolyn Blankenship coordinated the October Writing from Life in Austin, Tex.*



### *In This Issue . . .*

<i>Writing for Their Lives....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>President's Letter....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Tenth Anniversary Projects....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Tenth Anniversary Events....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Anniversary Publications....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Publication Rights....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>An SCN Haiku....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Meet Other Lifewriters: Becca Taylor....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>A Fine Thing... </i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Kitchen Table Stories... </i>	<i>11</i>
<i>2007 Anthology... </i>	<i>12</i>
<i>True Words from Real Women... </i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Take a Bow, Sr. Mary Sullivan... </i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Circles—the Heart of SCN... </i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Books for the Journey... </i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Story Circle News Roundup... </i>	<i>23</i>
<i>LifeLines Retreat... </i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Online Writing Workshop... </i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Nature Writing Conference... </i>	<i>26</i>
<i>The Back Page... </i>	<i>28</i>



They come from everywhere. They find us on the internet. They hear about us from friends of friends. They see a notice in the newspaper or writer's journal. Women are coming to write. Twenty-seven women filled the LCRA meeting room on October 21 and 22. They came from Georgia, California, Fredericksburg, and Fort Davis. They came from all over central Texas. They came to write and share their stories, eat together, laugh together, and support each other in finding their own unique voice.

We introduced a new schedule, which seems to have worked well. The final activity of the weekend was a sharing circle where everyone tried to find one word that summed up the workshop experience. We heard words like bountiful, re-energized, nourished, nurtured, grounded, soulful, and connected, that told us we had succeeded in offering a supportive venue for women to write and share.

We wanted to nurture out-of-towners who came to the workshop by offering evening activities, so we organized a Dutch-treat dinner across the street after Saturday's sessions, followed by a Conversation Café. Fourteen women participated in a conversation guided by facilitators *Leilani Rose* and *Hazel Baylor* focused around the question "If I could pass on one thing I've learned along the way to younger women, what would it be?" Responses included everything from "Don't settle" to "There is nothing maturing about easy" to "Follow your intuition." We discussed whether we would give the same message to our sons as to our daughters. We pondered what the world's women needed to hear. It was the perfect complement to a day of writing.

We extended our lunch hour to create a more relaxed pace and more time for visiting and shopping, and were rewarded by increased sales in our SCN book boutique and lots of rich conversation.

In response to repeated requests for the opportunity to mix with and hear from women who were not in the participants' small break-out groups, we included sessions

*(Continued on page 7)*

# Letter from SCN's President



Did you vote this year?

When you are reading this, the elections will be over and we'll be looking forward to a month of holidays. Because of our early *Journal* deadline, Election Day is still in the future as I write this. Georgia has an early voting policy, so I have already voted. I went this afternoon. It's always a thrilling experience to think how my vote helps determine our future government. Something else was thrilling to me today. Most of the voters gathered at our courthouse were women. Every one of the election workers was a woman, and here in this South Georgia county, most of those women were

African-American. What a change from a century ago!

I paused to think of the great and strong women who strived to gain the vote (the nineteenth amendment became part of the United States Constitution in August, 1919). I treasure my grandmother's 1920 Texas poll tax receipt from Callahan County. She certainly didn't waste any time getting to the polls!

How does a woman become strong? She works at it. I do. And she learns (sometimes without knowing it) from other women. I've been thinking lately about the strong women in my life.

I think first of my own mother and my grandmothers, but there were others. I think of two in particular. Alda Nordyke, my aunt, and Mary Elizabeth Davidson, my teacher.

Lots of families have an aunt like Alda. My grandparents brought their first-born to the rough and rocky farm in Callahan County, Texas, in a covered wagon. She started taking care of her little brother as soon as she could toddle. Then it was her little brother and new little sister, and then another brother and another sister and another brother and another sister. She spent her life taking care of her family. She helped send my dad to college. She never married. She taught fifth grade and cared for my grandparents. We didn't think much about her, because she was always there. Always there—what a lucky family, what a lucky niece, to have an Aunt Alda.

When I walked into the world history class at West Texas State College (now West Texas A&M) I knew I was a pretty good student, but I didn't know how much I loved learning. Mary Elizabeth Davidson set me straight. Miss Davidson (I've never been able to think of her as Mary Elizabeth) taught me lots of history. After that first class, I took about every class she taught. She taught me more than history, she taught me scholarship, thoroughness, and that one can be deadly serious and hugely funny at the same time. She saw something in me that no one else had recognized, and she took the time to make sure I saw it in myself. I didn't know it until I stood on her side of the desk, but she also taught me how to teach and to share my enthusiasm for learning. (Yes, if it's on the reading list, it will be on the test!)

It took years for me to realize the impact these two strong, quiet women had on my life. I never told them thank you, for by the time I was ready to—they were gone. I am thanking them here. This fall I made a contribution in their honor to our Story Circle Network Annual Fund. I wanted to see their names and mine together.

## Patricia Pando

Patricia Pando  
President, Story Circle Network

P.S. I'm proud of my new picture! It was taken by my good friend and strongest of strong women, Beverly Frick in Tallahassee, Florida. Thanks, Beverly!

## Story Circle Journal

*STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL* 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. If you have special mental-health needs, please see a healthcare professional.

Editor: Jane Ross  
journaleditor@storycircle.org

Contributing Editors:  
Mary Jo Doig  
Patricia Pando  
Lisa Shirah-Hiers  
Linda Wisniewski

We welcome your letters, queries,  
and suggestions.

Editorial Address:  
PO Box 500127,  
Austin TX 78750-0127  
ISSN: 1093-7528

©2006 Story Circle Network  
Copyrights to all contributed works  
remain with the authors.

### Membership Rates

One Year \$35 US  
\$45 Canada and Mexico  
\$50 elsewhere

Foreign Memberships: International  
Postal Money Order *only*, please

**Back Issues:** Back issues are available either as first-run or photocopies. 1–9 issues: \$5 each; 10 or more, \$3 each. Add postage as follows: \$1 for 1 issue, \$3.50 for 2–5 issues, \$6 for 6+ issues

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

**Change of address:** If you move, please tell us.

All our generous donors are listed on the back page. Thank you to all of you!—Ed.



# Celebrating Women's Writing

STORY CIRCLE NETWORK—10TH ANNIVERSARY

*Story Circle Network is bubbling over with projects and plans to commemorate our tenth anniversary year in 2007, starting with the delightful tenth anniversary logo designed by one of our members, a member survey, a retreat, a conference, and so much more...*

### *Logos, Line Art, and a New Look!*

Two very talented and generous women have lent their skills to help us celebrate our tenth anniversary year with a new logo and a new look. Katherine Misegades has created the SCN tenth anniversary logos at the top of this page and at right. And graphic artist and filmmaker Reya Kantor has created two new line art drawings for the True Words story pages and the book review page (lower right).

#### *About our Artists*

**Katherine Misegades** is an Internet Chapter writing circle facilitator and a freelance graphic designer and illustrator by trade. In response to our call for anniversary logo ideas, Katherine has put her talents to work to create a banner (at the top of the page) that truly celebrates the joy that is being able to tell our stories and be heard in a supportive community. And she has created a tenth anniversary version of our long-time SCN logo. Thank you, Katherine.

Visit Katherine's website at: <http://katherinemisegades.wordpress.com>

**Reya Kantor** studied graphic design in her native France before coming to the US and studying filmmaking at the University of Texas at Austin. Most recently Reya has been working on a film about Jeannine Parvati-Baker, an herbalist and midwifery pioneer. Reya is now headed back to live in Europe with her husband and young daughter, to pursue her filmmaking and to teach graphic arts and film.

### *Our Member Survey*

*Tell us how you see SCN, now and in the future*

Emails went out in November inviting all members to complete our online member survey and letters were sent to those who have not provided us with an email address. The member survey will allow us to learn more about what our members (*you*) would like us to be doing in our second decade. So please take just 15 minutes to complete the survey. It will help us enormously if as many members as possible complete the survey online at [www.storycircle.org/survey.html](http://www.storycircle.org/survey.html). The password is *scnsurvey*. We have extended the survey deadline by a week to give everyone a chance to respond.

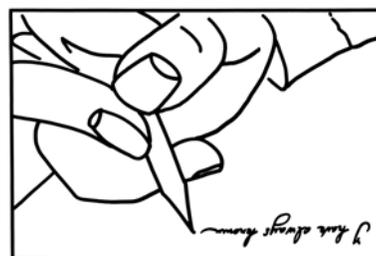
Didn't get our email about the survey? This may mean we don't have a current email address for you. If you'd like to provide us with your email address, by emailing Peggy Moody at [storycircle@storycircle.org](mailto:storycircle@storycircle.org), we'll be able to keep you informed of SCN news and events. (We never sell or share our email address list.)

If you are unable to use the online survey for any reason, you may call the SCN office voicemail and request a paper survey. Be sure and give your address. Call (512) 454-9833.

Look for a summary of the survey results in the March, '07, *Journal*.



Logos by Katherine Misegades



Line art by Reya Kantor





*A Land Full of Stories*  
*A Conference and Celebration of Writing*  
*About Place and Personal History*  
 June 8–9, 2007

**Paula Stallings Yost reports**

*LifeLines Lifewriting Retreat*

*A Created Version of the Past*  
*A Weekend Memoir Workshop*  
 March 16–18, 2007

“Memoir must be written because each of us must possess a created version of the past... If we learn not only to tell our stories but to listen to what our stories tell us—to write the first draft and then return for the second draft—we are doing the work of memory.”

—Patricia Hampl, *I Could Tell You Stories: Sojourns in the Land of Memory*

Susan Wittig Albert will facilitate the LifeLines Retreat in March, 2007, at Festival Hill, Round Top, Texas. The workshop, which is limited to 60 women, is based on the online class Susan taught for SCN for several years, and focuses on the use of fictional techniques in memoir. Participants will be asked to read a published memoir by a well-known writer (to be assigned later) and to bring a brief written narrative of an event from their own lives, which they will expand and rework during the weekend sessions.

Susan will demonstrate ways to develop characters, create scenes and construct plots, use various points of view to tell the story, craft lively dialogue, manage time (flashbacks, flash-forwards), and create settings. The sessions will be organized around group discussion, individual writings, and small-group sharing. Participants will take home several pieces of writing, as well as handouts and exercises that will allow them to continue their work.

An optional stay-over on Sunday will be available for those who would like to spend an extra night and enjoy the beauty and tranquility of rural Texas in the spring.

Sign up now for this wonderful weekend of writing and sharing. Registration is certain to fill up—Susan’s workshops always do. For registration details, see p. 24 or go to the Web page:

[www.storycircle.org/LifeLines](http://www.storycircle.org/LifeLines)

*Visit the **Land Full of Stories***  
*conference website at*

[www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/landstories](http://www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/landstories)

or register by mail using the form on p. 27.

Mark your calendar today for the weekend of June 7–8, 2007, so you won’t miss this unique opportunity. Story Circle Network, in cooperation with the Alkek Library’s Southwestern Writers Collection at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, is planning a weekend writing conference to mark the publication of *What Wildness is This: Women Write about the Southwest*—SCN’s new anthology of writings celebrating women’s experiences in the landscapes of the Southwest.

The conference will bring together people from around the country to tell their stories of the land through personal essays, autobiographical fiction, poetry, drama, dance, music, art and more. A wide variety of 90-minute interactive workshops and panel discussions will be offered on Friday and Saturday, June 8–9. These sessions will focus on the issues and challenges involved in writing about place, personal history, and the intimate connection between person and place.

Dr. Kathleen Dean Moore, Professor of Philosophy at Oregon State University, will deliver the keynote address following a Friday evening reception. Dr. Moore is the author of nature essays that explore our cultural and spiritual connections to the natural world—*Riverwalking: Reflections on Moving Water*; *Holdfast: At Home in the Natural World*; and *The Pine Island Paradox*.

*A Land Full of Stories* will be open to both women and men, and both are invited to submit workshop proposals. Workshop facilitators do not have to be members of SCN. For more information about the process for submitting your proposal, please visit our website.

Thursday, June 7, will be an optional pre-conference day of field-writing sessions in Austin and San Marcos settings. Small groups will enjoy these morning and afternoon gatherings led by experienced facilitators at such unique sites as:

**Wild Basin**, Austin. A woodland, grassland, and streamside habitat located minutes from downtown. [www.wildbasin.org](http://www.wildbasin.org)

**Central Park**, Austin. An urban natural area near the Central Market Café. [www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/centralpark.htm](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/centralpark.htm)

**Inner Space Cavern**, Austin. Large cave between Austin and Georgetown. (Guided tour \$19) [www.innerspace.com/tours.html](http://www.innerspace.com/tours.html)

**Aquarena Center**, San Marcos. A glass-bottomed boat tour of a spring-fed lake (\$7), nature trails, and aquarium. [www.aquarena.txstate.edu](http://www.aquarena.txstate.edu)

**Zilker Garden**, Austin. A formal garden with emphasis on aesthetic design. [www.zilker garden.org](http://www.zilker garden.org)

Scheduling of these field-writing workshops will depend on registration and may include other sites. Fees are not included in conference registration. To learn more, subscribe to our conference e-letter: [www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/landstories/newsletters](http://www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/landstories/newsletters). An optional evening reading-writing-nature activity also will be held Thursday on the Texas State University campus.

My calendar has been marked for some time, and I'm counting the days. See you there!

(The call for proposals for conference sessions is open until January 15, 2007. See the conference website for details.)



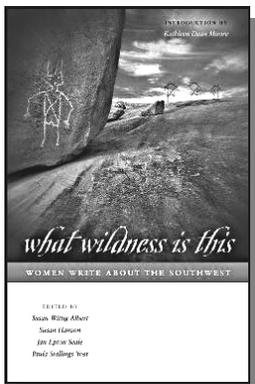
## 10th Anniversary Publications

### *What Wildness Is This* A New SCN-UT Press anthology Susan Wittig Albert reports

"I rejoice in the voices of the women in this book, almost a hundred, raising our voices in celebration or warning, the words echoing off the canyon walls and the border fences, whistling through ocotillo wands. This body of work expresses what so many people most deeply feel and most clearly believe: gratitude for the gift of this place; astonishment at what each moment presents—peach jelly on the table, rain on the wind, fear in a standing wave, ghosts in the soil; an abiding love for this serene and mysterious patch of earth; and the terrible understanding that we cannot wreck this place without destroying also ourselves."

These are the words of Kathleen Dean Moore, in the introduction to *What Wildness is This: Women Write about the Southwest*, which will be published by the University of Texas Press in March, 2007. The book's four editors—Susan Hanson, Jan Seale, Paula Yost, and I—have been working for over four years to assemble a collection of stories that will help us understand how women experience the landscape, and how the physical world around us shapes our lives and our stories.

We began by inviting women to submit their writing about the land. From the three hundred responses, we chose (with great difficulty!) nearly fifty, and then added



selections from writings we enjoyed by such writers as Joy Harjo, Denise Chavez, Terry Tempest Williams, and Barbara Kingsolver. This anthology clearly demonstrates that writing about place is no longer a man's domain, and that women have extraordinary stories to tell of their own special relationships with the natural world. The book's publication will be celebrated at the *Land Full of Stories* conference.

You can preorder *What Wildness Is This* at:  
[www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite](http://www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite)

### *Writing Prompt E-book*

Based on the weekly writing prompts that Susan Albert sends to the Internet Chapter members, this online book (working title, *A Woman's Wise Words*) will be available to all for purchase in mid-2007. More details in the March '07 *Story Circle Journal*.

### *Kitchen Table Stories* Time to recall those great family recipes and stories

**Our first ever anthology/cookbook** will be published in the fall of 2007, combining members' family stories connected with food together with related recipes. The call for submissions will go out in an e-letter in early 2007. But now is the time to think about your story.

Do you have a holiday recipe that has a family story behind it? Why not write that family story down and copy out the recipe while it's on your mind. Then in the spring, you'll be able to polish your story and send it in for the anthology.



### *New Organizational Member of SCN*

The Crossings is a progressive learning center, meeting place, and wellness spa located in the Texas Hill Country just outside of Austin. Surrounded by more than 200 acres of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, The Crossings provides experiences, in a learning environment, that expand awareness and inspire people to make conscious choices in their personal, work, civic and spiritual lives. The Crossings offers individuals, groups, and businesses a sanctuary where they can find inspiration, meet new people, relax and rejuvenate. Online at [www.thecrossingsaustin.com](http://www.thecrossingsaustin.com).

*Publishing our stories*

# Know Your Rights!

Several readers have asked about the status of their copyright when they submit a story to the Story Circle Journal. *Jane Ross*, Editor in Chief of the Story Circle Journal, explains the basics of publishing rights.

## What is Copyright?

Whenever you create an original work (for example, when you write a story about your life), your piece of work is automatically covered by copyright law. Your “copyright” is the right *you* have to decide how, when, and where your original work, your story, is reproduced. It is against the law for anyone else to copy that work or to publish that work without your permission.

You do not have to register the copyright for it to exist. If you are writing a story only for your family, you might not bother to register its copyright. However, if you are going to circulate your story more widely and think you might want to publish it in the mainstream press at a later date, it would be a good idea to register the copyright. That way you can prove that the work is yours, should there ever be a dispute. To learn about registering a copyright in the US, you can visit the website of the US Copyright Office (part of the Library of Congress) at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov).

Copyright actually encompasses a large number of different *rights*, which you can offer, give away, or sell to many different kinds of publications.

## Licensing

Whenever you offer or submit a story for publication and it is accepted and appears in print (or on the web), we say you have *licensed* the publisher to publish that story and you have *transferred* certain rights to the publisher. This is true even if you don't sign a contract and you are not paid for your story. The usual publishing industry understanding is that, if there is no contract, then on the story's acceptance for publication, the author transfers *First North American Serial Rights (FNASR)* to the publisher but retains all other rights. FNASR means the publisher has the right to be the first to publish this story in North America in a periodical (such as a journal or magazine or newspaper).

---

**Disclaimer:** This article is for information only and does not constitute legal advice. You should consult a lawyer or contact the National Writers' Union if you have specific questions about publication rights or the copyright of your stories.

## Contracts

Most magazines (including the *Story Circle Journal*) do not bother with formal contracts when they accept stories and articles for publication. They tend to assume that there is an unspoken understanding about what rights you transfer to them. From your point of view, it is wise to ask a few questions about what rights they will want and to know ahead of time what you are prepared to transfer to them. You may find this information on the Writers' Guidelines web page of many magazines' website. But if it is not there, don't be shy about asking. You can ask this question after the story is already accepted. If you don't like the answer, you can tell them you're offering only FNASR or you can withdraw the story.

For example, an editor might tell you that the magazine wants FNASR including Electronic Rights. Electronic Rights means the right to publish on the Internet, on a CD or DVD, and on any kind of electronic format. Once you've transferred Electronic Rights to a publisher, it is going to be much more difficult to ever have this story accepted for publication anywhere else. So you might tell the magazine editor that you don't wish to license Electronic Rights.

## SCN Writers' Guidelines

Here at the *Story Circle Journal*, when you submit a story for publication in the *Journal* and it is accepted, you are licensing FNASR to Story Circle Network. We reserve the right to hold your story for up to a year from the date of acceptance. If we do not publish your story within a year, then FNASR revert back to you. (See the Writers' Guidelines page at [www.storycircle.org/writersguidelines](http://www.storycircle.org/writersguidelines).)

If you submit a story to the SCN website, and it is accepted, then you have transferred *One-Time Internet Rights* to SCN. The story will appear on the SCN website but SCN will not publish it in any other form without your permission. Of course, we have no way of preventing someone who is browsing the Internet from copying your story and reprinting it or reposting it or passing it off as their own. This is a possibility that you should keep in mind whenever you post something on the Internet.

Let's say you have had a story appear in print in the *Story Circle Journal* and you want to offer the same piece for

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

publication elsewhere, such as to a special interest magazine. You would have a *legal obligation* to mention to the magazine editor that the piece has appeared in print elsewhere. FNASR are not available, but One-Time Rights or Second Rights or Reprint Rights are available. Generally, if an article has appeared in a small, limited-circulation publication, most other magazines won't have any problem with this. (The *Journal* print run is around 600 copies, and most of the copies go to SCN members, so the *Journal* would be considered a small publication.)

Of course, if you substantially rewrite your story, then it may become a *new work* and you're free to offer FNASR to another publication and you may not need to mention that the earlier piece appeared in the *Story Circle Journal*. ❖

You might like to check the following web page to find out more about rights. It has an excellent explanation of many of the different kinds of rights:

[www.writing-world.com/rights/copyright.shtml](http://www.writing-world.com/rights/copyright.shtml)

*Heads bent, stories pour  
from heart and pen, a woman  
smiles, another weeps.*

—Carolyn Blankenship

### *SCN Haiku Wins Recognition*

Carolyn Blankenship's evocative haiku (above) was a commended entry in an unusual writing contest this summer. In August, Community Techknowledge Inc., an Austin, Tex., based non-profit organization, challenged local non-profits to sum up their mission in a haiku, the three-line Japanese poetic form with 5, 7, and 5 syllables per line.

Carolyn Blankenship entered on behalf of SCN and won 11th place in the 5-7-5 Haiku Grant Contest. SCN was presented with a framed calligraphed copy of the haiku, which Patricia presented to Carolyn at our October Board meeting. Congratulations, Carolyn.

**Carolyn Blankenship** serves as Program Chair for the SCN Board, oversees the Writing from Life Workshops, and facilitates a monthly writing circle. She is the author of *From the Heart: A Manual for Facilitators* and has developed and taught a variety of programs in spiritual and personal growth over the past 20 years.

## *Writing from Life*

(Continued from page 1)

at the beginning and end that involved the whole group, and arranged Sunday's schedule to remix the groups in a different configuration, so that participants would have a chance to interact with women they may not have met.

Facilitators brought a fresh approach to women's writing that inspired and energized the women attending. *Lisa Shirah-Hiers* pointed out the similarities in music and writing. Participants listened to selected music and wrote about it as a journey and as conversation. They explored rhythm and tempo in both music and writing, as well as the ideas of harmony, tension, and dissonance.

*Ann Walters* took the participants on a visualized sacred journey down the river of time, accessing wisdom and healing from our past. We wrote about sacred circles and cycles, moments of initiation, and sacred moments as a way of providing fare for our spiritual autobiography.

*Lianne Mercer* helped us understand what the poet knows about telling stories with examples from her own work and life, as well as marvelous poems and writings from a variety of other authors. Her reading list will keep participants busy exploring ways to bring the richness and precision of poetry into their own writing.

We continued our emphasis on the arts in a session I led on using myth to explore our life stories. The final session focused on the technique of writing in layers to discover new ways of combining different elements of our story, enhanced by the addition of visual art as we created individual collages from our writing. *Nanci Saylor* kept us all going with snacks, lunch and coffee.

It is always exciting to see the responses of women who are attending their first SCN event or their first *Writing from Life*. Their energy, enthusiasm, and delight at finding the encouragement to write and share their stories in a place where each voice is honored is so gratifying. Five women attended who were not members of SCN, and each of them joined by the end of the event. That's what we call a successful workshop! One member said, "The workshop encompassed everything I love about SCN—creativity, community, connection." That about sums it up!

You can find out more about the facilitators of last October's Writing from Life and the workshop schedule by visiting [www.storycircle.org/Workshops](http://www.storycircle.org/Workshops).

### *Writing from Life to Go on the Road*

For those of you who find it difficult to make a trip to Austin for Writing from Life, take heart! We are finalizing plans to take Writing from Life on the road beginning 2007. Our first event will take place in Red River, New Mexico, August 12–14, 2007 so mark your calendar. Details will be posted online by the end of January 2007 and a link will appear in the February e-letter.

*Meet other lifewriters and learn from their stories*

# Becca Taylor: Finding Her Story

*Becca Taylor has been a Story Circle Member for a year and has thrown herself into her new passion for telling her life story. Born in Texas and raised in New Mexico, Becca trained as a Technical Communicator and now lives and works in Houston, Tex. Through her work, she has learned to use the very newest technologies to tell her story.*

*We begin with an excerpt from her blog in which Becca describes what finding SCN has meant to her. And the Journal interviewed Becca by email to find out more about her interests and the many possibilities she sees in new technology.*

## *Slowly Finding My Story*

**Becca Taylor**

Published online on September 17th, 2006

<http://nathanandbecca.com/becca/?p=217>

*Bit by bit, I have been rediscovering my voice. I write faithfully almost every day, very pointedly NOT about work. ... I am learning to look behind and look ahead but live in the moment.*

—Becca Taylor

*...the internet has given us so many new ways to communicate—over the last decade the world has become smaller and more accessible.*

—Becca Taylor

I have been a reader, writer, and storyteller for as long as I can remember. From the time I was in grammar school, my parents had to scold me to stop reading long enough to do my chores. When I was 13, I started writing down story ideas—fan fiction, really—for my favorite TV show, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Those and other story drafts have never seen the light of day (thankfully), and I slowly shifted my storytelling to voice. Any of my friends and family will tell you I love to tell and hear a good story (definitely my father's daughter!).

As I went through college, I found my school's Technical Communication (TC) program. TC is a rather general word for the art and science of conveying complex, technical information to the layperson. That communication takes many forms (written, audible, web-based, video, and graphics), but they all have one thing in common: a strict avoidance of fiction.

Now, I loved my training and I (mostly) enjoy my profession. But a little over a year ago, I had a realization. For many years, I had felt stifled—like I was just going through the motions of life, not connecting myself to the world around me. Part of what I realized was that all my training to “stick to the truth” and be unbiased sort of shut off my creativity valve. I was forced to write day in and day out, 8+ hours a day, 40+ days a week for work. Plus, I was in graduate school, with assignments that had me writing over 3000 words a week. All the enjoyment leaked away. No wonder my creativity was drained!

Then I found Story Circle Network. The minute I saw the ad in my *Writer's Digest* magazine, I went upstairs and sent in my membership fee! Bit by bit, I have been rediscovering my voice. I write faithfully almost every day, very pointedly NOT about work. In the last year I have gotten more satisfaction from my personal life than I can ever remember. I am learning to look behind and look ahead, but live in the moment.

The closer I get to myself, the more important my small circle of family and friends becomes. I used to think I was a solitary sort—that may be somewhat true, but I also know now that without the contact of my kindred spirits, my own spirit starts to wilt.

I never gave much thought to the growth and healing that comes with finding your own narrative and writing your life. The big things, the small and mundane; they all shape me and the world as I see it. So I've been on a new kind of journey this year. Some people call this “finding yourself.” But how can you find yourself when you're always changing? “Finding yourself” implies reaching an endpoint and staying there. If I've learned anything, it's that this is not a linear journey we're on. Now I'm happy to exit the interstate and start exploring some of these side roads. And all because an ad for Story Circle Network grabbed my attention at just the right time. ❖

## *Becca Taylor—In Her Own Words*

**SCJ.** In your work you're obviously very involved in using technology to convey information. Please tell us about some of the technologies that you use.

**Becca Taylor** I began my career as a technical writer and web designer, so computer technology was integral to my everyday job. These days, I use Microsoft Word and PowerPoint more than anything else, so that has helped me become an expert Microsoft Office user.

When you use the computer day in and day out, it's hard to keep it from spilling over into your personal life, too. As a professional communicator, technologies like blogs and podcasts pique my interest. In particular, the internet has given us so many new ways to communicate—over the last decade the world has become smaller and more accessible. I think they're all a natural fit.

**SCJ.** You've just made SCN's first podcast of our members' stories. Can you tell us what a podcast is? How can members listen to the stories in your podcast?

**Becca** A podcast is basically a multimedia (audio or video) file that is posted to the internet for wide distribution. With podcast catchers, you can create subscriptions so you know when new episodes of your favorite podcasts have been released. Perhaps the best known podcast catcher is iTunes, but there are many tools out there. You can subscribe to the SCN podcast, or you can just listen to it from our podcast web site (<http://scn.libsyn.com>).

**SCJ.** How were you able to record these two writers reading their work and incorporate this into a podcast, when you are all in different cities?

**Becca** I have to admit that my interest in starting a podcast began with purchasing my Apple Macintosh computer. The Mac comes with so many cool tools, I just had to try them out. So I used my Mac tools (GarageBand) to record my voice. To record the storytellers, there are a few options. There's an internet program called Skype. It's an instant messaging tool that allows you to do voice chats and even place internet phone calls. So, for the November episode, I called Joyce on my computer for our interview. The technology is so fun to play with! I also had two storytellers record their stories on their own computers and email the files to me. The options are almost endless with the technology that's available today.

**SCJ.** What are your plans for the future for these podcasts?

**Becca** For now, I'm sticking with the same format: an SCN member reading their story, a short editorial from me, and several songs that I hope inspire listeners to find one of their own stories. As much as possible, I'll be interviewing SCN members and other lifewriters. In the future, I'd love to get

contributions from other SCN members. For example, our SCN e-newsletter asks readers to send in postcards. I'd love to have an SCN correspondent or reporter who does their own segment. Ultimately, my goal is to make this a community effort.

**SCJ.** What other technologies do you use to reach an audience with your own writing?

**Becca** I have my own personal blog, but that's mostly a product of my own laziness. It allows me to share little snippets of my life with my friends and family. Now I don't have to remember to email them when I have a story to share—I just post it to my blog! Several years ago, I lost contact with my college roommate. Last fall, we reconnected and she told me that she felt like she never lost touch with me because she always checked my blog to see what was going on in my life. Hearing that from her convinced me that I need to keep that blog going.

**SCJ.** Do you have aspirations for your own writing and storytelling?

**Becca** For now I just want to find a rhythm that allows me to write regularly! Joining SCN has given me the impetus to find a routine that includes at least a little bit of writing everyday, whether that be in my blog, my journal, an email to friends, or the SCN podcast. I'm a romance novel junkie, so someday I'd love to pen a novel (or six or twenty) that others would enjoy reading.

**SCJ.** Most of our members use computers but still have a lot we can learn. What are the three most useful things that you think all lifewriters need to know how to do on their computer (after using email and a word processing program)?

**Becca** Wow, I have to limit it to just three? These days, I'd say the first thing any writer needs is a backup system. Don't lose those precious stories! Secondly, learn how to make the *most* of your word processing program. There are features like reviewing tools and styles that make writing so much easier, but many writers I encounter don't know about them. Lastly, since I'm limited to three, explore the writing of others using tools like RSS readers (also called news aggregators) that allow you to subscribe to blogs and newsfeeds. For example, I've set up my RSS reader so I know when any SCN blog has been updated (using the list of blogs provided on our web site, [www.storycircle.org](http://www.storycircle.org)).

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication—it's simply a way for content providers to send headlines and stories to their readers, without the reader having to come look for it. You can read more about RSS and readers/aggregators at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News\\_aggregator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_aggregator). I use the tools built directly into my Mac web browser (called Safari), but I've also used My Yahoo!, which I thought was easy to use.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Becca Taylor: Finding Her Story

(Continued from page 9)

**SCJ.** What advice would you give to a lifewriter who wants to get even more out of her computer and out of the internet to tell her story?

**Becca** Move beyond the written word in your lifewriting. Buy a scanner and scan photos to put in your stories. Record your own voice telling some stories. Better yet, record the stories of your relatives. As a genealogist who loves telling life stories, I am saddened by how many stories of my family have been lost because I didn't take the time to document them. I do think that audio will become much more prevalent.

**SCJ.** What are your interests (besides writing, blogging etc.)?

**Becca** Oh, too many to be healthy, I'm sure. Reading (I'm a voracious reader), scrapbooking, photography, genealogy, gardening, soapmaking, crocheting, card making, cross-stitching, web design, and now sewing. Too bad I'm not into housekeeping, because my house could really use it.

**SCJ.** Who have been your biggest inspirations recently and whose books do you like to read?

**Becca** The book that stands out most recently is *Dance of the Dissident Daughter* by Sue Monk Kidd. It's her memoir of her own spiritual journey. Being on a journey of my own, it really resonated with me and showed me that every evolution worth attaining is not immediate. It truly is a journey. So I've been reading a lot of inspirational and philosophical books lately. And, of course, being a romance novel junkie, I keep up with my share of happily-ever-afters. The romance novelists I like to read are Nora Roberts, Susan Wiggs, Debbie Macomber, and several others. I also have really enjoyed a relatively new line by Harlequin called "Next." It's a line of books about women who have lived a lifetime but find themselves in a transition that leads to a whole new chapter in their lives. ❖

—Email interview conducted and edited by Jane Ross



### New Organizational Member of SCN

Over twenty years ago, Amherst Writers & Artists (AWA) founder Pat Schneider developed the writing group method described in her book *Writing Alone and With Others* (Oxford University Press, 2003). The AWA method offers writers a supportive environment in which to generate writing and develop craft; its tenets help writers reach into their deepest creative places for material, resulting in writing

## A Fine Thing

An SCN T-Shirt Connects Storytellers  
from Two Continents

Marti Weisbrich  
Round Rock TX

I have recently returned from the trip of a lifetime to Ireland. My vacation to Ireland, ten years in the making, was so worth the wait, for this land of sacred stone, bog, moss, Celtic crosses and mist is the landscape of my heart. My husband and I traveled by bus and train seeking to experience the true alchemy of travel, the moment when you connect with the locals. I hoped to connect with the locals by wearing my SCN T-shirt. I wore the periwinkle colored one with Susan Wittig Albert's words printed on the back: "We are the only ones who can tell our stories, because we are the ones who have lived them."

Now we all know that the Irish are some of the world's best storytellers and I hoped that by wearing this T-shirt, I might engage in some lively conversations. Well, don't you know, my hope became a reality on a long bus ride from Kilkenny to Cork. Waiting in line to board the bus, an elderly Irish woman behind me, tapped me on my shoulder and asked, "Now what is this business that I am reading on the back of your shirt about stories?" I smiled, introduced myself and told her about the Story Circle Network.

She listened thoughtfully and said, "My name is Maude and if you are ever going to be around Limerick, where I live, you must come for a cup of tea and tell me your story. Imagine that, a club for storytelling! But, dear, all you have to do, if you want to talk about your life, is go visit your neighbors. Why not a day goes by that we don't have our tea and talk, and what do we talk about, you may well ask. Why, our lives of course! Now, you might say we are gossiping but, truth be told, we are sharing our day and isn't it a fine thing to be telling about your day?"

In a queue, waiting for a bus, miles away from home, I had connected with another storyteller. For in Ireland and all over the world, every day, women gather together, in homes, on walks, at work, in church, and on the Internet and speak the messages from their hearts. As they share the stories of their day, they prove that the story circle is a living, wise, engaging, sharing, uplifting form of communication that circles the globe continuously, reminding us all that the connections of universal sisterhood are ever present. ❖

that is also deep and genuine. AWA is an independent non-profit organized to promote the use of the AWA method by training people to lead writing groups and by running AWA-method groups for low-income women, parenting teens, people living with debilitating illness, and many other traditionally silenced populations. AWA also provides professional development and support to AWA-trained leaders through its Affiliate Network. For more information about AWA and the AWA Leadership Training program, please go to [www.amherstwriters.com](http://www.amherstwriters.com).

*Kitchen table stories*

# The Longest Hour

*Holiday times are busy times—especially for moms with growing families. But then, everyday is busy day in these households. Beth van Duzer shares the story of a particularly hectic afternoon with her two daughters and a tough decision about mashed potatoes.*

“That’s it!” I say exasperated. “There will be no TV for the rest of the evening.”

“Why, Mommy?” asks my whiny three-and-a-half-year-old.

“Because you hit me in the head with your sister’s blanket and it hurt my eye, that’s why. I expect you to play nicely while I am making dinner, no crying, no complaining.”

Off I go to make fish pie for dinner. Everything seems to be running smoothly for the first five minutes until I hear off in the distance “Get off of me. Get off of me! GET OFF OF ME!”

“Lucy? Is that you?” I ask as I am measuring frozen vegetables.

As if by magic my daughter appears next to me, stating “Mommy, I have poop on my butt.”

I look at her. She has her underwear on. Deep sigh and then, “Okay, let’s go to the bathroom.” As I clean up my daughter, I proceed to lecture her. “Lucy, Honey, next time just ask Mommy for help. Now, go upstairs and get new underwear and come right back.”

“Okay, Mommy,” my daughter says happily.

Note to self: don’t forget her soiled underwear is in the sink. Back to washing my hands and making dinner. Recipe says to strain the milk and pour it into the flour and butter mixture. Let me do that.

“Lucy, where are you? What is making that beeping noise? Did you touch the computer? Get over here. Ugh!” I just spilled the milk. I would debate about crying over it, but the computer is beeping incessantly and my daughter is not responding. “Lucy!”

“Umm...I touched a switch.” My daughter says sheepishly.

“Get over here. You need to find a book to read by yourself, NOW.”

Let me turn everything on the stove to low and see if I can get this beeping to stop. Unplugging the computer and

plugging it in again doesn’t work. Hmm, let me call my husband.

“Hi, Honey, do you have a minute? Well, Lucy touched a switch and now your computer is beeping relentlessly. Yes, I did unplug it. Why would I need to turn a switch off if I unplugged it? Okay, I’ll try it and...Lucy, what are you doing to your sister? Leave her alone! Sorry, wait, no. It’s still beeping. Look, I’m just going to unplug it. I have to go.”

Back to the sink to wash my hands. What was I doing? Oh, the milk. I’ll clean it up once the stove is off. My luck,

*(Continued on page 12)*



## Fish Pie

- 1 lb. cod or salmon fillets, skinned
- 3 3/4 cups milk
- 4 peppercorns, 1 bay leaf and a parsley sprig
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup corn kernels
- 4 tablespoons grated cheddar
- 1 tablespoon snipped fresh chives
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Potatoes (or instant potato flakes)

Put fish in shallow pan with milk, peppercorns and herbs. Bring to boil, then cover and cook for 5 minutes or until fish flakes easily. Remove fish, strain milk and reserve. Flake fish with fork, set aside.

Melt butter in a small pan; add onion and sauté until softened. Stir in flour to make a paste, cook for 1 minute. Gradually add strained milk stirring until sauce thickens. Mix in mustard, peas, corn, chives and 2 tablespoons cheddar. Cook for 4 minutes. Season and add the fish. Put mixture in an 11 x 7 inch ovenproof dish.

Make mashed potatoes. Spread the potatoes over the fish, making peaks with a fork. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Cook in the preheated 350 degree oven for 25 minutes.

---

**Beth van Duzer** resides in Georgetown, Mass. with her husband, daughters, and two Saint Bernards. She was an English Major in college, has been a member of SCN since summer 2006, and is very happy to share her stories with SCN members via the internet chapter. Her oldest daughter frequently tells her, and anyone who will listen, how much she dislikes fish pie.

(Continued from page 11)

I'll just wind up in the emergency room if I try to clean it now.

The recipe calls for homemade mashed potatoes. No time, instant will do. And it needs chives? Who really eats chives anyway? Oops, crying one-year-old under my feet.

"Lola, Honey, Mommy can't give you dinner until it's finished cooking. Do you want something to drink? How about some water? Oh, sweetie, please stop crying. Here have a cracker."

Yup, instant potatoes with butter sound fine to me. I think I can put this in the oven. Why is it so quiet?

"Lucy, where is your sister?"

"Umm...in the closet."

"Give Mommy five more minutes and then I am yours. Here, let's use the stopwatch. You can see how fast Mommy cleans up!" Anything to get her away from her sister. Let's see: take underwear upstairs and throw into washing machine; clean up spilled milk. New beeping noise.

"Mommy, time's up."

Looks like pots and pans will have to wait. ❖

### *You have kitchen table stories, too!*

We'd love to print them here in the *Journal* (800 words maximum, please, including recipe). Send via email or as a Word attachment to [ppando@gmail.com](mailto:ppando@gmail.com). In the subject line, please type "Kitchen Table Stories." If you have no computer, type or write your story *legibly* and mail to: Patricia Pando, 1600 Lake Douglas Road, Bainbridge, GA 39819.

## *True Words Anthology*

**FAQ:** *I belong to a writing circle in my home town but my circle is not listed on the "Story Circles in the U.S." web page. How can I get it listed as an official Free-Range circle and be eligible to submit stories to the anthology?*

**Answer:** The facilitator of the circle you belong to must be a current SCN member for the circle to be eligible for listing as an official SCN free-range circle. If the facilitator is you, then just contact the Circles Coordinator, Lisa Shirah-Hiers at [storycircle@storycircle.org](mailto:storycircle@storycircle.org) to get your circle listed.

If you are not the facilitator of your circle, why not suggest to your facilitator that she join SCN, too.

Remember, only fully paid-up members of SCN may submit work for the anthology. So, once your circle is an official SCN free-range circle, encourage your fellow circle members to join too and to submit their stories. ❖

## *True Words Anthology Call for Submissions*

All you reading and writing circle members boot up your computers or pick up your pens! SCN's yearly anthology, *True Words from Real Women*, needs you! Each spring, we publish a special "stories-only" anthology to showcase the wonderful writing done by our members.

We are very pleased to announce the editor for the 2007 annual anthology. Mary Jo Doig is well known to many of you as the Editor of the True Words pages of the quarterly *Journal*. For 2007, Mary Jo has been chosen as the Anthology Editor from among a group of very well-qualified circle facilitators who applied for the position (and whom we hope will join us to work on other projects in 2007).

The SCN Publications Committee feels certain that contributors to the anthology will find Mary Jo a joy to work with, as you submit your stories.

Again this year, we will only be accepting submissions from women who are SCN members and **are active members of an official SCN circle**. If you are in an Austin Chapter or Internet Chapter writing *or* reading circle or you're a member of one of our official "free-range" circles, we want to hear from you. (Not sure if your circle is an SCN free-range circle? Check our website. Look for the "Story Circles in the US" link on our homepage navigation bar.) Because these official SCN story circles are at the heart of SCN's mission, we want to showcase circle members' work and encourage other members to form or join a writing or reading circle.

There is no theme for the anthology, and we accept prose and poetry and both short and long pieces, though greater consideration is given to shorter pieces. The word limit for prose is 1000 words and for poetry, 40 lines. We will accept up to three pieces per author for consideration. The deadline for submissions is **February 15, 2007**.

To avoid confusion with the True Words pages of the *Journal*, all email anthology submissions should be sent to Mary Jo Doig at [anthology@storycircle.org](mailto:anthology@storycircle.org). Please be sure to include your name, city, phone, street address, and email address so that we may contact you if we have questions about your submission. Also, please tell us which circle you belong to. We look forward to receiving a wide sampling of stories and poems, representative of our increasingly diverse membership, but we can only accomplish that goal with your help. Let us hear from you!

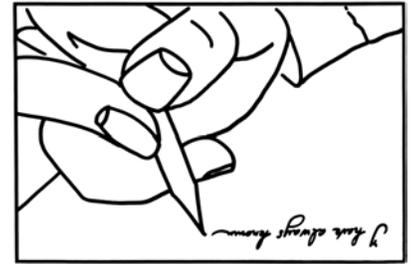
### *Hard-copy Submissions for the True Words Anthology*

If you would like to submit your story by mailing in a paper copy, please send your writing to:

Anthology Submissions  
Story Circle Network  
PO Box 500127  
Austin TX 78750-0127

# True Words from Real Women

The theme of this issue's True Words section, edited by Mary Jo Doig, is "A Holiday Story." True Words from Real Women is a selection of short pieces of lifewriting by our members. Why not contribute your own True Words to the Journal? Future topics are listed on p. 16.



## Holiday Traditions

**Sue Bilich**  
Austin TX

Momma would grate the potatoes for Chanukah and fry them until they turned a delicious beautiful golden brown. We'd always light the first candle of Chanukah at Bubba and Zaida's house (Yiddish for grandmother and grandfather). The aunts and uncles would line up against the wall and the kids would march through the tiny two-bedroom house receiving Chanukah gelt (money) from each relative. We'd sing, spin the dreidel for pennies, and have lots of fun.

In the spring we'd celebrate Pesach (Passover) and that was a very special time too. My mother would clean the whole house, changing her everyday dishes to her Passover dishes. She'd make her own gefilte fish. I remember coming home from school one day and as I entered the house, I found my mother, grandmother, and aunts crying. I thought something terrible had happened. They laughed amidst the tears and said that they were making their own horseradish, the hottest and best. A huge pot of chicken soup was on the stove, matzo balls were in the ice box, and the meat dish was in the oven. I can still smell the delicious aromas as I salivate.

My Aunt Leah made the tallest sponge cake—a feat I've yet to match—and chopped liver with homemade-rendered chicken fat, which kept it together like glue. At the time we didn't know it was gluing our arteries together.

At night we'd gather around a very long table where family and friends would read from the Haggadah (the story of Passover). And when it was time to open the door for the Prophet Elijah to come into the house, the children ran to the door and opened it for the spirit of Passover (freedom from oppression) to enter. We were always amazed when we returned to the table and found that the prophet's glass of wine was empty and yet we never saw anyone come into the house. Unbeknownst to us it was my grandfather who drank from the glass. We celebrated for eight days, not eating anything made with leavening.

Now it's my turn to continue the traditions. They've changed a little but the meaning of family togetherness remains. We invite friends and family over to help celebrate the *simchas* (good times). We've made our own traditions, mixing the old with the new. We still have a wonderful time

during Chanukah and Pesach, with the handed-down recipes and even include some new ones.

I often wonder what my children's traditions will be like after I'm gone. I hope that they have tradition. Like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* said, "Tradition! That's the glue we need to hold our families together." ❖

## The Violin

**Lavon Urbonas**  
Rancho Cucamonga CA

It started about fifty years ago. One Christmas someone gave Mom a festive corsage of artificial holly with a realistic little violin nestled in the red and green. The next year she pinned the corsage to the ribbon of a gift she gave me.

It was tradition in her family, this recycling of gift wrap and ribbon and tie-ons. After each gift was unwrapped—carefully, no ripping—the wrapping paper was smoothed out and folded neatly, each ribbon and decoration laid aside to be stored away for next year's encore. If someone else tossed aside any of these treasures, Mom or Aunt Frieda retrieved them. And gift boxes? Aunt Frieda was known to ask for the box back before you had a chance to unwrap the gift she had given you. We all kidded about this family trait.

Having inherited that family gene, I was in on the joke as both kidder and kiddee. The next Christmas, I attached the violin to a gift I gave Mom. From then on, that little violin was under the Christmas tree every year. We didn't have to sign the gift card; the violin was our signature. It suffered over the years: red berries fell off, holly leaves bent awry, the red velvet ribbon faded, a violin string broke. But always it was there, our little in joke having become an unspoken bond between Mom and me.

Today I have a chest of drawers overflowing with old gift wrap and ribbons and tie-ons, some that I've saved and some that I inherited from Mom, along with that gene. The violin is not among them. When Mom died in early December 1999, it was my year to give the violin to her. And so I did.

Each Christmas since, the gifts under the tree have been as bountiful and beautiful as ever. But I still miss—and always will—the one with the violin. ❖

*More True Words . . .**(Continued from page 13)***The Santa Claus Experiment****Jane Cadieux**  
Geneva, Switzerland

I did not grow up with Christmas. Well, I did, not because our family celebrated it but because it surrounded us.

I loved lighting the menorah, eating crispy potato latkes, and receiving Chanukah gelt. However, by the time I reached school age, the Christmas spirit began to affect me.

Something magical always happened in December. Store windows transformed into kaleidoscopes of tinsel, constant snowfall turned the city into a winter wonderland, school art projects suddenly called for the use of more glitter, regular hymns evolved into Christmas hymns, and children of all faiths took part in Christmas assemblies. Even television changed, airing whimsical specials that had me gobbling down dinner just to catch them.

During shopping outings, I would clutch my mother's gloved hand as we maneuvered through slush-flooded sidewalks and frenzied shoppers. I looked longingly at the department-store Santas wondering if the real version of these hefty, red-suited men would ever leave me presents if I asked. I loved it all.

But—it wasn't my holiday.

One year, I decided to conduct the Santa Claus experiment. Afraid that my parents wouldn't approve, I relied instead on advice from my experienced Christian friends: be good, leave cookies, go to bed early.

I rifled through my sock drawer and, just to play it safe, hung a pair of my brother's socks too. I set out a plate of cookies hoping Santa wouldn't mind rugelach. Waiting for sleep to come, I kept thinking how lucky children were to feel this excited about going to bed every Christmas knowing all they had wished for would be brightly wrapped and waiting the next morning. But I was a little more anxious than most children. It was not a case of what Santa would bring but whether he would come at all. With this thought in my head, I drifted into a restless sleep.

The next morning I ran downstairs bursting with anticipation. There they were: socks—bulging with candy and toys. Even my nasty brother reaped in the bounty of Santa's generosity. I didn't mind. My experiment worked. Santa had visited my Jewish home. ❖

---

*Sign up soon for the March LifeLines  
Retreat with Susan Wittig Albert.  
This event is sure to fill up fast.*

**Mom's Bowl****Dorothy Ross**  
Davis CA

Mom's carnival-glass serving bowl was always the centerpiece of our Thanksgiving table, filled with mini-pumpkins and little gourds. For Turkey Day, Dad pulled the mahogany table into the center of the living room and extended it as far as it could go. When the feasting was over, he shoved the heavy table back against the wall, where the orange bowl held its fall bounty until the Christmas crèche replaced it.

I was twelve years old when the bowl got broken. Because my mother had taken a part-time job, I had to hurry home from school to look after my baby brother. Grandma, who lived downstairs, watched him until I got home and then she was ready for a nap. Chris wasn't walking yet, but he could pull himself up to stand in his playpen that was set up in the living room, next to the big table. That afternoon, I put him in the playpen with his toys and went to the kitchen for a snack. I was startled by a loud crash and the baby's howl. I found Chris planted on the floor of the playpen with the edge of the table runner clasped in his plump little fist, pumpkins and gourds mingled with his plush toy animals. He was red in the face from yelling, but he wasn't hurt.

When Mom came home, she was angry that I hadn't kept a closer eye on the baby. I remember thinking it was strange that she was so upset about a broken bowl. Before depositing the bag of shattered glass in the garbage can, she rescued the largest piece—a fan-shaped wedge about the size of my hand—and set it on the kitchen windowsill where it reflected the sun's cycle through the seasons.

Years later, I asked my aunt about the incident. She reminded me that Mom and Dad were married in 1932, during the Great Depression. She told me that their celebration was a small family dinner, and that carnival-glass serving bowl was the only wedding present the young couple had received. ❖

**God's Eyes (This Is No Yarn!)****Sharon Blumberg**  
Munster IN

As a seventh grade teacher, for years I enjoyed doing a fun project with my students the day before the winter holidays. The project that I am referring to is called *Ojos de Dios* (God's Eyes) in Spanish. With this Hispanic craft project, the students wind yarn around two wooden sticks that are glued together the day before. In Hispanic tradition, people give these crafts to one another for good luck, or they can be used as holiday ornaments.

About nine years ago, this event did not go as planned. Fortunately, this was my last class period of the day. As this activity with my students progressed during the 47-minute period, yarn intertwined itself throughout the classroom. It was as if a multi-tentacled, colored sea creature wrapped itself around every desk and chair that it could reach. I didn't

notice this taking place because I was so preoccupied by cutting yarn for individual students, while helping others with the winding technique of the project.

By the end of the period the room was so grossly tangled that one girl had much difficulty trying to exit the classroom. I was so astounded by my students' mischief that all I could do was laugh hysterically until I could no longer catch my breath.

The principal stopped by my room after school and stood in my doorway with an angry gaze. He said in a solemn voice that there was yarn all over the hall and lockers. Then he vanished as quickly as he appeared.

As the school bell signified winter break, joyous students gaped with shock as they filed by my classroom. Meanwhile, one of my students from a different class period spotted the scene. He was like a miracle bloom on the barren cactus. He stayed after school for a while to help me clean up the entangled spectacle.

This young man's kindness was indeed a holiday gift that I never forgot. However, the dust-laden bags of abandoned yarn resting in the corners of my basement remind me to carefully evaluate my method if I ever do this project again. ❖

## The Warmth of Tradition

**Becca Taylor**  
Pinehurst TX

Another Christmas had come and gone—I couldn't believe it. I felt like a kid again, hoping against hope that it would last forever. I was 28 years old, and I could safely say that was the best Christmas ever. Ever.

We had a wonderful visit with all of our guests and I thoroughly enjoyed playing host to all of them. It was hectic and exhausting, but I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

This was our first Christmas in our first house, which is a big enough milestone to make for a memorable holiday. On Christmas Eve, I had nine family members over: two moms, two dads, a sister, two uncles, and an aunt (oh, yeah, and don't forget the spouse and the cats!). That was a full house.

But instead of full, it felt comfortable. At one point during the evening, I had to go upstairs for some reason. As I was walking down the stairs, I was stopped in my tracks by the sounds of my family reveling in each other's company. Laughing, yelling, talking.... I sat hidden on the stairs for a few minutes and just listened, and smiled. How can one feel nostalgia for a newly experienced moment? But that's what I felt. Perhaps it was the immediate recognition of a treasured memory or the hope for a long-term tradition.

It's so easy to take our relationships with our loved ones for granted. But as I sat on the stairs and listened to my large and boisterous family, I was overcome with affection and pride. This is *my* family, I remember thinking. At that moment, I felt an indescribably strong connection to every person in my living room. At that moment, I felt a stronger gratitude and love for my family than I have ever felt before. I hope to never forget the warmth, the security, and the contentment of that moment. ❖

## Good Tidings We Bring

**Joan Givens**  
Bellevue NE

I came to Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* late in life. It has become one of my favorite holiday traditions.

I grew up in a working-class home in Omaha, Nebr., graced by neither classical music nor ballet. Our bill of fare was *The Lone Ranger* playing Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings on the local radio station. Among the first in the neighborhood to own a television set, I knew Milton Berle, Ed Sullivan, and Sid Caesar, but probably never heard the name Piotr I. Tchaikovsky.

My dad took me to the Civic Auditorium to watch Argentina Rocca wrestle; a man dressed in tights in this venue was acceptable, but never on stage dancing in the role of the Snow King or the Nutcracker Prince.

But then, some twenty years ago, I accompanied a group of preschoolers to the Orpheum Theater to see an abbreviated version of this holiday favorite.

I sat transfixed watching the graceful ballerina, admiring the beautiful costumes, getting caught up in the enchanting storyline, and—most of all—finding myself lost in the powerful music.

I rushed out immediately to purchase the cassette tape. I listened to the *Waltz of the Flowers* and *Pas de Deux* as I drove across Omaha to pick up stocking stuffers or at home as I hung balls and tinsel on the Christmas tree.

Then four years ago a new tradition emerged. My daughter-in-law Diane, her mother Donna, my granddaughter Briana, and I began to attend the Sunday afternoon matinee each December.

This year I was delighted to escape to the fantasy of Clara's home on Christmas Eve. It was comforting to become part of her dream of pirates, nutcrackers, silly mice, snow beauties, ice maidens, and more. When the reality of my world is war in Iraq, strife on the streets, hungry children, and daily assaults of violence on TV, in the newspaper, and online, it's necessary to inhabit a more peaceful place. And on the wings of Tchaikovsky's music I transition, my spirits lift, and I remember the world is also a place of good tidings. ❖

## The Best Christmas Tree Ever

**Susan Ideus**  
Magnolia TX

Christmastime in Indiana found a young boy and his dad in search of a Christmas tree. They spent a fun-filled, frosty afternoon tramping from lot to lot until they found the best Christmas tree ever, then tied it to the top of the car for the trip home. Running to the door, the little boy yelled, "Mom, come see our tree. Dad and me are gonna put it up."

Well, Mom looked at the tree, then looked at her husband and son and said, "There is no way that we can put up a tree this year. With the twins running around, it would

(Continued on page 16)

## More True Words . . .

(Continued from page 15)  
be a disaster.”

The boy's smile crumpled into sad tears and his dad was just as disappointed. “Sit with me on the steps, buddy, and we'll figure this out.”

“Oh, Daddy, how can it be Christmas if we don't have a tree? Santa won't know where the presents go.”

Such was the situation the year my older brother Ken was seven and my twin brother Jim and I were eleven months old. Now, we had been known to create a few disasters, but this was Christmas!

No one ever loved holidays as much as my dad, and Christmas was his favorite. Little did Ken know that this was a challenge Dad couldn't refuse. He told Mom to take us to her sister's, that he'd take care of everything while she was gone. I'm sure she just rolled her eyes as she left.

When she got back, she saw lights in the front window. She flew in the door, an angry remark ready. “I thought I said no tree!”

“But, Mommy, just look! Daddy fixed it.”

In front of the window stood that wonderful tree, hand-decorated by Dad and Ken, the two of them grinning like a pair of conspirators. In all its splendor, the tree rested squarely in the middle of the twins' outgrown play-pen, safe from little hands. Ken had his best Christmas tree ever and there were no tree-related disasters during that holiday. ❖



## Grandma and the Christmas Poinsettia

E J Phillips  
Woodward OK

It was Christmas and money was scarce. I had three small children and all those expenses that go with raising a family: house payments, car payments, doctor bills from the last bout of tonsillitis, shoes, insurance, and more.

I window-shopped, searching for a special gift for my 78-year-old grandmother for a cost that would fit my very limited budget.

Grandma was a dear person to me. As a child, I visited her each evening on my way home from school. On hot summer nights I stood at her elbow as she visited with friends in her tree-covered back yard. In the winter I curled up on her sofa, covered with a warm, cozy afghan that she had crocheted. And it was to Grandma's that my newborn son went for his first visit out of the house.

I strolled past a florist shop and there in the window sat a large Christmas poinsettia. Velvety red with glossy dark green leaves, the basket was entwined with red, green, and gold Christmas ribbon. Grandma would love that! But when I saw the price, I set the poinsettia back on the shelf. With three little ones to buy for, I couldn't afford it.

But the Christmas poinsettia stayed with me. I went back to the florist shop. As I stood looking at it the thought came, *How much would I spend on flowers for Grandma's funeral? Flowers she wouldn't see and wouldn't know were there.*

I bought the poinsettia. When I carried it into Grandma's room, her face lit up and her eyes brightened. “Oh, I love it,” she said. “I've never had a poinsettia!” And she reached to hug me.

I don't remember my financial status when Grandma left us. Nor do I remember the flowers I bought for her then but I do remember the look on her face when I gave her that Christmas poinsettia. Since that day a Christmas poinsettia in memory of Grandma has found a prominent place in my home for the holidays. ❖

## Looking Ahead

“True Words” is organized around a 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 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:

*Awakening*—March 2007 (due January 15)

*Yard Sales*—June 2007 (due April 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 Mary Jo Doig: email [maryjo\\_d@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo_d@yahoo.com).

If you do submit typed or handwritten stories, please make sure that every word is legible. Mail to: 531 Steeles Fort Road, Raphine, VA 24472.

## Chanukah

**Illia Thompson**  
Carmel Valley CA

Marzipan. Ground almonds and sugar in the shape of small fruit: oranges, green and red apples with appropriate blush, clusters of purple grapes, lemons, bananas. This once-a-year sweetness signaled the December holiday.

When offered, I'd pick the largest, eliminating looks for quantity. My taste buds waited the full calendar year, ready for this treat.

My small teeth prepared to bite into that confection, to savor the familiar memory, the candy that originated in another continent, like myself and my heritage. Marzipan, sweetness of connection.

What brings sweetness to mind as I recall childhood? What does this particular satisfaction add to my memoir? I'm not on target yet. Something else is trying to come forth. I ask it to appear, cleanse the palate, ready to find this underlying part of childhood, wanting to speak its voice.

Something hesitates. I open the door, invite entrance. *It is snowing now. The heavy wooden front door is ajar as I peek down the slate path that leads to the sidewalk. A taxi pulls up to the curb: Grandfather George and Grandmother Amelie arrive. She's wearing a brown fur coat and a hat to match. He's wearing a long gray coat and a hat to match. But they don't seem to match. No sweetness between them. She's so beautiful. He's so handsome. He carries a white paper bag. I know it holds marzipan even before I see inside.*

*Grandfather George bends down and gives me a big hug. Grandmother Amelie smiles at me.*

Suddenly I know why mother doesn't hold me. She didn't learn how from her mother. If I eat enough sweetness, will I be able to be a sweet mother? I take the white bag to the kitchen, place the pretty fruit on a glass plate, eat a red apple and hope it will keep sweetness inside until I grow up and really need it. ❖

## A Daddy's Christmas

**Marti Weisbrich**  
Round Rock TX

"Daddy, tell us about Christmas when you were a little boy," asked Erika. Shelley, her twin, added, "What was your favorite toy, Daddy?"

I will never forget the look of sadness that crossed my husband's face. He looked at me and told the girls, "All of my Christmases were fine. I cannot remember my favorite toy," then he stepped out into the back yard.

The silence that followed was so loud that it spoke volumes. The girls cuddled around me and were quiet. Finally, Erika asked why Daddy didn't talk about Christmas. Shelley just looked outside at Rich walking in the back yard. Our girls were only six, perhaps too little to tell them about their father's many sad holidays but I felt that they should be told the truth, in words they could understand. I went outside and spoke to Rich, asking him to talk to his girls. Reluctantly, he agreed but worried that his words would make them sad.

Sitting down on the couch, each girl by his side, he told them that from the age of four, he had lived in an orphanage. Our girls knew that his parents had died when he was little. He explained that while the orphanage had a tree and lots of cookies and cakes, there was no extra money for presents so he had never had a Christmas present until he was nine. The girls started to cry but Rich hugged them and said for them not to be sad for he had had the best Christmases ever since we became a family. My heart melted when both girls simultaneously reached up and patted Rich's face, gave him a kiss, and smiled at me. Later in the afternoon, they told me that they would like to make something special to give to their daddy for Christmas.

On Christmas morning, Erika and Shelley were so excited. They ran into their rooms and returned with their gifts. As the girls presented their gifts to Rich, he looked at me with surprise. He opened Erika's gift; she had written and drawn a story for him about a little boy who needed a bag of marbles for Christmas. Also inside the box was a sack of marbles complete with shooters. She said, "Here, Daddy. Now you can play."

Shelley grinned and said she wanted to open her gift for her daddy herself. Out of the tissue-enfolded box, she held up a little man puppet that she had made, using a simple stitch that her grandmother had taught her to sew. Her puppet had a mustache and she placed her hand in the opening and said in



## A Special 10th Anniversary True Words Theme

From December 2006 through 2007, we will be accepting stories for a special True Words web page and a page or two in each issue of the *Journal*. The theme of this section will be:

### ***How I found Story Circle Network***

We all have a story about how we found Story Circle Network. If you'd like to share your story (up to 450 words) in print and on our website, please email it to Mary Jo Doig at [maryjo\\_d@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo_d@yahoo.com).

All the stories that are accepted will be published on the SCN website. And a selection will appear in each issue of the *Journal* during 2007. Please follow the guidelines for all True Words stories (see the Looking Ahead section on the opposite page) as to format, etc. There is no deadline for these stories.

*(Continued on page 18)*

## More True Words . . .

(Continued from page 17)

a loud, jolly voice, “Now Daddy, I know you have been a very good boy. Santa asked me to make this special Christmas toy for you. You can talk to him and make him talk to us. Ho, ho, ho!”

Thirty years later, these gifts of love from our daughters to Rich are the first things that are unpacked when we set out our Christmas decorations and Rich unpacks them. When we see these gifts from our children’s hearts, we know it is Christmas. ❖

### Turkey Day 1941

Susan James  
Glencoe IL

When my mother first married and began housekeeping at age nineteen, she figured she could imitate with ease her mother’s apparently effortless preparations. After all, she didn’t have to serve a crowd. She only had to cook for two.

My parents lived at Parks Air College in East St. Louis, where my father, an aeronautical engineer, was a flight instructor. Until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, my father taught British soldiers to fly. After Pearl Harbor, American soldiers arrived for flight instruction. My mother’s parents lived nearby, across the Mississippi River in St. Louis.

My young mother decided that Thanksgiving was a perfect occasion to prove her independence. So, instead of acquiring a fresh turkey from family friends, like her parents did, she ordered from her local butcher. To her astonishment, when she arrived to pick up her order, the butcher handed her a live turkey. Too shy at nineteen to protest—or faint—Mother and the turkey left the butcher’s shop together.

My father rushed home to give Mother a hand at the task of killing the poor thing. They took their places in the fenced backyard of their apartment, my mother holding the head across a slab of wood and my father holding the hatchet. Whack! The head fell, startling my mother. With the loss of her grip on the turkey, it escaped and ran the perimeter of the yard—headless.

My mother and father learned the hard way that they had to scald a bird before they could pluck its feathers. After a frustrating struggle, they finally called my grandparents over for help. From then on, my mother ordered her turkeys both dead and plucked. She also became an excellent cook.

My idea of independence differed from my mother’s, perhaps because I was older than she when I faced preparations for my first Thanksgiving dinner. I believed success brought independence, so I sought expert information first, then improvised. Indeed, detailed instructions from my grandmother produced a photogenic—and delicious—turkey for my table. ❖

### Advent through a Child’s Eyes

Linda Collins  
Chino Hills CA

The Christmas that my daughter was three, she was old enough to understand what was going on and to join in the anticipation of good times. Like many parents, I wanted to emphasize to her the spiritual aspects of Christmas amid all the commercial and frenzied activity.

On the first Sunday of Advent, our church provided all the materials needed to make Advent wreaths to take home: fresh greenery, purple candles and ribbon, a Styrofoam base, and stick pins. My daughter and I made the wreath at home. She was learning to use scissors at preschool and clipped ribbon into tiny pieces, sprinkling them over the greenery. That evening, the three of us lit the first candle and I tried to say something about Old Testament prophets and the coming of the Christ child that would be relevant to her.

Three-year-olds have a biblical concept of time: everything is yesterday, today, or tomorrow, though preferably today. The one-candle-per-Sunday formula didn’t make a lot of sense to her. A few days later, she insisted that I light all four candles at once. I tried to explain the significance of waiting, but then gave in.

Her small face lit up just as the four candles did. Then she sang *Happy Birthday* to Jesus in her high, lisping voice and blew out the candles on the wreath as though it were a birthday cake.

Out of the mouths of babes. ❖

### Thanksgiving with Granny

Sonja Borstner  
Woodlands TX

The night before Thanksgiving she visited my dreams in Colorado. Early in the morning I got the phone call from my dad in Los Angeles.

I made a toast to her at Thanksgiving dinner with twenty of my friends. “I propose a toast to that Yugoslav woman who was the eldest of eight, who grew up in Aspen and was high school valedictorian, who taught in a one-room school on the plains of Colorado, who became a matriarch of a large extended family in Los Angeles. She was Josephine Krisman Borstner. She was my grandmother and she died today.”

My last visit to Granny in the hospital in Los Angeles was punctuated by a ripe orange sun drinking the Pacific. I gazed at her luminous complexion and soft blue eyes. She told me I’d turned out pretty. I told her I’d always felt a special connection with her. She said she felt that way too, that she’d always thought she’d take me to Yugoslavia with her, but every time she’d renewed her passport, Pa had gotten sick.

I started to cry. “This may be the last time I see you.”

Granny said, “Why don’t you just crawl into bed with

me, come get under the covers. No one will see you.”

I smiled and said, “I wish I could.” Instead, I leaned close to kiss her on the lips. She touched my nose with her index finger and we kissed each other softly. I put my hand over hers that were folded across her chest. Our eyes couldn’t get enough of each other. Granny said, “Your face looks pretty.” I felt so pleased that she’d say that.

I said I was going to go and we kissed again.

Then I drove to the beach and watched the sun make its peace with the sea. ❖

## A Holiday Surprise

**Sandra Simon**

Austin TX

The first winter after the divorce was tough, so I wanted the holiday to be wonderful for my two little daughters. We hung blue-and-white Happy Chanukah banners, daisy chains, crepe-paper menorahs, and strings of cranberries and popcorn throughout the house. We baked beautiful cookies. We polished our menorahs and bought colorful Chanukah candles to celebrate the miracle of the light.

Hilary, who was seven, asked for a Christmas tree—just as I had long ago. My mother’s response popped out of my mouth, fully formed, “No tree!” But I, too, wanted something special. Our family had changed; we were much happier but inside I was frightened. I needed to reassure us and to feel a jolt of courage.

Our Norwegian-German neighbors had six children and a large extended family. They all gathered at their home on Christmas Eve and I knew that someone played Santa. Standing under a paper menorah, I arranged for Santa to visit our house.

That night, I put two presents outside the back porch and unlocked the doors. We were sitting on the floor, the girls building an elaborate village from toys and blocks. Suddenly, the kitchen door banged open. Cold wind, ringing bells, stomping feet, and a deep, loud, “Ho, ho, ho!” filled the house. An instant later, Santa—tall, red, noisy—strode into the living room. The girls stared up, astonished, their eyes huge. Little Taylor inched closer to Hilary.

Santa bent down, told the girls that they had been good, and gave each one her present. Glowing with excitement, they managed tiny thank yous. Then he left, shouting, “Merry Christmas! Happy Chanukah!”

They ran after him, onto the porch, but he was gone in the darkness. Taylor shrieked, “That was Santa!”

Hilary asked, “How did Santa come to our house? Did he see our candles in the window?”

Their joy thrilled me. Years later, Hilary told us that she had been skeptical until she touched the present. It was cold, as though it had been out on a sleigh. Wonder, happiness, health—how blessed we were that winter. ❖

## Grandma’s Christmas Eve Chicken and Noodles

**Carol Wessling**

Bellevue NE

I am an only child. Part of my childhood Christmas ritual was to have food and opening of the gifts on Christmas Eve at my grandparents’ house. After my grandparents died and I had a family of my own, my mother had the December 24th celebration at her house. By the time she died, we were hauling seven children plus gifts to Christmas Eve dinner with her and my Aunt Kate, her sister.

In 1978, my mother’s passing left us with no plan for that holiday evening. In stepped my mother-in-law, who, in spite of a very small house, offered to have us continue the tradition with her. Whereas my mom usually served baked ham and cheese potatoes, my husband’s mother started a new ritual dinner: chicken and noodles. Not the usual noodles but real homemade noodles, which she lovingly prepared for us for the next 23 Christmas Eves. She even invited my aunt to join us.

As our family matured, married, and began to include grandchildren, she would just set up more card tables and make a few more noodles.

Everyone looked forward to Grandma’s chicken and noodles on Christmas Eve and to the presents that were waiting to be opened after dinner! So special was our ritual that it was included by our local paper in its *Holiday Traditions* story.

At my mother-in-law’s funeral four years ago, the memory of her thoughtfulness warmed me and made me smile. I hope she knows how grateful I am that she filled the family gap for me with her memorable chicken and noodles, which, by the way, I have tried and failed to duplicate! ❖

**GIVE**  
the gift that will last  
all year—a gift  
membership to SCN

Sign up on our website:  
[www.storycircle.org](http://www.storycircle.org)

(scroll down to “How to Join...” in the  
purple navigation bar)

or mail in the form on p.23.

*Take a bow! Spotighting our volunteers*

## *Sister Mary Sullivan: Meeting at a Heart Level*

*Sister Mary Sullivan lives in Ronkonkoma, NY, and works at the Cenacle Retreat Center where she includes writing exercises in the workshops she leads. Mary has been a very active member of SCN for about four years. She participates in two Internet Chapter e-circles and is a facilitator of her own e-circle. She also facilitates OWL circles and is a frequent contributor to the Journal. Mary contributed a moving piece for this column and Pat Flathouse interviewed Mary by phone.*

### *The Metaphor Changes*

Mary Sullivan, r.c.



Today, Saturday, November 18, 2006, is the day after my seventy-first birthday. It is the day my metaphor changes.

The youngest of three children, I have always sought to catch up with my two older brothers, Joe and Ted. For seventy-one years I have played the game "Follow the Leader."

I couldn't wait to go to school to join them. I couldn't wait to

read so that I could experience the power of words the way they did. I couldn't wait to make my first communion; to walk as fast as they did; to know as much about life as did they.

I suppose Joe and Ted were always larger than life for me. Dad had died when Joe was nine, Ted eight, and I four. As a result my brothers were my protectors, my conveyers of adult knowledge. In fact, Joe explained the facts of life to me. I felt Mom would not know and I trusted him to know and tell me what was what.

Each brother, according to his own personality, was instrumental in forming who I became and am now. Ted showed me how to commute, to muscle my way onto a train and get a seat; as we strolled through a museum in Florence, Italy, Joe showed me the spirituality inherent in visual art; both showed me the beauty of nature, the joy of humor, the responsibilities inherent in being the child of a widow, the tenacity of loyalty to a sibling no matter what.

They, also, demonstrated the aging and dying process. Each fought valiantly to live. But each, also, knew when to surrender, when to let go and enter the dying process.

Ted died at 67 in 1998. As Ted neared his death Joe admired Ted's willingness to no longer drive. On Saturday January 13, 2001, his seventy-first birthday, Joe shut off his television, deliberately put the TV remote in his nightstand's drawer, shut his eyes, and entered his dying coma. The next morning, the day after his seventy-first birthday, he died.

This morning, the day after my seventy-first birthday, I awoke and realized I had lost my two leaders. The game's name has changed to "Freeze." I have no one ahead of me to follow. I turned around to see that Joe and Ted together are now frozen in death. I have more sunrises and sunsets in my life; more receptions of communion than they.

I mourn. I grieve. But that does not change the metaphor. I have become the leader—how to live, how to age, how to die. Today in a sense is the first day of my life. I forge forward—without them who am I now? ❖

### *Take a Bow, Mary Sullivan*

In her work as a retreat leader at the Cenacle Retreat House in New York, Sister Mary Sullivan always includes writing assignments in her workshops. She uses poetry as inspiration and often has the participants write a poem. She believes that writing poetry helps us to distill our thoughts into a few words.

Mary first saw an advertisement for SCN in the publication *Personal Journaling*. She soon joined SCN and became part of an Internet Chapter e-circle writing group. The very first writing topic was "What is on your heart?" At that time, she had just been diagnosed with a tumor on her pituitary gland and she wrote about that. Immediately, a member of the group e-mailed her and said that a close friend had just had surgery for a tumor on her pituitary gland. The group member asked if her friend could call Mary. The woman called almost immediately and told her exactly what to expect and it was just what Mary needed at that time— instant support!

When she first joined the e-circle, the members knew that Mary was a nun, but she did not write much that was deeply spiritual, not knowing how that would be received by the group. She soon learned that she could write freely about her spirituality and that she can just "write her heart out." The group has been very receptive to each other's writing. Since 2002, she has also joined the poetry e-circle and now she facilitates an e-circle of her own as well.

Being in three e-circles is of great benefit, says Mary, because she gets to do three writings a month, which helps her to hone her writing skills. She highly recommends the

*Story Circles—the heart of SCN*

## *Circles Get Creative*

*An SCN “free-range” circle is a face-to-face writing circle that meets anywhere in the country (other than Austin, Tex., which as SCN’s birthplace has its own chapter structure). In the year since she took on the role of Circles Coordinator, Lisa Shirah-Hiers has seen the number of SCN free-range circles throughout the US blossom.*

### *Free-Range Circle Variety Boggles and Inspires*

I love browsing the free-range circles list from time to time to see how each circle approaches meetings.

Susan Myrick’s Chicago WordWomen circle works from a “free-write” (a 20-minute timed topic); exercises that “use tools such as senses, time, and point of view”; and others that “stretch” their vocabulary and “add dimension” to their writing.

Two circles publish anthologies of members’ writings: Women’s Ink in Lafayette, Ind., (facilitated by Sandra Gaylor and Marcy Wooldridge); and P. Jan Hall’s Midwest City, Okla., group (which collects registration fees to offset printing costs).

Several circles use books as inspiration, including Linda Wisniewski’s in Warrington, Pa., Joyce Boatright’s in Houston, and Barbara Miller’s in Denton, Texas. Books explored include: *Finding the Voice Inside* by Unitarian Universalist minister, Gail Ranadive; Ann Lamott’s *Tender Mercies*; and Susan Albert’s *Writing from Life*—the book that gave birth to Story Circle Network.

Nature offers inspiration for Marie Buckley’s Hillsboro, Ore., circle, which “enjoy[s] the natural beauty of the

surrounding wetlands.” Sonja Borstner’s group, “Story Circle Gardeners,” find that their location in The Woodlands, Tex., is “an intimate setting [that] has been fertile ground for deep-rooted writing.” Sandra Pesini’s Philadelphia circle even enjoyed a camping trip together!

But the “highly-creative” award goes to Pat Turner’s Tyler, Tex., circle, which is busily “exploring some of the different ways to tell our stories such as scrapbooking and through art.”

If you are a facilitator, a glance at the free-range list can inspire and help you breathe life into your own meetings. Visit [www.storycircle.org](http://www.storycircle.org) and click on “Free-Range Story-Circles in the U.S.” under the “How to Start a Story Circle” section. And why not share your own circle’s methods through the facilitators’ Yahoo Group? Email me at [freerangecircles@storycircle.org](mailto:freerangecircles@storycircle.org) to learn how to join.

### *Our First Story Circle Meeting!*

*Elsa McKeithan (Winston-Salem, N.C.) sent this message to Circles Coordinator Lisa Shirah-Hiers in October.*

Despite hurricane rain, five women met at my house September 13 and organized ourselves into a story circle. We actually started writing on September 28 with two new people present. The meeting went extremely well; everyone wrote and shared and we all felt the glow of connection! We have all skill and experience levels in writing, but every woman spoke from her heart, and there is no lack of heart in any one. Special! We plan to meet second and fourth Thursdays indefinitely and will be taking new members for awhile as we collect other interested women into the plans.

Thanks for all the news, encouragement, and how-to you have provided. The timing just wasn’t right before and now it is. I want the world to know: This is fun! And wonderful and deep and rich. Very special. Yes, I’m a bit giddy, but why not!

### *Circle Numbers*

As of this writing the Story Circle Network now boasts 32 free-range story circles in Ontario, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

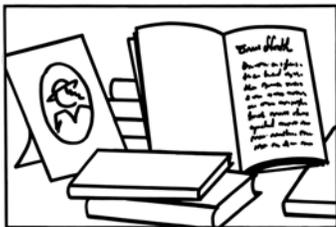
### *Take a Bow, Mary Sullivan*

*(Continued from page 20)*

SCN e-circles because they are such a safe place to write.

Recently Mary has started to work with the OWL program. The first group she led was marvelous. The women just took off and began writing. Now she is leading her second group and is again enjoying the experience very much. Each group seems to have a personality of its own.

Says Mary, her favorite thing about SCN is the depth of the women she has met. She has been in her original e-circle for four years now and the group has built up a tremendous sense of trust among the members. One of her co-workers is continually amazed that she “knows” these women in her e-circles so well through e-mail, although they have never met in person. Mary feels blessed to have had the wonderful experience of meeting these women at a heart level. ❖



## Books for the Journey

*Standing Alone in Mecca*, by Asra Q. Nomani (Harper Collins, 2005. ISBN 0060571446). Reviewed by Marti Weisbrich, Round Rock TX

### Call for Reviewers

If you're an SCN member and have recently read a great book, please consider reviewing it for us. It's never been easier. Check out the Reviewer's Guidelines online and then simply fill out your review using the online form. The book review website is at [www.storycircle.org/BookReviews/](http://www.storycircle.org/BookReviews/).

As a member of our review team you will be eligible to receive free books that authors or publishers occasionally provide for review.

Happy Reading!  
—Paula S. Yost  
([psyost@peoplescom.net](mailto:psyost@peoplescom.net))  
Book Review Editor

The subtitle, “An American Woman’s Struggle for the Soul of Islam,” of this book by Asra Nomani, an Indian Muslim born in the United States, is the heart of this memoir. Asra, a former Wall Street Journal reporter and friend and colleague of the late Danny Pearl, undertakes a pilgrimage to Mecca that is a once in a lifetime requirement of her faith. This pilgrimage, the Hajj, is not only a journey of a Muslim faithful but also a journey of a woman trying to find her place in a religion that so restricts the rights of women to worship equally as men. The title is wonderful taken in its literal sense. Asra was alone—a modern, progressive woman straddling two worlds, an unwed mother taking her child on the Hajj, the sacred and profound pilgrimage. Taken figuratively, Asra was anything but standing alone. The sense of wall-to-wall people at the holy sites, walking about the path of the pilgrimage made for suffocating scenes and a feeling of being trapped in the veil of both worlds. I especially admired the fact that while she made this ancient holy pilgrimage signifying that she is Muslim, Asra is a modern woman who fought and continues to fight for equality among the women of her faith.

Compelling writing drives this book, and it is made all the more so by the fact that it was written as George Bush was preparing to invade Iraq. Asra has many reasons beyond the fundamentalist requirement for making the journey. Among the most compelling is to seek to do what the Dalai Lama answered to this question: “What is it that our leaders can do to transcend the issues of power that makes them turn the people of different religions against each other?” His answers are to read the scholars of each religion, talk to the enlightened beings in each other’s religion and do the pilgrimage of each other’s religion.

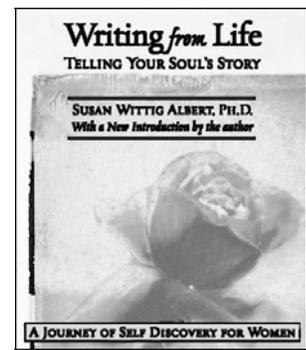
Beautifully interwoven with her story is the story of the original Islamic pilgrim, Hajar, called the mother of the Islamic Nation; whose 4000-year-old footsteps Asra follows on her journey. Asra attempts to lift the “veil” of the perception of fundamentalist Muslim women. Her inspirations taken from ancient Muslim women fuels her task when she returns to the States to confront the sexism and intolerance of her local mosque. Asra questions how a religion can be true to its theological principles if it oppresses women. What it means to be a good Muslim is defined by core universal values of what it means to be a good person. She notes that “a spiritual umbilical cord connects all women through the timeless universality of womanhood.”

This is an important and riveting book for its religious and historic overtones, let alone its compelling story. The core values of all religions and cultures are the ones that serve us best. Asra notes that these are truth, knowledge love and courage. In light of the world we find ourselves living in today, to keep an open mind, to engage in discussions of this religion, to try to find the common ground, is not only necessary but vital. Asra’s journey is a testimony to the potential for all of us to become empowered spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. In so doing, we just may find that we are not standing alone. ❖

*Looking for holiday gifts for the aspiring lifewriters, genealogists, and keepers of the family stories in your life ?*

*May we suggest the book that helped launch SCN and that'll guide any woman on her writing journey:*

**Writing from Life: Telling Your Soul's Story by Susan Wittig Albert.**  
**Pb. \$18**



**It's easy to order online at [www.storycircle.org/GiftGuide.html](http://www.storycircle.org/GiftGuide.html)**

# Story Circle News Roundup

## Board News

The SCN Board met at La Madeleine restaurant on October 23, 2006. President Patricia Pando chaired the meeting, which was attended by 11 members and the Executive Director. Members reported their contribution of 549 hours to SCN activities since the last meeting, bringing the total for the year to 1549 hours.

The board:

1. Reviewed and approved the minutes of the May 2006 meeting and the treasurer's report.
2. Acknowledged Carolyn Blankenship for her SCN haiku, which won 11th place in the Community TechKnowledge 5-7-5 Haiku Grant Contest.
3. Set the SCN board meeting schedule for 2007.
4. Recognized and thanked Melanie Alberts, Linda Jones, Marilyn McConnell, Diana McDaniel, Donna Remmert, and Mary Ann Reynolds who will be leaving the board at the end of 2006.
5. Reappointed Penny Appleby and elected Judy Abrahamson, Hazel Baylor, Joyce Boatwright, Helen Lowery, Linda Joy Myers, Sandra Simon, Jo Virgil and Linda Wisniewski to serve on the SCN Board for three-year terms beginning January 1, 2007.
6. Reappointed Penny Appleby to the office of Secretary/Treasurer.
7. Reviewed plans for the March 2007 LifeLines retreat, June 2007 nature-writing conference, Fall 2007 SCN cookbook/anthology, and February 2008 Stories from the Heart IV conference.
8. Received updates on the development of the November

2006 SCN member survey, new writing circles and a policy for affiliated workshops.

The board met for a planning session on November 4 and will convene again to do more planning January 20-21 and for its regular meeting on January 22, 2007.

—Report by Leilani Rose

## Austin Chapter Be Our Guest

Susan Wittig Albert treated Be Our Guest attendees to a mini writing workshop Sunday November 12. We explored the days of our own lives as Susan led us in writing exercises based on the theme of her recently published *China Bayles' Book of Days*. Guests visited with Susan and each other after the workshop when Susan signed copies of her book.

—Report by Rebecca Roberts

## Internet Chapter News

The Internet Chapter continues to grow. Many new members have joined the writing circles and/or the reading circle. Others have bowed out of e-circles opting to spend time working on their own personal writing projects while enjoying the other benefits of Internet Chapter membership. The Internet Chapter membership is a gentle mix of seasoned and novice writers, published and unpublished writers, writers of poetry and writers of prose. Internet Chapter welcomes women from around the world who share a love of writing and sharing their stories. If you have thought about joining Internet Chapter but have not yet done so, perhaps you'd like to do so now!

—Report by Lee Ambrose



This membership is a gift.

My name and address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

My phone and e-mail:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Join the Story Circle Network!

- \_\_\_ Annual Membership: USA: \$35;  
 Canada & Mexico: \$45; } International MO  
 International \$50.  
 \_\_\_ Austin Chapter: \$18/yr (in addition to your national dues!)  
 \_\_\_ Internet Chapter: \$18/yr (in addition to your national dues!)  
 \_\_\_ Sample copy of the *Story Circle Journal*: \$5

Mail your check to  
 Story Circle Network,  
 PO Box 500127,  
 Austin TX 78750-0127

12/06

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Become a supporting member and help Story Circle Network grow. Check here:

- \$70 Supporter     \$125 Sponsor     \$200 Patron     \$400 Benefactor

SCN-sponsored writing workshops, retreats, conferences

# LifeLines Writing Retreat

With Susan Wittig Albert

At Festival Hill in Round Top, Texas, March 16-18, 2007

### What is LifeLines?

LifeLines is a weekend writing retreat for women. For a detailed description of the program, see p. 4 or visit the website at:

[www.storycircle.org/LifeLines](http://www.storycircle.org/LifeLines)

### How much does it cost?

\$375 for SCN members; \$395 for non-members. The fee includes 2 nights in a double occupancy room and five meals. For a single occupancy room, the rate is \$25 per night higher (\$425 for members; \$445 for non-members).

### How can I pay?

You can pay online (electronic funds transfer or credit card) or by mailing a check to the SCN PO Box number below. If you cannot pay the entire fee at the time of registration, you may take advantage of our installment plan: 1/3 at time of registration, 2/3 by 12/15, balance by 1/15:

- Member installment plan: \$125 at registration, \$125 by 12/15, \$125 by 1/15;
- Non-member installment plan: \$132 at registration, \$132 by 12/15, \$131 by 1/15

### Register online at:

[www.storycircle.org/LifeLines/frmregister.shtml](http://www.storycircle.org/LifeLines/frmregister.shtml)

**Mail checks to:** Story Circle Network, P.O. Box 500127, Austin, TX 78750-0127.

### What is included in my registration fees?

Your registration includes:

1. Five workshop sessions (Friday evening; Saturday morning, afternoon, and evening; Sunday morning)
2. Meals: Friday dinner; Saturday breakfast, lunch, and dinner; Sunday breakfast
3. Snacks/drinks during breaks
4. Two nights stay in double-occupancy accommodations (two twin beds in each room). Check-in time is 4 p.m. on Friday; check-out time is noon on Sunday.

### What is "Sisters Helping Sisters"?

The Story Circle Board has approved a tuition subsidy called "Sisters Helping Sisters" for the LifeLines Writing Retreat. It is available to SCN members who have paid their \$375 registration fee (either in full at the time of their registration, or through the installment program). The subsidy will be paid by check when the awards are announced. You can find information about the subsidy, as well as the application form, online or call the phone number below or write to SCN. If you are qualified for this assistance, we hope you will apply.

*(Continued on page 25)*



## LifeLines Retreat Registration

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ SCN member?  Yes  No

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- Extra fees (optional): Single room Fri/Sat nights (\$25/night extra; \$50 total)
- Extra (Sunday) night in double occupancy room (\$55)
- Extra (Sunday) night in single occupancy room (\$55 + \$25)

I am enclosing \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check here to request vegetarian lunch/dinners

Mail your check to:  
Story Circle Network,  
PO Box 500127,  
Austin TX 78750-0127  
or use your credit card at  
[www.storycircle.org/LifeLines](http://www.storycircle.org/LifeLines)

This is a gift registration from  
{your name, phone, e-mail}

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*LifeLines Writing Retreat cont.***What is the refund policy?**

Cancellations are accepted until February 15, 2007, and are subject to a cancellation fee of \$50. After February 15, we will refund your money only if we are able to fill your place from our waiting list.

**Will SCN provide transportation?**

For those flying to the workshop, we will not provide transportation to/from the airport. However, we will serve as a go-between among those needing transportation. Let us know your transportation needs when you register.

**Questions about LifeLines?** Contact us via email: [storycircle@storycircle.org](mailto:storycircle@storycircle.org) or phone: (512) 454-9833

**SCN's Mission:** The Story Circle Network (SCN) is dedicated to helping women share the stories of their lives and to raising public awareness of the importance of women's personal histories. We carry out our mission through publications, a website, classes, workshops, writing and reading circles, and woman-focused programs. Our activities empower women to tell their stories, discover their identities through their stories and choose to be the authors of their own lives.

## Memory to Memoir

### Online Writing Workshop with Paula Stallings Yost

SCN announces the third session of Paula Stallings Yost's highly successful online writing class, *Memory to Memoir*.

**Where:** This is an online class. An introduction will be emailed to you upon receipt of your enrollment fee. The lesson plan, as well as further instructions, will be emailed to you on the first day of class.

**When:** January 15–February 26, 2007

**Cost:** \$225 for dues-paying members of Story Circle; \$250 for non-members.

**Website:**

[www.storycircle.org/Workshops/MemoryMemoir.shtml](http://www.storycircle.org/Workshops/MemoryMemoir.shtml)

Paula Yost describes the class schedule:

"The online classes are very informal in order to adjust to student's varied schedules. Beginning on Jan. 15, I will send a lesson plan with writing tips and an assignment (write a story, usually) each week to each student. Then the student will have a week in which to accomplish that assignment before the next lesson comes along. There is no formal class 'session.' You may choose to read and absorb the assignment at your convenience (even two in the morning if you wish) and then submit a story you write specifically geared to that week's lesson or a story in your 'previously

written' stash. Once I receive your assignment, I will edit same and provide a constructive critique usually within 24–48 hours. Based on this schedule, the last lesson will be sent on Feb. 19. So you should be finished with the class by Feb. 26, a week later. Students will be given the opportunity to share their work with each other or not, as they choose. Otherwise, all your correspondence will be directly with me in the interest of preserving your privacy."

Paula Stallings Yost is an experienced journalist/memoirist and founder of LifeSketches/Heirloom Memoirs Publishing—a company dedicated to the preservation of personal and family histories in book form.

In her online class, each student will compose four or five short stories that will be edited by the instructor and returned with helpful suggestions for improvement or expansion. Students also will work on methods for transitioning and organizing the stories into a creative nonfiction narrative, including a table of contents, dedication, etc. Writing guidelines, story ideas, and a bibliography of suggested reading materials will be provided.

*Paula's course ... was the best I've had in twenty years of writing classes, conferences, workshops, etc. And last year, I graduated from McMaster University's Writing Certificate Program with As in every class, but I have learned much more from this course.*

**HOW CAN I PAY FOR MY WORKSHOP?** You can pay online (electronic funds transfer or credit card) or by mailing a check to the SCN PO Box number below. Register online at: [www.storycircle.org/frmenroll.shtml](http://www.storycircle.org/frmenroll.shtml)

**REFUND/CANCELLATION POLICY:** We will refund your registration fee (less a \$15 cancellation charge) if you request us to do so by the 10th calendar day before the workshop. After that date, we will refund your fee only if we are able to fill your space from our waiting list. We reserve the right to cancel the workshop; if so, we will refund your full registration fee.

Story Circle Network, P.O. Box 500127, Austin, TX 78750-0127, 512-454-9833, [storycircle@storycircle.org](mailto:storycircle@storycircle.org)



# A Land Full of Stories

*A Conference & Celebration of Writing about Place and Personal History*

*Conference dates: June 8–9, 2007  
Alkek Library, Southwestern Writers Collection  
Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas*



Kathleen Dean Moore

Mark your calendars and start making plans now to join us in San Marcos, Texas, for this Story Circle Network conference

SCN, in cooperation with the Alkek Library's Southwestern Writers Collection at Texas State University, is planning a weekend writing conference to mark the publication of *What Wildness is This: Women Write About the Southwest*—Story Circle Network's new anthology of writings by women celebrating their experiences in the landscapes of the Southwest. The conference will bring together people from around the country to tell their stories of the land through personal essays, autobiographical fiction, poetry, drama, dance, music, art and more. A wide variety of 90-minute workshops and panel discussions focused on writing about place will be offered on Friday and Saturday.

## *Keynote Speaker*

The evening's keynote address will be delivered by Kathleen Dean Moore, Professor of Philosophy and founding director of the Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature, and the Written Word at Oregon State University. Moore is the author of three books of essays: *The Pine Island Paradox*; *Holdfast: At Home in the Natural World*; and *Riverwalking: Reflections on Moving Water*.

## *Pre-Conference Writing Sessions*

Field-writing activities in Austin and San Marcos, including bat-watching, wildflower sightings, glass-bottom boat tours, spelunking and more.

## *Conference Hotel*

**Quality Inn, San Marcos 512-353-7770**

We have reserved a block of rooms at the Quality Inn in San Marcos for conference attendees. Lodging is not included in your registration fee. You will need to make your own reservations by calling the hotel directly at 512-353-7770. Don't forget to request the special, reduced SCN rates of \$69.95 (single room) and \$79.95 (double room) available for the nights of June 7, 8 and 9. Rates include free high-speed Internet access and a hot breakfast each morning! Book early. Reservations at this discounted rate available only until May 24, 2007.

**Website:** [www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/Landstories](http://www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/Landstories)

*To sign up for our  
Conference  
e-letter, to catch up on  
the news,  
or to register,  
visit our website.*

Copy this page and send with your check to:  
 Conference Registration, Story Circle Network,  
 PO Box 500127, Austin TX 78750. To register  
 online and use your credit card, go to [www.  
 storycircle.org/WomenWrite/landstories](http://www.storycircle.org/WomenWrite/landstories) and  
 click the link to Registration.



Southwestern  
 Writers Collection



# Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Story Circle Member?  Yes  No

Are you currently enrolled as a college student?  Yes  No  
 (Students pay a discounted fee of \$15 for workshops, and full price for the Fri. reception and Sat. lunch.)

Registration Type		Early registration* (before 04/15/07)	Regular Registration (04/16/07–05/31/07)	Registration at the Door (cash/check only!)	Amount Due
<b>Full Registration</b> (Full conference includes Friday afternoon/Saturday workshops, Friday night welcome/reception/keynote, Saturday breaks and lunch. Does not include pre-conference field-writing activities, housing, transportation from hotel to university.)		\$180 Students \$112	\$195 Students \$112	\$210 Students \$112	
<b>Partial registration</b>	Saturday only, with lunch	\$125	\$140	**	
	Saturday only, no lunch	\$100	\$110	\$125	
	Saturday lunch only	\$30	\$40	**	
	Individual sessions <b>Friday</b> Session 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Session 2 <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Saturday</b> Session 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Session 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Session 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Session 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$25 Students \$15	\$30 Students \$15	\$35 Students \$15	
<b>Field-writing Sessions</b> Thursday, June 7	Morning Session 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon Session 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$25	\$30	\$35	
				<b>Total Enclosed</b>	

What is \*NOT\* included in my FULL registration fees?

- Optional Thursday Pre-Conference Field Writing Sessions
- Lodging is \*NOT\* included in the registration fee. You need to make your own lodging arrangements. Want a roommate? See Roommates Wanted page for more information.

\*\*You MUST register for lunch by May 31! Registration for this event will NOT be accepted at the door.

You can pay online (electronic funds transfer or credit card) or by check sent to the address at the top of this page.

Refund Policy: Cancellations are accepted until May 15, 2007, and are subject to a cancellation fee of \$40 for a full conference registration.

Questions? Contact us via email at [LandStories@storycircle.org](mailto:LandStories@storycircle.org) or phone: (512) 454-9833

# Thank You

## To Our Generous Donors

A big THANK YOU!!! to all of our generous donors this year! These women are helping to support our programs, publications, and projects. As of November 13, 55 donors have donated over \$13,000.

Abrahamson, Judy  
Acker, Jan  
Albert, Lucy Ann  
Ambrose, Lee  
Azar-Rucquoi, Adele  
Baylor, Hazel  
Bell, Denise  
Benardo, Helene  
Betts, Emilie  
Bisher, Sue  
Blackstone, Barbara  
Byrd, Ann  
Conwell, Bonnie  
Cook, Carolyn (In honor of Carolyn Blankenship)  
Gilbert, Christine  
Gold, Betty  
Goodale, Joy  
Helburn, Judith  
Kelley, Loretta  
Koen, Karleen  
McGill, Cathy  
Meyer, Debi (In honor of Danelle Sasser & Carolyn Blankenship)  
Misegades, Katherine  
Murdock, Maureen  
Newman, Jackie  
Nichols, Tracie  
Nichols, Tracie (In memory of Cassandra Chavez Ketterer)  
O'Toole, Pat  
Pando, Patricia  
(In honor of Judith Helburn & Leilani Rose; in memory of Alda Nordyke & Mary Elizabeth Davidson)  
Peters, Barbara  
Phifer, Nan  
Ramsey, Jean  
Reynolds, Fran  
Ross, Jane  
Sasser, Danelle  
Seale, Jan (In honor of Fonty Dady)  
Shackelford, Sandra  
Simon, Sandra  
Stephens, Tricia  
Styne, Marlys (In honor of Violet Marshall Funston, my mother who is near death and can no longer write or talk. She inspired me.)  
Talbert, Tot  
Vanderslice, Carolyn

Watkins, Bonnie  
Weisbrich, Marti (In memory of my mom, Trini Martinez, my first storyteller and who taught me the love of family stories)  
Whelley, Judy (In honor of Betty Gaines Sheppard Grant, author of "The Garbage Dump")  
Williams, Connie  
Wisniewski, Linda (In celebration of my 60th birthday!)  
anonymous  
anonymous (In honor of Susan Wittig Albert)

And another big THANK YOU!!! to all of our members who upgraded their basic membership to a higher level. These women, too, greatly aid in supporting the Story Circle Network mission.

Bart, Duffie  
Bauer, Sarah  
Baylor, Hazel  
Beckner, Anne  
Betts, Emilie  
Booth, Carol (Amherst Writers & Artists)  
Check, Lisa  
Doig, Mary Jo  
Fisher, Peggy  
Harman, Joan  
Helburn, Judith  
Hungerford, Rachael  
Jaeschke, Jazz  
Johnson, Donna  
Marks, Mary Jane  
Mills, Lynn  
O'Toole, Pat  
Pando, Patricia  
Pierce, PJ  
Ross, Jane  
Samuels, Marlene  
Sasser, Danelle  
Seale, Jan  
Stephens, Trisha  
Stroud, Stacy (The Crossings)  
Vanderslice, Carolyn

## Mark Your Calendar SCN Events and Deadlines Spring 2007

**Jan. 15, 2007:** Deadline for workshop session proposals for the Land Full of Stories conference

**Feb. 15:** Deadline for submissions for the 2007 True Words anthology (see p. 12)

**March:** Publication of *What Wildness Is This: Women Write about the Southwest* (see p. 4)

**March 16–18:** LifeLines Writing Retreat with Susan Wittig Albert, in Round Top, Tex. (see p. 24)

**April 15:** Early registration deadline for the Land Full of Stories Conference (see pp. 4 and 26)

**June 8–9:** The Land Full of Stories Conference, San Marcos, Tex.

Events are open to all SCN members and other women interested in writing about their lives. Most events require registration (except free events). Check our website for registration details, place, and time. Our online calendar is at:

[www.storycircle.org/calendar07.html](http://www.storycircle.org/calendar07.html)

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