



# Story Circle Journal

Vol. 11 No. 2, June, 2007

The newsletter for women with stories to tell...

## Thinking and Writing About Nature and Place

*Kathleen Dean Moore, philosopher and writer, contributed an essay and wrote the foreword to SCN's anthology, What Wildness is This, and will be the keynote speaker at our Land Full of Stories Conference, June 7-9.*

*Kathleen is the author of three books of nature essays. Her most recent book, The Pine Island Paradox, won the 2005 Oregon Book Award. As a Professor of Philosophy at Oregon State University, she is the founding director of the Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature and the Written Word. The Journal interviewed Kathleen Dean Moore by email to learn more about her thinking and writing about nature and place.*

**SCJ:** How does your unique background influence your writing?

**Moore:** An education in philosophy can be an education in courage, to come right up to the edge of understanding and then to jump off the cliff. At the same time, it's an education in clarity, to say as clearly as possible what sometimes cannot be said. So how does the oddness of my background influence my writing? I like to think it makes the writing more layered than it otherwise might be, and more reckless about engaging ideas that are hard to understand. In the other direction, the essay [form] has transformed my thinking about my philosophical work. Traditionally,

*(Continued on page 5)*

**Land Full of Stories Conference**  
San Marcos, TX, June 7-9

Hear **Kathleen Dean Moore** speak at the Friday evening reception.

You may register at the door for most conference sessions (as long as space is available). Visit the website for registration info and directions to the conference venue.

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



Kathleen Dean Moore

Enter SCN's  
Susan Wittig Albert  
Lifewriting  
Competition, '07

This year's topic:

**Birthings and  
beginnings**

Details & rules on p. 4

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## A Letter from SCN's President



"Too busy!" I tell my friend and fellow SCN member, Pam Immendorf, at least once a month, and then she tells me the same thing. Usually it's when we're setting up for our monthly OWL Circle. We cajole each other not to get so involved and to take some time for ourselves.

When I told Pam, "Too busy," last month, she set down the coffee pot and made it clear. "I'll never be too busy for OWL Circle. I don't do it for the circle, or only partly—I do it for me! I get more out of it than I give!"

"May I put that in the President's Letter?" I asked. She happily agreed.

Story Circle Network activities are like that. Sometimes we think we are doing things for others, but then it turns out we are the biggest beneficiaries. Whether it's leading an OWL circle or a story circle, writing for this *Journal* or even reading it, we share and give at the same time.

One of the biggest SCN opportunities to share is coming up. We announce **Stories from the Heart IV** in this *Journal*.

I've been a member of SCN for right at seven years and **Stories from the Heart** has been an important part of that membership. When the first one was announced I thought it sounded like a good idea. I thought maybe I should go, maybe I would go. I thought that, but, you know, I didn't do anything. For most of the year of 2001, I merely thought about it. Then February 2002 rolled around; in Austin women gathered. I was home in Georgia. I read about it later. Then I kicked myself. This will not happen again, I thought.

A year passed; my *Story Circle Journal* arrived with the **Stories from the Heart II** announcement. I didn't hesitate. I tore off the application page, wrote a check and sent it in—that day. Come late January 2004, I was in my car, rolling west. I thought I'd have a great time. I had no idea! When, during the last lunch, SCN President Judith Helburn urged us to get more involved, I was so excited I couldn't wait to e-mail or write her. No, instead I wrote her a note in smeary ballpoint on my wet luncheon napkin, and then ran it up to the podium before she had a chance to get away!

Sure enough, in 2006, I was involved. Involved in the planning, involved in the program, involved in the whole thing. I had a great time.

No wonder I can't wait for 2008.

Now is a chance for other SCN members to have the same fun and satisfaction I have enjoyed. I know it's hard for far-flung members to find the time and money to get here. Please try.

You don't have to wait until February 2008. While the organizing committee will need volunteers then, there are volunteer opportunities right now, both for Austin area members and for national members.

Think about giving to Story Circle and to yourself by being a part of **Stories from the Heart IV**. You can e-mail [conference@storycircle.org](mailto:conference@storycircle.org) for full information. Like Pam, you'll get more out of it than you give.

*Patricia Pando*

President, Story Circle Network

## 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.

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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: \$1.25 for 1 issue, \$5 for 2–5 issues, \$7.50 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.

**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.

# Celebrating Women's Writing

STORY CIRCLE NETWORK—10TH ANNIVERSARY

## SCN Publishing Takes Off

This tenth anniversary year has been our busiest ever for new publications. A big part of the SCN mission is providing venues for our members to see their own writing in print. This year we're doing that in more ways than ever, with three publications this spring alone.

***What Wildness Is This: Women Write about the Southwest*** was published in March. Four volunteer editors (Susan Wittig Albert, Susan Hanson, Jan Seale, and Paula Stallings Yost) worked for over three years on this anthology of writings about nature and place. It was published by the University of Texas Press, one of the best-known university publishing houses in the country. The book includes the writings of 30 SCN members together with essays and poetry by other emerging and established women writers.

In April, SCN published ***Starting Points***, a collection of 50 writing prompts by Susan Wittig Albert, chosen from the over-300 writing prompts that she sent to Internet Chapter members over the past seven years. This publication is a first for SCN. We're publishing it simultaneously as a downloadable e-book in PDF format and as a print-on-demand, spiral-bound book.

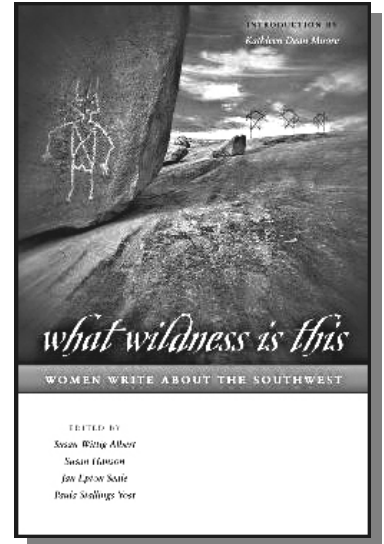
This 54-page, letter-size book gave us the chance to try out the very latest in publishing technology at very low cost to SCN and to purchasers. For just \$5, you can download the book and print it on your home printer. Or, if you prefer a spiral-bound book with a colorful cover, for \$8 + shipping you can order the print version. This is printed and mailed as soon as your order and payment are received.

We're using a print-on-demand service called Lulu.com to distribute this book and hope to make greater use of the miracle of print-on-demand publishing to produce more SCN publications in the future. We're also looking into providing an online class to introduce our members to self-publishing using print-on-demand.

***Starting Points*** was produced with the help of a group of SCN volunteers and is another example of a project that helps introduce SCN women to the editing and publishing process.

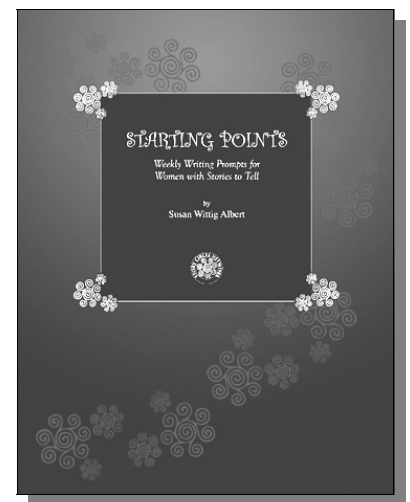
And in May, the annual SCN anthology, ***True Words from Real Women***, reached members' letterboxes. Mary Jo Doig was the guest editor of this year's anthology and worked enormously hard, not only editing the 40+ stories and poems but also learning the layout software that we use to create this publication and organizing and laying out the issue. Thank you, Mary Jo, for a job very well done, and congratulations to all the contributing authors.

Our next big project, due out in the fall, is ***Kitchen Table Stories: A Story Circle Network Anthology of Stories and Recipes***. Look for the book cover on the back page of this *Journal* and a sample two-page spread with a story and recipe from Internet Chapter member Jane Cadieux on p. 10. Linda Wisniewski describes what she learned as a member of the KTS editorial team on p. 9. ❖



A podcast of selections from ***What Wildness Is This*** is available at:  
<http://scn.libsyn.com:80/>

Order the book at:  
[www.storycircle.org/WhatWildness](http://www.storycircle.org/WhatWildness)



***Starting Points:***  
***Weekly Writing Prompts***  
***for Women with Stories to Tell***  
Preview the book & order it as a  
download or in print:  
[www.lulu.com/content/774054](http://www.lulu.com/content/774054)



*Announcing SCN's Eighth Annual Writing Contest,*  
*The Susan Wittig Albert*  
*Lifewriting Competition*

SCN is proud to announce its eighth annual lifewriting competition, named in honor of Story Circle Network founder and best-selling author Susan Wittig Albert.

**Topic:** This year's topic focuses on **Birthings and Beginnings**. Here are some women's wise words to help you get started:

*We are not born all at once, but by bits. The body first, and the spirit later; and the birth and growth of the spirit, in those who are attentive to their own inner life, are slow and exceedingly painful. Our mothers are racked with the pains of our physical birth; we ourselves suffer the longer pains of our spiritual growth.*

—Mary Antin, 1912

*Birthing happens every day, in many ways, large and small...Old things come to an end, are outgrown, or outworn. New life emerges, and with it a sense of wonder, of joy. What interesting lives we lead!*

—Susan Wittig Albert, 1997

Beginnings are magical moments, whether they are joyful, ecstatic, painful, or traumatic. Write about a beginning in your life. What began? How? When? Where? Who was involved? What happened? What happened after that? How did this beginning change the story of your life?

**Awards:** One prize of \$75, one prize of \$50, and two prizes of \$25 each. Winning stories will be published in a special section of the September *Story Circle Journal* and will be featured on the SCN's award-winning website. Upon the judges' recommendation, other entries may be published in later issues of the *Journal* and in other SCN print or online publications.

**Rules:**

- You must be a dues-paying member of Story Circle Network to enter.
- There is a \$10 entry fee, which can be paid online or by check (send to the address below).
- One entry per member, please. To be eligible, **your entry must be unpublished.**
- Winners of previous competitions are not eligible.
- **If you have internet access, you *must* submit your entry to us electronically** by using our online form or by sending it in an email, as a Word attachment or copied into the body of your email. If you do not have access to a computer, mail it (typed and *single-spaced*, on 8.5" x 11" paper). If you do not have access to a typewriter, we will accept entries that are *clearly handwritten in dark black ink*.
- Each entry must be titled and ***no longer than 1200 words*** (count *actual* words or use the MS Word word-count tool). **Put the actual word count under your name/address.** Entries that are longer than 1200 words will be rejected.
- Be sure that your name and address appear on your entry (these will be removed for the judging process). Include a 100-word bio to be published with your entry if you win. Winners' stories must be available for publication; however, if you wish your story to be published anonymously, we will remove your name. Keep a copy of your entry.
- By submitting your story, you are giving Story Circle Network the right to publish it in the *Journal*, in its other print publications, and on its website. However, authors retain copyright.

**Criteria and judging:** The judges look for entries that are fresh and original, tell a compelling story in a clear and authentic voice, are responsive to the topic, and have been polished *and* proofread for presentation in the competition. The most successful submissions are rich in evocative detail and avoid generalizations and abstractions. Entries will not be returned; evaluations will not be available. The judging team will be made up of SCN Facilitators and published authors.

**Deadline:** July 15, 2007. Winners will be notified by August 15, 2007.

**Three ways to enter:**

1. **Preferred method:** Go to [www.storycircle.org/Contests/](http://www.storycircle.org/Contests/) to enter online.
2. Email your entry to [storycircle@storycircle.org](mailto:storycircle@storycircle.org).
3. Snail mail your entry to: Lifewriting Competition, Story Circle Network, PO Box 500127, Austin TX, 78750-0127

## Kathleen Dean Moore

(Continued from page 1)

philosophical articles argue in support of a conclusion. But the essay is an exploration; when I begin an essay, I have no idea where it will take me, only hoping that the journey will surprise me. Now that I think of philosophy as an exploration rather than an argument, I'm having a lot more fun.

**SCJ:** *How has Western philosophy influenced the way we perceive and experience the world?*

**Moore:** While people of wisdom in virtually every other culture studied the continuities that link human with human, humans with nature, Western philosophers were busy making distinctions. Early Greek philosophers separated humans from nature, on the assumption that only humans have minds. The divisions widened during the European Enlightenment. René Descartes separated mind from body, human from animal, user from used. Francis Bacon separated culture from nature and transformed knowledge into power over the natural world. Capitalist economics transformed the natural world into a commodity. John Locke argued that humans are essentially individual, related to others through competition. As I wrote in *The Pine Island Paradox* (p. 53), the result is that we imagine we live in a world of nothing but “matter and mechanical animal-clocks,” that we are the only “shining eyes in a universe stripped of mystery, exposed to human understanding and control, reduced to human convenience.” We have made ourselves a lonely world to live in.

**SCJ:** *In The Pine Island Paradox you talk about the need for nature writers to “show...that it’s possible to connect deeply and meaningfully to the land without living by the pond.” (p. 136) What did you mean?*

**Moore:** Henry David Thoreau perhaps did us all a disservice by leaving Concord and going to [Walden] pond, in order to live “deliberately, to front the essential facts of life” and not to discover when he came to *die*, that he had not *lived*. That has encouraged generations of nature writers and others to think that nature (those *essential facts*) is *out there* somewhere, separated from the places we live. And so to protect nature, we have turned our attention to the ponds and mountaintops, neglecting or discounting the nature that is in every breath we take, every bite we eat, every skin cell brushing the air. We think we are good nature-lovers because we protect wilderness, even as we allow toxins into our own homes and foist our trash off on other people. We have a wilderness ethic. But we have no ethic for our own over-fertilized, scalped, and poisoned backyards and our living rooms crammed with junk.

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*We have to escape from the speed and busy-ness that are imposed on us by the imperatives of profit and power. Then we are free to go out into the morning and notice the light on the puddles and the force of the rain and the hope in students’ faces and the flavor of the coffee or carrots. Then we are free to give conscious, joyous, ethical attention to every decision we make....*

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**SCJ:** *How we can connect in urban settings? What prevents us from doing so?*

**Moore:** We have to escape from the walls we build around ourselves—work cubicles, locked houses, closed windows, locked cars, hermetically sealed office buildings, hurricane fences, and the terrible fear of strangers. We have to escape from the artificial world we dream-walk through—video games, TV shows, Walkmans, cell phones, advertising, and the delusions of power. We have to escape from the speed and busy-ness that are imposed on us by the imperatives of profit and power. Then we are free to go out into the morning and notice the light on the puddles and the force of the rain and the hope in students’ faces and the flavor of the coffee or carrots. Then we are free to give conscious, joyous, ethical attention to every decision we make—what food we eat, what stuff we buy, what transportation we use, what work we do, what gifts we give or fail to give, what gratitude we express. Then we can begin the good work of connection. We know what this work is, because this is the work that gives us joy—planting a garden, singing in a choir, organizing a neighborhood, caring for elders, gathering food at a farmers market, learning again to live locally in this time and place.

**SCJ:** *Your work is full of references to music: the augmented triad sung by wolves and loons, the music of wind in the pine needles, etc. Are you a musician?*

**Moore:** I love to sing, especially to sing harmony with other people, in groups large and small, around a fire or in a bus. My friends and I used to sing walking home from school, my children and I used to sing at bedtime, and I miss this. There’s something miraculous about harmony—that strangers can come together, open their mouths, breathe out music, and tune themselves into a beautiful, resonant chord. If we can do this—if we can listen this closely, respond this perfectly, together create something this beautiful out of thin air—what other miracles might we perform? This is one of the few things that gives me hope.

**SCJ:** *What is the Spring Creek Project?*

**Moore:** The Spring Creek Project began beside a little stream in the Coast Range, where Franz Dolp and I imagined a program that would nurture our sense of biological, emotional, and spiritual connection to wild places. We knew that if humans are to find ways to live on Earth without wrecking it, we will need all the ideas and dreams and insights and stories and knowledge and ancient wisdom that the human mind can provide. At the university, we often teach and work in disciplinary isolation. At Spring Creek, we wanted to bring together the practical wisdom of environmental science, the clarity of philosophical analysis, and the creative power of the written word, to re-imagine our

(Continued on page 6)

## Kathleen Dean Moore

(Continued from page 5)

relation to the natural world. This is a high-voltage combination of ideas, we have found. We've brought scientists and writers together on Mount St. Helens, in the ancient forest, in the community, out in a coast-range cabin. It is amazing to hear the ideas that spark when the conversations begin.

When scientists and writers walk trails together, they both begin to see the world a different way. Writers delight in—and soon begin to use—the rich language of science. They tangle in the ecological description of the world, the rich networks of interdependencies and effect. Scientists are invited into deep traditions of celebration, the poet's gratitude and attentiveness. All are as joyous as school kids on a field trip, released from the strictures and distortions of a too-narrow focus, invited to see what they have never seen before.

**SCJ:** *What was most rewarding about working with What Wildness Is This: Women Write about the Southwest?*

**Moore:** You have to know that I live in the Pacific Northwest, where the rains begin on Halloween and don't end until the Fourth of July, clouds rolling in off the ocean with all their dankness and fury. I live through the winters because (and only because) when spring vacation comes, I can go to the Southwest. For decades, I have fled to Death Valley, Grand Gulch, the Ajo Mountains each spring. And during the long winters, I have read the stories of the Southwest. So when Susan Hanson and Susan Albert asked me to contribute something to the book, I was grateful, the way a person is grateful for sun after winter. I was honored to be among writers I so much admire and love. To write the foreword was a great honor, and a challenge, to think about women writers' freedom and our constraints, what we share and what distinguishes us one from another.

**SCJ:** *What are you most looking forward to at the "Land Full of Stories" conference?*

**Moore:** I am excited for the chance to meet the extraordinary women whose work is collected in this book. Some of them have been my heroes for years. Some of them I have just come to know from their writing. All of them are the kind of people I want to know. I'd like to come together with other writers, walk a dry wash, watch a southwestern sunset, look for lizards, share stories and hopes and fears, and maybe find what I value most, a sort of sisterhood in our shared work in the world. These are amazing writers. I think they will be amazing friends. ❖

—Email interview conducted and edited by Lisa Shirah-Hiers

## True Words from Real Women

### The Garage Sale Memory Sale

Mary Caliendo  
Plainfield IL

I open my door today,  
to friend, neighbor, and stranger alike.  
Come look through my things of old,  
and some things new.  
Can you use my aunt's old table lamp,  
that she would crochet by?  
What about that new toy,  
my child did not quite love?  
Please excuse me if I shed a tear,  
as the doll and stroller leave the drive.  
It's hard to believe as I look at all my stuff,  
how much time has gone by.  
I can sum up my life in one garage sale,  
memories made, forgotten, and today renewed.  
I have opened my door and welcomed you all,  
into a place where you may create  
memories anew with your garage sale find.

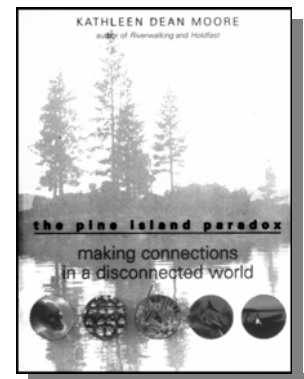
**Kathleen Dean Moore's writing credits** include three books. *Riverwalking: Reflections on Moving Water* (1995) won a Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Book Award. *Holdfast: At Home in the Natural World* (1999) took the 2000 Sigurd Olson Nature Writing Award and *The Pine Island Paradox* (2004) won the 2005 Oregon Book Award.

She is currently working on a new book, *Wild Comfort*, which will explore the healing power of the natural world.

Dr. Moore is University Writer Laureate and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Oregon State University in Portland, Oregon.

For more information on Kathleen Dean Moore's books, speaking engagements and other events, visit her website at [www.riverwalking.com](http://www.riverwalking.com)

Information about the Spring Creek Project is available at: <http://springcreek.oregonstate.edu/>





## Books for the Journey

***What Wildness is This: Women Write About the Southwest***, Edited by Susan Wittig Albert, Susan Hanson, Jan Epton Seale, Paula Stallings Yost (University of Texas Press, 2007. ISBN 0292716303).

### *Reaction from Two SCN Reviewers*

(Excerpted from the SCN Book Review website. Read the full-length reviews online at: [www.storycircle.org/BookReviews/](http://www.storycircle.org/BookReviews/) )

*What a treat!* Not only are the stories and poems inside the cover delightful, passionate, insightful and/or all of the above, but handling the book itself is a delight. From the picture on the cover connecting past and present to the decaled edges and the weight of the pages, *What Wildness is This* is a pleasure to handle.

Inside, riches flow. Here you will find women who pour out their passion for and their connection with places in the Southwest. The places vary from solitary canyons casting protective shadows from the blazing sun through open prairies with dancing grasses to city backyards shielding home-nests of families from urban chaos. The women who write these words write with deep feeling, fine writing and connections to Nature. These are not mere descriptions; in many cases, they are love songs. ❖

—Judith Helburn

*The writers' words* made me want to see the river that flows through a canyon, to watch the blackbirds, to feel the "muscular wind" of Linda Joy Myers' Oklahoma ("Song of the Plains"). I want to eat tortillas in Santa Fe like Sandra Ramos O'Briant ("Chile Tales: The Green Addiction").

... I pictured oil wells and gas wells and dogs in the yard. I felt what it was like to be the part-white child in an Indian school like Leslie Marmon Silko in "Not You, He Said." I laughed at the cunning of Patricia Nordyke Pando's grandmother in "Dumplings Come to Town."...The land colors everything, determines everything, and decides everything.

This is a collection to celebrate not only because it adds so many beautiful female voices to the canon of nature writing but especially because our own Story Circle Network sponsored it. To paraphrase Barbara Kingsolver in her essay "Not Long Ago," I can't think of a book I've read that gave me such a clear fix on what it means to be human. ❖

—Linda Wisniewski

## Story Circles The Heart of SCN

Lisa Shirah-Hiers reports

*Would you like to join a story circle  
in your area?*

To date we have reading and writing circles in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, New Mexico, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, Ontario and even Ma'bar, Yemen! Check the "Free-Range Circles" list in the "How to Start a Story Circle" section of the website, [www.storycircle.org](http://www.storycircle.org)

If there is no circle in your area, we hope you will consider starting one! The Facilitator's Guide has everything you need including information on finding members, guidelines for facilitators and six weeks of writing prompts. And it's free to our members.

### *Attention facilitators!*

Would you like to invite new SCN members to your circle? Just check the "new member" lists in the Internet Chapter E-letter. If there is a new member in your area, let me know and I will look up their contact information for you.

For further information, contact Lisa Shirah-Hiers, Circles Coordinator at [freerangecircles@storycircle.org](mailto:freerangecircles@storycircle.org)

*Here at last! The prompt ideas  
you've all been asking about.*

Current and prospective facilitators will find SCN's new e-book, *Starting Points: Weekly Writing Prompts for Women with Stories to Tell*, a fantastic tool. Based on a year's worth of favorite selections from SCN's weekly online series "Women's Wise Words" each page begins with women's quotations, because women's voices are what SCN is all about. Prompts use lists, questions and other methods that give you new ways to think and write about your unique life. Use it, share it, or give it as a gift with a copy of SCN's beautiful Discoveries Journal. Buy the paperback version of *Starting Points* for just \$8 plus shipping, or if you prefer, download it as an e-book from the website for only \$5! Your purchase supports SCN's programs and, at that price, just about everyone can afford a copy. (The web address to preview and order *Starting Points* is on p. 3.) ❖



**Lisa Shirah-Hiers** is a piano teacher and active freelance writer with many publishing credits to her name. Lisa lives in Austin, Tex., and is a Contributing Editor to the *Journal*.

## *Story Circles—The heart of SCN*

# *Wondering If the Internet Chapter Is for You?*

*SCN Internet Chapter President and Member Services Coordinator Lee Ambrose explains how the chapter works and invites you to join an e-circle.*

Members of SCN's Internet Chapter find their lifewriting opportunities to be as varied and rewarding as the chapter's membership is far-flung. Internet Chapter boasts membership from around the world. That's right! Not just from the four corners of America but from points all over the globe. For this reason alone, SCN Internet Chapter offers women a unique opportunity to share their stories.

Many of the women who belong to SCN Internet Chapter find the weekly "Women's Wise Words" writing prompts make all the difference in their attempts to be disciplined about their own writing. Each week, members receive (by email) a quote and some thought-provoking prompts to help members explore their own takes on the topic of the week's prompt. Thanks to the Wise Words feature, many members have been able to take the hope of writing every day and turn it into a reality.

One of the key components of Internet Chapter is the reading and writing e-circle, for those members who desire a closer connection with other members. For members of e-circles, the bond that is created by the sharing of words is a powerful one. At the heart of the writing e-circle is the sharing of lifewriting each month. Members post a story that is often prompted by the monthly topic posted by the circle facilitator. Members also respond to the stories of other members each month. Stories are archived on the Yahoogroups archive site for each circle. Those sites are password protected. Only current members of that circle can access the stories/responses that are archived there and members retain all copyrights to their submissions. Stories are kept there for as long as the circle is active.

The Internet Chapter boasts one Poetry e-circle, led by Jazz Jaeschke, for those women who are particularly interested in writing and sharing their poetry.

If you are looking for a place to share stories with other women, SCN's Internet Chapter writing e-circles may provide just such a place for you. If you are looking for

editorial input or publishing help, the writing circles are *not* designed to function in those capacities. However, SCN does offer online classes that include critiquing, as well as our writing retreats and conferences, which may be of help.

Since the mission of SCN is to encourage women to explore their own stories and to write and share them, the focus of the writing circle is just that—a sharing storytelling experience. Responses are not critique oriented. Rather, they take the form of a "gentle response," meaning members are asked to respond to the story but not to judge the actions or the writer. Some describe this as a "touchy-feely" response. I like to think that it is more of a nudge to the writer to push on...to explore more...to search out possible opportunities to publish.

New members sometimes ask about the "rules" for being in a writing circle. There are really very few rules and they are commonsense ones: keep what is shared in the circle within the circle, and be a gentle responder. Members are asked to write life stories rather than fiction. And otherwise, common decency applies. On the rare occasion that there is a breach in the privacy agreement or the gentle responder etiquette, the situation is handled privately and on a case-by-case basis.

The Internet Chapter also has one (or sometimes more than one) reading circle at any given time. Circle members belong to a cyber book group, so to speak. Each month, all members of the reading e-circle read a predetermined book and discuss the book with the help of discussion questions. Members take turns leading the monthly discussions. Books are non-fiction works authored by female writers. Members of the reading e-circle find that they have been introduced to writers and subject matter they might otherwise never have experienced.

On the encouragement of other circle members, several of the Internet Chapter writing e-circle ladies have submitted stories and had them published in a variety of publications.

For many of us in an Internet Chapter writing circle, writing monthly stories for just one writing e-circle allows us to have twelve finished stories at the end of the year's membership. For those of us who have been writing for more than one circle or have been with SCN for many years, we have quite a collection just begging for publication. For all of us, we find our lives are enriched by the SCN writing circle experience. SCN's Internet Chapter welcomes new members and would love to have you join us for some unique and enriching writing experiences! ❖

### *What should an Internet Chapter member expect when she first joins a writing circle?*

New Internet Chapter circle members are usually integrated into already existing circles. The new member is asked to post an introduction and she is encouraged to read the bios of her sister circle members (posted at the circle website). Circle members generally respond to the bio with some sort of greeting/welcome and include a comment or two that will give the new member a sense of inclusion from the get-go.

**Lee Ambrose** will be taking over the Women's Wise Words writing prompts from Susan Albert. Read more on p. 23.



*Publishing our stories*

## *What I Didn't Know About Editing (Could Fill a Book)*

*When Linda Wisniewski accepted the invitation to participate in the editorial team for the Kitchen Table Stories cookbook and anthology (to be published fall '07), she got a crash course in editing. She shares what she learned along the way.*

When I agreed to join the editorial team for SCN's *Kitchen Table Stories* anthology and cookbook, I didn't realize how involved the process would be. I'd never been an editor, and what I didn't know could fill a book.

At the beginning of March, our project coordinator Jane Ross sent all ten editors a Style Guide, which made it easy to make decisions about punctuation and grammar. It was all spelled out for us and uploaded to Google Documents. Jane advised us to print out a copy for reference. That turned out to be a very good idea. Referring to it online as I edited would have made my eyes cross.

I didn't realize how many things an editor has to consider. The stories must conform to one standard of punctuation, grammar, and even type fonts, while keeping the authors' unique voices intact.

All the stories and recipes were on Google Docs, both a joy and a challenge. It was great having all the stories and recipes online in Word format, with easy access to the Baked Goodies section I was editing. But mysteriously, the program deleted the quantities on many of the recipes, especially the fractions: 1/2 cup became \_\_\_ cup!

We needed standardized headings for titles and subtitles, and sometimes Google Docs would allow us to do this using its Styles tool; but other times, it just didn't work. Jane devised a code for us to type next to the titles instead, which I'm sure made her job more tedious.

The best thing about Google Docs was that I could insert a comment or question for my teammate or coordinator when I wasn't sure what to do, and she could read it next time she went online. For example, how would we handle multiple alternate spellings of a foreign word? Our standard was Webster's dictionary. We used the spelling as it is in Webster's, no matter what. Merriam-Webster's dictionary is available online, as is the *Chicago Manual of Style*, our other resource, for a 30-day trial period.

Theresa May led my team and divided the stories and recipes between us. Theresa is an acquisitions editor, quite

different from editing copy for *Kitchen Table Stories*. The most challenging part of this project for her was "overcoming the urge to cut and rewrite" because, for this anthology, "the multiplicity of voices is essential. I experienced some severe whiplash switching back and forth between hats," she said.

Like me, Theresa's learned a lot. "I came away with even more respect for the professional copyeditors everywhere especially those on my staff who deal with the most complicated projects you can imagine." Theresa says she "was grateful for two things: that this was not an overwhelmingly complex project, and that Jane was there to catch all the things I missed on the first round!"

After we discovered that Google ate some of the recipe ingredients, we contacted the authors for the missing fractions. We deleted repetitive words or changed one of them to a synonym. We deleted "weak" adverbs like quite, rather and fairly. Oops—and we put in "serial commas," as in "quite, rather, and fairly." We made sure every sentence was followed by one space instead of two.

There were styles for recipes, too. Who knew? (Not me!) Lots of time and work went into making standardized lists of ingredients, indenting paragraphs, headings, using italics instead of caps...—oh, my! I think I've got whiplash, too! Emails and phone calls flew back and forth between editors and authors.

Louise Saxon's lovely and evocative story included cooking instructions, because it was a reminiscence of watching her mother in the kitchen. Our standard, however, was to have recipe instructions separate, so the reader could make the recipe without having to read the story. I asked Louise to rework her story and recipe, and she graciously did it in less than two days! The result is a lovely stand-alone story about her mother and grandmother, and a delicious-sounding recipe to go alongside it.

A few times, I needed to clear up statements I didn't understand. In Melinda Sherman's Wacky Cake recipe, she says to "prepare the pan." Melinda told me, when I asked, that it means "grease and flour" the pan, so I made that change in her recipe. Her frosting recipe calls for 1/2 cup cream and 1/2 cup milk (Google Docs had lost these fractions, too!) but she told me she uses 1 cup Half and Half, so I noted that in her recipe. Wait till you read her story about her mom making the cake. I felt the calories attaching themselves to my hips as I edited, but I don't care. I'm going

*(Continued on page 10)*



Linda C. Wisniewski is a Contributing Editor to the *Journal*. Linda's memoir, *Off-Kilter: A Life with Scoliosis*, will be published by Pearlsong Press in 2008. Visit Linda's website at [www.lindawis.com](http://www.lindawis.com)

## Hockey Pucks

Jane Cadieux

A breaded patty made from minced chicken, eggs, and garlic, fried to a crispy golden brown is one of the most treasured foods in my extended family. Phonetically spelled these patties are known in our family as *fusheers*, but I have no idea where that word came from or what it means. Even after searching in cookbooks of both Hungarian and Jewish cuisines, I cannot find anything that remotely resembles that word.

The recipe emigrated from Hungary before the First World War with my grandfather, his two brothers, and sister Helen. Auntie Helen first introduced these tasty little patties, light as air and fried to perfection, to her immediate family. As her brothers began to take wives from outside the tightly-knit Hungarian circle in their new city, the *fusheer* evolved. When my grandfather married Sadie, born from freshly transplanted Byelorussian émigrés, the *fusheer* morphed into a whole different food group—something we came to know as Hockey Pucks.

Grandma was not the most delicate of cooks, and certainly didn't have the culinary finesse that Auntie Helen had. Grandma's *fusheers* were always a little flatter, a little harder, and a little more burnt than Auntie Helen's. They were also very garlicky and made with a cornflake crumb crust, rather than a breadcrumb crust, which I can only assume was Grandma's own variation on the theme, as she

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Jane Cadieux started out in the business world as a fashion designer/merchandiser. After one marriage, two children, three international moves, and living life for the past thirteen years overseas, she evolved into a wife, mother, teacher, volunteer, photographer, artist, writer... observer.

### 4 Kitchen Table Stories

was happy to use ingredients from the New World. I am also not sure who came up with "hockey pucks," but this left-handed term of endearment wasn't much of a stretch. The name stuck.

Grandma Sadie was plagued with arthritis, which worked and twisted her fingers into painful knots. On Sabbath, she painted her nails peach, which only accentuated her deformity. Perhaps it was the arthritis that resulted in the *fusheer* turned hockey puck, or it could have been because she employed Grandpa to do most of the mixing and shaping.

Grandma, a five-foot-tall rounded figure with large glasses, would still be wearing her floral apron when she came through the swinging door from the kitchen with the large platter of these little marvels, setting them ceremoniously on the table that had been dressed with her best Sabbath linens, china, and cutlery. We grandchildren would yell in unison, "Yea! Hockey pucks!" as if we had just received manna that had fallen from heaven and crashed through the roof. She laughed with us and was actually proud of this seemingly insulting moniker leveled at her cooking. We would tuck in, even before the rest of the platters arrived. There would be a lot of food—chicken soup with boiled chicken, vegetables, and matzo balls (we called them sinkers), a large brisket of beef, sides of potato knishes, carrot tsimmes (a sweet carrot dish), and noodle pudding. We were never sure if the hockey pucks were a main course, side dish, or appetizer. Sometimes they came after the soup but before the main course and sometimes in tandem with the vegetables. Nevertheless, the tray had to be replenished several times, right up until dessert.

When I was older and traveling, Grandma would sometimes give me a care package of cold hockey puck sandwiches to take on the plane—something akin to a "fast food chicken burger" except that these were wedged between challah or *kimmel* bread, smeared with strong mustard, and wreaking of garlic. I was forced to consume

*What I Didn't Know about Editing* (Continued from page 9)

to bake these goodies soon!

We did the first round of editing all through the month of April, and plan to have the first proofs of the book go to press around the first of September. You'll be able to get your hands on *Kitchen Table Stories* in time for holiday meals. The joy of cooking and sharing food with family is embedded in each story and recipe. But the editors' stamp, we hope, is totally invisible. ❖

*Here it is—a sample two-page spread from our upcoming anthology-cookbook of stories and recipes from SCN members:*

- Over 70 recipes in a 150-page soft-cover book,
- A beautifully illustrated cover designed by SCN member, graphic designer Katherine Misegades,
- 8½x8½-inch square format with spiral binding,
- High-quality natural-shade text paper.

## *Fusheers or Hockey Pucks*

### Ingredients

- 3 pounds raw, minced chicken
- 2 eggs
- 5–6 slices of challah (egg bread)
- 1 clove (or to taste) garlic
- Salt and pepper
- Chopped onions
- Breadcrumbs or cornflake crumbs
- Oil for frying

### Preparation

Preheat oven to 375°F. Slightly dampen the challah or bread and break it up in to small pieces. To the minced chicken, add the eggs, challah, garlic, and salt and pepper. Mix together. Brown a few chopped onions in the oil and add to the mix. Make little balls of the chicken mixture and dip them into the breadcrumbs (or cornflake crumbs) and press them flat like hockey pucks.

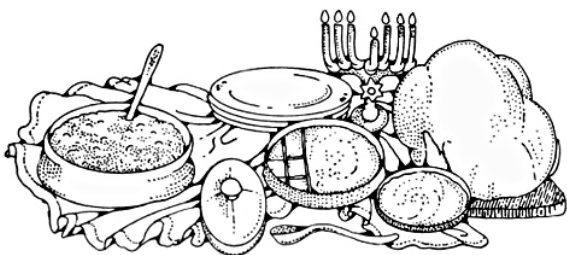
Brown the patties in hot oil for 3 minutes. Then, turn them over and brown the other side. Put the pucks in the oven for 45 minutes or until done.

Makes about 3-dozen small pucks

### Tips and Notes

The quantity of challah is an estimate only. You can use white bread, or crushed soda crackers, if challah is unavailable.

Sample, subject to change.  
Shown slightly smaller than  
actual size of 8.5x8.5 inches



them quickly at the airport, so strong was the smell of garlic permeating from the tightly foil-wrapped contents, further protected in a Ziploc bag claiming to lock in freshness. People near me stared and grimaced, as if I possessed a dangerous weapon.

The *fusheer* will always be clouded in mystery, both in name and meal placement. Even the recipe varied. Quantities were not important. It was something you felt. They might have been part of the cuisine of my grandfather's village, or just a family word. Certainly the breaded chicken patty is common enough. And though the origin of the *fusheer* continues to elude our knowledge, the hockey puck doesn't. It conjures up a very specific image, not just of a black rubber disc slapped around an ice rink, not even of the garlicky cornflake-crust chicken patty, but of the little round lady with large glasses, floral apron, and gnarled peach-nailed fingers wrapped around the handles of an oversized platter. Maybe our reference to hockey pucks was a bit harsh, but Grandma's ear-to-ear grin, when she heard it as she came through the swinging door, convinced us that she didn't mind at all.

*Heartwarming bedtime reading and a cookbook to use and cherish.*

*The SCN Special Edition will be available for purchase by pre-order only. Watch for a flier that will land in your mailbox later this summer and be sure to order promptly and to get enough for all your holiday giving. We'll print only enough of the Special Edition to cover our pre-orders.*

*(Contributors will receive 1 free copy. A Trade Edition will follow in 2008.)*

*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.

*How I Found SCN**Searching for Storytellers*

*Sandra (Sam) Pinkerton is a writer and storyteller from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. A member of reading e-circles 1 and 2 and writing e-circle 8, she is presently working on several short stories and a novel.*

This past year, I published a short story, “On the Yellow Line,” in an anthology called *Lost Soles*, and was advised to find a reading group to help further hone my skills. I was told, “Sam, you have a talent and heart but must learn technique.”

I looked into a reading group out of Barnes and Noble; it was not a good match for me. I went online one wintry night to look for writing contests and came upon the Story Circle Network by accident. I was immediately drawn to the site and joined without hesitation. I made some friends and they invited me to join their reading and writing groups. It was as if destiny was playing my song. I am now in a circle of supportive and caring women who have helped me to bloom and feel confidence in my writing. I love this group so much that together with another member, Grace, I purchased a gift membership for a friend.

As a child I was always reading or telling stories I heard from my great-grandparents and grandparents. I loved to sit at their feet as they told me one story after another. I absorbed them into my blood and they flow freely to this day. My great-grandfather was one of the first Texas Rangers and a true-blue Texan. He always wore his cowboy hat cocked to one side and a cigar in his mouth. He drove his model-T, “Old Lizzie,” until his death at the age of ninety-seven in 1967.

There is an article in the paper about the first time he brought her in to be inspected. He said, “You can inspect all you want but I will drive Lizzie till I damn well please.”

My great-grandmother was part Indian so I remember stories about Indians, herbs, and nature. I had an abusive childhood so my imagination carried me to places of safety and my stories helped me see a magical world outside the darkness of reality. I once crawled into a suitcase under my parents’ bed and closed it so my father could not find me. In that suitcase I dreamed I traveled to Pompeii and then wrote the story at age eight. I have rewritten it many times since then as I continue to dig in other people’s myths, adding more layers to my storyteller’s cloak. Now, in my late fifties, I see the world literally or through the stories of my friends from many lands.

I want to keep the art of oral storytelling from my ancestors alive and bring the ways of those before us to life in my stories. The present world, to me, is sterile, technical, and cold—instant gratification or bust. I want to share the beauty of preparing food from scratch, the art of cheese making, the fun of old board games, and the adventure of chasing fireflies, playing hide and seek, primitive camping, along with the stories from my elders and the wonderful world opened by books and storytellers. I want to nurture the

children or adults who are lost or sad and sing songs of praise to their specialness. I want them to see what I share with them in my stories in a panoramic view. My wish is that they live through my words and are participants in the scenes I place before them.

The SCN reading e-circle 2, Women Who Run with the Wolves, [named for the thought-provoking book by Clarissa Pinkola Estes that the e-circle is studying] has been instrumental in my desire to push my dream forward into reality. I have come to face my wildish nature, and the fear that was stifling me is sloughing away like an old skin. The e-circle’s chapter-by-chapter reading approach works for me as there is so much to be absorbed, digested, and shared. We gather in the circle and expose ourselves freely with a trust born of the instinctive nature of the pack. I am excited as soon as my fingers hit each key as I know it will be a force that flows through me much like an electrical current. I feel the tingling of unforeseen discovery with each email. I come to the computer filled with energy and anticipation. It is a powerful group.

My first oral presentation at the Beems auditorium in our public library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on January 20, was about cowboys. The audience was captivated and the children’s eyes widened when I described the dangers of trail drives and then laughed at my story of a cowgirl—me—in Lebanon who rode a camel. I told them I was called the Pied Piper of the village of Miksi because the children followed me everywhere as I shared stories about Texas and cowboys.

The children at the library looked over my display carefully, fascinated by objects they had never seen: the cowboys and cowgirls from all races. They were so enthralled and animated it made my heart sing...I had brought them into my world and they were there in heart and mind. I left satisfied I might see some of their faces again in future presentations.

The colorful wagon rolls into the city limits and the children run to meet me—the gypsy storyteller. ❖

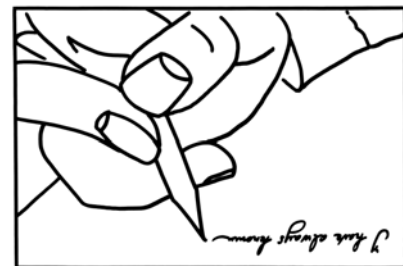
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**Sandra Pinkerton**, a.k.a. Sam/Little Bit, grew up with seven siblings in Texas, Germany, and Louisiana—an Army brat. She graduated from Temple Junior College’s nursing program in 1976 and began her Associate Degree in nursing in the ’80s.

Sam has held a variety of jobs and traveled the world. She draws her storytelling from those experiences along with growing up in small towns. She likes photography and cooking and loves sharing life with her three children and six grandchildren. Sam resides in Iowa with her significant other, Keith, and their dog Baxter.

## True Words from Real Women

The theme of this issue's True Words section, edited by Mary Jo Doig, is "Yard Sales." 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.



### Bright Symbol of a Bright Time

**Jan Golden**  
Largo FL

My daughter, Heidi, is a garage sale diva with a drive-by eye that guides her to the bargains. Standing in her driveway I gape at the collection stacked here.

"What are you going to do with this stuff?"

"Garage sale," she says, looking at me as if to say, "what else?"

"Anything you want?" She waves her hand toward the pile. I start rummaging. A bright color attracts my eye; digging to the bottom of a bag I grab a garment and catch my breath.

"Mine!" My favorite-ever sweatshirt, I often wondered what I did with this shirt. I run my hand over the colorful lettering and clutch the sweatshirt to my chest in an embrace. I'd loved it so much I bought two, so I would always have a clean one to wear. I remember now giving one to my daughter when I moved to the island. I took one. It had stayed packed the nine years I lived in Grand Cayman's tropical weather.

Unpacked again in Massachusetts, it seemed too shabby to wear. I got rid of it. Ten years later here it is again. I hold it close, like a dance partner, and whirl around the room. As I pass the mirror twenty years drop away. I am forty-four, newly divorced, slimmer, and attending classes at North Shore Community College. It's the first time in my adult life that I have time to focus on myself: my needs, my wants, and my desires. I want to catch up on everything I've missed along the path of marriage at seventeen and motherhood at nineteen—heady days—when wearing a bright and lively

sweatshirt made me feel beautiful.

Gazing at it I wonder what was so special about a black sweatshirt with the word *Forenza*, a brand name, across the front in letters of every bright color I love: red, blue-green, yellow, pink, and purple.

I drop it back into the box, this symbol of an especially bright time. I loved that shirt. I loved my life. I had just learned to love myself. ❖

### Shopping for Baby

**Erin Declan Philbin**  
Pittsburg PA

My son, Brendan, is almost four when he is told he is going to be a big brother. He isn't very interested.

The only new thing we need is a dresser. We search department stores, and run out screaming when we see the price tags. Next we try Ikea. We'll have to assemble it ourselves, but Chris is a master with an allen wrench. We realize we can't afford Ikea either so we head to a furniture liquidation center. We find two dressers made from pressed cardboard. One is missing a handle; the other has a buckled top where someone has left a cup of coffee. There are, however, many black velvet Elvis paintings and a life-size King Tut that glows when you walk past.

We try flea markets. They have acres of things we like, some things we can even use, but no dressers. We decide to stop going before we purchase any more second-hand tools.

I'm getting desperate for a dresser when I see a sign for an estate sale. I wake Brendan early on a Sunday morning and tell him we're going shopping for the baby.

I've never been to an estate sale before and feel a little uncomfortable walking through someone's home. It's in an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood; everyone is speaking Yiddish. It's crowded and we need to squeeze past people as we shuffle from room to room. Finally, in the last bedroom, half hidden under a pile of linens is my dream dresser. It's waist-high with drawers on one side and a space for tiny hangers on the other. It is made of real wood; the drawers are dove-tailed.

Brendan begins to fidget as we pay for the dresser. He becomes increasingly agitated as we move it through the house. Finally, he stands in the middle of the room and screams, "Where's our baby? You said we were going shopping for the baby!"

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### 10th Anniversary True Words Theme: How I Found SCN

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

A selection will appear in print in each issue of the *Journal* during 2007. Please follow the guidelines for all True Words stories (see the Looking Ahead section on p. 16) as to format, etc. There is no deadline for these stories.

(Continued on page 14)

## More True Words . . .

(Continued from page 13)

No amount of explanation can comfort him as he slides into total meltdown. Amid a room of half-concealed smiles, Christopher finally scoops Brendan into his arms and carries him from the house. ❖

### Saturday Morning Adventures

**Virginia Coultas**  
Havana FL

I just don't get it. From the excitement they exhibited, one would think they had just returned following some marvelous trip. They waved from the old family station wagon as they pulled into the driveway. The girls, actually grown women, leaped out first; their mom—my neighbor—got out more slowly, but she had the same satisfied smile on her face.

"Wait till you see what we got."

"Oh, what a morning."

They were all talking at once. Then they were dragging the plastic garbage bags from the back of the wagon.

"These are mine. No, yours are in the back. Where is my other one?"

They finally got them sorted out, and began to brag about their treasures. The prize catch of the day was a gorgeous \$1.00 sweater with a designer label.

I tried to show some enthusiasm as they showed me their finds, but in truth I couldn't see the fascination. Their mom was not as exuberant as the girls, but I could see the pride in her eyes. Her girls were carrying on a family tradition, for she had yard-saled with her mom.

Every Saturday morning for years the three of them went on this treasure hunt. They scanned the classifieds, made notes during the week of yard signs, and then they mapped their route the night before. They knew from past experience which locations would be the most productive. They bought quality stuff—no junk.

Mom was the pro; she had taught her girls well. Their husbands tolerated their excursions, wondering where they were going to put it all, but somehow they managed. The gift closet held birthday and Christmas gifts bought at yard sales, all ready when the special day arrived. If there was a call for clothing or furniture in the newspaper because of a disaster, the garage storage room probably had just what was needed.

I still can't imagine spending my Saturday mornings that way, but I can see that this cherished family tradition weekly nurtures their love for each other. I can only applaud. ❖

### Sailing

**Anne Ericksen**  
Des Plaines IL

To my family I am just a drudge. I am called upon only to drive to "the Walgreens" to pick up "medication"—not a prescription or medicine, but always "medication." I am

called upon to drive to the smelly, overcrowded local fruit store and follow the ever-so-slow women with their rusty carts and rusty joints. But, to my BF, I am the captain of a ship. Well, maybe not the captain, but that lady on the prow with full bosom and lots of courage who doesn't even blink at the sign of danger or barter.

Saturday mornings, my BF and I go sailing. (BF is best friend. I try to be a lifelong learner, though I was a little daunted when I asked what LOL means and everyone actually did laugh out loud, but I digress.) Saturday my BF and I cruise the neighborhood along routes known and unknown. We hunt treasure, but the real treasure is not the Watt pottery vase I bought for two dollars or the pin that I think has real emeralds. The treasure is our friendship.

Our sailing sojourns are like the reoccurring water-equals-freedom theme in Huck Finn. We are free to talk about the trials of divorce, troubled teens, and mindless jobs. It's sometimes easier to talk about things that hurt when we don't have to look into each other's eyes but ahead toward the unknown.

Sometimes we run out of sailing money and hint, "This would make a wonderful birthday present"—our face-saving way of wanting something without having budgeted the funds. We open these treasures later, on snowy days, and recall our days in the sun with the wind at our backs.

At the end of our sailing, we LOL and have our sacred ritual of coffee (we used to do it "fore and aft," but found the "fore" made us too uncomfortable and one time we LOled so much one of us had an accident.) Just thinking about it is a treasure so filled with warmth and love I want to CMEO (cry my eyeballs out). ❖

### Death into Life

**Mary Sullivan, rc**  
Ronkonkoma NY

My brother Joe, a priest, died seven years ago. We had an exceedingly close relationship. A celibate, he left no progeny, no spouse. Joe appointed me his executor.

I tried to avoid the grieving process. Though he had little to leave I had stored his things away to deal with at another time—any time but now. Eventually circumstances forced me to grieve.

The retreat house in which I was living was suddenly sold. Everything in the house had to go and I needed to strip down my possessions to move to another state. That meant that I had to look at Joe's things and dispose of them.

It was hard. We had an estate sale and I put Joe's things in with our things to sell. We each had different duties during this sale: mine was to collect the money and dispense change. As a result I got to see each of the people who bought Joe's possessions.

Joe loved to work with teenagers as they blossomed into adulthood and into a mature faith. There was a high school student who bought a book of his that was empty inside; in essence, a safe. She is a writer and excitedly told me how she planned to use this object in a story.

Another woman bought some of his Jane Oliver CDs. She shared with me her work with the dying and how this music renewed her. Joe had been a chaplain in hospice and Jane's music also revived him.

A friend of mine wanted to buy his lap board, a piece of wood designed for one's lap to write notes on. I didn't want her to pay. The first note she wrote on it was to say thank you to me and tell me that she gave money in Joe's name for the collection of those affected by the recent tsunami. Joe had been a missionary in Africa and I knew this donation would have delighted him.

I saw that Joe was not dead; he still lived through these people as they wrote, told stories, worked with the dying, listened to music, reached out to other countries. ❖

## Those Doggone Dogs

Penny Leisch  
Austin TX

"I'll help," said Carol.

"Me too," said Joan. A chorus of others echoed.

"We'll sort and price every night the week before the sale," said Deanna.

"OK. We'll hold it at my house," I said. "We have a huge patio where we can store everything."

"Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you, we have a shed with stuff from last year's sale," said Deanna, who is president of a basset hound rescue group.

That was my first hint that this project would become the doggonedest yard sale ever. My next hint was the call asking whether I would be home to receive several truckloads of stuff.

"Did we get donations already?"

"Oh, no. This is from last year," chirped Deanna.

By the end of the day, my three-hundred-square-foot patio was full to the roof and donations hadn't even started arriving yet.

The week before the sale arrived. The patio and the garage were now full, but only two people had signed up to sort and price. Sheer panic began to descend, and I quickly dialed Deanna's number.

"Is anyone helping on the sale days?"

"Two people signed up for a half day each," she said, making me want to reach through the phone and strangle her.

"Deanna, the sale lasts three days. If you want those vet bills paid, *pleeease* find someone to help me."

When sale day arrived, my sympathetic husband abandoned his job to help us. He couldn't get out of the driveway anyway. Our entire street was blocked by 6 a.m. When Deanna strolled in at 7 a.m., I resisted the urge to throw the shoes I was bagging at her. Instead, I handed her a calculator and said, "Good. I need another cashier."

By 6 p.m., she looked like she'd run a marathon.

"See you at 6 a.m. sharp," I called as she left, hoping I sounded as cheery as she did every time I called. I'm not sure what she mumbled, but I waved and smiled.

In the end, we made over \$600, which paid all outstanding vet bills for the rescued hounds. ❖

## Stories for Sale

Ellen Collins  
Vienna VA

*How strange to hold a yard sale in winter*, I thought as I drove up to my house. There at the top of the driveway, and spread out on to the yard, were overturned boxes covered with books and dishes. No, it wasn't a yard sale; it just looked like one. In fact, the items on display that winter afternoon were the contents of my mother's garage.

After she died, and I rented out her house, I stored a multitude of items I didn't know what to do with in the detached garage in back of the house. They were the orphaned odds and ends, some with no value beyond sentimentality. At that point, though, I had to hold on to them because the person who had owned them was gone.

One day, after weeks of snow, the garage roof collapsed; my husband gathered all the icy, soggy cartons and brought them to our house. He opened the cartons and set the contents out to dry. That was the collection laid out before me.

On that winter afternoon, there were books with their yellowing pages open to the thin January sun. There were yearbooks, address books, prayer books. There were miscellaneous china cups and ashtrays, the lone dessert plate, a collection of chipped vases. I remembered the zinnias that my mother always put in the white vase. I remembered the hard candy and gumdrops that filled the glass canisters.

I picked up the items one by one, knowing each told its own story. Maybe the plate had been a gift. Maybe the linen napkins had been used at a special dinner party. There were photos and newspaper clippings, award certificates, dusty juice glasses. I didn't know their stories, couldn't hear them, but I knew I couldn't throw anything away. The stories were there just under the surface.

Maybe some day they would speak to me. ❖

## Goodwill—Or Bust!

Lee Ambrose  
Kingsport TN

"Okay, just to set things straight: whatever doesn't sell goes directly to Goodwill. Nothing goes back into the house. Agreed?"

That being said, taking my change box and a fresh cup of coffee with me, I set out to greet the inevitable early birds who always seem to feel the *No Early Birds Please* posting does not apply to them.

*Surely most of this stuff will sell with no problem*, I thought.

By mid-morning half of the inventory was gone. I didn't remember selling some of the items but maybe one of the girls or Tim sold them. There were those two short breaks I took to refill my coffee cup.

When the sale ended, true to my word, we didn't even go back into the house. We drove straight to the local Goodwill and then to Dairy Queen. I thought I spied a glance that

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## More True Words . . .

(Continued from page 15)

implied a secret between the girls and Tim but decided I was wrong. The DQ tasted so good and felt so refreshing after spending the day in the sun.

“Oh, no!” I yelled as I entered the house. There on the couch were several over-sized stuffed animals: lions and tigers and bears—oh my! I shook my head and continued on to the bedroom where I found several pieces of—umm—junk that I thought someone had sold while I was getting a refill on my coffee.

I should have known. This had happened several times before. The first yard sale Tim came to me and said, “You’re not gonna get rid of this, are you?”

“Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I *was* going to get rid of it!” I quipped.

Apparently the girls and Tim had made a pact to spirit their items back into the house before I realized what had happened.

Oh well! There will always be a next time and one of these times, if their prized junk doesn’t sell, it will be donated before it makes its way back into the house! ❖

## Miles of Smiles

Carol Wessling

Bellevue NE

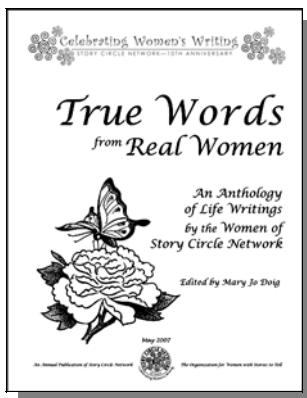
Here in Nebraska, we have an annual fall event that is the mother of all yard sales! It is called the Nebraska Junk Jaunt and the name pretty much describes what it is all about.

Approximately 22 towns surrounding both sides of the Loup River in central Nebraska get together on the last weekend in September to host a three-day sales extravaganza. The yard sales are held both in these rural towns in garages, parks, and churches, as well as the homes of farmers, who post signs directing the bargain hunters to their own neck of the woods. It can take a person a whole day to traverse only 60 to 70 miles of sales.

My husband and I discovered this bargain-hunter’s paradise last year. Determined to find the one and only treasure that we didn’t yet own, we set out on a Friday night to a motel in central Nebraska. The next morning we started the Jaunt and were delighted to see fluorescent posters at every sale site, guiding us to farmyards, church basements, porches, and occasionally even a garage. By the time we reached our turn-around point, we had nearly filled the back of our SUV with our finds. The next day was Sunday; it was raining off and on. As we headed up the other side of the river, we found some intrepid sellers still open, and we amassed even more bargains. We finally headed home when the weather began to get ugly. But we were hooked!

This year, we made reservations well in advance at a motel in Broken Bow, NE, one of the bigger towns on the route. We left on Friday morning, determined to have as much time as possible to peruse all those great buys. Three days later, heading home with a full SUV, we’d covered almost the whole 220 miles.

We’ve already made our reservations for this fall’s trip—I wouldn’t want to miss the biggest yard sale in the state! ❖



*The writings [in the True Words anthology] are such a blessing to read. Thanks for your part in editing it! The SCN writing group is also a healing balm to my soul....*

—from anthology contributor Claudia Ewers to Mary Jo Doig, Guest Editor of the 2007 *True Words* anthology

## 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:

***When the Power Went Out***—September 2007 (due July 15)

***Lost Voices***—December 2007 (due October 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.



## Anglicans Love Tradition

**Sharon Wildwind**

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

At church jumble sales, I head for the same spot each year: the far left corner of the hall, next to the stage, under the end table.

My absolute favorite treasure from the needlework corner is a four-inch, hand-crocheted pin cushion, shaped like a summer hat. Even after seventy years every pale green stitch is perfectly shaped, the picot edges a lacy frill, and the tiny pink ribbon in place. Underneath the hat are eight circles of cream-colored wool.

I suspect Peggy organized the project. Her circle is at the bottom, her name in teal blue. Below, in red, an arrow pierces two intertwined hearts. Peggy's hearts, with stitches through all the layers, hold the pin cushion together.

Next is *Alice I. Ellement, 1937*, with a ring of chain stitches around the whole piece in red. Her stitches aren't as precise as Peggy's, but they have a certain joy and abandon about them.

*Rose M. Altimas, 1937*, in fine teal blue letters.

*Paulinita, 1937*. Her *1937* is a full 5/8" tall and stands out in tiny, tiny red stitches. I suspect Paulinita stood out her whole life.

*Paule Dubuc. Aug. 4/1937*. She used pink thread and the pencil used to trace the letters has smudged, making the thread dusky.

*Best Wishes Madge*, is in teal blue. While the other women used stem stitch, Madge embroidered in perfect, minute bullion. Madge had to be the most experienced embroiderer in the group.

*Eileen*, well done, but the thread is too heavy for the cloth. Was Eileen an older woman who could no longer manage fine thread?

Finally, *Shirley*, is barely visible in an interrupted pale yellow running stitch, with a French knot for the dot over the *i*. I don't think Shirley did needlework at all, but something moved her to contribute to this gift.

Eight women, each differently skilled with a needle, came together to make an engagement or wedding gift for an unknown woman. Well worth the fifteen cents I paid for it. As they say in the credit card commercials: priceless. ❖

## Packrat Maximus

**Susan Mayson**

Austin TX

My mother grew up in the midst of and survived The Great Depression. Frugality flowed through her veins. She was the queen of thrift stores, rummage sales, and yard sales. My favorite toy—my dollhouse—grew out of yard sale finds that included everything from small trinkets to old wallpaper rolls that ended up on the walls of the simple wooden dollhouse my dad built me.

I grew up wearing strange vintage clothing and old

Levi's and reading other people's books. When I became a teenager I was suddenly horrified and embarrassed by my mother's shopping habits. More than anything, I wanted to look like all the other girls in school, whose moms shopped at Marshall Field's and the Limited, not your neighborhood yard sale or the Congregational Church rummage sale. I had started to wonder if one day I would walk into school and some girl would recognize what I was wearing as once having been in her own closet.

My mother continued to yard-sale-it well into her seventies. As she aged, my brothers and I noticed that she had begun to amass quite an arsenal of neighborhood memorabilia. She could not part with anything. In fact, by the time we moved her down to Texas from New Hampshire at age 83, we had removed twenty tons of those great yard sale finds from her basement, attic, and living quarters. And she still brought a moving truck full of valuables with her.

In fact, she marked several boxes with my name. My husband asked if I wanted them thrown out so they wouldn't clutter our house. I opened the first one and my heart nearly stopped. It contained my entire childhood dollhouse contents. I wanted to take every piece out and set them up as I had played with them thirty years ago. But instead I repacked the box and put it in my closet. There are some things you simply cannot part with. ❖

## Yard Sale Bride

**Susan Myrick**

Glencoe IL

Following my husband Jay's graduation from law school, we moved from our furnished apartment in Michigan to an unfurnished apartment near Chicago. We packed and towed all we owned behind our 1969 Firebird.

After unloading china, crystal, and other wedding gifts, the 9x12-foot rug, cinder-block chairs, and a Green Stamp card table, we realized the inadequacy of our belongings. Furnishing costs for the apartment were larger than our wallet and more urgent than time allowed. Our mattress of winter coats wore thin before we could rally purchasing forces.

Jay worked in the Chicago Loop six days a week like a law firm dog and spent most of the rest of his time studying for the bar exam. Since my teaching job did not begin until September, furnishing fell onto my shoulders.

The classified section of our local paper revealed an abundance of household items for sale. Yard sale ads promised an alternative to the privilege of retail. During the summer, I drove to every yard sale within a six-mile radius. By driving from one to the next, I learned my way around our new home town.

By the first of June, we had a bed and a pair of two-dollar unfinished chairs. By July 4<sup>th</sup> we had painted the chairs to match our fashionable olive green rug. We liked the color so much that we refinished a desk and dresser the

(Continued on page 18)

## More True Words . . .

(Continued from page 17)

same. Yard sales reaped a kitchen table and a pretty little china cabinet, two ugly couches, a small 75-cent bookshelf with a hole in the back, and a three-dollar chair with a dog-chewed arm. Sand paper, paint, a sewing machine, and diligence created a comfortable, even attractive, beginner's home.

Yard sales are adventures for the surprises they yield. Not only did I become familiar with the area, but I made a tangible connection to our new community through the stories behind each purchase brought into our home.

Forty-eight years later we still call Chicago home, and except for the couches, the summer purchases remain in the family. ❖

### Sorting Life's Cycles

**Annette Greenfield**  
Austin TX

Preparing a household for a move is a great gift to me. My husband and I are moving into a new home in two weeks. I examine everything to determine what we want to keep and what has outlived its usefulness. The very best part is the trip down memory lane.

*Oh look, there are the girls' photo albums—each a lifetime of memories from birth to college graduations, wedding, careers, grandchildren, and beyond.* The report cards show how blessed Rick and I have been with two highly intelligent girls. When other mothers were complaining about having to motivate their children, I kept repeating that 97% was very good and they should be proud, not disappointed, in their accomplishments. There are the school and camp pictures: activity camps, music camps, field hockey camps. The camp letters to and from home, recording the exciting life at camp and the mundane life at home awaiting the girls' return. The memories of the various phases in a strong 37-year marriage are reflected in pictures and memorabilia.

My treasury of books chronicles my self development journey. In the '70s were child development books. The '80s went from books on adult children of alcoholics progressing quickly to books on recovering from childhood sexual abuse. Years of therapy are seen in various self-help books and journaling. A passion for feminism resulted in books and careers in social change activism. Now I am firmly engrossed in spiritual development and looking toward new careers/avocation after retirement.

Certificates, awards, and trophies log my careers, volunteer work, and interests: Volunteer of the Year for the New Hampshire Women's Lobby, Volunteer of the Year for Literacy Austin, workplace Buckaroo award, and Toastmaster contest trophies.

This trip down memory lane emphasizes how truly blessed I have been in this adventure of life. Without life's challenges and disappointments, I would not have had opportunities for immense growth and excitement. Thank goodness for this latest move and newest beginning. ❖

### Garage Sales:

### High Adventure to Higher Finance

**Adele Azar-Rucquoi**  
Sanford FL

"Will you take a dollar fifty?"

"A dollar fifty? How about two dollars?"

"It's a deal!"

High finance? Sure, a garage sale is more than simply the occasion for swapping goods. It reveals a slice of hidden values—yes, even holistic values.

A teenage daughter kibitzes her father: "Dad, that shirt would look great on you." He hands her his wallet, "Okay." She buys it. They leave arm-in-arm.

A fifty-ish woman rummages in the "men's department" whispering, "I need a man."

"Surely you don't mean that. You don't *need* a man; you *want* a man."

"No," she snaps. "I need a man to share bills, mow the lawn, repair what's broken. I want a boyfriend to help."

What about the sweetness of the lady announcing, "I'm eighty years old today!" That sparks loud congratulations from fellow customers, a chorus of *Happy Birthday*. At that moment, we are family.

The darling eight year old clutches her quarter, carefully examining each table's items. She picks up a potpourri: "How much?"

My profit motive dissolves. "It's free to you."

"No!" she counters. "I want to pay."

Well, there it is. Grown up at eight.

How about those who try to bargain real low? Actually, the Middle Eastern merchant in me is disappointed if someone doesn't go for the bargain. Is it simply monetary value vying for recognition—or is it something deeper, say self-esteem?

Take this example: an antique dealer likes my lamp. It's marked \$15. He offers me \$12. I counter-offer \$13. He takes it but offers me a sober reflection: "What earthly difference does two or three dollars make to you?"

Is ego playing here?

When it comes to items bequeathed me by my deceased parents, I'm immovable. "I'm sorry, this price is firm!" Cherished items are not for haggling.

In all this open market shirt-sleeving there are woven delicious tales, studies in personalities, excursions into aging and youth, our values everywhere confronted, called up, revealed in the money we exchange, challenging us at every turn with sometimes painful, yet always perfectly transparent truths. ❖

Adele Azar-Rucquoi, writer, speaker, and former nun, is the author of *Money As Sacrament*. Her website is: [www.moneyassacrament.com](http://www.moneyassacrament.com).

*Take a bow! Spotighting our volunteers*

## *Paula Stallings Yost: The Best Job in the World*

*Many SCN members know Paula Stallings Yost from her two important roles in SCN, as Editor of the Book Review website and as teacher of an online writing class aimed at helping members polish their stories, often with a view to creating a book.*

*Paula has recently handed over the reins of the Book Review Editorship after five years in the position. She'll be devoting more time to her other role, as a personal historian, writing coach, and publisher through her business, LifeSketches/Heirloom Memoirs Publishing. Jane Ross talked to Paula to find out more about her work as a writing teacher.*

Says Paula Yost, "I have to say I have the best job in the world. I just love hearing people's stories and helping them share those stories with others."

That love of story shone through in Paula's three online classes for SCN. The response to all three classes was extremely positive. Some of the participants commented that they have gained more from Paula's class than from any other writing class they have ever taken. Paula was able to connect with these SCN women and their stories in a very deep way.

The students in Paula's online classes vary in age from twenty-something to eighty-something. They are from as far away as Switzerland to as near as her home state of Texas. Says Paula, "What we all have in common is our love of writing and a deep-seated need to share our thoughts and experiences with others."

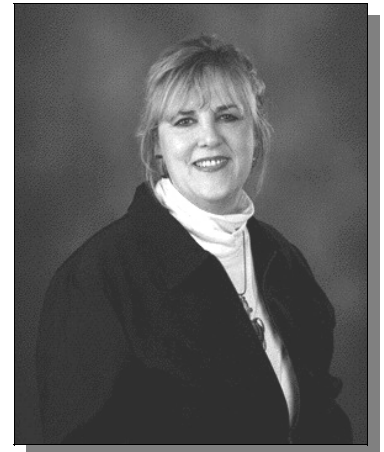
As a personal historian with eight years experience writing memoirs for others and leading life-writing classes, Paula has learned the importance of deep listening and establishing mutual trust. "Without those two things," she says, "it's impossible to connect or to help anyone discover their own truths." In her online classes, students submit their stories only to Paula. "A writer may be sharing a deeply personal story for the first time, trusting in my promise of confidentiality and non-judgment. I realize how very difficult such an effort can be and hold that trust sacred."

Paula sees the women in her online classes make tremendous progress along their writing journeys over the course of the six weeks of class. "As the weeks pass," says Paula, "I notice many students gaining a degree of self-confidence and objectivity that is reflected in their writing through a truer, clearer voice. Of course, we all experience certain challenges, joys, and heartbreaks as we travel down the road of life, many quite similar. Reflecting on the lessons learned along the way can be very therapeutic, especially as we begin to realize we're not alone in those experiences."

Paula's online classes have a big advantage over typical once-a-week writing classes. Students "can be pajama-clad, sans makeup, or having a bad hair day when they push that 'send' button on their computer, and it makes no difference at all," says Paula. "If they do their best work at 2:00 a.m., that's fine with me."

One of the lessons in her online class centers on methods for organizing stories to create a finished book. Paula also leads the students through exercises in the art of transitioning smoothly from one story or chapter to another. She helps students create a fairly elaborate table of contents that includes titles of stories the student has already written, plans to write and dreams of writing, along with a list of photos or memorabilia they would like to include. This table of contents becomes a great guide or outline for them to follow once the class is done and they're working independently.

Once a student has finished writing her book, Paula can help with editing and provide options for the author to self-publish it online, or she can handle everything through her company (including layout, design, printing, and binding).



*When Paula became book review editor in late 2001, less than 40 book reviews were posted on the website.*

*Today, more than 300 reviews are posted in expanded genres on the site. The review staff has grown as well to include a terrific group of multi-talented women writers who know a good book when they see one. SCN says a heart-felt thank you to Paula for a stellar job as Book Review editor since 2001 and wishes her well in her continuing adventures in lifewriting.*

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Besides her online classes, Paula offers one-on-one writing assistance as a tutor or writing mentor. Says Paula, "A good mentor offers quality, one-on-one time to discuss edits or revisions and the reasons behind them." Mentoring can make the student more aware of her strengths and weaknesses and show her how to expand those strengths.

A good mentor also opens a few doors into areas where writers may not have ventured before, such as the power of strong dialogue or "showing" as opposed to constant "telling." Paula encourages her students to read, read, read, and then read some more, always noticing what works and what doesn't, what they like and what they don't. Says Paula, "I'm convinced that reading is the very best training ground for writers."

Most of Paula's clients find her by word of mouth, through recommendations from past clients. Some of her students publish their stories or books through her company, too. Always the best moments in Paula's job come when she sees a client cross the finish line with a book, whether independently after lessons from her or through her company [www.alifesketch.com](http://www.alifesketch.com). When the student first holds the finished book in his or her hands, "It's a great, tangible accomplishment for both of us!" Paula says.

*In addition to her online classes, Paula offers private tutoring online. Her goals as a mentor include spending one-on-one time with aspiring writers to ...*

- 1) Work on specific projects;*
- 2) Discuss edits or revisions and the reasons behind them;*
- 3) Discover their writing strengths and weaknesses and grow through the process;*
- 4) Learn where to go to find the answers to those nagging grammatical and theoretical questions through various resources.*

Paula takes particular pride in a veterans memoir project that she ran in cooperation with Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas. The yearlong process involved interviews with 144 veterans of WWII, the Viet Nam War, the Korean War, and Desert Storm who were members of the church. Says Paula, "We laughed and cried together as those wonderful men and women shared their stories, some for the first time ever. For me, it was a great lesson in humility and the recognition of what's important and what's not in this life."

Paula plans to expand her online classes by adding a Part II session for prior students later this year and possibly repeating Part I if there is enough interest. In 2008, she expects to offer more in-person writing classes as well and possibly a weekend retreat. She also hopes to complete a series of lifewriting guidebooks. Watch the *Journal* and the website for sign-up information about Paula's upcoming classes, and don't forget to check out her website. ❖

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## *SCN Announces New Book Review Editor*

In May, Nancy Rigg picked up the baton of the Book Review Editorship from Paula Yost.

Nancy Rigg is a writer and documentary filmmaker, who moved in 2006 from her home of more than twenty years in the diverse and thriving Fairfax District of Los Angeles to Camarillo, a less harried coastal community in Ventura County, CA. She has not yet fully recovered from the shock of taking up residence in a suburban setting for the first time in her life. She often seeks refuge in the beautiful, new Camarillo Public Library.

With so many talented writers and educated readers in SCN, Nancy felt that by serving as SCN Book Review Editor, she could give something back to the wonderful organization that has provided her with a nurturing atmosphere for exploring lifewriting and also benefit from the wisdom and varied interests of the talented SCN book reviewers. ❖

*Looking ahead*

# *Planning for the Next Ten Years of SCN*

*SCN Board member Joyce Boatright explains the process that the SCN Board is working through as we plan for SCN's second decade.*

*If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there—or so the old saying goes.*

In its tenth year, Story Circle Network finds itself at a crossroads, and the Board, under the capable leadership of national president Patricia Pando, wants to be sure we head in the right direction. That is why the Board has dedicated this year to planning.

A strategic plan focuses on the organization's mission, goals to work toward the mission, strategies to achieve the goals, and action planning (who will do what and by when). Initially an ad hoc planning committee has begun the process by examining issues facing the organization through a SWOT analysis. (See the sidebar at right to learn "What is SWOT?")

The Board has three other ad hoc committees that are reviewing different aspects of SCN's operation: the committee structure of SCN, categories of participation, and resources. They, too, are looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the organization as it seeks to grow without depleting its resources.

In its review process, SCN is facing some important issues and challenging decisions. For example, there are inequities that exist to circle members in the Austin Chapter—they pay an extra \$18 a year to belong in circles, while free-range circles pay nothing. Is there a weakness: Does it duplicate effort, dissipate our focus and energies as a Board and as an organization? Is there an opportunity: Should it be transitioned into some kind of regional or district format?

These are not easy questions, and the Board does not take its role lightly. Board member Carolyn Blankenship reports that her committee will consider surveying the Austin Chapter members to see how they feel about dissolving or changing the nature of the chapter; ask what they are receiving, if there are things they want, are they getting their money's worth, etc.

Our strengths are plentiful. SCN is a vehicle to allow members to have a range of reading/writing choices based on their interest, location, and personal choices. The current categories of participation/membership are: national membership, internet chapter, Austin Chapter, free range circles, OWL-Circles and, most recently, regional.

The expertise among the membership is exceptional. We have, for example, significant experts in publishing, teaching, grant writing, planning and promotion. Susan Wittig Albert has been a phenomenal founder with a charismatic personality and a vision for the cause. Board members have donated thousands of volunteer hours to plan workshops, retreats and conferences and to write, edit and publish journals, brochures, self-help books, and other noteworthy publications. Katherine Misegades and Becca Taylor are but two examples of members at large who have freely shared their expertise in graphic design and pod casting to enhance the image of SCN.

SCN was an early adopter of technology, and our website is very "robust" (meaning it works well on many different kinds of computers and browsers without crashing). Many of our members find us initially by searching online and finding our website. The Internet reading and writing circles are growing slowly but steadily; members view their e-circles as "lifelines." The e-newsletters are an inexpensive way to keep the SCN name in front of 4,000-plus people.

Finally, possibly the greatest strength of the organization is that it gives women new confidence and new professional skills. Women are getting the opportunity to give voice to their life story. Some are publishing those stories for a large reading audience; others are sharing within the safe boundaries of a story circle. More of the organization's current



Joyce Boatright

### What is SWOT?

All strategic planning begins with looking at the current operation of the organization and doing a SWOT analysis to identify:

**S**trengths

**W**eaknesses

**O**pportunities (ways that the organization can grow and strengthen)

**T**hreats (factors that could cause the organization to weaken)

Board member **Joyce Boatright** belongs to writing e-circle 11 and facilitates a monthly free-range circle in Houston, Tex.

*(Continued on page 22)*

### Planning the Next Ten Years of SCN

(Continued from page 21)

workshops are being offered by women, through their association with SCN, who have become professional presenters/facilitators.

According to President Pando, some of the issues facing us as an organization include identifying new revenue streams, expanding member services, increasing free range circles, developing policies for new programs, reviewing categories of membership and managing our growth. "After all the Board members provide input on the SWOT phase of our planning," she says, "we will review the analysis and then take the next step in our strategic planning process." ❖

Four ad hoc committees are looking at different aspects of SCN's operation:

**The Categories of Participation Committee** (Convenor, Carolyn Blankenship) is looking at the different levels of membership and levels of volunteer involvement in SCN and considering how these can be streamlined;

**The Resources Committee** (Convenor, Helen Lowery) is looking at the financial and woman-power resources of SCN;

**The Committees Committee** (Convenor, Pat Flathouse) is looking at the committee structure used to run SCN operations and considering how this could be improved;

**The Strategic Planning Committee** (Convenor, Patricia Pando) has already created a very comprehensive draft SWOT analysis and is still seeking input from board members.

### Are you part of an organization or business that shares the missions, values, and goals of SCN?

Maybe you're in a regional writers' organization or in a business that works with and for women writers. Why not suggest to your organization that they become **Organizational Members** of SCN.

For just \$100 a year, your organization will receive various opportunities to reach the SCN membership with information about programs and services. For full details go to:

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

### Sign up today for Summer & Fall '07 Workshops

With SCN-sponsored workshops in New Mexico, Vermont, North Carolina, and Texas, there's a writing destination just waiting for you. See p 24.

### Postage Increase To Spark Changes to Journal

U.S. post rates went up in May, by a hefty 30% for mailing the *Journal*. The Board is looking at ways to offset the postage increase by making changes to the *Journal*. This issue, we have discontinued having the *Journal* three-hole punched by the printers. The Board is considering mailing future issues folded in half and other options to hold down the cost of printing and mailing and avoid raising dues.



This membership is a gift.

My name and address:

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

My phone and e-mail:

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### 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  
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PO Box 500127,  
Austin TX 78750-0127

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

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

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

# Story Circle News Roundup

## Board Meeting Report

The SCN Board of Directors met on March 29, 2007, at the home of Judith Helburn in Austin. Ten members and the Executive Director gathered around Judith's dining table and four were present via teleconference. President Patricia Pando chaired the meeting. Significant items discussed included:

- Successful LifeLines 2007 weekend at Round Top;
- Status of cookbook/anthology to be published in the fall;
- Status of plans for release of *What Wildness is This* and for the "Land Full of Stories" nature-writing conference at Texas State University (June 7–9);
- Plans for Stories from the Heart IV national conference scheduled for February 2008.

Look for more information about the Board's tenth anniversary strategic planning effort in Joyce Boatright's article on p. 21. This tenth anniversary year will be one of renewal and looking to the future for SCN, with several key positions set to change hands (see the announcements at right).

Our full slate of tenth anniversary publications and events are announced throughout this *Journal*.

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for June 11.

—Report by Penny Appleby

## Announcements

### Nominations Open for SCN Board Deadline August 1

With the appointment of a Nominating Committee, the Story Circle Network Board of Directors has initiated the process of filling vacancies for three-year terms that will begin in January 2008. SCN members may suggest themselves or other SCN members for consideration by the Nominating Committee as it prepares the slate that will be acted on by the Board at its October meeting. The names of potential nominees or questions related to the board selection process may be submitted by e-mail to [storycircle@storycircle.org](mailto:storycircle@storycircle.org) or by regular mail to Story Circle Network, P.O. Box 50012, Austin, Tx. 78750-0127. Please include full contact information for the potential nominee and, if different, the nominator. August 1, 2007, is the deadline for submitting names. Shortly after the deadline, the Nominating Committee will ask all potential nominees to submit information about themselves and their affiliation with Story Circle Network.

## Passing the Baton—Three Key SCN Positions Change Hands

### SCN Announces the New Editor of the Women's Wise Words Weekly Writing Prompts

Since 2000, Susan Wittig Albert (SCN's founder) has written a weekly writing prompt that goes to SCN's Internet Chapter members every Monday. (The best 50 prompts are available to all in our new publication, *Starting Points*.) Now Susan has handed this baton to Lee Ambrose.

Lee has been an active SCN member since 2000. She currently serves as president and member services coordinator for the Internet Chapter. She writes for the poetry e-circle and writing circle 7 and facilitates circles 10 and 12.

Thank you for taking on this new volunteer position, Lee. Internet Chapter members will be eagerly watching their Inboxes for your new prompts, to keep them writing each and every week.

And a huge thank-you to Susan for seven years of wonderful prompts and now a book of the best of these. You have helped to make lifewriting a daily practice for hundreds of women!

### Book Review Editor Position Changes Hands

After five years as Book Review Editor, Paula Stallings Yost handed over this post to Nancy Rigg as of May. The SCN Board sent a heart-felt thank-you to Paula for five excellent years, in which our Book Review website has grown to over 300 reviews.

Paula will be devoting her time to her business, Lifesketches, and her work as a memoir writing coach and teacher. You can read about Paula's work on p. 19 and about Nancy Rigg, who has picked up this baton, on p. 20. Thank you to Paula and Nancy from women readers and writers everywhere.

### Story Circle Journal Editor to Step Down in '08

This spring, *Journal* Editor Jane Ross wrote to SCN President Patricia Pando to let her know that she plans to retire from the position in 2008. Jane began working as Assistant Editor to Susan Albert in 2002 and took over as Editor in Chief in 2003. Jane has loved working on the *Journal* and will be sorry to give up the editorship, but other projects call and this seemed like a good moment to give another dedicated SCN member the chance to contribute to SCN in this position.

The candidate search for someone with editing experience and dedication to take over this position will begin in the fall of '07.



SCN-sponsored events

## Workshops, Retreats, Conferences

### Red River Writing Retreat

a Story Circle Network Writing Workshop  
with Carolyn Blankenship & Leilani Rose

August 12-14, 2007  
Red River, New Mexico

Escape the August heat and humidity and kick back in the cool mountains of New Mexico! Join us for a women's writing retreat at the Ponderosa Lodge in beautiful Red River, New Mexico. We will explore the theme, "Come to Your Senses," and delve into writing that focuses on using touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell to take our writing to a deeper level.

Check out the information at our website, [www.cbdeco.com/rr07](http://www.cbdeco.com/rr07), then click on the Registration link for a printable form. Because we want an intimate retreat with ample time for writing and sharing, we are only able to accept 20 participants.

**COST: \$185** (Includes workshop and refreshments; does not include lodging, meals, or transportation)

**DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION: July 10, 2007**

Questions? Contact Carolyn at [cb@io.com](mailto:cb@io.com) or Leilani at [lrose11@austin.rr.com](mailto:lrose11@austin.rr.com). We hope you will "come to your senses" and join us!

*Want to find a member-run  
writing workshop in your region?*

- Visit our Member Services web page:  
[www.storycircle.org/memberservices.shtml](http://www.storycircle.org/memberservices.shtml)

We have members in Ohio, Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon and other parts of the country who offer writing workshops. Check them out.

### The Power of Words Conference

Liberation through the Spoken, Written & Sung Word

September 28th – October 1st, 2007  
Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont

Featuring David Abram, Allison Hedge Coke, Nehassaiu deGannes and over 35 presenters and performers on writing, storytelling, drama, social change, ecology, healing, mythology and music. Explore how to make a living, make community and make change through our words.



123 Pitkin Road, Plainfield, VT 05667 - [www.goddard.edu](http://www.goddard.edu)  
[TLAconference@goddard.edu](mailto:TLAconference@goddard.edu) 802-454-8311x204



*Want to get the word out about  
a writing workshop that you offer  
in your region?*

SCN offers several way for you to get the word out:

- Advertise in the *Story Circle Journal* Workshop pages. \$50 for a 1/4 page advertisement.
- List your writing-related business on the SCN Member Services web page. (\$15 per year). Visit: [www.storycircle.org/memberservices.shtml](http://www.storycircle.org/memberservices.shtml)

You may also contact us about a sponsorship or affiliation arrangement with SCN by emailing [storycircle@storycircle.org](mailto:storycircle@storycircle.org). (Please include the words: "Sponsorship/affiliation request" in the subject line of your email.



## LifeLines

An SCN-sponsored Lifewriting Retreat  
with Robin Edgar,  
author of *In My Mother's Kitchen*  
October 5 – 7, 2007  
Little Switzerland, NC

Join nationally-known author and writing-workshop facilitator, Robin Edgar, for a weekend lifewriting retreat open to any woman who is interested in lifewriting, regardless of skill level or experience. Held at WildAcres Retreat in Little Switzerland, North Carolina, participants can enjoy 1,600 acres adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Pisgah National Forest (see [www.wildacres.org](http://www.wildacres.org)).

The rustic setting offers comfortable lodges with rooms that accommodate up to two guests and have a private bathroom. There are no televisions or telephones in the rooms to distract you from your writing. Vegan and vegetarian meals are available upon request. Registration is limited to 12 participants.

**COST:** \$250 for SCN members, \$275 for non-members. (Includes a double-occupancy room for two nights and five meals; does not include transportation.)

**DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION:** September 1, '07

To register, contact Robin Edgar at [robinedgar@earthlink.net](mailto:robinedgar@earthlink.net).

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

### Call for Workshop Proposals Seize the Opportunity!

If you have been thinking you might like to facilitate a session at one of Story Circle's events, now's the time! We have several opportunities for women with great ideas for interactive writing. There is an opening for one more facilitator in the fall Writing from Life (October 27–28). And spring workshops are right around the corner (dates to be announced).

Workshop sessions are an hour and fifteen minutes long, and we ask that facilitators offer *at least* two opportunities for participants to write and share during that time. It is important to remember that these are *writing* workshops, not lectures or instruction. Women come to SCN's events

because they love to write, share, and hear women's stories, so the bulk of the time in a session should be spent doing just that.

Sixty percent of the proceeds (after expenses) are divided among the facilitators for Writing from Life Workshops. The Program Committee selects facilitators after reviewing all proposals.

Proposals for Writing from Life should be sent to Carolyn Blankenship at [cb@io.com](mailto:cb@io.com). Facilitators must be members of SCN, and weight will be given to those who have attended at least one WFL Workshop, as well as those with facilitating experience. Proposals should include:

1. Title of presentation;
2. Brief description of session;
3. A short bio that relates your facilitating or other pertinent experience.

If your proposal is chosen, you will be asked to give us a more explicit description of your presentation, describing the methods you will use to involve participants.

We just know our membership is teeming with all kinds of talent and bright ideas—let us hear from you!

## Writing from Life

*Nurturing the Self and the Soul:  
Confronting the Tyranny of Relentless Busyness  
October 27–28, Austin, Tex.*

**Facilitated by Carolyn Blankenship, Ann Walters, Leilani Rose, Cathey Capers, and Catherine Cogburn.**

"I had to examine, in my dreams as well as my daily life, the devastating effects of over-extension. Overextending myself is not stretching myself, and I had to accept how difficult it is to monitor the difference. Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is an act of self-preservation."

—Audre Lord, *A Burst of Light*

Our standard greeting to each other has become "I am so busy." We say this as if exhaustion and stress were marks of character. If people and tasks are always clamoring for our attention, we must be important and needed. We seem to value speed, consumption and productivity above rest, relationships and creativity. Women, who are great multi-taskers, are particularly susceptible to the cultural pressures to do more, buy more, be more. Take a weekend for yourself, to write, relax, and rejuvenate with other women who are writing—and re-writing—their stories and their lives.

This workshop is open to any woman who is interested in life-writing—regardless of skill level or experience.

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



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

# Stories from the Heart IV

*The Story Circle Network National Conference*

February 1-3, 2008

Wyndham Hotel, Austin, Texas

Mark your calendars and start making plans now to join us in Austin for the *fourth* National Conference of the Story Circle Network!

**Stories from the Heart IV** will bring women from around the country to celebrate our stories and our lives. Through writing, reading, listening, and sharing, we will discover how personal narrative can be a healing art, how we can gather our memories, and how we can tell our stories.

We welcome readers, writers, storytellers, and any woman with a past, present, and future. There will be opportunities to explore difficult or hidden issues, expand our relationships with other women, and discover different modes and media—such as art, dance, and drama—for sharing our stories.



Nancy Aronie

## *Our Keynote Speaker*

Our Friday-night keynote speaker, Nancy Slonim Aronie, has been a commentator for National Public Radio's All Things Considered. She was a Visiting Writer at Trinity College in Hartford, CT, wrote a monthly column in *McCall's* magazine and was the recipient of the Eye of The Beholder Artist in Residence award at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. She gives writing workshops and lectures at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, Omega Institute, Rowe Conference Center, Wain-Wright House and The Open Center in New York City. She teaches at Harvard University.

## *Our Conference Website is Open Now!*

To register, to sign up for our conference e-Letter, or to catch up on the news, visit our website.

We're looking forward to seeing *you* at **Stories from the Heart IV.**

## *Our Hotel*

Wyndham Hotel  
3401 South IH-35, Austin TX 78741  
512-448-2444 / fax: 512-443-4208

See the hotel website for more information: [www.wyndham.com/hotels/AUSWC/](http://www.wyndham.com/hotels/AUSWC/)

To get the conference rate (\$99/night plus tax, double occupancy), call the hotel directly (512-448-2444) and make your reservations no later than January 9, 2008. Room rate includes complimentary airport shuttle service, parking, and high speed wireless internet.

*Our Website:* [www.storycircle.org/Conference](http://www.storycircle.org/Conference)

# Call for Presenters

Deadline: JULY 15, 2007

The conference program will feature 20 presentations organized into four concurrent tracks, with five 90-minute presentations in each track. Each presenter will receive a \$40 discount from the full conference fee. The ideas sketched out at right are just suggestions—be creative! Make sure your presentation includes at least two opportunities for participants to actually write and share their writing. Our conference is built around interactive presentations rather than lectures. The program tracks are tentative and subject to change.

## Proposal Guidelines

We are especially seeking proposals with strong audience interaction/participation, rather than lecture-style presentations that primarily deliver information. When you write your synopsis, remember that it will be used to promote both your presentation and the conference. So take advantage of this opportunity to “sell” your workshop and build excitement about the conference with descriptive, definitive words that go directly to the heart of the matter, explaining your goals for the workshop and the benefits participants can expect. A catchy, definitive presentation title is important. Create something short and sweet that will appeal to conference attendees and whet their appetite.

NOTE: Individual presenters may not create a panel presentation. You may co-present with another person(s); multiple presenters must be named and have bios included within the original application.

Presenters do not have to be members of Story Circle, but must register for (at minimum) one day’s attendance at the conference. Your registration and payment (at either the member or non-member rate) must be received by October 15. Presenters will receive a discount: full registration will be discounted by \$40, Saturday only by \$25, Sunday only by \$15.

NOTE: “Double” discount people (those who are both presenters and panelists) should take the higher discount, not both.

## Submitting a Proposal

Please fill out the form on our website at [www.storycircle.org/Conference/frmpresenter.shtml](http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/frmpresenter.shtml)

or email your proposal to [confprogram@storycircle.org](mailto:confprogram@storycircle.org)

The deadline for all proposals is **July 15, 2007**.

## Tentative Program Tracks

### *Track A. Circles of Creativity*

We invite writing circle facilitators (Austin Chapter, Internet Chapter, free-range circles, OWL-Circles) to use some of their favorite prompts to lead a writing circle.

### *Track B. Nuts & Bolts*

*Some possibilities include:* self publishing; genre options for personal writing (autobiography, memoir, fiction); writing a family history; relating the history of a community, business or organization; fictionalizing your story; organizing a memoir; telling another person’s story (your mother’s, grandmother’s); harvesting our journals.

### *Track C. Putting Our Hearts on Paper*

*Some possibilities include:* techniques for accessing our inner wisdom; writing an ethical will; writing spiritual autobiography; writing as a tool for building relationships, healing emotional wounds, and/or giving a gift to loved ones; journal writing as a tool for increasing self-awareness, accessing deeper levels of experience, and/or learning to trust, appreciate, and celebrate our own process.

### *Track D. Myriad Methods of Storytelling*

*Some possibilities include:* telling stories through media such as sculpture, dance, art, poetry, oral storytelling, and scrapbooking; telling stories that reflect multicultural experiences; telling stories that include several points of view; enhancing stories through the use of genealogical research; and specific techniques for reviving memories.

 10th Anniversary  
**Events**  
and Deadlines

### *Mark Your Calendar*

**June 7-9:** The Land Full of Stories Conference, San Marcos, Tex. (see p. 1)

**July 15:** Susan Wittig Albert Lifewriting Contest entry deadline. Topic and rules for entry on p. 4

**July 15:** Deadline for proposals for presentations at the February '08 SCN National Conference, Stories from the Heart IV (see p. 27)

**August 1:** Deadline for SCN Board nominations (see p. 23)

**August 12-14:** Writing from Life writing workshop, Red River, N. Mex. (see p. 24)

**August 15:** Winners of the Susan Wittig Albert writing contest announced

**October 5-7:** LifeLines Lifewriting Retreat with Robin Edgar, Wildacres, N.C. (see p. 24)

**October 27-28:** Writing from Life writing workshop, Austin, Tex. (see p. 23)

**February 1-3, 2008:** Stories from the Heart IV, SCN's national conference, Austin, Tex. (see p. 26)

Our online calendar is at:

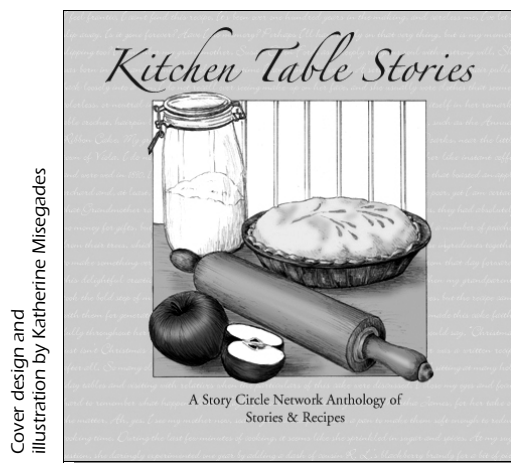
[www.storycircle.org/calendar.html](http://www.storycircle.org/calendar.html)

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

*Coming fall 2007 in time for holiday giving*

## *Kitchen Table Stories*

Our first ever anthology/cookbook, mixing members' family stories about food together with related recipes. See a sample story and recipe from this charming book on p. 10.



The SCN Special Edition will be available by preorder only. Look for a flier in your letterbox this summer and order promptly for holiday gifts. Contributors to the book will receive one free copy. (A Trade Edition will follow in 2008.)

Events listed at left are open to all SCN members and other women interested in writing about their lives. Most events require registration (except free events). Contests and Board nominations are open to members only. Check our website for all registration details.