



STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL

Vol. 16 No. 2, June, 2012

The newsletter for women with stories to tell...

Sarton Memoir Award 2011 Winners

The Sarton Women's Memoir Award is a new literary competition named for May Sarton (1912-1995), distinguished American poet, novelist, and author of twelve outstanding memoirs and journals. The award was created by a team of Story Circle past presidents, who worked together for several months to design and develop the program for the approval of the Story Circle board of directors. Paula Yost and Susan Albert were named as coordinators of the 2011 competition. The program was widely advertised throughout the year and two teams of judges (one group of Story Circle members, another group of professional librarians not affiliated with Story Circle) read and evaluated the submissions.

We had planned to name just one winner. But when the results of the judging came in, two books were so close that we decided to honor both. Each is an outstanding example of women's memoir, an inspiration to readers, and a demonstration of the way women's stories document the private and public lives every woman lives. Learn more about these two outstanding women in their author interviews on pages 20-22.

We believe that May Sarton would be especially proud of these two fine books.



Gated Grief: The Daughter of a GI Concentration Camp Liberator Discovers a Legacy of Trauma
by Leila Levinson, Austin TX

After the death of her father, a WWII U.S. Army doctor, Leila Levinson discovers a concealed box of shocking photographs he had taken of a Nazi slave labor camp. She learns that he suffered a breakdown after treating the camp's survivors and is compelled to seek out and interview dozens of WWII veterans who also liberated Nazi concentration camps. In this groundbreaking portrait of trauma's legacy, *Gated Grief* reveals how unspoken memories and unshared stories can imprison and haunt us. It speaks to the power of story to honor and heal the wounds of the past.



Lost Edens: A True Story
by Jamie Patterson, of Minneapolis MN

Lost Edens is a memoir about Jamie Patterson's attempts to salvage her marriage. As Story Circle reviewer Sharon Lippincott noted, "[The author's] entire self-image seems bound up in her ability to please her errant spouse, and she seems convinced that if she only tries harder, she can fix whatever is wrong and make him love her again, thus fulfilling her dream of living happily ever after. Ultimately she is forced to realize this is not going to happen, that the marriage is too broken to fix. It took her longer to realize that although she couldn't fix the marriage, she could fix herself." *Lost Edens* helps us all to understand that changing our stories can help us change our lives.



Sarton Memoir Award

The guidelines for the 2012 competition are here:

<http://www.storycircle.org/SartonMemoirAward/guidelines.php>

The entry deadline is
December 7, 2012.

***Susan Wittig Albert
Lifewriting
Contest 2012
Contest Entries Accepted
Through June 30, 2012
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Letter From SCN's President— Blossom



Even though most of us had an easy winter, we all welcome spring. What comes to your mind when you think about spring? For me it can be summed up in two words: planting and cleaning. I know that all of those who garden look forward to deciding what they will plant, and then anxiously await the beautiful or bountiful result.

Then there is the cleaning. It seems somehow that, when spring arrives, our rooms, closets and windows appear to be less organized, more overflowing and more opaque than they were all winter.

Springtime for writers can also involve planting and cleaning. Isn't it a great time to look through those desk drawers for writing projects that have been previously ignored? Why not look at these "seeds" of writing and think about where you might plant them? Once you have "cleaned" them up, there will be acres of publishing opportunities in which to plant them. One such opportunity is the 2012 Story Circle LifeWriting Contest. This year's topic is solitude.

As writers, regardless of the season, there is one important cleaning task. Often our internal critic is much like the weeds that threaten our gardens. And, just as we do when we tend our gardens, we need to rid ourselves of this "weed" before it overruns and destroys our blossoming ideas and the creativity of our writing.

So this is my wish for all of you and your writing: Happy Planting, Happy Cleaning and a very Happy Spring.

Pat LaPointe

SAVE the Date!

Lifeline Retreat
Festival Hill, Roundtop, Texas
March 8-10, 2013

Sheila Bender, founder of Writing It Real: A Community and Resource Center for Writing From Personal Experience, will be the presenter. Sheila has more than three decades of experience working with writers of personal essays, poetry, fiction and memoir and has been an instructor for SCN's on-line classes. More information will follow in later correspondence, but it's never too early to plan for an event that will benefit all who attend.

<http://www.storycircle.org/LifeLines>



Story Circle Network'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, websites, 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.

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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Contributing Editors:
 Mary Jo Doig
 Susan Albert
 Barbara Miller

We welcome your letters,
 queries, and suggestions.

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

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

Susan Wittig Albert 2012 Lifewriting Contest

Contest Entries Accepted Through June 30, 2012

SCN is proud to announce its thirteenth annual lifewriting competition named after our founder, best-selling mystery writer Susan Wittig Albert. This year's focus is on "Solitude".

Greta Garbo's trademark statement was "I want to be alone." Some years after she made this statement, she offered this clarification: "I never said I want to be alone." I only said: "I want to be left alone. There is all the difference."

Greta was comparing two different approaches to solitude. This year let's consider the place that solitude has in our lives. Here are some words to get you thinking, and of course, writing.

Perhaps you see yourself like Alice Walker, as "...the kind of woman that likes to enjoy herself in peace."

Or you may view solitude much like May Sarton: "...a time alone in which to explore and to discover what is happening and what has happened."

The contest is open to dues paying members of SCN and coordinated by SCN President, Pat LaPointe and Executive Director, Peggy Moody. The submission period is from May 1, 2012 to June 30, 2012. For entry form and further information visit: www.storycircle.org/Contests. Click on the link to read last year's award winning stories.

www.storycircle.org/Contests



Previous Year's Winners

2011: Courage

Seren's Serenity Prayer, Marlene Samuels, Chicago, IL
 Rats and Roses, Susan Flemer, Fairfield Bay, AR
 Dancing to the End of the Song, Nancilynn Saylor, Austin, TX
 Arbitrary Violence, Determined Courage, Stephanie Dalley, Forestville, CA

2010: Letting Go

Finding Home, Khadijah Lacina, Shihr, Yemen
 Making Lemonade, Susan Kasper, Georgetown TX
 De-Demonizing Maui, Jo Virgil, Austin TX
 I Have to Let Her Grow, Margaret Stephenson, Austin TX

2009: Overcoming Obstacles

The Spirit of Cherry Pie, Mary Lee Fulkerson, Reno NV
 The Face in The Mirror, Linda Hoye, Auburn WA
 Glowworm, Linda Sievers, Arcata CA
 Morgan's Legacy, Michelle Welch, Bakersfield CA

2008: Evolution and Growth

Trick or Treat, Amber Polo, Camp Verde AZ
 The Homecoming, Victoria McNabb Wheeler, Stockton NJ
 Strong Winds, Carol Hyde, Round Rock TX
 My Mother's Hands, Karen Appleberry, Grapevine TX

2007: Birthings and Beginnings

Carol Ramsey, Austin TX
 Katherine Misegades, Fort Wayne IN
 Sandi Simon, Austin TX
 Georgia Hubley, Henderson NV

2006: Truth

Pixie Paradiso, Acton MA
 Sandra O'Briant, Los Angeles CA
 Lavon Urbonas, Rancho Cucamonga CA
 Gwen Hatley Whiting, Marietta GA

2005: Womens' Friendships

Laura Girardeau, Moscow ID
 Barbara Smythe, West Covina CA
 Patricia Daly, Largo FL
 Lucy Ann Albert, La Mesa CA

2004: The Relationship Between Mothers and Daughters

Ellen Collins, Vienna VA
 Susan Schoch, Idledale CO
 Diane Linn, Bryan TX
 Diane Pattara, Austin TX

2003: Our Environment

Karen P. Ryan, Erie PA
 L. Hazel Davis, Chelsea MA
 Mary M. Elizabeth, Austin TX
 Dee Stover, Concord NC

2002: Our Identity

Linda Joy Myers, Richmond CA
 Jackie Woolley, Austin TX
 Mary Jo Doig, Raphine VA
 Lisa Shirah-Hiers, Austin TX

2001: Pain

Jean McGroarty, Battle Ground, IN
 Erin Philbin, Pittsburgh PA
 Sandy McKinzie, Lafayette IN

2000: A Revealing Relationship

Mary Faith Pankin, Arlington, VA
 Duffie Bart, Monterey CA
 Marie Buckley, Hillsboro OR
 Carolyn Cook, Austin TX
 Peggy Park Talley, Gonzales TX



Internet Chapter: Ambassadors For Writing Women Around the World

by Lee Ambrose,
President SCN Internet
Chapter

The Story Circle Network's Internet Chapter is more than 200 members strong. With that much creativity, compassion and life experience, the Internet Chapter is much like a "United Nations of Writing Women." And each member is an ambassador not only to the women within her circle, but also to every woman.

Currently, those 200+ women are from thirty-six of the fifty United States, Canada, Ireland and Iran. When Story Circle Network first launched, it did so in one city – Austin, Texas. I often wonder if founder Susan Wittig Albert ever imagined her dream would one day connect women from all around the globe.

What makes Story Circle Network's Internet Chapter work is the fact that no matter where its members are from or what their age might be, they share common bonds that make the circle seem like a small intimate circle of friends sitting in your living room or at the neighborhood coffee shop. Members can attend at whatever time suits their busy schedules. They can dress up or dress down, as they desire. They can linger as long as they like. There's no need to clear out the meeting space for the next group. No one is going to turn the lights out or lock the doors before you're ready to leave.

Weekly writing prompts have the potential to turn your thoughts into fifty-two viable pieces of personal life writing. Monthly writing prompts for writing e-circle members have the potential to turn into twelve short stories or twelve chapters to your very own book each year. Reading e-circle members who actively participate are introduced to twelve new books written by women for women each year. And, in the comfort of their own homes, members of the reading circle have opportunities to discuss the book and create ever-strengthening friendships.

Some of my best friends are women I've never met in person but with whom I have shared my joys, my heartaches, my hopes and dreams... As I write this piece, one of our members who is visiting in Istanbul has just emailed me to say she met someone there who wants to join us! Our circle is an ever widening, always growing sisterhood that honors the unique stories of our individual and collective lives. It's an honor to be able to share our stories with one another. We are a very warm, inviting group of women who love to bring others into the circle and celebrate life!

More LifeWriting Opportunities Advance Notice of our Annual True Words Anthology

It's time to begin thinking about our next annual True Words Anthology, which will be published in late fall of this year. The Anthology is a unique publishing opportunity in two ways for SCN members: first, your stories and poems can be longer than the SCN Journal True Words limit of 350 words (up to 1,000 words in the Anthology) and, secondly, there is no thematic prompt. Thus you can send in a life story on any topic you wish. There is also no limit to the number of stories or poems you can submit.

Here's the 2012 Anthology Schedule:

July 1, 2012 – the call for submissions opens

September 1, 2012 – the call for submissions closes

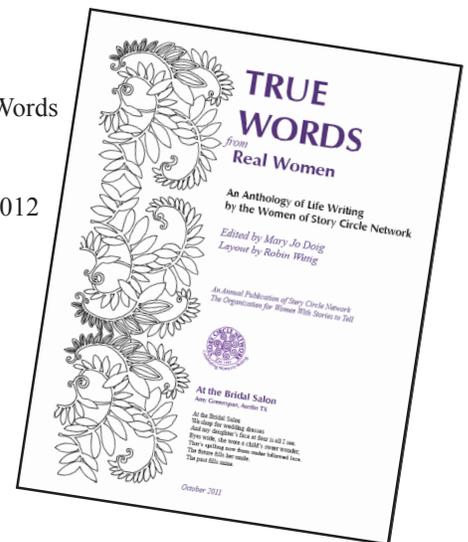
Mid-November, 2012 – you'll receive your annual Anthology

We seek stories and poems that tell the truths of your life. In this—our large international circle of women who share our life stories, these truths connect on so many levels with other women in ways that sometimes are unimaginable.

So, lift up your pen, write down the words that come into your heart, polish up those little jewels, paste them into the online submission form link that will be included in the Call for Submissions, and hit the Send button. We both welcome and look forward to sharing your words.

Warmest regards,
Mary Jo

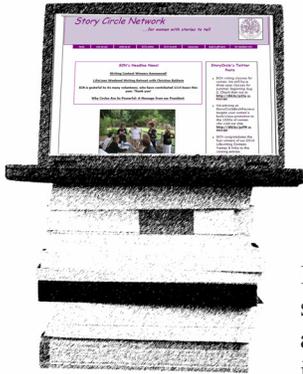
Mary Jo Doig,
SCN Journal True Words
editor
SCN True Words
Anthology editor, 2012



Visit the Story Circle Network Blogs

Telling Herstories: The Broad View and One Woman's Day

<http://storycirlenetwork.wordpress.com/>



Story Circle Network's Online Classes

SCN's second Spring term began May 15, but a number of classes are still open! Online enrollment is easy and fast, but class sizes are strictly limited (that's the nature of online learning), so please hurry. If the class you

want is already filled, try another.

Independent Study Program

We are please to announce our new Independent Study Program, where you can work one-on-one with an experienced teacher to accomplish your writing goals. The four-week Independent Study sessions provide a personal and encouraging environment in which to enhance your writing skills. Check out the Independent Study course descriptions for each teacher and choose the one that's right for you.

June 11-July 9, 2012:

Lynn Goodwin
Susan Hanson
Amber Starfire

Journaling & Self-Discovery

June 11-July 9, 2012:

Writing for Personal Evolution II

Sharpening Skills

June 11-July 2, 2012:

Writing Fast, Writing Deep (Advanced Character Development)
How to Revise and Edit Your Writing: Polishing Your Story

June 18-July 9, 2012

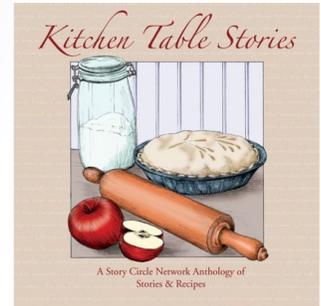
Writing Fast, Writing Deep (Advanced Emotions and Affect)

Looking for Teachers!

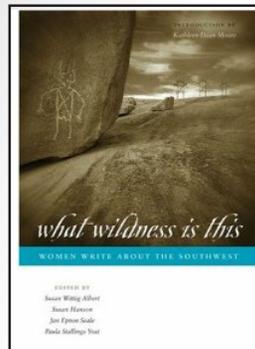
We are looking for women teachers/writers who want to share their passion for lifewriting by working with women (SCN members and non-members) in classes carried out on the Internet and via email. If you are a skilled writer with experience in teaching memoir, journaling, life-based fiction, and other lifewriting forms and are interested in joining our faculty, we'd like to hear from you. For details, visit:

<http://www.storycircleonlineclasses.org/onlineproposal.php>

Look for these SCN Books!
Available on the SCN website at:
<http://www.storycircle.org/store.shtml>



"...it's the first time a cookbook has brought a tear to my eye."

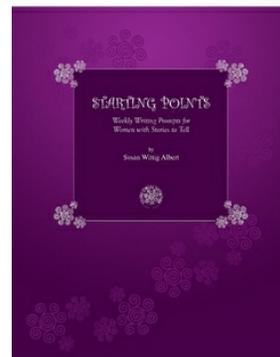
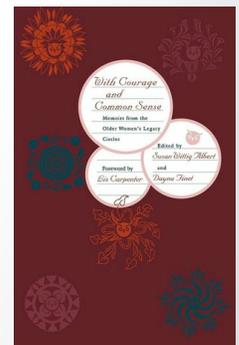


"...navigate with ease through these vibrant, evocative and often moving pieces."

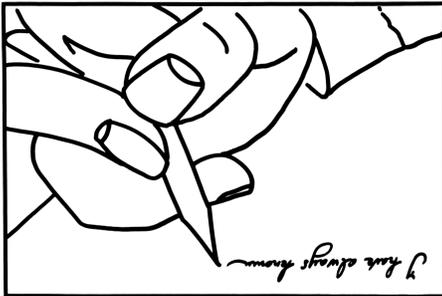
—El Paso Times

"Much of the time our society stereotypes and dismisses old women as ridiculous, troublesome, irrelevant, and (worst of all) boring. These memoirs contradict the assumptions. The women who wrote them have experienced solid, hearty lives, with a characteristic vitality enduring into old age."

—from the Foreword by Liz Carpenter



"...this book will help you keep writing, each and every day for a whole year."



True Words from Real Women

One Summer Day

A selection of short pieces of lifewriting by our members, edited by Mary Jo Doig. The theme of this issue's True Words section is "One Summer Day." Contribute your own True Words to the Journal. Future topics are listed on page 28.

Summer

Marguerite Bouvard, Wellesley MA

The seeds on their perilous journey
are bathed on the font
of the moment, the aspens
race in the wind, the burgeoning clouds
rise like a gathering of prophets.

Summer's Defining Moment

Sara Etgen-Baker, Allen TX
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Usually the soothing summer sun on my face and skin felt as if it could remedy most anything. On this particular summer day, however, the blazing sun singed my skin offering no such relief from my mother's harsh words: "For God's sake! I wish you didn't try so hard; you overshadow your younger brother!"

Her words—blurted out on a scorching summer day—ignited unfamiliar feelings of anger, betrayal, and disappointment. I pondered, *Why isn't mother the fan and supporter I thought she was?* Because I valued her support, I soon claimed the hidden truth and guilt lurking behind my mother's words. Then my reality shifted, and my self-confidence slipped away from me like an untethered balloon. Over the next few weeks, I became discontent, silently defiant, and subtly argumentative.

Fortunately that summer, I sought refuge within the musty books and silent aisles of the local library where, quite by chance, I discovered Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare died long before the summer of 1966, his story of Hamlet struck a chord with me, for I identified with Hamlet as he grappled with his own feelings of betrayal towards his mother.

Even in Polonius' advice to Laertes was a powerful phrase that gave me hope: *to thine own self be true*. At that instant, I decided I would not succumb to the guilt concealed within my mother's words and become less than who I wanted to be. I intuitively understood that the most important relationship in my life was the one I have with myself.

Funny, I still remember that summer day and my mother's words, for they became a defining moment in my life—a turning point in the process of growing up, when I discovered the core of strength within me that can survive criticism and hurt.

Call Into The Wind

Jazz Jaeschke, Austin TX
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The porch post is rough, square
but I wrap my bare arm around,
clinging as I face into the wind,
vigorous whooshy wind—
blowing tears from my cheeks;

blowing asunder that caustic rebuff
provoked by frustrating circumstances,
leveled without heed to sensitivities,
with no sense of its stinging nettle
in my ears, heart, eyes;

blowing in memories, old ones
of times I felt this same stinging,
when discounted by then-husband,
unworthy his time to listen to me,
then, too, shushed and spurned;

blowing in a childhood connection—
the summer day I challenged Daddy's reprimand,
Mother's fury: *Don't you EVER talk back to him!*
Oh! ... to him. HIM! Is that why I'm out here crying
not inside, insisting the current HIM listen?

Heart braced, cheek steadied against post,
emotions taunted into turbulence
I call into this blustery benevolence—
Blow aside all other voices.
Let me hear my own truth.

August Morning

Naomi Sandweiss, Albuquerque NM
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Slightly humid air,
birds chirping in the backyard.

Lots of work to do...
...errands, visits.

I've already cut the roses
and finished my tea.

I'll save it for later;
this morning is my Sabbath.

Grey and white cat found his
cool place for the day.

Summer, 1962

Lois Halley, Westminster MD
joeandloishalley@comcast.net

His skin was like hot cocoa, in its warm chocolate silkiness. He had high cheekbones, a straight nose, and eyes filled with passion: passion for life, love, and his "cause." His cause was simply to be known as a man, not as a colored man. He laughingly boasted, in his proper Bostonian accent, that he had inherited the best of his mixed ancestry.

If we were to be seen together, it had to be on his end of town. My end still had signs saying, "No Colored Allowed," and it was where white men stared at us with open contempt. Besides, I had already been warned by my supervisor to end the relationship if I wanted to continue there. "Movie stars can get away with interracial dating, but he's not Sammy Davis Jr.," she said.

On the west side, we walked hand-in-hand on the city streets. I, wearing sleeveless cotton dresses and colorful sandals, felt safe, protected, and defiant. We believed that we were doing our part to promote civil rights.

We went to the bowling alleys, Chinese restaurants, and theaters. We frequented jazz clubs to hear live music, and although I was not yet the legal drinking age of 21, no one asked for my ID. While he sipped Cutty Sark, I learned to drink Brandy Alexanders and screwdrivers.

One sizzling afternoon we escaped into an air conditioned theater to see *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I desperately needed a drink of water but, as the only white person, I felt too shy to leave my seat. I tolerated my parched throat and got lost in Atticus Finch.

Later, in the dim light of his room, I watched him sleep and listened to the whirr of the window fan. I wondered if it was to silence the noise from the street below or just to stir the sultry summer air.

ON A SUMMER'S DAY

Patricia R. Hollinger, Westminster MD
woodscrone@comcast.net

The chirping of birds and rustling of leaves awakened me upright,
ON A SUMMER'S DAY!

I bought some tomatoes, so red and bright,
ON A SUMMER'S DAY!

I'll go home to prepare a feast so delicious,
ON A SUMMER'S DAY!

My husband will wonder what on earth this dish is!
ON A SUMMER'S DAY!

A note! As I opened the door?

I couldn't go on...Call 911...and keep your feet on the floor.

This is how it ended

ON A SUMMER'S DAY!

A Summer Twist

Ronda Armstrong, Des Moines IA
ronda.armstrong@gmail.com

Emporia, Kansas. 1974.

That summer I returned to my hometown to stay with my parents during the break between two years of social work grad school. Week days I worked as a physical therapy assistant at the local hospital.

I planned a relaxed pace after the rigorous school year: make some money, catch up with my parents, and spend time with friends—including my role as bridesmaid on June 8th.

Late in the afternoon, following the wedding, a girlfriend and I drove to her folks' place outside town.

On arrival, my friend answered the ringing phone. She handed it to me.

Breathless, Mom asked, "Are you okay?"

Before I responded she raced on, "A tornado hit town! The mall, a nursing home, a trailer court. The killer F4 tornado struck so fast no sirens blared until afterwards."

The shopping mall was located across from the church where the wedding had been held. We'd left an hour earlier. What if we had stayed later or stopped at the mall? Would the tornado have crossed our path?

Stunned, we slapped on our work badges and headed toward town. As hospital employees we were waved through traffic barricades.

Soon chairs and stretchers filled with the injured lined the hospital halls. Some frantically looked for loved ones. Rumors ran rampant about the numbers of deaths and injuries. Reports of extensive devastation spread rapidly.

The person in charge handed me a clipboard. "Figure out who's here!"

I moved from person to person, jotting down names and snippets of information.

Some missing were accounted for. Some were not. The terrible evening passed. So did summer.

A break in my formal education? True

A break in learning? False

My social work training received real-life infusions. I saw the community pull together to mend and rebuild. The hospital physical therapy department ran a tight schedule to treat the many injured. I experienced firsthand how people coped with the tornado's toll.

That summer life dramatically changed. *From Death do us part* to disaster. From festive mood to mourning. From sudden twists to healing lessons.

Sam the Babysitter

Carolyn Sullivan, Austin TX
csullibear@aol.com

We used to have a big yellow dog named Sam. Sam was part Labrador and part several other things. His fur was a nice butter yellow color, which shed all over the carpet and furniture, so Sam stayed outside a lot of the time. But the good thing about Sam was that he was a good babysitter.

One summer when Susie was about two-and-a-half years and Gina one year old, I set them on the porch with Sam and a cup of dry Cheerios. I was just inside the screen door where I could watch while I did my chores.

Gina picked out one Cheerio and put it in her mouth, and then one more and put it in Sam's mouth, then one for her and one for Sam. Sometimes she missed and tried to put the Cheerio in Sam's nose or ear, but Sam was good-humored about it. I guess he knew he couldn't expect much from a baby. Susie was on her own with the Cheerios. She was big enough to help herself.

After about fifteen minutes, I saw Sam lumber to his feet and trot down the steps and out to the walk, so I came to the door to see. Susie had escaped from the porch and was toddling down the sidewalk. Sam just sidled up to her and got his body very gently in her way so that she was forced to turn left until he got her turned all the way around and headed back to the house. He shepherded her very gently up the steps and back onto the porch, where he collapsed again and looked to Gina to see if it was his turn for the Cheerio.

Sam was sure a good old dog. He was with us a long time. When he got old and crotchety, we retired him to a friend's farm. I hope they had a big front porch.

George, My Hero

Helen Leatherwood, Beverly Hills CA
lenleatherwood@gmail.com, w-ecircle 6

One early evening in summer, my older brother George and I headed off to the Little League baseball field where he was going to play a game and I was going to watch. He was eleven and I was eight. I was barefooted and wore shorts and a thin top; he had on his baseball uniform and cap.

When we were three blocks from the baseball field, a dog—mean and snarling— appeared suddenly. It headed straight for me. I did the absolute wrong thing—I ran as fast as my legs could take me. Of course, the dog was faster and soon was nipping at my feet. I screamed, knowing I had nowhere to hide since we were in the middle of an open field. I sank down to the ground and huddled into a tight ball. The dog barked and snarled, ready to bite me.

Summer Memory

Darlene Hayman, Montrose CO
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I have no memory for history's dates. I can't remember when the Monroe Doctrine was adopted or telegraph lines linked Colorado with the East. But I remember one summer which now seems like one day.

The world was mine the summer I was sixteen. That was the summer when Rich—tall, smooth, tan as a fawn, brown eyed and gentle, laughter-filled—set my heart flipping and flopping.

We hiked the Boulder foothills, talked every day on the phone, frequented the movies, and carried on long thoughtful discussions. On days off from summer work, we sped in his car to Baseline Lake. We swam and sunned and chased each other through the azure space of warm lake water. The sun dazzled our eyes with golden streams through shifting clouds. The soft, flannel sand surrounded and warmed us. My blood charged through my veins like hot lava and my nerves made a shivery sort of passage up and down my spine.

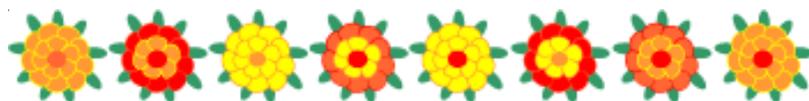
We drank Cokes in the evenings and danced slow dances, later to park in front of my house, worry my mother and scandalize the neighbors with our kissing under Mom's glaring front porch light.

Too soon summer ended and Rich and I went separate ways. I cannot return childhood to the old girl. I can only sit here and remember as summer memory floats up and puts its face in front of me. There's comfort in returning to that distant scene.

Just then, I heard a loud screech. I peeked out between my arms to see George hurling rocks at the dog. A few more well aimed shots sent it running off squealing, its tail between its legs.

“Never run!” George snapped as he came over and pulled me up off the ground. He took my hand and held it tight the rest of the way to the baseball field.

I felt so safe just knowing George was close. I still do fifty years later, though now he's far away.



Undercover

Barbara Lindquist Miller, Austin TX
Austin Millwood Writing Circle

My eyes cracked open as my ears were assaulted by the racket of someone banging on the front door just below my second story bedroom window.

“Hurry up and open this door! I’m going to drop all this fabric on the porch,” bellowed Aunt Margaret.

Gladys, my mother, called out from the kitchen. “Hold your horses! I can’t leave this rhubarb sauce. It’ll boil over.”

It was immediately clear to me that the annual ritual of apron sewing was about to begin. Margaret and Gladys, the oldest and the youngest of seven siblings, made it a yearly August affair to spend a day renewing their absolutely necessary apron supply. Most of last year’s stock had already relegated to the rag bag.

“I’ve got it!” I shouted as I flew down the stairs clad in my summer jamies. Pushing open the screen door, I surprised Aunt Margaret. As her tall frame flew backwards, I caught a partial bolt of calico just before it hit the floor.

“Apron Day” literally took over the house. The huge dining room table, covered with table pads, was the cutting station. Abandoned by 10:00 in the morning, the process moved to Mom and Dad’s upstairs bedroom where two sewing machines began to hum. Window shades drawn against the summer heat darkened the room. Old metal fans, set to blow on the overworked seamstresses, hummed above the clack, clack of the old sewing machines. Clipping the basting threads was my task by the time I turned ten.

A pile of new treasures began to grow on the bed by three in the afternoon. The cover-ups, for serious cooking and canning, were made from print fabrics edged with contrasting bias tape. The half-aprons were often trimmed with ruffles and long ties. The trophies were the organdy hostess aprons for entertaining.

Mom was seldom without her apron. She spent most days “undercover.” As a modern ‘60s housewife, I shunned the apron tradition. I must have been really neat as a new homemaker. Today you’ll often find me in one of those old-fashioned cover-ups.

Flashbulb Memory

Teresa Werth, Spencerport NY
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It is a perfect summer day. July 17, 1997. We’ve just enjoyed a delicious dinner with our college-aged daughter, our teenage son, and his girlfriend. Conversation in the car on the ride home is animated and witty. All is right with the world. I can see us turning off of the main highway onto our road. Impulsively, we turn into a new subdivision to check out the monstrous houses being built...a kind of “fantasy detour.” I wish I could hold on to that image forever. I wish my cell phone would not ring..., but it does.

Our daughter arrived home ahead of us and listened to a message from my sister saying that our Dad has been in a serious car accident. I should call her. My husband makes a quick K-turn, throwing loose gravel in every direction, and barrels back to our road, over the canal and home.

My brother-in-law answers the phone. “Is my father dead?” I ask.

“Let me talk to Don,” he replies. I ask again. His response is the same. And then a third time.

Finally, I scream my question into the receiver so loudly it hurts my throat.

He pauses and quietly answers, “Yes.”

My world is inexorably altered in that moment. I can’t breathe. I feel as if my body will fly apart, or maybe I wish it would. I drop the phone. All I know is that this gentle, handsome, smart, funny, loving man who has been

“Dad” for my whole life is gone. Gone.

The technical term is “flashbulb memory.” During extremely arousing and often emotional times, vivid and accurate flashbulb memories are formed. Oftentimes, people can recall photograph-like memories, and are able to remember exactly what they were doing or where they were at the time of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the disaster involving the Challenger space shuttle, the occurrences on September 11, 2001—or on July 17, 1997, the day my father died.

Poor Crawfish

Dorothy Sells Clover, Beaumont TX
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Poor crawfish in the cooler...
Do you know the deal?
Do you realize your dilemma,
trapped in there against your will?

Do you understand the drama
that's about to unfold?
You're about to be a spicy treat!
Or have you not been told?

Poor mudbug, I don't envy you,
your family and friends.
You think you're in the backyard pool...
But now the end begins!

I wish that I could save you
from your unwarranted fate.
But face it...it's your destiny!
You were born to grace my plate...

or box or crate or baggy.
Anything will do.
Poor Crawdad... what a pity!
Let's close the lid on you.



The Good Old Summertime

Carolyn McCraw, Houston TX
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Story Circle OWL writers, Long Star College, Houston TX

I heard the sweet sounds of birds chirping outside my window and somewhere in the distance I heard the roaring engine of a lawnmower. The thump of the newspaper thrown onto our porch echoed loudly. Oh, the sweet sounds of a summer day. This was the first day of summer vacation. I could listen to my records all day, play games, talk on the phone, hang out with my friends, and stay up late. A summer of sun and fun was my plan.

I heard my Mom's voice faintly calling us. I knew it was a breakfast call because I smelled bacon frying and biscuits baking. Then I heard her loud and clear, telling us to get up. My brother, Donald and I quickly joined her in the kitchen to get our itinerary for this summer day. Would we be swimming or playing volleyball today?

We were both shocked when Mom told us that after breakfast, we would go downtown to the Texas Employment Commission and get a summer job. She explained that young people needed to seek employment and learn about the workforce. It was the summer of 1964, when our governor supported the summer jobs program for youth.

Why did the governor's programs have to change my summer routine? I wondered what had brought this on. What happened to my plans of sun and fun, sitting by the pool, listening to my records, talking on the phone, and sleeping in late? Wasn't this a summer vacation? Who did summer vacations apply to anyway? It seemed like a lot of pressure was put on us to get jobs.

Well, we went to the Texas Employment Commission and Mom and the Governor were right about youth learning how to work. This summer was the first summer I didn't get to follow my usual summer routine. It was amazing that one summer day I became part of the summer jobs program for youth. I still had great summers although the itinerary had changed.

Thanks, Mom, for getting me up and starting me on the road to a successful work routine.

Glastonbury, Grief, and Beyond

Lo Anne Mayer, Morristown NJ
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One summer day I strolled through the gardens at the Chalice Well in Glastonbury, England. At the same time, my daughter died by suicide back home in New Jersey. The shock of the telephone call I received, informing me of Cyndi's death, still haunts my dreams seven years later.

Grief is a lonely journey. Some people get lost in the black forest of grief and never escape. Some people struggle to climb the mountain of grief, often falling backward to the bottom. Some people find a new awareness of life after death that opens up possibilities never considered before. I was one of those lucky ones.

It all began with my desire to contact my mother after her death. I believed it was possible. After prayer and meditation, I started journaling in an attempt to heal the adversarial relationship Mom and I had in life. My heart leapt with joy as my mother imprinted her words on my mind. I wrote them down, word for word. The connection was immediate and powerfully healing for me. Once I understood why she hadn't been able to connect with me in life, my judgment and anger towards Mom evaporated. She called it Celestial Conversations.

Five months after I began journaling transpersonally with Mom, Cyndi took her life in a moment of despair. Since I didn't know how or why she died, I turned to my mother's journal for consolation and information. The words that flowed from my pen to the journal not only helped me to understand what happened to Cyndi; it catapulted me into starting a separate journal with her. Reading the dictation I took from her helped to

ease my grief and point me towards forgiveness and unconditional love.

Through Celestial Conversations I learned a universal truth: Mother-Daughter love never dies. That awareness birthed my spiritual memoir, along with my workshops, offering my process to other grieving individuals. Millions of people die each year leaving an epidemic of grief. My mission is to share what I have learned with others who need tools to help heal their broken hearts.

Eyes Wide Open

Karen Mocker Dabson, Columbia MO

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<http://www.mockerdabson.com/category/blog>

One summer day
I realized that my life was over.
I mean, not my life, but that life—

The one I was living then.
The one that you could see through
Like a thin, tattered tissue
Of lies and recriminations:
Late nights and ladies and loose lies,
Sloppy kisses laced with stale beer,
And, need I say, more lies?
Doping and smoking and selling,
And more lies about that.

Till, till...

Conscious of my death,
I watched as the leaden cloud lifted
From my shoulders
And poofed into nothingness
Against the brilliance of the blue, blue sky.

Weightless and worrisless,
I let my breath go,
And danced with the sunbeams
That dappled the deck.

(Editor's Note: In the March 2012 Journal, the author's address was incorrectly stated as Columbia MD instead of Columbia MO. I regret this error. MJD)

The Skywriter

Doris Ayyoub, Yakima WA
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The skywriter's writing! His puffs catch my eye.
I've so much to do, I should walk on by.
But the skywriter's writing way up in the sky.

The skywriter's writing, oh who else will sigh?
The earthlings seek earth things, will no eyes lift high?
See! The skywriter's writing way up in the sky.

The skywriter's writing, a heart-shape, a "Hi."
Smiley face, Pac-man, the white wisps drift by.
Yeah! The skywriter's writing way up in the sky.

The sky writer's writing, the lines fade and die.
Is he done? Has he gone? Will the plane no more fly?
The skywriter's writing, salutations on high.

What Kind of Mother Am I?

Bonnie Frazier, Brookings OR
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On a hot sunny afternoon at our favorite BLM campground, my husband Virgil and two of our kids took turns burying each other in warm white dune sand at the edge of the lake. The third child just sat on a beach towel, trying not to touch anything. This child, Greg, is autistic. He didn't like the gritty sand, or much else on this camping trip. Grass tickled him. The life jacket he had to wear in the canoe restricted him. The water scared him. A pair of sturdy twin boys, tanned and energetic, played near us, and the contrast between them and my pale, skinny, anxious three-year-old was painful to see.

Virgil took the older kids off somewhere, and Greg and I sat together on the beach. Something finally interested him enough to tempt him off the towel, and he took some tentative steps in the little lake waves. Things that float in shallow water are always worth investigating, and one such thing caught Greg's eye: a small, shimmering bluegill fish, very dead. Greg followed it, picked it up, dropped it, chased it, and picked it up again. I was thrilled to see him wade into the water and do something that looked like playing. Even if it involved a dead fish.

A small girl wandered past us, kicking up water as she waded along the beach. She noticed Greg holding the dead fish, and with a loud, "Ewwww," grabbed the fish from him and prepared to toss it away.

I heard myself say, "Don't take his fish!" The girl eyed me, shrugged her shoulders, and dropped the fish where she stood.

As she waded on her way, I realized what I had just said. That's when I rolled my eyes and wondered what kind of a mother lets her toddler play with a dead fish. Only one whose heart longs to see him doing something almost normal for a change. And I'd do it again in a minute.

Haunted Memory

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Jiribam, Manipur, India June, 1942

It was the scorching sun which made my grandmother hold her umbrella with her left hand while she held my little hand in her right. The sun was not in a hurry to go down toward west and seemed to be busy torching us on this side of the planet. As a seven year old I did not bother much about hot weather. Bubbling with enthusiasm and anticipation of getting sweet rice balls at the Friday Market, I walked chattering with never ending questions which kept my grandmother occupied with answers. An unexpected sight caught my attention and I pulled my grandmother's hand.

We stood for a few seconds and saw the teen aged boy with slightly protruding belly sitting on the rock, his sack placed on the dirt road and eyes closed. His hands crossed on his chest as if trying to protect himself from the cold. It was a hot day but he was shivering. My grandma pulled me and walked ahead leaving the boy alone without saying anything.

I became inquisitive, "Ine, what has happened to him? Why is he shivering?"

"He will be okay. Once his shivering is gone he will walk to his destination," she replied. She also mentioned that she had seen before some of the villagers doing the same thing while the attack of malarial fever came over them.

But I kept thinking about that boy. His faded loin cloth and his facial features indicated he was from a tribal community and most probably a poor farmer's son from the hills. My grandmother, being from a higher caste, would avoid touching any one like him. The caste system was a predominant factor during my grandmother's time in the 1940s. Along with the struggle for independence from Britain, Mahatma Gandhi was a strong advocate against the caste system. Hence after independence the caste system was abolished completely. But the memory of this incident haunts me to this day. Did anyone help him get to the hospital and receive treatment? I wonder if that boy survived till he reached his adulthood.

Labor Day, 2011

Amy L. Greenspan, Austin TX
w-ecircle 4, Austin Reading Circle

History's hottest summer
Endless baking
Endless dry
Ends in north wind
Cruel relief
The state's on fire
Texas cries

My Hero, the Wolfman

Cathy Scibelli, East Norwich NY
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www.iconicmuse.blogspot.com

One summer day I met a hero. At the time, I didn't know he was a hero; I thought I was going to meet the Wolfman.

As a child I learned from eavesdropping on hushed parental conversations that my Uncle Frank had a drinking problem and my mother wanted to protect us from seeing him when we visited family up north. In my imagination I pictured him turning into a scary Wolfman as he drank.

One August my mother said, "We're going to visit Uncle Frank in the hospital. You can't come in, but he'll come to the balcony and wave to you."

I was finally going to see the Wolfman! As I watched the balcony a man in a pair of blue pajamas emerged and walked unsteadily to the railing. He smiled from ear to ear and waved. I was puzzled. This man didn't look anything like the Wolfman. There was something about him that made me smile and wave back.

When we got home, for some reason I decided to send a get well note to Uncle Frank. He wrote to thank me and that started a regular correspondence between us. Then my father was diagnosed with terminal cancer and in my letters to Uncle Frank I shared all my fears and grief. In return I received love and understanding.

A few months after my father's death, Uncle Frank died of a heart attack. My grandfather received a letter from the President that said my uncle was a hero who earned honors fighting in some of the fiercest battles in Germany during World War II. My mother now told me for the first time how Uncle Frank had come home seriously injured and that his drinking was a result of the attacks of "nerves" he suffered after that.

My uncle became a hero to me even before I knew about his heroic deeds in war, but I often wonder how different his life might have been if more was known about PTSD in the 1940s.

God Bless Our Troops and Rest in Peace, Uncle Frank.



Summer Day on the Farm

Janice Kvale, Austin TX
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In the prairie wind the house squealed.
 Dust seeped in closed windows spreading
 a thin silty veneer on the oak table.
 An iron stove owned the kitchen
 hissing as the wind drew the smoke up,
 devouring corn cobs, indiscriminately
 hot winter and summer.
 Outhouse denizens swatted
 flies, read the Sears, Roebuck catalog
 tore out pages for hygiene.
 Thin black and white pages
 ruffled briskly were best.
 Rain water hand pumped
 from the basement cistern
 drained into the open slop pail
 joined by vegetable waste. Pigs
 squeal jostling for orange rinds
 and cucumber peels.
 From deep in the earth cold
 water rich with minerals,
 sucked up by windmill
 brought to the house for drinking.
 At day's end mother rocks
 the little girl and sings,
 "By-o baby bunting, daddy's
 gone a hunting, for to catch
 a rabbit skin, to wrap my
 baby bunting in."

Marriage

Darlene Hayman, Montrose CO
dhayman2010@gmail.com

I set out on a journey
 one summer day,
 a valiant adventure,
 a clear redirection
 from my usual setting
 to the distant crags
 unlike my mountains,
 not realizing what lay ahead.

No sadness in departing
 from the previous house,
 from the people I knew
 and the well-known culture,
 not leaving of failure or sadness
 simply confident alliance with
 a friend from my school
 now my sweet-tempered husband.
 I held great aspiration
 blindly stepping into disaster.

The Color Yellow

Pat Bean, Harker Heights TX
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<http://patbean.wordpress.com>

The roadside is alive with yellow flowers this sunny, summer day as my canine traveling companion, Maggie, and I continue our journey to see as much of North America as Gypsy Lee, our small, tidy RV home, will take us.

Finally, I can stand it no more. I look for and finally spot a safe place to pull off the road. I put Maggie on her leash and grab my camera for a short walk along the rural highway we've been traveling. It's the kind of road where ten minutes can go by before another car passes, and usually that's a farmer in an old truck who tips his straw hat, or his ball cap, at you as he passes. I always wave back, a big smile on my face.

As Maggie and I walk, we pass a big patch of black-eyed Susans with Indian paintbrush sprinkled among the yellow. The color yellow demands that I record the moment. Yellow seems to have a physical effect on me. In that, I'm not alone.

Curious George followed the man with the yellow hat home from Africa, Dorothy followed the yellow brick road, the Beatles fancied a yellow submarine—and a bright spot of yellow stops me in my tracks.

Maggie sniffs a few small animal holes, in which I hope a snake is not hiding. But her nose also never misses the flowers we pass. She always takes time to smell the blossoms on our walks, as if she knows that has become a mantra for me.

After capturing one last photo of a golden primrose that grows alone on a bare piece of ground, I turn back toward the RV. That farmer I talked about earlier passes. This one's not wearing a hat. So he just waves. I smile and wave back.

The flowers and the warm summer sun have worked their magic. I am filled with contentment that continues with me for the rest of the day's journey. Maggie's soft snores, as she sleeps beside me in the co-pilot seat, are full of contentment, too.

Starting Over

Mandy Lewis, Florida City FL

Helen Keller wrote: *When one door... closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.*

After thirteen years of poor choices, I finally see what I've missed by staring at closed doors. Lies, cheating, stealing, and drugs prevented me from seeing.

During time in jail I decided I was done with that life. I'd paid a steep price. I couldn't stay in Florida any longer. It was toxic for me.

"Come live in Tennessee," Mom said. I said I would, but I didn't want to move. Mom said I had three choices: die, return to jail, or move. So, on a sunny June afternoon, I boarded a plane for Tennessee.

Starting over is hard! No friends, no job, no purpose. Mom's one request was that I attend church. I looked at her, thinking, *Are you crazy? How could I go to church after all I'd done?* Reluctantly I went with her and soon realized I was right where I belonged. A door had opened!

Other doors opened too. I went to Narcotics Anonymous, got a sponsor, and began working the program. I met a Christian man who didn't drink or do drugs. On

our first date, not wanting him to know about my past, I put up a brick wall. On our second date, he told me he knew. I panicked. After hesitating I told him the truth—all of it—and added, "I'll understand if you don't want to see me again." He stayed.

But my past caught up with me. Charges were filed for long ago crimes. I wasn't the same person who committed those crimes but, here I was, facing jail again.

Last October, I was taken into custody and extradited. Now I sit in county jail awaiting sentencing. However, I've come to realize that had I continued to stare at closed doors, I would have missed a life-changing experience. Tennessee waits for me and I wait for the day I can return to Tennessee. All because I boarded that Tennessee-bound plane one sunny afternoon in June.

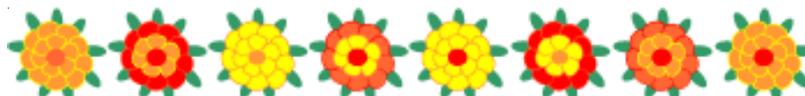
Safe Place on a Summer Day

Jane Steig Parsons, Austin TX
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Angles of green.
Patterns of shade.
Pillars that tempt Zeus' thunderbolts.

Nestled there is a cocoon of comfort,
walled in pristine white.
A safe place, a quiet place
in which to contemplate lives well-spent
and dream a future yet untold.

To see us intertwined
and celebrate on a summer day
the times we touch each other's hearts,
though briefly,
soon to live again in memory.





Stories from the Heart VI Conference News: Final Edition

If you attended the Stories from the Heart Conference, no doubt you experienced a memorable and heartfelt weekend of connecting with dear friends and your own life memories to put to paper. If you missed the excitement, the StoryCircle Network offers workshops and events throughout the year to help you hone your writing skills and share your own Stories from the Heart.







Stories from the Heart VI Magic Moments

Dear Story Circle 2012 Conference Attendees,

I hope that each of you experienced an exceptional time of learning, fun, friendship, and camaraderie within the wonderful circle of women who comprised SCNs National Conference 2012. I've been using much of my time since then to reflect and build: new and improved writing, research, and journaling habits, writing a new story, trying out some new ideas, and also opening the cover of one of the three great new books I purchased at the conference.

In addition to the above, I experienced an abundance of what I'm calling Magic Moments during the three conference days, such as the one in Marlene Samuels' session. One participant talked about needing to do research in Germany for her writing. Someone asked where in Germany and then a woman at the next table said she had a friend who lived about 30 miles from that location and would give the researcher her friend's name afterward. In that same session, Lisa Shirah-Hiers shared a wonderful connection she made simply by keeping people in her life apprised of what writing projects she was working on.

I heard a woman at Open Mike read a story that linked closely with my own and we engaged in such meaningful conversation afterward. Another woman later told me she and I share a similar history. These were such rich connections.

On Saturday morning I attended Gail Straub's session. Gail gave us an exercise designed to help us move from the "old stories" we tell about our families into deeper levels of new stories. When we were done writing, Gail asked us to pair with another woman at our table and share our process. I turned to Linda Hoye and as she and I shared our words, we found ourselves in a profound, deeply-insightful moment.

This was all such affirmation of how interconnected each of us are and especially so when we share our stories. I wondered how many Magic Moments each of you experienced; so I asked, and you shared your stories. I hope you enjoy reading these magical moments as much as I did.

Listening to Gail Straub was an unexpected experience. I was mesmerized. She read her speech, and was unbelievably engaging. What a lady.

Jeanne Guy, Austin TX



I blogged about the SCN conference and my post was uploaded to the Museum of Motherhood in New York City!! Check it out: <http://www.mommuseum.org/2012/05/mamablogger365-deep-in-the-heart-of-texas-by-kate-farrell/>

So SCN conference is in the Big Apple along with mention of Gail Straub who lives nearby. My Magic Moment is from that blog: Gail Straub's workshop on the intersection of fact and imagination was stunningly incisive as she directed us to cut through left-brain dominance to a new way of knowing.

My uploaded blog text and photos to the New York group, Museum of Motherhood, is a coup since it gives SCN some exposure there. I also wanted to connect Gail Straub to M.O.M. with a prominent mention of her in the post; Gail lives just outside NYC and is very interested in working with M.O.M.

Kate Farrell, Sebastopol CA

*Warmest regards,
Mary Jo*

*Mary Jo Doig
True Words editor
2012 Anthology editor
Facilitator of e-circle 7
SCN Book Review editor*



Apart from making some new friends and exchanging views, I had two magic moments—I had not seen my friend, Jamuna in three years. Not only did I get to meet her again, but shared a room with her, getting to learn her life-long good habits. We had some happy moments and I am grateful for all that great time.

The other magic moment was—me reading a poem on Saturday night. Jamuna and I were busy that morning, rehearsing our open mike performance. At Open Mike later, I read the poem with my fake American accents—loud and clear. There was a pin-dropped silence in the room. At the end, I received the loudest and longest applause I ever had. One poet stared at me, and I think her reaction was, "Looking at you now, it seems your heart-breaking story is shocking."

I have become more focused since my short performance. Thank you, Story Circle, for building my character for the better.

Smita Jagdale, Ann Arbor MI

I have several snippets, memories, and magical moments but the one I want to share right now concerns a dear lady, Michelle Walker.

Michelle came to a life story writing class I co-teach nearly four years ago. She told us all she was battling breast cancer and wanted to write her stories for her two daughters. At the time she was only 41 years old.

Michelle wrote and wrote and self-published three or four books. The cancer went into remission and then came back with a vengeance. But it didn't stop Michelle, she just got more involved with the American Cancer Society, and also our writing program. She facilitated a story circle and was determined that this April would be the year she would fly with our group to Austin to attend the SCN conference.

Alas, she was hospitalized mid-March and died April 6th. We were shocked at how quickly our dear friend was gone. We knew her prognosis but she had been so full of life until the end. Her memorial service was April 14th. One of our group, who stayed behind, attended the service and emailed me the photos of Michelle which were used in the service.

Saturday evening, I was sitting in the foyer of the Wyndham Hotel using the computer and I opened up the attachments, not knowing what they would be, and suddenly – there was the big smiling face of Michelle filling the screen.

For a moment it took my breath away and then I smiled because I realized, *Michelle, you made it! You are here with us at the Wyndham Hotel in Austin just as you had planned!*

*Val Perry, Valrico, FL
Bloomingdale Writers Connection*

Wildflowers

It was Friday
and here we are
pre-arranged to see
wildflowers...
Now, we are wild flowers
gathered
from across
the country
and the city
Now
meeting up
at the Wildflower Center
the squeals
Pat Bean, Marion
Janice and
Nancilynn...
Laughter
rings out beneath
the overcast sky
just as we grapple
with our hugs
the sky
spills over...
and we laugh-
and laugh,
and laugh.
Lunch,
beneath an overcast sky
breaking open
sunshine



and flowers
and yes
more hugs...

*Nancilynn
Saylor,
Austin TX*

envelope. This reminded me of my grandson who had the same attachment until he left for college.

Meeting Matilda and Kendra again and attending their workshop was another magic moment. I loved those moments posing for pictures with everyone whom I had contacts online and met at the conference. When I saw each I felt like meeting a friend whom I had known for a long time; each was a sweet moment.

Jamuna Advani, San Ramon CA

I'm not much of a hugger, but I could have hugged every woman at the conference. The feeling of "coming home" was deep and rich. I looked at each woman and knew that she had a piece of my story and I had a piece of hers. And I could feel that we were all part of the larger story, called "woman." Nearly my entire writing circle made it to the conference. Spending time with women who are more a part of my daily life than my blood family was extraordinary: Janice, Marion, Pat, Sam, Len, Nancilynn. These women have shared their stories with me for two years, and finally I got to share meals, and walks, and girlfriend time. It could not possibly get better than that!

Read more Magic Moments on page 18

Caroline Ziel, St Louis MO

At the dinner Saturday night sitting with Patti LaPointe on one side and a woman, whose name I just cannot remember on the other, we found out through conversation we had both been stationed at RAF Lakenheath, in the U.K. in 1988. She had lived in the town of Thetford and I lived just outside in the village of Weeting. Thetford is where I worked. How is that for a coincidence?

Sharing the conference with two other people from my writing group really magnified the experience. It seemed as though there was always one of us rushing up to the other saying, "I have just been speaking to a really interesting person," or, "Guess what I just learned?" We arrived on different flights but went home on the same plane which, when you think about it, is quite symbolic.

Val Perry, Valrico FL

My magic moment began at a workshop where we were asked to write about a time our heart was broken by someone else. I related the story of how my daughter breaks my heart consistently. I was astonished at how many women came up to me afterward and let me know that they, too, have felt that kind of heartbreak. It is the one that cuts us deepest, but I no longer had to feel alone with my heartache.

Denise Hanshaw, Palatine IL

The magic moment for me was listening to the Open Mike reading and especially the girl from California who had kept her baby blanket until it became a piece to be kept in an





I'd like to share three Magic Moments.

One of the workshop presenters talked about the second stage of writing being the "sentimental" version of a life story. That's the place where it's good, real, and well-written, but only full and complete to the author and not the audience. Those are my words and I might have missed something. I was so glad to have that label when I evaluated the submissions for Writer Advice's 7th Flash Prose Contest. I found several that were very well-written and touched me. I wanted to encourage the author, recognized that the writing is at the sentimental draft stage, and will be able to offer advice if it's requested. This label was an awesome addition to my repertoire of editing tools.

As I was setting out the materials for the workshop I was leading, I fell. Sole of shoe meets carpet. Gravity took me down. There was no way to break that fall until my head collided with the metal rim of a chair. I remained conscious, but I couldn't open my eyes for what seemed like minutes. When I looked up I saw a group of concerned women clustered around. I knew I was safe. I knew I would be okay, somehow, even if there was a medical issue. Someone got ice. Peggy and Susan took care of official things without alarming me, and I could see delight and excitement in the faces of the women who'd taken care of me as they got new ideas and experiences from the workshop. One wise woman even asked how I was feeling at the end. I considered for a second and said, "Imperfect," but I smiled. I loved the way we helped each other. Women writers have a special bond.

The third magical moment occurred every time I said, "my husband." We've only been married since February 17, and telling anyone that "my husband" was in Houston visiting his 89-year-old father and would pick me up on Sunday sent a thrill through me. I wasn't playing a role. This was really happening. In addition, Susan Tweit's wonderful talk gave him new insights into all that is involved in being a memoir writer. Who could ask for a more magical gift than that?

Lynn Goodwin, Danville CA

There was so much magic, it is hard to separate out the moments, as the entire experience was like being bathed in the nurturing energies of so many collaborative women, women who've done their work, and become wiser for it. I got home still feeling encircled and enriched, by the women participants, and their stories, as well as the wisdom of the presenters. I feel as though I have met my 'tribe.'

I enjoyed the mythic aspects of Gail Straub's writing journey, as it validated the importance of the writing, no matter what happens to the pages; getting them written changes us, in ways that ripple well beyond our individual life...

In Leila Levinson's workshop, when she reminded us that "writing is a process, not a formula," and "what we're uncovering, by writing through our pain, is our internal truth,"...and "what we're bringing to the surface is a gift to the world." "Don't expect certain women to accept your work, or you, because they haven't gone there...won't go there." (and that's okay.) The magic in these moments with Leila has lasted, and spurred on my own memoir writing since returning home.

I loved the singing with Susan Lincoln, and hearing all our voices, rising together, and her sharing of the prophecy, from the wise women of New Zealand, who say, "When the Grandmothers speak, the Earth will begin to heal..."

I was moved by the woman who read at Open Mike of needing to be excused from jury duty, due to 'prior bias' as a incest rape victim, who has gotten through and can write and read with the healed voice of a victor.

*Cynthia F. Davidson,
Prudence Island RI*



After Open Mike at the 2010 SCN Conference, five of us lingered and continued to share for a very long time. We called ourselves the "OM Synchronicity Sisters." Four of us were able to meet again this year to share our stories at Open Mike. That night many of the women who had read stayed after the session and talked in small groups. It was different from two years ago but still very special.



One of my "OM" sisters and I decided (actually, we knew) it would be good to talk a bit longer over a glass of red wine. Her powerful story at Open Mike that night had moved me to tears—and my name had been called to read right after her. It was hard for me to even start reading; my story was so light. Then later, as we sipped our wine in the nearly empty hotel bar, I began talking about a tragic part of my life I had never been able to write about. Now I know that someday I will have the strength to do so. Thanks to you, dear sister!

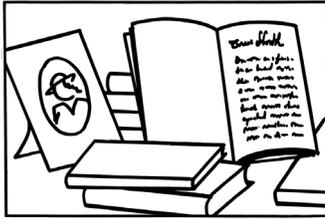
Pattie Burke, Austin TX

I felt a bit impatient as I waited for the Story Circle Conference dates to finally arrive. Several of the women I have been corresponding with in Writing Circle 6 for the last five years would be attending. I had met none of them before but I felt that these women were my sisters-in-writing. As a docent at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, I offered Circle 6 members an experience at that facility. Carol Ziel arrived a day early and we had a lovely lunch in the garden after a walkabout through the garden plots and art exhibit. The next day the garden experience was repeated with Marion Hunt, Pat Bean, and Nancilynn Saylor before we returned to the hotel for the opening of the conference.



The catered meals and evening dinners on our own were highlights as seven of us from Circle 6 shared with each other in ways we hadn't through on-line technology. The additional members were Sam Patron, Len Leatherwood, and with Deborah Bean, honorary Circle 6 member for the conference (Pat Bean's daughter) our group swelled to eight happy women.

Janice Kvale, Austin, TX



Story Circle Network's Book Reviews

Share a Good Book

At StoryCircleBookReviews, we always receive more wonderful books than we can possibly review. So we've created a new feature on our website: a section called *Briefly Reviewed*, a selection of titles, briefly described, that represent the wide range of recently-published memoirs written by strong women who have been there, done that, and lived to tell the tale. Recommended! Visit the new section here: www.storycirclebookreviews.org/briefly.shtml

StoryCircleBookReviews is the largest, longest-lived women's book review site on the Internet, offering reviews, author interviews, and more. Here's an excerpted sample of the books we review. It may be just what you're looking for!

The Prosperous Heart: Creating a Life of 'Enough,' by Julia Cameron, Tarcher/Penguin, 2012, reviewed by Laura Strathman Hulka

I have been a follower of Julia Cameron for many years. This new book, *The Prosperous Heart*, takes techniques from *The Artist's Way* and applies them to how we look at money. The subtitle, *Creating a Life of "Enough,"* is a message that we all need to read, hear, and implement in our lives.

The Prosperous Heart offers a twelve week program of regaining your balance and connection with your money and your financial perspective. Cameron "trains" you through these lessons in using your creative spirit to connect with your prosperity in all aspects of your life. Her message—you cannot separate your finances from your spirituality or any other portion of your life—resonates with me. . .

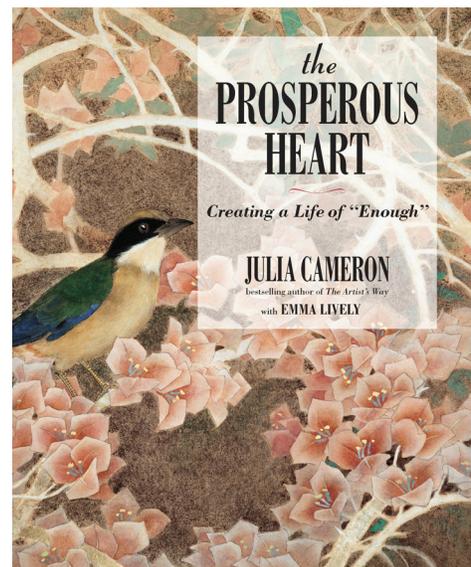
The key? "Prosperity is a spiritual bottom line." We are works in progress, evolving, the goal is not to be completed, but to be enriched, growing, learning and experiencing it all from a healthy, balanced perspective. Cameron gives us the basic tools to practice and learn during the twelve weeks.

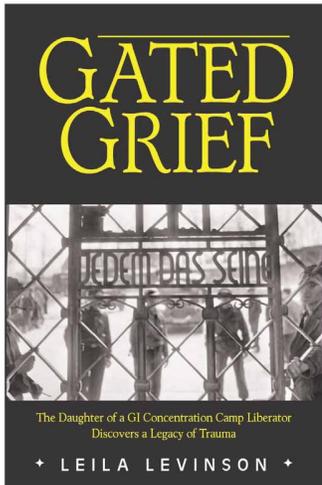
- ✘ The Morning Pages (a daily writing practice) has been an element of Cameron's teachings for many years. The author calls it "...the primary tool of a creative recovery...(and) also a primary tool for establishing prosperity."
- ✘ The next basic tool is Counting. It's a simple technique: you learn to habitually count money in and money out.
- ✘ Third is Abstinence. STOP going into debt. No more borrowing. Period.
- ✘ Fourth is Walking. What? What does walking have to do with growing in prosperity? It is an opportunity to "immerse yourself in the present." It is a way to embrace our own inner connections to the greater world.
- ✘ Next up is Time-Out. Yup. Just what it sounds like. Taking time for "self-appraisal" and "self-approval." Twice a day.

Once you have these five techniques under your belt you're ready to read on and learn during the twelve weeks ... Twelve weeks is a guideline—if you take longer reading/participating in one chapter to establish a comfortable understanding of the techniques, then give that to yourself. One chapter a week is enough, though, for as Cameron reminds the reader, "be gentle with yourself." After all, twelve weeks (three months) is not too long to devote to yourself and your well-being, is it?

Some chapters will resound with you, providing "ah-ha" moments, others will be arduous and uncomfortable. Sometimes, she says, "when my students shake the apple tree, oranges fall. And oranges may have been just what they were looking for, after all."

There are plenty more reviews like this one—and a great many wonderful books—on our website: www.storycirclebookreviews.org Drop in and browse! And remember, the books you purchase through the website help to support Story Circle's work.





Leila Levinson: Gated Grief

Leila Levinson was awarded first place for her book *Gated Grief: The Daughter of a GI Concentration Camp Liberator Discovers a Legacy of Trauma*. Her memoir describes her personal struggle to understand her father and the trauma experienced by World War II veterans who liberated concentration camp survivors. It speaks to the power of story to honor and heal the wounds of the past. Levinson is the founder of veteranschildren.com, a website where veterans and their children share their stories. She also teaches writing workshops for veterans and their families. She was interviewed for SCN by Paula Stallings Yost. This is an excerpt; you can read the full interview and find links to reviews at <http://www.storycirclebookreviews.org/interviews/levinson.shtml>



Sarton Memoir Award

You began your research by interviewing WWII concentration camp liberators after your father's death, when you discovered some startling photos taken by him when his unit came upon a Nazi slave labor camp. How many veterans did you interview? How did you establish the trust factor needed to get the most honest responses?

Over a period of two years, I interviewed ninety-seven veterans. I first approached them with a letter explaining that I was the daughter of a GI liberator as well as a professor of Holocaust literature, and that I wanted to understand what significance witnessing a concentration camp might have had for them. I think my status as the daughter of a fellow veteran and a teacher of the Holocaust gained me credibility and that a letter gave them time to consider my request. However, many veterans did not respond.

Once I entered the living rooms of those who agreed to meet with me, I presented myself in a low key, soft-spoken manner, focusing completely on them. I needed to leave outside the door any agenda of my own, as I felt it was imperative to manifest my genuine interest in them. I was there to witness their truths, their grief, their triumphs.

I think that those who did agree to meet with me intuited that I offered a way to break their silence. Changing a lifelong dynamic within their families seemed overwhelming to them. But I offered a way they could share their stories with their children, even if indirectly. So I became a bridge between the veterans and their children. In presenting these stories, my manuscript opened up new dynamics within many families. Daughters and sons now feel compassion and understanding rather than resentment and puzzlement.

What inspired your end-of-interview essential questions: "How did the experience affect you upon your return to civilian life? Did you discuss what happened with your children--with anyone?" Were these questions effective tools for revealing the "rest of the story"?

I credit my students for those questions, which evolved from the course I created and taught at St. Edward's University on literature of the Holocaust. We read memoirs by survivors and by the children of survivors and learned how, due to the cruel

way trauma works on the psyche, parents unwittingly transmit their trauma to their children. My subconscious led me to include oral histories of GI liberators in the curriculum. When my students read words such as: "The shock was complete and total," or "The smell followed me all the way back to the New York harbor," they asked, "Did the trauma of the liberators affect their children like the trauma of the survivors affected theirs?"

My students parted the curtain for me. This question had stared me in the face for the twelve years that had passed since I found my father's photographs taken by him at Nordhausen Concentration Camp. But my own trauma had prevented me from seeing it. Trauma pulls a veil down before our eyes, making it difficult to recognize clues around us.

These questions proved critical in getting a veteran to talk about his or her silence—why they had chosen silence, how and why the memory of witnessing the camp terrified them—still, sixty years later! They fervently sought to protect their families from what they had witnessed, and silence appeared the only possible means.

How did you decide which stories to share in your book? Did you uncover any stories you could not tell?

Different emotional consequences, different aspects of silence began to emerge like pieces of a puzzle, and I chose stories that expressed the pieces most clearly. Yes, I excluded some stories when the veterans asked me not to include them. Some called me a week or a month later asking me not to. Those were painful moments, when I saw the depth and width of a veteran's guilt and shame for the reaction of his eighteen-year-old self upon walking into the unforeseen nightmare of the camps. A few were repulsed by the prisoners. A few killed the first Nazi they could find. These men still suffer.

How did you know when you were ready to begin writing?

There was no one moment of beginning. *Gated Grief* contains writing I did in my twenties and thirties, though I had no idea then what I was writing about.

I fiercely believe in free writing. The evening after every interview, I free-wrote. When I traveled through Germany, I free-wrote every day. All that became part of the manuscript.

My greatest challenge was figuring out the book's structure, how to arrange these myriad pieces. I completely rewrote the rough draft because only after I finished it did I see how intertwining my story into those of the veterans allowed me to express a core discovery: that my father's trauma and my own were one and the same.

Did you find the writing of this book to be a personal healing process as you came to better understand what your father must have experienced during the war?

More than I could have anticipated. I learned that healing is circular. Helping others to tell their stories healed me, and in my own healing, I became more able to help others heal.

How did you find a publisher for your book? I see it's available in both paperback and hardback. Is it also available in e-book format?

I wasted two years with two different agents who acted as if they were representing me only to tell me after a year that they were not. When I decided to go with a small press, a friend introduced me to an author of WWII nonfiction who praised his

publisher. Upon my contacting her, that publisher invited me to submit my manuscript and later decided to publish it.

Gated Grief is available in e-book format, though the format suffered when we removed half the photographs (Amazon would not allow us to lower the e-book price unless we reduced the number of photographs). I encourage people to wait a couple of months before buying the e-book, at which time we will have resolved the formatting issue.

What's next for your writing?

Every time I give a talk about Gated Grief, someone in the audience asks, "What happened to your mother?" Many friends are encouraging me to write a memoir about her—the mother I lost at age five to alcoholism and mental illness, whom my family and community all but erased. For most of the last year, well, actually, for most of my life, I haven't been able to consider writing a book about her. But in the last few weeks, maybe since receiving this award, I am finding the desire and courage to learn what I can of her story. I want to honor the person she was before silence claimed her.



Jamie Patterson: Lost Edens

Jamie Patterson was awarded second place for *Lost Edens: A True Story*. A memoir of a failed marriage and abandoned dreams, *Lost Edens* helps readers understand that while some relationships are too broken to fix, we can change our stories and thereby transform our lives. Patterson, an academic editor, lives in Minneapolis MN. She was interviewed for SCN by Susan Wittig Albert. This is an excerpt; you can read the full interview and find a link to a review at <http://www.storycirclebookreviews.org/interviews/patterson.shtml>

Lost Edens is your first book. Tell us about the process of writing it. Why did you feel you had to write it? How did you begin? At what point in the process did you know you had a book?

I have a lot of drawer novels (the kind you write and put in a drawer) but *Lost Edens* is the first book I felt was finished--there came a point when the work to be done was not text generation but editing and I think that's the moment I felt like I had a book. I wrote *Lost Edens* within weeks of where the book starts and so I was very much writing in the moment itself; there was a very clear beginning and then a sequence of events toward an end. The writing was fast and necessary because I was trying to figure out what had just happened to me but I wasn't writing it for an audience. I have always written to help me make sense of the world and I needed that outlet during that time to help make sense of this very specific series of events.

How did you choose the elements of your narrative that you wanted to include in your book? Were these conscious choices, or did you mostly follow the arc of events as they occurred? How much did you shape these events in order to include them in your story?



Sarton Memoir Award

Because I was writing within weeks--certainly within months--of all the events, there was actually very little conscious choice of what made it into the narrative. *Lost Edens* is in its most basic form a simple chronology of events and I didn't leave anything out, particularly in the early chapters. Towards the end, though, decisions did need to be made about how to show, in a short space of time, the work I went through to heal. The decision was made to go back to two different beginnings: the beginning of the marriage in Kansas City and then the beginning of the book and the beginning of a new life in Minneapolis.

The story of *Lost Edens* is not just your story, it is Ben's. Did telling his story present you with any conflicts? Why/why not? If it did, how did you resolve these conflicts?

One of the things that prompted the writing was trying to figure out Ben's story. I didn't know what he was doing, what his motivations were, or what his end goal was. This confusion I think comes out in the book and contributes to a feel of reading a mystery--even for months after the events all of these things were a true mystery to me, particularly his motivation and reasoning for why and what he did. I think because I simply

Continued on page 22

Continued from page 21

related events as they happened I did feel any conflict about whose story this was. I was concerned, though, with protecting his identity and so small details were adjusted (where he worked, what sport he played) and some big ones, too (like his name). I'm confident that anyone currently in his life could read the book and not know the book was about his first marriage.

Many of your readers have described this story as "painful." In writing about pain, we have to deal with the pain of the experienced events, and the re-experiencing of this pain in the writing. How did you deal with this?

That's actually something I'm dealing with now in writing the followup to *Lost Edens*. I'm having to put myself mentally and emotionally back into moments that have long gone. I'm hesitant to do so and it's hard to do so. I often say that I could never again write a story like *Lost Edens* about that time in my life, because now I have the wisdom and experience I gained from going through it. I didn't have that wisdom and hadn't yet learned from the experience when I wrote the narrative. That unknowing and naivete is what makes *Lost Edens* painful for me now.

Writing about our experiences is a way of re-storying them. As we tell the story, a new story (sometimes several different stories) about the past, present, and even the future begins to emerge. Was that true for you?

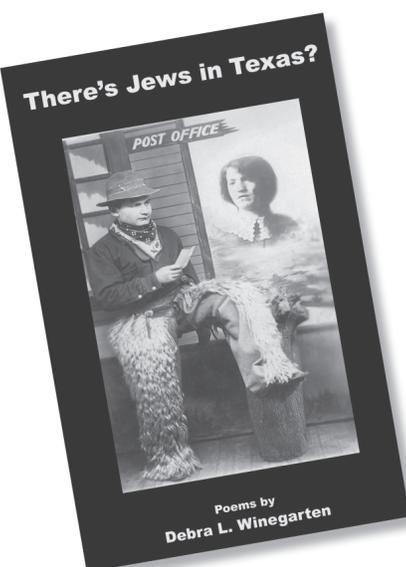
I actually began writing at the encouragement of Dr. Miller, the doctor in my life (and in the book). The idea was that telling the story of what has happened to us helps us to reclaim the events and own them. This was definitely an important thing to me--I wrote so that I could own the events and not be a victim of them.

Tell us about the process of publishing your book, once it was finished. Who is your publisher? How did you discover this publisher? What is the relationship like?

I live in Minneapolis, which is one of the best cities to be in for small presses. I'm literally surrounded by them. I started thinking about publishing at the encouragement of my friend and editor, Sue Greenberg, and realized pretty quickly that I while I was proud of the story and the writing I was also a little hesitant to share it; it felt like living in or dredging up the past. I wanted the publishing process to go as quickly as possible so instead of querying traditional presses I chose a mentor publisher here in Minneapolis. The idea is that the publisher acts in every way like a publisher but the process is completely directed and paid for by the author. The relationship, then, ended once the book went to press.

As the book is being launched, the author faces the challenge (often difficult) of marketing it. How are you approaching this? What's the hardest and/or least attractive part of marketing, for you? The easiest? The most fun?

I have a background in public relations and marketing so I thought that the process of selling the book would be fun--and it is! I learned quickly, though, all of the things that I don't know about the process. I hired Austin literary publicist Stephanie Barko before we even had a final draft of the manuscript. Stephanie was absolutely essential in molding the text (she saved the whole project from a bad edit), securing endorsements, and establishing a solid online presence for the book. I worked closely with Stephanie for over a year and truly believe the project would not have been a success without her involvement. The best part about launching and marketing the book as definitely been the people I've worked with and met.

Who Says Poetry Doesn't Pay?

Debra Winegarten's chapbook, *"There's Jews in Texas?"* won first place in Poetica Magazine's writing contest. Following her beloved mother's advice, she won't quit her day job to pursue her passion for writing -- unless, of course, she sells a million copies. Read a free sample poem from the book on Debra's website, www.sociosights.com -- such a deal, who could resist?

To purchase soft-cover or ebook: www.sociosights.com

The healing that can grow out of the simple act of telling our stories is often quite remarkable. Even more remarkably, this healing is not just our own healing, it is the healing of all women. That's why, as we tell our stories to ourselves, it is also important to share them with others. This sharing brings a sense of kinship, of sisterhood. We understand that we are not alone in our efforts to become conscious, whole, healthy persons.

—Susan Wittig Albert



The LifeWriters Yahoo Group: HerStories, Hugs, and Healing

The SCN LifeWriters Group on Yahoo.com boasts over a hundred members, many who post more than one message a week. This group is very active, and you can join the conversation.

Join Our Supportive Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/scnlifewriters/>

The head of psychiatry at Stanford University is reported to have said that one of the best things a woman could do for her health is to nurture her relationships with her girlfriends. The reason? Women connect with each other differently and provide support systems that help us deal with stress and difficult life experiences. We test this theory every day in our LifeWriters email chat group: sharing experiences and learnings (sweet and painful), boosting spirits, nurturing those who are in a tough place, and sometimes just connecting. Here are a few recent member comments about the importance and value of these connections.

- ✂ The old negative ways of women—competitive, jealous, unsupportive because 'she' might get 'him' and that job first—poison everyone. This alone is enough to cause me to love being a crone: appreciation, sharing and holding each other up. And this wonderful circle is a great example of all the good things about women sharing.
- ✂ I must say that hearing your HerStories and seeing how familial and societal influences have made your struggles in relationships and friendships difficult, I am in awe at how strong this group of women is!
- ✂ I love the idea that we help each other pick up the pieces and put each other back together. And finding a place and a circle of women who hold those pieces gently, and help you find their true spots, rather than imposing their own idea of order, is a gift beyond price.
- ✂ Grateful for all the circles of women, past, present and future, in my life that make so much richer and brighter my own journey—and you are all gems.
- ✂ Sitting here reading this afternoon's threads . . . powerful painful threads . . . I would like to engage in a group hug. I'm picturing us all in a big circle, arms entwined, hearts sharing, love embracing, healing energies dancing, filling.
- ✂ In the time that we've shared the list I've come to have immense respect for the courage and grace with which you met a challenge you would never, ever have chosen. Maybe that should be part of Memorial Day, too--that we acknowledge not only those who have gone on, but those who are still bravely, graciously, here. [A comment for Susan Tweit, who six months before, lost her husband Richard to cancer.]

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- Attend our wonderful events.
- And best of all; join our circle of sisters and share your stories.

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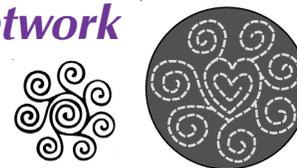


www.cafepress.com/storycircle



Circles: The Heart of Story Circle Network

Where To Begin



by Barbara Lindquist Miller

A Story Circle is a group of women who come together to read, write, and celebrate the stories of their lives. A Circle may be made up of as few as two or three people, or as many as twenty. Each meeting of your Circle will probably include a period of writing, a time for voluntary reading, and discussion. Some Circles have chosen to share a meal or refreshments before they settle down to writing and reading.

“Where do I begin?”

This is the first question voiced by the participants in a six-week writing experience that I am currently facilitating in a local retirement center. Each one of these folks has a driving undercurrent in her life to tell her own story. Many are experienced writers of professional materials as teachers, counselors, nurses, or entrepreneurs. Each realizes that the informational model of writing, bereft of feeling and experiential details, isn't sufficient for transmitting the power of their own life stories.

“So – where do I begin?”

The sacredness of their stories has quickly become clear. The rediscovery of the nuances of past experiences awakens memories long ago packed away for safe keeping. The renewed self-understanding, awakened by reflection and meaning-making, stands these writers tall and proud of the way each has weathered the valleys and soared from the mountain tops of their own life journeys. They are writing sacred text. They are writing first of all for themselves, secondly for family and descendants they will never know. A sense of urgency has emerged in the group to convey to future generations what living during a time of tremendous technological and cultural change has been like.

This is what story circles are all about. Those of us who recently talked together about circles at the “Stories from the Heart” conference in Austin, affirmed for each other the reasons we write our memoirs.

We write for personal empowerment. Remembering our stories helps us discover the threads that have run through

our years. We tell our own side of the story, consciously choosing how it will be told. We find our own voice and have it validated in community. We celebrate our lives and heal as insights arise from memory.

We write to share our personal wisdom. This writing gives us the opportunity to bear witness to the realities of our life choices. Those who come after us will know the values and worldview that informed our lives.

We participate in a writing circle for life support. Because the writing circle is a safe place, where confidentiality is the rule of the day, we find ongoing support as we push ahead with our writing ventures. The circle becomes the place that offers support as we cross the transitional bridges life keeps putting on our path.

Are YOU in a story circle? You can discover the opportunities already available by going to <http://www.storycircle.org/circles.shtml>. No story circle in your area? YOU can facilitate this rediscovery experience for women in your community. The Facilitator's Guide, free for SCN members, gives you ample information and material to get you started. Once begun, the stories become the engine for ongoing life of the circle.

YOU can give other women the chance to tell their own unique and personal stories. YOU can be the catalyst for growth of women as writers, as witnesses to the power of women's stories. We now have in place a mentor program for new circle facilitators. Contact me at circles@storycircle.org with any questions or to secure a mentor to work with for a year.



SCN Sugar Bowl Scholarships

Story Circle Network empowers women to tell their stories, discover their identities through their stories and choose to be the authors of their own lives. We're in our 14th year of helping women find their voices. Sugar Bowl Scholarships help our members in need pay their annual dues and participate in some of our programs.

Why not become a contributor to this worthwhile program? To add your contribution to our Sugar Bowl Scholarship Fund, send a check to: Sugar Bowl, Story Circle Network, PO Box 500127, Austin, TX 78750-0127. You may also donate on the SCN website at www.storycircle.org/frmdonate.shtml.

2011 Millwood Collection



The Millwood Collection was written and self-published by The Millwood Circle.

Pictured: bottom left to right: Connie Katusak, Dianna McDaniel, middle left to right: Jane Steig Parsons, Barbara Lindquist Miller, Jacqueline Newman, back row left to right: Sandra Passman Tesch, Eleanor Jane Clarke

All about the 2011 Millwood Collection

by Jacqueline Newman
Millwood Circle Group Leader

Our Millwood Writing Circle has remained the same group of memoir collecting-writing-sharing ladies for nearly seven years. Over the years, we became not only more sophisticated in our writing styles, but also more trusting in sharing our lives' sorrows, regrets, and tears.

Along the way we took time to laugh and rejoice over many humorous and happy occasions that we wrote about. We were surprised at how universal our feelings and emotions were, as we wrote about and shared some of our deepest and most basic beliefs; especially those concerning how we grew up and why we turned out the way we did.

During a discussion early in 2011, we all realized that we'd collectively written dozens of stories about our lives. Thus, a new project was born. We decided that each of us would contribute up to ten stories to what would become The 2011 Millwood Collection.

It would have been magical thinking to believe that this could be as simple as gathering ten stories from each of us, although I must admit, I suffered from a "wee" bit of such thinking when I agreed to take charge of this project. But, there we were, committed. We agonized about choosing our stories, edited them for everything from content to spelling and grammar, print style and size, formatting, table of contents, copyrights, etc.

Although, without the inspiration and motivation we gave to and received from each other, it's doubtful we would have worked so diligently on preparing our individual sets of stories for the Collection. I know I wouldn't have.

We had the books printed at Office Depot and used 8.5 x 11 good quality paper. There were over two hundred pages in each book. Our only exceptions to white paper and black print were the two colored photos of our group and the red spiral bindings.

I admit we were all very excited and pleased with the end results.

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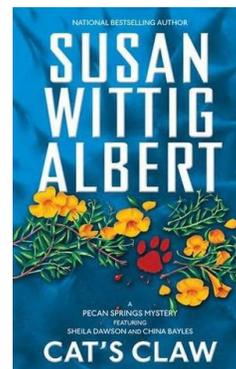
Order these titles and many more through the SCN website at:

www.storycircle.org/susansbooks.shtml

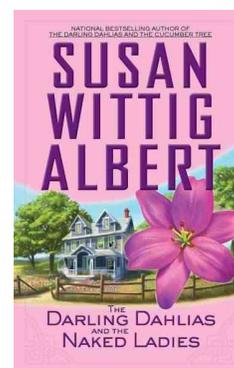
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"As a writer, I learned that place goes beyond setting. Albert shows how place grows from the roots of history and extends beyond the borders of home. There is place in union and in solitude, in self and spirit, in heart and intellect. And through it all, we are together and alone."
~Womensmemoirs.com~



"Quirkly, enlightening and suprisingly profound...an absolute delight to read: head and shoulders above most other amateur whodunits."
~Ransom Notes~



"[Albert] brings a small Southern town to live and vividly captures an era and culture--the Depression, segregation, class differences, the role of women in the South--with authentic period details. Her book fairly sizzles with the strength of the women of Darling." ~Library Journal~



photo by James Bland

Have You Put Your Happiness on Hold?

Have You Traded In Your Bluebird of Happiness for a Crappy Pigeon?

A Writing from Life Workshop:
with Jeanne Guy, The Great Self-Proclaimed Re-Story Expert

October 6, 2012, 9am-4pm
Family Life Center (Epiphany classroom), First United Methodist Church
1300 Lavaca St, Austin TX 78701

It's as if everyone has a built-in, happiness-now button, which can instantly change how they feel, no matter what's going on in their lives. But for many, most of the time, they prefer not to push it. Go on, push it real good.

—*The Universe* (www.tut.com)

Rethink, Reframe, Re-Story Your Life!

Gretchen Rubin in her #1 New York Times Bestseller *The Happiness Project*, posts a weekly video on her website about some "Pigeon of Discontent" that a reader has raised. "Because," as she says, "as much as we try to find the Bluebird of Happiness, we're also plagued by the Pigeons of Discontent."

Might you have a few pigeons of discontent in your life, flying too close overhead? Where are all those bluebirds of happiness anyway?

In this one-day workshop, Jeanne Guy will use her Re-Story Circle method to help us find out why a bluebird in the hand is worth way more than those two pigeons in the bush.

A Re-Story Circle is a safe structure for deep conversation, and for generating ideas through writing prompts to "re-story" your life. Re-storying means looking at your life, your story, as it is currently constituted and reframing it. A Re-Story Circle is a place where you can feel nurtured, supported and empowered—in community.

What to expect in the workshop: writing, sharing, listening, laughing, reframing, lunching, collaging and more! See <http://www.storycircle.org/Workshops/> for full details.

Join Jeanne as she leads us on an exploration of self-discovery to help us all rethink, reframe and re-story our lives.

Tentative Workshop Schedule

9-9:30am: Coffee & registration

9:30am-noon: Session I

noon-1pm: Lunch: provided on-site with the workshop fee. Those with special dietary needs should contact the conference coordinator ahead of time to make special arrangements.

1-4pm Session II

Registration Information:

Date: Saturday, October 6, 9am-4pm

Location: Family Life Center (Epiphany classroom), First United Methodist Church, 1300 Lavaca St, Austin TX 78701

Cost: \$95 for dues-paying Story Circle Network members, \$140 for non-members (which includes a one-year SCN membership). The registration fee covers the cost of instruction, lunch, coffee/tea, & handout materials.

Enrollment is limited so that we can allow all participants time to share. Please register early via our online enrollment form at <http://www.storycircle.org/frmenroll.php>

Registration/Payment Deadline: Friday, September 28. We must receive your registration and payment by this date!

SCHOLARSHIP for FOOD! We are offering a full scholarship to this event for someone good at organizing, who will be asked to bring snacks, set up the coffee and snack table, call in lunch orders, and pick the lunches up. The cost of food and beverages will be covered by Story Circle Network. This person will miss part of the session just before lunch and will need to arrive half an hour early to set up and stay after for half an hour to oversee the cleanup. Interested? Please email us at wfl@storycircle.org.

About Jeanne:

After a successful 25-year career in administrative office management and business development, Jeanne Guy (Austin, TX) of Jeanne Guy Workshops re-storied her life. As an educator and writer for over 15 years, she now helps people explore and change their lives. In her former life, she managed architects. Now she's married to one and says she needs all the help she can get. And she's found it—through re-storying her life daily.

Witty, insightful and knowledgeable, Jeanne uses her irreverent sense of humor, coupled with her encouraging and experiential facilitation style, to create a safe space for participants to reshape their lives through the power and practice of journal writing.

Jeanne is a graduate of Indiana University and Leadership Austin, and is a Story Circle Network board member. She is currently writing *Gone: A Memoir*, the story of how her children were stolen from her and how she stole them back.

As the Great Self-Proclaimed Re-Story Expert, it's her goal in life to hear people say, "That woman is weird but she does seem to be enjoying herself."

<http://www.storycircle.org/Workshops>

 <p><input type="checkbox"/> This membership is a gift.</p>	<h2>Join the Story Circle Network!</h2> <p>Annual Membership:</p> <p>____ USA: \$45</p> <p>____ Canada & Mexico: \$55 (International MO)</p> <p>____ International \$60 (International MO)</p> <p>____ Internet Chapter: \$20/yr (in addition to your national dues)</p> <p>____ Sample copy of the <i>Story Circle Journal</i>: \$5</p>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Make your check to Story Circle Network PO Box 500127 Austin TX 78750-0127</p> </div> <p style="text-align: right;">06/12</p>
	<p>My name and address:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____ Amount enclosed _____</p>	
<p>My phone and e-mail:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Become a supporting member and help Story Circle Network grow. Check here:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Friend <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> \$225 Sustainer <input type="checkbox"/> \$400+ Benefactor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Donor <input type="checkbox"/> \$175 Contributor <input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Patron</p>		

Be Our Guest!

To introduce all women to the benefits of becoming a member of the Story Circle Network, we offer FREE workshops of interest to women in our area. Bring a friend, enjoy our programs, and find out about our upcoming workshops and projects to help women everywhere tell their stories. Read on for the details of our next event.

Speaker: Debra Winegarten
Program: "Turning Grief into Gorgeous Poetry"
Date/Time: Thursday, September 13, 7 - 9 pm
Location: Garrison Chapel, Family Life Center, First United Methodist Church
 1300 Lavaca St., Austin, TX



Debra L. Winegarten is author of *There's Jews in Texas?*, the recent winner of *Poetica Magazine's* Chapbook Contest, her fourth book and first book of poetry. Ed Madden, in his book review said, "How do we know who we are? When you're a minority, everyone else likes to define you. When you're a little Jewish girl in 1960s Dallas, they tell you you're going to hell, your prayers are better, and you have perfect pitch—and you wonder why they put your locker next to the locker of the only black kid in the class. Debra Winegarten's poems are sharp, sometimes poignant, sometimes funny, but always on the mark when it comes to our difficult understanding (and self-understanding) of difference."

Story Circle's own Judith Helburn has this to say about Debra's book:

There's Jews in Texas? is a chapbook, winner of the 2011 Chapbook Contest of *Poetica Magazine*. Only 36 pages, this book of poetry is funny, introspective and full of observations both of her and by her. She begins

with some second grade experiences: one of a man on the street telling her she would be going to Hell because she was Jewish and another of a teacher telling her she had a direct line to God, also because she was Jewish. Other poems tell of her missing her mother, of innocents dying because of their religion, of daring to say prayers in a synagogue in Cairo after being told that praying was not allowed.

Each poem is a short life story, understandable to anyone. Winegarten will make you smile. She will cause you to pause and think.

Debra reports that her mother once advised her as a writer "not to quit her day job." "But Mom," she protested, "I don't have a day job!" "Then get one," her mother said. So she did. Now she works for the Department of Astronomy at UT Austin, where she is the First Undersecretary of the American Astronomical Society. By night, she writes.

<http://www.storycircle.org/beourguest.php>

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FREE Be Our Guest Event

For members and non-members!
September 13, 7-9 pm, in Austin.
Details on page 27

True Words: Looking Ahead

Submit your work directly to the website at:

<http://www.storycircle.org/members/frmjournalsubmission.shtml>.

Future Topics and deadlines for upcoming Journals are:

September, 2012 (due July 15)—A Harvest Story with Recipe
December, 2012 (due Oct 15)—Country Roads/City Highways
March, 2013 (due Feb 15)—Silence

In September, you may include a recipe with your Harvest Story and increase your word count from 350 words to 500 words total. You can use that word limit however you choose for your piece: for example, a long recipe may require a shorter story, or vice versa. Your submission will be considered as long as the total number of words for both story and recipe is 500 or less.

If you send in a story without a recipe, the limit will remain at our usual 350 words. If you have questions, contact me at scn.truewords@gmail.com.

Looking forward to sharing your harvest stories....*Mary Jo*

Advertising with Story Circle Network

As you plan the marketing campaign for your book, writing program, or writing-related workshop or conference, please consider Story Circle as a partner in your promotional efforts. Story Circle provides a unique voice and a wide range of services for women readers and writers. Partnering with us allows you to target your promotion efforts and take advantage of SCN's growing reputation in the international community of women writers. Depending on your budget, you can choose from five packages.

Here's where you can advertise:
StoryCircleBookReviews pages
National and StoryCircleBookReviews e-letters
Combo Ads on the SCRB website AND in the e-letters
Quarterly Story Circle Network Journal
Annual True Words Anthology

NOTE: SCN dues-paying members receive a 15% discount off of the total advertising amount due.

For details and submission forms visit:
<http://www.storycircle.org/frmadvertising.php>

