



STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL

Vol. 16 No. 3, September 2012

The newsletter for women with stories to tell

Congratulations to the Winners of the 2012 Susan Wittig Albert Life Writing Competition

by Pat LaPointe

SCN is proud to announce the winners of our thirteenth annual Susan Wittig Albert Life Writing Competition! The judges were faced with a major challenge as they sorted through 33 entries on the topic of "Solitude" (suggested by our SCN President, Pat LaPointe). We invited writers to reflect on the following: 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.

The first place winner for 2012 is **Janet Lucy of Santa Barbara, CA for her story "Adieu, Solitude."** The second place prize goes to **Debra Davis of Cle Elum, WA for "Waltzing Alone in the Garden."** **Peggy Christian of Missoula, MT took third place for "Climbing Narahoe"**, with fourth place held by **Bonnie Frazier of Brookings, OR for "Attitude Adjustment."** The winners received cash prizes and their pieces appear both in this journal and on the website at: www.storycircle.org/Contests/winners.shtml

The contest would not have been possible without the many hours of reading and reflection by our 18 wonderful volunteer judges. Thanks to all of you and to my co-chair, Peggy Moody, for her terrific organizational skills and web wonder-working. Thanks also to all the participants for your wonderful stories and the hard work you put in to writing them down. I encourage all of you to keep writing and consider entering again next year.

If you did not enter the contest this year, I encourage you to explore the topic of "solitude" in your own writing. It is an especially rich and rewarding one; one that has many different meanings. And do consider entering the contest next summer. Win or lose, you will have a honed piece of writing you can be proud of.

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Sarton Memoir Award
Submissions Due
December 7!



- September 13:
- September 15:
- September 17:
- October 6:
- October 8:
- October 15 :
- December 7:
- March 8-10, 2013:

- Be Our Guest with Debra Winegarten
- Anthology Submissions Due
- Back-to-School with SCN's Online Classes
- Writing from Life Workshop with Jeanne Guy
- Donna Remmert Book Talk and Signing
- True Words Submissions for December Journal
- Sarton Memoir Award Entries Due
- LifeLines Lifewriting Retreat

Letter From SCN's President—



Start Something New

“School days, School days....” I was one of those kids considered to be “odd” because I loved that song. Actually it wasn’t the song I loved. It was the idea of going back to school in September. I guess today I’d be considered a nerd or geek. But I got butterflies in my stomach when I went to the drugstore (it was many, many years before Walmart or Target) to pick out new notebooks with their pristine covers and seams still intact. Trying on my new uniform had me shaking with anticipation.

I am only able to reveal this “dark side” because of what I’ve learned over the years since elementary and high school. In talking with other women writers I found that many of them were weird too. So many of them willingly disclosed their weirdness; their love for starting school each year.

It’s been a long time since my school days, but something still stirs in me when I see the school supplies displayed at the store. It stirs the desire to find one of those pristine notebooks and start something new: a writing project or perhaps to fill the pages with notes on a topic I choose to study.

But enough about me. I am calling out to anyone who shares my September excitement to allow it to move you to start something new: a writing project that you can share with other writers, forming a writing circle, joining a writing circle or taking an online course. It will be like starting school: new classmates, new ideas and the opportunity for new rewards.

~Pat LaPointe
President, Story Circle Network

Speaking of back-to-school,
get in on Story Circle
Network’s online classes! See
the list on page 8, and visit:

www.storycircleonlineclasses.org



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

The quarterly newsletter of Story Circle Network, 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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We welcome your letters, queries,
and suggestions.

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

Adieu, Solitude

by Janet Lucy, Santa Barbara CA

Solitude
arrived unbidden
with Sorrow in tow,
retrieved from her nightly forays
amongst bony trees and sinewy shadows
barefoot, no buttons or soles,
just a pale gossamer gown
holy and haunted
by too many naked dreams.

I opened the old paned door
and let them in together,
then drew a long hot bath
to soak away Sorrow's sadness
in coarse sea salt and the essence
of rose oil

while Solitude and I
retreated to the living room
and began our nightly rituals:
turning the dimmers down low;
lighting one lone white pillar
or a row of six singular votives
in clear aquamarine glass,
flames fluttering across the altar
like tiny angel wings;
pouring the mystical wine,
ruby red or the color of fading sunlight.

In time the sadness lifted
from the antique claw-foot tub,
and Sorrow found her way
back to the sea
diving
deep
to slip sacred sand
inside an oyster shell,
leaving me
with Solitude
to discover the alchemy.

Solitude,
you have wooed and courted me,
keeping constant time
we've sat in silence
and strolled side by side,
divining a delight—
ful new rhythm
you've infused and inspired me,
stirring up and teasing my idled imagination.

Now I'm feeling aroused
wild inside, totally free
and more alive
than ever.

Tonight
I bid you adieu, Solitude
in gratitude
for your ardent companionship.
For so long I believed you were mine
alone, and always
and now I know
we've had our time
and you must go, first
before I do.
Eventually, I'll be packing too—

I've kept a few things to remember you:
dove-gray cashmere socks darned from fall mourning clouds;
a leather coin purse filled with luminous pearls
of evening stars, full moons, and winter sunrises;
and sprigs of springtime lavender pressed inside

the book of poetry
you gave me when you first arrived
last summer.



About the LifeWriting Contest Winning Authors:

Janet Lucy is the Founder/Director of "Women's Creative Network" (WCN) in Santa Barbara, California, a consulting business providing personal and professional development through writing. She is the author of *Moon, Mother, Moon Daughter: Myths and Rituals that Celebrate a Girl's Coming of Age* (Second Edition, Publishing by the Seas 2011) and has been a contributor to *Mothering*, *Natural Solutions*, *The Sun*, *Real Travel*, and *Skirt!* magazines. Poetry, which she discovered through the gifts of Lorraine Mejia and Story Circle Network, is her new passion.

Debra Davis is a writer, artist and naturalist who has spent 31 consecutive seasons working around the Pacific Northwest as a forestry technician. For 21 seasons, she has hiked the central Cascades of Washington as a member of a backcountry trail crew. Interested in human interaction with the natural world, Davis brings field experience and curiosity to her written and drawn observations. Her blog is *Fieldwork*: <http://dedavisart.wordpress.com>

Peggy Christian is a writer, photographer and naturalist living in Montana. She is the author of a number of children's books, she blogs (<http://www.backwoodsandbeyond.com>) about the natural world and our relationship to it and is currently working on a memoir about death entitled *Memento Mori*. Beyond writing she teaches yoga, has a huge garden, cans and preserves veges and game, raises bees and chickens, hikes, skis, and is training for a marathon. She does volunteer work for the Native Plant Society and a number of conservation organizations.

Bonnie Frazier. The idea of a pioneer, homesteading lifestyle has always appealed to me, although in recent years ease and leisure have become more of a priority. Still, I love to try my hand at making stuff myself, including growing and canning produce, sewing, knitting, and making soap. I love to sing, read, camp and kayak. I taught 6th grade for a few years. I have 3 grown children, one of whom is autistic. I live with my husband, son, and 2 cats in a small coastal town in southern Oregon.

Waltzing Alone in the Garden

by Debra Davis, Cle Elum WA

"Gardening is an instrument of grace." —May Sarton

Right now it is nearly dark, windows open to the midsummer twilight. Cool air filters into the house after a humid overcast day. Traffic sounds, voices, wind chimes reach my ears.

Wilted flowers were carried out to the compost pile earlier today, and no fresh ones were brought in. Only the 'Escargot' begonia in its terra cotta pot and a jumble of pine cones decorate the table across the room from my writing corner. I'll gather flowers for the house in the morning. Like the poet May Sarton, I like to look up at a bouquet while writing in my journal.

My hands are clean but roughened from a day in the garden. This morning I climbed into a faded pair of work pants and a soft old T-shirt, clipped the curls up off my neck, slipped my feet into flip-flops and stepped out the open door. Sunshine poured into the garden, brightening the colors and textures and burgeoning life. Billows of purple catmint enticed honeybees to sip at the tiny tubular flowers. Bees made golden sparks around the hive, single-minded in their travels to and fro. The first peach-colored poppy has opened, and other fat buds are near to bursting. Penstemons, creamy daisies, bright clove pinks, lamb's ears, lavender—all flowering now or promising to bloom soon. I walked under the arbor, pleased by the arching canes of the 'New Dawn' rose and the tangle of honeysuckle. Stately gold and purple irises leaned toward the path, where my feet were cushioned by a mat of fragrant woolly thyme.

This is my creation, my refuge. The garden began as my solace after the divorce seven years ago. As my hands dug and sifted the weedy compacted soil, flowers and food grew in my wake. A little at a time, structure appeared in the form of raised beds and pathways. Plants were salvaged from other places, brought home from my grandma's yard, thoughtfully selected from catalogs. Some didn't make it. Some did too well, and the tapestry of plants continues to evolve and change. A couple years ago, the garden held me when I came home from the hospital after heart failure. Too weak to dig or plant, all I could do was rest out there. That spring Nashville warblers came back to sing in the pussywillow tree while I convalesced in the sunlight. As the days passed I grew stronger. In tending the garden, I tended myself. By allowing the kind of unbidden growth that accepts violas and larkspurs traveling randomly around the garden, so too did I allow new ideas and feelings take root. As my heart healed, it opened.

I am alone but not lonely. I am a woman who is not afraid of her own company. Drawn to wild places since childhood, I've spent a lifetime outdoors. Solitude is not the same as isolation, as I learned on a lookout tower in the Idaho mountains. The nearest human habitation was fifty miles away on bad roads. Creatures of all sorts came and went on that mountaintop, from flies buzzing at the windowpanes to mountain goats below, and once a large owl that circled the tower one evening at dusk. Air was always in motion, and wind sang in the guywires. Since those times in my twenties, I have perched alone on remote peaks in the Cascade Range to watch wildfires and weather, grand panoramas unfolding moment by moment. Even then I've never been completely cut off, since a two-way radio

connects me to the voices of other humans. I may not see anyone for days, but I talk and listen.

The solitude of creative work is familiar. It calls to me just as the mountains call to me. The making of paintings and prose comes from a source deep within myself, and I have not yet found a way to share this experience with another person. Generating words and images is solitary and rarely exact. I go out and come back much like a honeybee, finding a route to the flower and coming back drunk on the pollen of mystery. There is no way to understand or explain how or why this is, so I have stopped trying.

And I have known the withdrawal into the dim fog of depression, disappearing so completely that those around me don't even know I'm gone. This is the deepest most mysterious wilderness of all, the slippage of time and space and self. It goes beyond solitude. It is separation, isolation, desolation. I feel it most in the winter, when the garden lies dormant under a frozen blanket of snow and the bees are huddled deep in their hive. Slowly the earth tilts back toward the sun and as spring returns, so do I.

This is the waltz we dance all of our lives, the one-two-three slide while leaning into the arms of Intimacy or Solitude. We are always dancing between spending time with self and spending time with others. We can't help but follow the rhythm and tempo of our own unique song. We hear the symphony of seasons, the music of stardust and sunlight. We go away and we come back. For some of us, the ballroom needs to be a big place and there must be doors that open to the outside.

I could not begin to draw a map of my thoughts as I spend the day waltzing alone in my garden. My hands are busy plucking weeds, smoothing soil, wielding tools. I kneel to lean forward, then rock back on my heels. A flutter of wings in the cherry tree catches my eye. The cat strolls out from his nap spot to stretch and roll in the dirt. Fresh lettuce for my supper salad crosses my mind. When to stake the tomato plants? Who will water the garden for me in two weeks when I go to the wilderness for my job? How is it to be 52 years old, a solo woman living in a small house in a small town, growing a garden? Is this enough? What does it mean for this to be enough? What does it feel like to stand in my integrity, to live my truth in the world?

It must feel a lot like this. Even though I am not at this moment relating to another human being, I feel completely connected and present. Perhaps it's true that feeling separate from the world is an illusion. Where does this garden stop and I begin?

A swallowtail butterfly alights on a penstemon and delicately probes a slender blue tube, I pull a radish and carry it into the house. There will be salad for supper, and time to scrub my hands and dirty toes. Time to watch the bees in the long evening as swallows scissor the air in graceful loops above the house. And then time to come inside and write.

The song never ends, nor does the waltz.

Climbing Narahoe

by Peggy Christian, Missoula MT

In 1996 my husband, two sons and I moved to New Zealand for three years. It was an adventure, exciting, intriguing, incredible. But it was also disorienting, confusing and overwhelming. Uprooting our family, moving to the other end of the earth...I had nothing familiar to navigate by. I didn't know the names of the plants or trees or what their habits were. Moss did not grow on the north side of the tree trunks, it encircled them and covered the ground. No Big Dipper, no North Star. And my children, without the family and childhood friends they had grown up with needed more from me than sometimes I had to give.

In Montana I can spend weeks without seeing anyone outside the family. But in New Zealand I was meeting new people every day, trying to navigate a new culture and a new set of meanings for old familiar words. Hardest of all was living in the city, in a house so close to the neighbor that I knew his digestive problems long before I recognized his face.

When it finally became too overwhelming I took off on a week long backpacking trip around Ruapehu and Narahoe—the belching volcanoes that created the North Island. It was the first time I had been backpacking without my family. And I gloried in the freedom of it. Not having to keep pace with my 6'4" husband—not worrying whether the kids were bored or tired or hungry. If I wanted to spend an hour sitting under a tree in silence I could. If I wanted to wander off the trail I did. I could take the time to look around and get my bearings and explore whatever caught my eye.

On the third day out I awoke at the base of Narahoe—a perfect cone shaped mountain whose sides are shingled with slate. And I decided I needed to climb it.

Why? Perhaps I needed to prove to myself that I was still young enough and strong enough to do it. Perhaps I thought I needed to accomplish something tangible on this trip. Perhaps just because it was there.

A switchbacked trail wound two thirds of the way up the mountain. It was steep and hot and my legs ached, but the way was clear and well defined. I trudged on, resting when I got discouraged, angry at myself for not being in better shape, worried about what the hikers who passed me thought. Still, I pushed on, with an eye on the top of the peak, gauging how far I'd come and how far I had to go.

And then, suddenly, the trail ended in a scree field—a scree field that was the top one third of the mountain. I tried going straight up, but for every step up, I slid back as far. I searched for some sign of the trail—of the right way to go. All the other hikers had disappeared. I got down on my hands and knees and scrambled, abrading my palms and slicing small cuts in my knees. It was slow going and every few feet I had to stop to catch my breath. I kept going until my water ran out and there was no shade anywhere on the bare peak and still I had a long ways to go.

I sat down and thought, I can quit. I don't have to do this. No one will even know or care if I give up. And this is just too hard.

Then I heard a voice from the top lip of the crater. It was woman's voice, speaking English, but with a heavy German

accent. "Keep coming dear. It's a struggle I know, but it's worth it." I looked up and saw a white haired couple staring down at me.

"Is there a trail?" I asked.

"I'm afraid not. You just have to do the best you can."

"I don't think I can go much farther," I yelled up, trying to look pathetic and hoping they would come down, take my pack, help me up. But of course they didn't.

"The rocks are sharp. I'm getting cut."

"Yes, it hurts doesn't it. It must be really painful." I waited for them to say the pain goes away but they didn't. They just sat there, occasionally throwing down encouragements.

"You have a half hour until the sun will reach the rim. It should be beautiful."

I wished they would just go away and let me head back down the mountain, but still they sat there. Oh Hell, I thought, maybe they at least have water.

So I started to crawl up the rest of that God dammed peak on my hands and feet, bruising my knees and shins every time my foot slipped, shredding my hands on the knife sharp rocks. Tears dripping off the end of my nose I crawled up, hating them for being there, for having done something I was struggling so hard to do, hating myself for all my inadequacies and limitations and weaknesses.

After awhile my mind went numb. I stopped thinking about them and about getting to the top. It was all I could do to find a stable rock to push my foot on to, or a larger rock that wouldn't slip away when I grasp it with my fingers.

And then something deeper than thought took over—a body memory that turned my feet sideways to the hill and I stood and looked across, not up the slope, traversing back and forth across the scree. Once I looked up to the rim, to see if the German couple was still there, but there was no sign of them. I really could quit now I thought, but looking up threw me off balance as I teetered on the broken rocks. So I dropped my gaze and just kept side-hilling the slope. I began noticing how each rock was different. Some of the shapes could be fit together like puzzle pieces, some hinted at the shape of something else. Splashes of yellow and pale green lichen decorated some of them and mica chips glinted in the sun like snow crystals somehow frozen into once liquid rock.

And then, quite unexpectedly, I had reached the top. I looked around and found myself all alone. There was no one there to take my picture, arms raised in triumph to prove that I'd done it. So I found a large boulder to rest my camera on and set the timer. Behind me the sun hit the rim of the crater—a fiery red that turned the water into a lake of molten lava. I didn't know if I stood on the edge of heaven or hell.

When I got the picture back weeks later all you can see is the faint black outline of a human figure backlit against the flaming clouds, tiny next to the immensity of the crater and the sky and sweep of land in the far distance. It could be anybody, anybody at all.

Attitude Adjustment

by Bonnie Frazier, Brookings OR

He's gone. Ah. Peace. And silence. I close my eyes and let it wrap around me like soft silk. He's gone, and I feel nothing but relief. Sweet, sweet relief.

He's gone and I'm alone. Now what? Though I've looked forward to this for weeks, I've made no plans. The time is a treasure I don't want to waste, but what should I do with it? I could just sit and read. I might make a cup of tea and amble around my garden. I could be more energetic and pull some weeds. But no. I can do those things when he's here. Maybe I should call a friend and go to lunch. No. I don't want to share this delicious quiet with anyone. I want it to just be me savoring the silence. All day. All alone. No routine. No interruptions.

Some things I won't be doing. I won't be fixing his baloney and cheese sandwich for lunch every day, or listening to him chatter about the grand schemes and visions in his head that only he can see. I won't be helping him find a treasure he's lost, or repairing something he's damaged, or helping him avert some other major catastrophe in his life.

I'm beginning to feel guilty for enjoying his absence. And yet, I'm not sure I AM enjoying it. I keep thinking about him. He's been a major part of my life, a part I never expected, since practically forever. I'm certain he's not thinking about me, though. He's been gone before, and when I've asked him if he missed me, he's always said no.

I can't help worrying about him. I always do when he's away from me. Is he eating enough? Is he getting along with the people around him? Is he warm enough? Is he having fun? I camp by the phone, in case he gets sick or hurt or homesick. In case he needs me.

Oh, no. Now I'm missing him. When he's gone it's easy to forget how aggravating his routines and repetitive behaviors can be. How inflexible he is and how easily agitated. When he's home, it's easy to forget that he can't help any of that. He can't stop his obsessive behaviors, or help it that he's autistic. He can't change what he is or the way his mind works.

As much as I relish my times of freedom from him, I know he wants and needs respite from me even more. What kind of a life is it for a 30 year old man, having to live with his parents, dependent on them for his every need? He'd learn to drive if he could, move into his own apartment, attend college. If he could. But those things, and many others that "normal" folks

do, are "nevers" for him. He's stuck with me and his dad. Except this week. This week he's gone to camp, one for adults with special needs, one filled with non-stop activities and fun and being a regular guy. It's the best week of the year for him, better than Christmas, his birthday, and grandparent visits all rolled into one. The best part of it, he says, is that there are no parents there. It's his vacation from me.

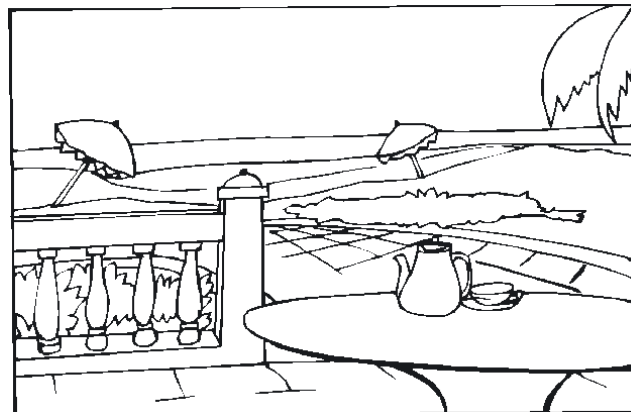
He's gone and it's my vacation from him, too. He may be annoying and hard to get along with at times, (I may be, myself!), but when he's gone I forget about those things. Instead, I remember how funny and charming he can be. Like flipping pages through an old photo album, I think back over incidents of his life. It makes me giggle thinking about how he'd climb into my lap and purr like a kitten when he was a toddler. I can't recall how his lifelong love of vacuums started, but I'll never forget his excitement on his 5th birthday when all the aides in his classroom brought their vacuums to school for him to see, and how his favorite conversation starter at that age was, "What color is your vacuum?" I loved his Christmas Eve comment one year, when he NEEDED to be the first to open a present, because, as he told the family, "I'm the most important one." I smile when I think how tickled he gets when the networks bleep out bad words on his favorite TV shows. I can't see crows without picturing his delight in "scramming" them or seeing one doing what he calls the "full-body caw." When I pull up next to a pick-up truck at an intersection, I imagine him telling me that it's a "big fat stinking diesel." Tomorrow morning at 6:18 I'll wonder why it irritates me when at that exact time every day he clumps down the stairs and asks me how the cats are doing, exact same words, exact same intonation every single time.

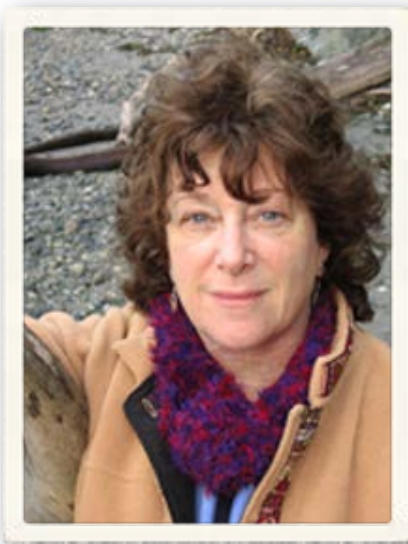
He's gone, but just for one week. And I've used up most of it thinking about him. My initial relief is now tempered by loneliness for him. My life and my heart are filled with him, and I didn't even realize how much until he was gone. He'll come home exhausted by his week of excitement and activity, ready to get back to his routines. I'll be here waiting, refreshed by my week of quiet and peace, ready to go on investing my energy into improving his quality of life.

When he gets home there will only be 51 more weeks until it's time for camp again, with no parents there. Ah. I can't wait!

"Being solitary is being alone well: being alone luxuriously immersed in doings of your own choice, aware of the fullness of your own presence rather than of the absence of others. Because solitude is an achievement."

~Alice Koller

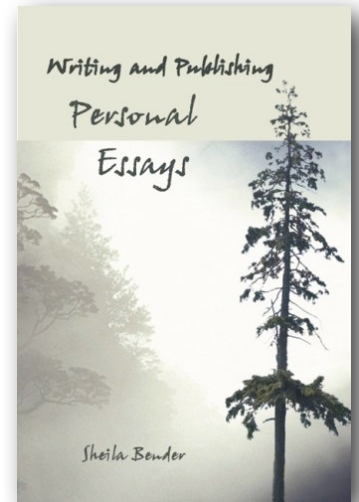




LifeLines: A Story Circle LifeWriting Retreat

with Sheila Bender

March 8-10, 2013
Festival Hill, Round Top TX



What if we really talked with each other, & listened to each other, & held each others' stories as sacred information that could transform our lives?

What if we learned to shape the stories of our lives as containers for our experience & an expression of our heart's greatest desires?

What if we wrote what we had learned & took it home with us as a guide to realizing our dreams & hopes?

Writing our past in the present can be a life line to a future filled with hope.

Join us for a women-only weekend lifewriting retreat, led by Sheila Bender, at the beautiful Festival Hill.



About the Retreat: "Write! Write! Write! Learn Tools Experts Use and Enhance Your Life Writing"

Spend a weekend with Sheila Bender, founder of Writing It Real, and fill your notebook or laptop with personal essays, vignettes, and poetry that you can incorporate into your ongoing life-writing projects. Sheila offers guided practice with writer's tools for using imagery, lyric sound, dialog, forms of organization and much more. Using Sheila's much talked about gentle, yet empowering three-step responding method, you'll discover your writing's depth, purpose and insight. Her mantra concerning work-in-progress is this: there is no such thing as bad writing, only the opportunity for good writing. Join us for a weekend of writing and sharing to discover those opportunities.

About the Facilitator: Sheila Bender

Sheila is a poet and essayist best known for her books on writing instruction, such as *Writing in a New Convertible with the Top Down*, *Writing Personal Essays*, *Keeping a Journal You Love*, and several others. Her most recent book, *A New Theology: Turning to Poetry in a Time of Grief*, is her most personal: it is a memoir chronicling how reading and writing poetry helped her move through grief after the death of her son.

Sheila has devoted most of her career to the teaching of writing and the improvement of writing instruction. In addition to her nine books on writing, she has written instructional articles for *Writer's Digest* and *The Writer* magazines. She is the founder of Writing It Real through which she provides an on-line writing magazine, offers individual and group writing instruction as well as offering writing conferences in Port Townsend, Washington and many other sites across the country. She is also a regular instructor, panelist and presenter at writing and educational conferences nation-wide. She has recently been an instructor for several Story Circle on-line classes. Read more on her website at <http://writingitreal.com>

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



Sarton Memoir Award

Sarton Memoir Award

Honoring Women's Lives

The award is named in honor of May Sarton (1912-1995), distinguished American poet, novelist, and author of twelve memoirs and journals. It is sponsored by the Story Circle Network.

2011 Winners

Leila Levinson

Gated Grief: The Daughter of a GI Concentration Camp Liberator Discovers a Legacy of Trauma (Cable Publishing, 2011). *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.

Jamie Patterson

Lost Edens: A True Story (Beaver's Pond Press, 2011). A memoir of a failed marriage and abandoned dreams, *Lost Edens* helps us understand that while some relationships are too broken to fix, we can change our stories and thereby transform our lives.

About the 2012 Award

The winning author's name and the title of her book will be announced on the Story Circle Network websites and to its extensive email list in March, 2013. She will be invited to attend and be honored at Stories from the Heart, the biannual SCN National Memoir Conference, Austin TX, April, 2014. Her book will be featured in SCN publications and websites throughout 2013.

Want to enter your memoir? Visit the website for full details: <http://www.storycircle.org/SartonMemoirAward/>

www.storycircle.org/SartonMemoirAward/

Fall, 2012 Online LifeWriting Classes for Women

Memoir and Lifewriting:

- Words In Place: Reconnecting to Nature Through Creative Writing
(October 1-October 22, 2012)
- Writing Travel Essays: Your Inner Wanderer at Large in the World
(September 17-October 22, 2012)
- Mothers and Others: Fleshing Out Our Families on the Page (Part 1)
(September 17-October 15, 2012)
- Mothers and Others: Fleshing Out Our Families on the Page (Part 2)
(October 15-November 12, 2012)
- The Art of Self: Memoir
(September 17-November 12, 2012)

Journaling & Self-Discovery:

- Journaling through the Flow of Money
(September 17-November 12, 2012)
- Journaling for Memoir Writers 1
(September 17-October 15, 2012)
- Journaling for Memoir Writers 2
(October 15-November 12, 2012)

Sharpening Skills:

- Writing Fast, Writing Deep (Introductory Quick Start)
(September 17-October 8, 2012)
- Writing Fast, Writing Deep (Advanced Dialogue)
(October 8-October 29, 2012)
- Writing Fast, Writing Deep (Advanced Character Development)
(October 22-November 12, 2012)
- The Power of Writing Short: A Class in 'Flash' Fiction/Memoir
(September 17-October 22, 2012)
- Creative & Professional Writing Through the Senses
(September 17-November 12, 2012)

Networking, Publishing & Blogging:

- Getting Noticed: Cover and Query Letters
(September 24-October 22, 2012)
- Transformative Blogging
(October 8-November 2, 2012)
- Write a Blog that People Will Read: How to Use Your Authenticity to Find Your Audience
(September 17-October 8, 2012)

Poetry:

- Sampling of Contemporary Women Poets as Model Poets: Part 2
(September 17-October 22, 2012)
- Poetry for the Truly Terrified
(October 8-November 12, 2012)

Winter, 2013:

- Our next class schedule will be posted in December.
Classes will run January 14-March 11, 2013

www.storycircleonlineclasses.org



Story Circle Network's Book Reviews Behind the Scenes

by Susan Wittig Albert, Coordinating Editor, SCBR

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For almost a dozen years, StoryCircleBookReviews has been a leader in publishing reviews of books by, for, and about women. Since the website was launched in 2001, we have published 1375 reviews of very good books, providing a review venue for small presses, university and regional presses, and for women authors whose books may not be reviewed elsewhere. We also publish a monthly eletter and maintain a full-service website that features 10-12 editors' picks, a Review of the Month, an author interview, and book advertisements, as well as news from our reviewer team.

All this wonderful stuff doesn't just happen by magic, of course. It is the product of work by a dedicated team of 60-some reviewers, eight talented editors, our wonderful webmistress, our fine advertisers, and other contributors. Here's a quick behind-the-scenes view of the process.

Choosing Books for Review

Books for review come to us from two sources. On the "Getting Reviewed" page on our website, there is a submission form that allows authors and publishers to let us know about a book they would like to be considered for review. The second source: our editorial team acts as "book sleuths," sniffing out books we'd like to review. Susan Ideus is especially tasked with book sleuthing. Laura Hulka, our Review Copy Request Editor, handles the requests for review copies and enters the information into the databank on our SCBR Yahoo site.

When the Review Copy Arrives

The review copy is sent by the publisher or author to our Distribution Editor Barbara Heming, who posts the information on our "Distribution Blog" and invites (via a Yahoo-group email) the reviewers to check out the new arrivals. The Distribution Blog is a private blogsite that was originally designed by editors Linda Hoye and Susan Ideus. It features all the current and backlist books. If a reviewer wants a copy of a book, she uses a form on the blogsite to request it, and Barbara pops it into the mail to her. If a book is not requested for review, it is eventually donated to a library near Barbara's New Mexico home.

When the Review Arrives at SCBR

Our talented reviewers read, write, and then submit their reviews via a form on our "Reviewing for SCBR" page. Our editors edit the reviews and Peggy posts them at SCBR, notifying the author and/or publisher. She also posts to Amazon, and to our Facebook review team page.

Our Monthly E-Letter

Once a month, our editors pick their favorite reviews and select a Review of the Month. (Our current Review of the Month is Sarton Award winner Leila Levinson's review of

Marguerite Bouvard's excellent book, *The Invisible Wounds of War*.) These outstanding reviews are featured in our monthly eletter, along with news from our reviewers, other book-related news, and ads for women's books and writing workshops.

Author Interviews

One of the special features at SCBR are the author interviews, conducted by email. At SCBR's request, the reviewer develops a list of questions about the book and the writing process. The questions and the author's responses are posted on our website. A recent example: Mary Jo Doig's very fine interview with author/SCN member Linda Hoye.

Promoting SCBR

StoryCircleBookReviews is on Twitter and Facebook—those posts are made by Judy Miller. Trilla Pando posts for SCBR to SCN's blog, HerStories.

What Keeps Our Website in Business

It's no secret: we are powered by woman-power! Our volunteer reviewers and our volunteer editors are the energy behind this unique and valuable service to the women's book community. But we also depend on our advertisers, whose books and writing-related activities are featured on our website and in our eletter, which goes out to over 4,000 readers. (You're invited to become an advertiser, if you have an appropriate project or product you'd like to promote.)

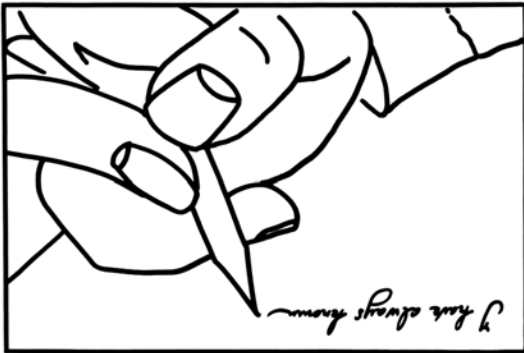
And most of all, we depend on your purchases of books through the website, an Amazon affiliate. Your purchases of new books and other products through our SCBR website help to support this valuable work.

Who We Are

Our SCBR reviewers and editors are featured on our "Review Team" page. When you check us out, please notice the reviewers' honorary designations. "Star" reviewers have posted 10 or more reviews/interviews in the past 18 months and have their own web pages. SuperStars have authored at least 25 reviews/interviews; StarBurst 50; NovaStar 75; and SuperNova 100. If you enjoy reading and want to share your views of women's books, you're invited to join us!

Want to Become a Reviewer?

If you'd like to join our team, you can find the how-to details on our "Reviewing for SCBR" page. Yes, reviewers get to keep the books they review—and they are able to add the reviews to their portfolio of publications. Some of our reviewers post their reviews to their blogs and websites, as well as to our SCBR site, and all reviewers can see their work on Amazon.



True Words from Real Women

A Harvest Story

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 "A Harvest Story & Recipe" Contribute your own True Words to the Journal. Future topics are listed on page 28.

On Soup

Teresa Werth, Spencerport NY
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Do you have a kinder, more adaptable friend in the food world than soup? Who soothes you when you are ill? Who refuses to leave you when you are impoverished and stretches its resources to give a hearty sustenance and cheer? Who warms you in the winter and cools you in the summer? Yet who also is capable of doing honor to your richest table and impressing your most demanding guests? Soup does its loyal best, no matter what undignified conditions are imposed upon it. You don't catch steak hanging around when you're poor and sick, do you?

~Judith Martin (Miss Manners)

I love soup. Over the years I've gotten into a routine of making soup most weekends from early fall until early spring. Yes, I make spring and summer soup, but not with such regularity as fall and winter soup. I usually make it on the weekend in one of four crock pots. (One can never have too many crock pots!) Sometimes I use a tried and true recipe like the ones I have for cabbage soup, vegetable soup, potato chowder or chili. Once in a while it's made from "must go"...I open the refrigerator and see what must go. Add a little broth, some rice or pasta to the leftover vegetables and meat, a few cloves of garlic, shake of spices, maybe some beans and a small can of mushroom pieces and we have a one-of-a-kind feast alongside a salad and crusty loaf of bread.

I am most proud of my homemade tomato soup. It bears no resemblance to that which comes from a can. The flavor is bright and sweet with distinct flavors of tomato, onion, and green pepper, all of which used to come from our garden. Nowadays, they come from the Farmers' Market. Just the same, people remember my tomato soup.

I frequently share my original recipe for Tomato Salsa soup that is simply that (tomato soup and a jar of salsa) but gets really

interesting when you garnish it with sour cream, shredded cheese, corn chips, avocado chunks, diced onion, and black olives.

Come by our house any weekend from September until April and you'll smell wood burning in the stove, soup simmering in the kitchen and a place for a friend at our table where you'll receive what Miss Manners calls "hearty sustenance and cheer" in a bowl.

Best Tomato Soup Ever:

(Recipe can be multiplied easily. Cans or freezes well. Ingredients in () are for a large batch.)

- 1 28 oz can diced tomatoes or 1 quart home-canned (1 peck, peeled and sliced)
- 1 tablespoon diced onion (1 large)
- 1 tablespoon diced green pepper (1 large)
- 1 tablespoon butter (3/4 cup)
- Salt, sugar, cornstarch

Directions:

In large saucepan, brown onion in butter. Add tomatoes and green pepper. Cook to boiling. Put mixture in blender. Blend until smooth. Return mixture to sauce pan. Stir in:

- 1/2 tablespoon sugar (10 tablespoons)
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt (3 tablespoons)
 - 1/2 tablespoon cornstarch (6 tablespoons)
- Heat to blend. Enjoy!



Harvesting Pecans

Sara Etgen-Baker, Allen TX
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Every October father took us to a remote location for the sole purpose of gathering pecans for mother's pecan pralines. One October day, we drove to a park by a nearby levee where my brothers and I—with flour sacks in tow—ran through the cluster of wild pecan trees, eager to collect the ripened pecans that blanketed the ground. It was the perfect pecan-picking day, for the autumn sun burned brightly—like a flaming torch—igniting the colors in all of the leaves. As the October winds hurried through the pecan trees, leaves began falling, some fast and some slow, swirling and twirling around my feet until at last they touched the ground.

I scurried through the park, unable to resist crunching all the dried leaves with their apricot oranges, burgundy reds, tangerine yellows, amethyst purples, and chocolate browns. I dove into a soft bed of leaves and lingered there inhaling the intoxicating smell of the moist earth and the musty leaves.

I spent the remainder of the day picking pecans. By twilight, my flour sack was so full that I had to drag it to the pickup where my father hoisted its contents into a bushel basket.

"Fantastic! We've enough pecans for your mom's pecan pralines." He winked at me. "Now, grab your flour sack; I'll meet you at the top of the levee!"

At the top, he placed his flour sack under his buttocks; took a running start; sat on the flour sack; then slid down the levee. My brothers followed suit successfully gliding down to the bottom. I, on the other hand, neglected to stay upright and soon laid flat on my back, the wind blowing through my hair as I spun out of control. As I twirled ever faster, the sinking sun painted the sky with swirls of pink, yellow, and orange across a deep, blue horizon. In the distant twilight, I caught a glimpse of the moon, the stars, and my own creativity which, like the autumn sun on dry leaves, has burned brightly ever since.

Pecan pralines owe their taste to the blend of pecans and brown sugar. I particularly enjoy them during the harvest season, for they trigger sweet memories of harvesting pecans with my father.

Pecan Pralines:

1 cup brown sugar	2 tablespoons butter
1 cup granulated sugar	1 cup chopped pecans
1/2 cup cream	

Directions:

Place the candy thermometer in a saucepan, clipping it to the pan's edge. Pour the cream and sugar into the pan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently. When the sugar has dissolved, add the butter and pecans.

Continue stirring over medium heat adding pecans at this time. Cook until the mixture becomes thick, and the candy thermometer reaches 238° (soft ball stage).

Allow the mixture to cool until it is thick enough that it is hard to stir. Use spoons to scoop up bite-sized portions and place them on the baking sheet to cool.

Nana's Love

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Fall is different here in Central Texas. Trees start to change, but not to the vivid colors I remember from my Northwest Washington childhood. Muted tones seem to dominate the land, with an occasional bright mesquite tree to break up the monotony.

The temperatures barely drop from summer's highs until a front comes ripping through, usually around Thanksgiving, causing rain and winds that knock every turning leaf to the ground. Summer often metamorphoses directly into winter.

It is in the fall that I miss the Northwest the most.

I long for the oranges, reds, and gold of the trees. I remember the smell of burning leaves, spicing the slowly chilling air as we bid fond goodbyes to the brief summer sun. I miss the smell of the evergreens and thick, humus topsoil under my feet.

I loved the anticipation in the air as school began and we welcomed the coming Halloween and Thanksgiving.

I miss the taste of my Nana's apple cake.

She did not make it very often when we were young. We were poor and it took expensive items like oil, sugar, cloves and cinnamon. We could get the apples fairly cheap; after all, it was the Northwest, but the other things could be quite dear.

When Nana decided it was time to bake an apple cake, the house would smell like fall and the holidays all day long. The rich, cinnamon smell was just a tease for the main event that was ahead, though. The whole family waited through the day with anticipation and rushed through our dinner, barely tasting it, but salivating at the prospect of Nana's apple cake.

It was served in small squares of brown, moist, savory deliciousness. If we were particularly flush, there would be whipped cream in a dollop beside it, but you could do without.

I remember biting into a piece and tasting the oil and small apple chunks as they burst on my taste buds. Then the cinnamon hit the middle of my tongue. It was heaven on a fork and I loved it almost as much as the angel who baked and served it to me.

It was Nana's love, wrapped in the tastiest wrapper she could achieve.

Nana's Apple Cake Recipe:

4 cups chopped apples	3 eggs
1 teaspoon salt	1 tsp vanilla
1 teaspoon baking soda	2 cups sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon	2 cups flour
1/4 teaspoons cloves	2 cups chopped nuts (optional)
1 cup oil	

Directions:

Sift salt, cinnamon, soda, and cloves. Add oil, eggs, vanilla; then add apples, nuts, sugar, and flour into the bowl. Mix. Bake in 13x9" pan at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until toothpick comes out clean. Sprinkle with powdered sugar or serve with whipped cream and always add a big dollop of love. Keeps for up to a week if covered or refrigerated.

The Best Cherry Pie

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 Busy Pens Story Circle, Valrico FL

Mr. Ray Fulton lived in a small one story home on the west side of Logansport, Indiana near Riley School, and had several cherry trees in the yard. He and his wife Elsie would pick all the cherries they wanted before the birds picked the trees clean, and would then invite our family to come pick what we wanted.

Dad would put several buckets in the Ford station wagon and my brother Frank and I would tag along. At ages ten and eleven we really weren't much help; we played tag and visited with Mrs. Fulton while dad filled buckets with the sweet red cherries. Dad picked enough for Mother to bake several pies, and also enough for Grandma Berta, whose specialty was cherry cobbler, which she often shared with us.

One year, Grandma read in the newspaper an article about a U-Pick Farm in Ann Arbor, Michigan. You would bring your own containers and pick your own fruit. They had Bing cherries and peaches.

Since she had never been to one, she suggested we pack a picnic lunch and leave on Saturday morning. We packed sandwiches, cookies, and fruit, and then piled into the station wagon for our family excursion. We stopped at a roadside picnic table (which were prevalent in the fifties and sixties) and ate our lunch before arriving at the farm.

I remember Dad, Mother, and Grandmother being directed to the area to pick cherries and my two brothers, Frank and John, and my sister Joyce and I followed along. We didn't pick fruit, just played near the tree and fence. After picking what seemed like a bushel of dark red Bing Cherries we had a cold soda and started home. On the way home that day, my brothers and sister fell asleep and Grandma and I talked about the cobbler she would make. I wanted to be a good cook like her, and she invited me to come anytime, promising to teach me all she knew.

After washing and pitting the cherries on Sunday afternoon, Mother and I made two pies. Once dinner was over and the

table was cleared, we all enjoyed a piece of pie. Dad said it was the best cherry pie ever, as he smiled at mother and me.

The Best Cherry Pie:

4 cups of pitted, fresh cherries
 1 1/2 cups sugar
 1/4 cup flour
 1/8 teaspoon salt
 1 recipe of plain pastry (see recipe below)
 2 tablespoons butter.

Directions:

Combine cherries, sugar, flour, and salt. Fill 9 inch pastry-lined pie plate. Dot with butter and adjust top crust. Bake in hot oven 450 degrees for 10 minutes, then in moderate oven for 350 degrees for about 30 minutes.

Fool Proof Pie Crust:

(acquired from a farmer's wife in 1965)

3 cups flour
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 cup shortening (Crisco)
 1 egg, beaten
 1 tablespoon vinegar
 1/3 cup cold water

Directions:

Mix flour and salt, cut in shortening; Combine egg, vinegar and water, stir in flour lightly. Once mixed, roll into a ball on floured board, roll lightly in flour, let sit about 5 minutes; separate in half and roll bottom crust. Remaining one half is for top crust, or it can be cut in long strips for lattice topping. Bake pie as directed.

Harvest of Memories

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Splat! Splat, splat, splat!!

Missiles rained all around me and I was struck in the upper chest. I looked down and saw red rivulets running down my shirt. With a savage yell I rose and hurled my own missiles toward my enemies, barricaded on the other side of several long steel troughs bearing running water and more missiles floating by. I heard a very satisfying "Aauugh!" from where the others had set up their ambush.

My little sister, only five, kneeling behind the heavy trough by my knees, started to whimper and I saw red rivulets running down her face from the pulp in her hair. She'd been struck in the head. Oh, man! Mom was gonna kill me! I was nine and should have known better. Even though we'd never been told not to mess around by the Libby tomato cannery, I had a hunch we'd be banned after this.

My best friend, Mary, on my sister's other side, lobbed several missiles in a row and then caught one on her shoulder. Red rivulets ran again. Nothing like a good tomato fight.

These were the last hot sultry days of August before school began and the field-harvested tomatoes floating in the troughs of cool water going into the canning factory had been more than we could resist. We had tomatoes in our personal gardens, too, and nothing tasted more delicious right off the vine. Tomatoes sure don't taste like that now. They weren't for fighting.

These harvest memories are the blessings I receive each year when the angle of the sun gets lower, its light is weaker, the skies lose their cloudless white-blue of summer heat, and gain the fluffy clouds and deep impossible blue of fall. I'm in Texas now, but the slowing and turning of the universe's energies becomes just as apparent it was when I was a kid in Ohio. There's a restful feeling. A good job done, time to relax.

Of Mice and Cranberries

Bonnie Watkins, Austin TX
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The world may dub her "sister-in-law," but I call her sister. Taylor, a young bride to my husband's brother Jim, entered the Air Force as one of many brave military wives who pack up their homes and children to leave their families and friends every few years, often for the far corners of the world.

Tay has many colorful stories about her challenges navigating life in foreign countries. Once, in France, she was traveling on a train with her six-year-old Jimmy, now James, who wanted the independence of going to the bathroom in the adjoining train car. Sitting at the end of the first car where she could see into the next car, Taylor let him go. After he had been gone a long time, Taylor decided to go check on him just as the train workers began to un-couple the cars!

"Un moment," she shouted, dragged Jimmy out, and leaped hand-in-hand across the two foot gap back to their seats. In a few minutes, Jimmy could have been headed to another country, unaccompanied!

Another of her daring feats involved ridding their German home of mice. Their house in the small farming village of Ingendorf, near Bitburg, was a converted barn that had previously belonged to the Forestmeister; it sat high on a hill so he could look down and watch for fires. Their living room had been the stable and their bedroom the hayloft, and the mice in the forest sought refuge there from the first nips of harvest season.

She bagged about 50 mice with traps, but they got so bold that they practically walked right up to her, so she just started slugging them with a broom or throwing her shoe at them, whatever was handy to kill them in their tracks. But she drew the line on executions when she found a wheelbarrow in the shed full of baby mice. Instead, she raced it out to the nearby field and upended it. "I wasn't a fan of killing any species of babies!"

When Jim retired from the Air Force, his remarks included glowing testimony to the partnership of military wives, especially Taylor. She now is enjoying a second career as a fitness instructor, so she keeps trying to get this native San Saba, Texas pecan family to give up their traditional pie for healthier fare. Sometimes she succeeds, such as with this nutritious and still delicious recipe that has become a fall favorite.

Taylor's Cranberry Casserole:

Mix in a 9"x13" casserole:

3 cups raw cranberries

3 cups Granny Smith apples, cubed, but not peeled

3/4 cup (or reduce to 1/2 c. if you like it tart) sugar.

Directions:

In a bowl, cut 1/2 stick butter into 1 cup quick oats, 1/3 cup flour, 1/2 cup chopped nuts (still loyal to San Saba, Taylor's note says pecans), 1/2 cup brown sugar, and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla. Spread mixture over fruit. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

An Expected Harvest

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One of my aspirations as I have gotten older is to become a good cook. Not a fabulous cook or a fantastic cook, just a good one. While I raised my kids on basic recipes like spaghetti with tomato sauce and bean tostadas, I have been well aware that if I harbor any hope of luring my future grandchildren to my home on a regular basis, it is surely going to involve tasty food. Besides, what grandmother's house worth its salt wouldn't have a few goodies for the little ones to savor? Hence my motivation to become a "good" cook.

I must admit to having a cousin who has provided me with guidance, along with a few delicious recipes. His mother loved cooking and his appreciation and ability to produce excellent food reflects that fact. So, he has taught me via email how to grill salmon, chicken, and turkey burgers (I don't eat beef or pork), plus how to add a delectable turkey meatball to my already tasty spaghetti with tomato sauce. And my husband, a decent baker in his own right, has helped me understand the finer nuances of baking homemade cookies, cakes, and pies. So, what is my reward for my hard work besides the fact that I continue to not have any grandchildren to lure with my growing culinary skills?

The unexpected fruit of my labor has come in these past few years just before my children's birthdays. "Do you want to go out to eat or come here for dinner?" I ask. "If you come here, you get to pick what you want."

"I want your stuffed shells," my youngest says, "that's my favorite food anywhere."

"Will you make your peach cobbler?" my oldest says. "I can't get any that is half as good as yours."

"Just make anything," says my middle daughter. "I know I'll love whatever you make."

Ah, the joys of the harvest. Nothing could be sweeter....

Unless it's the arrival of those grandchildren one of these days, and the chance to finally let them taste these dishes I've been practicing all this time just so they'll want to come and visit Grandma.

Turkey Meatballs:

Cooking spray

1 pound ground turkey

1 slice whole-wheat bread, crust removed, pulsed into crumbs

1/4 cup grated Parmesan

1/2 cup finely grated carrot

1/2 cup finely chopped onion

2 large cloves garlic, minced

2 tbsps minced fresh parsley leaves

2 tsp minced fresh thyme leaves

1 egg, lightly beaten

1/2 teaspoon salt

Freshly ground pepper

Directions:

Preheat broiler. Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray. Combine ingredients and form into 2 1/2 inch balls. Place on baking sheet and broil for 10 minutes or until browned and almost entirely cooked through. Add meatballs to sauce, cover, and cook additional 10 minutes.

Bounty of Friendship

Betsy Boyd, Maryville TN
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Commonly in every office, secretaries are the ones who know what's going on; so it is at the branch campus of the community college where I work. We admire our dean for her vision, creativity, and boundless energy. We value computer, maintenance, and library staff for their contributions. I think all appreciate the services I provide students as the counselor. However, if anyone wants to know the latest immunizations policy, testing center hours, or status of one of our clan who has been MIA for awhile, we go to Rhonda. Recently, Rhonda retold a story I had forgotten, even though it involved me.

Late fall 2001 found me finishing treatment for breast cancer. Having survived a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery, I was halfway through chemotherapy. My goal: to live as normal a day-to-day existence as I possibly could. With Mom staying at my house to help with meals, cat care, and routine housekeeping tasks, I was able to work full-time during chemo—well, almost. I typically arose and got ready for work, often pushing through mild nausea and chemo malaise. Once I got to work and focused on helping students, I usually felt better.

One day while I showered, dressed, and poufed up my wig, Mom packed my lunch. But I felt miserable. Sick. Tired. Over it. I yearned to soldier on, but I just couldn't do it that morning. Frustrated, I plopped down at the kitchen table, sobbing. Frustration led to anger. With a yank, I flung my wig across the room. Chaos ensued as my cats flew out of the kitchen and Mom flew in.

"I just can't do it," I sobbed. "I want to, but I just can't."

"It's okay," Mom soothed. "Why don't you call school and tell them you're not up to coming in today. Maybe we'll take a ride up to the Smokies."

After calming down, I called the campus and Rhonda answered. As she retold it recently, we both started giggling about my wig sailing through the air and landing on top of the refrigerator. The laugh was therapeutic, as was the drive Mom and I took that day.

Later, a van from school appeared in my driveway. Two friends unloaded homemade casseroles, breads, fruit, and salads—it was a bounty of comfort foods collected for me. I loved every dish, and felt my body heal with every bite. But my favorite was the Friendship Bread Rhonda sent. Who but a true friend could giggle with you over a bad chemo day?

Rhonda's Friendship Bread:

1 cup oil	2 teaspoons sugar
1 cup sugar	2 cups self-rising flour
1 tsp vanilla	½ cup milk
3 eggs	2 3.4-oz boxes instant vanilla pudding
½ teaspoon salt	⅓ cup chopped walnuts

Directions:

Preheat oven 325°. Grease two large loaf pans, sprinkling with a sugar and cinnamon mixture. Combine oil, sugar, vanilla, eggs, salt, and cinnamon. Add flour, milk, pudding, and walnuts. Mix well. Pour into pans, sprinkling leftover sugar mixture on top. Bake 1 hour.

Peaches

Naomi Sandweiss, Albuquerque NM
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Three years ago, my mother withered away the week the peach trees exploded. Her decline from a multi-year battle with breast cancer was sudden. Or so it seemed. Jaundiced one day, incoherent four days later, I watched her take her last breath a week afterward. Ensnared in the hospital and then the hospice, I failed to notice the eruption of the peaches.

The morning after she died, I returned home to shower. Never before were the trees so prolific. I knew my mother would want me to harvest them. A practical woman and a wonderful cook, it would devastate her to leave ripening fruit to rot.

And so I gathered the golden-red globes, which barely needed a tug before they eagerly dropped into my hands. I boiled and chopped them, mixed them with flour and butter, poured sugared peaches into jars. I prepared peach pie and peach cobbler, peach preserves and peach salsa. I served mourners and guests shared the bounty with neighbors and friends until it seemed that the peaches would never stop.

And while I cursed the never-ending harvest, the fruit claimed my hands, occupied some of my thoughts, and absorbed some of the painful blow. I still had decisions to make: Which casket was best? Who should write the obituary? Would I call her friend in Canada?

In retrospect, I needed the fruit, both as a distraction and as a reminder of life's inevitable cycles of abundance and emptiness. Life moved forward, despite the fact that my mother was gone.

Three years later, I've helped see my father through the transition, holidays, and his own health crises. I've missed my mother's steadfastness and level-headedness, missed seeing her hands at work knitting or sewing, mourned the fact that my children's time with her was too short.

I've also kept a closer eye on those peach trees, babying them during winter freezes and fretting over them during summer hailstorms. Now that we are close to another profusion of peaches, I am reminded of my mother and the season of loss and abundance. I've also learned to appreciate life's sweetness, to savor the harvest no matter when it comes.

I only wish that I could share the bounty with my mother.

Easy Peach Cobbler Recipe: (from Allrecipes.com)

1 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
¾ cup white sugar
Pinch of nutmeg
¾ cup milk
¼ cup butter
2 cups sliced fresh peaches

Directions:

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees Centigrade). Melt butter in a 9 x 9 inch baking dish. Blend together flour, baking powder, sugar, nutmeg, and milk. Pour batter in baking dish over the butter. Sprinkle fruit on top of the batter; do not stir. Bake for 1 hour or until golden brown

Kraut

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Our background was German as far back as anybody could remember or research, and my Grandpa made sauerkraut. Grandpa's garden was mostly cabbage and tomatoes. A lot of cabbage. When it was harvested Grandpa would get out his slaw cutter, like one of those mandolin doo-dads a fancy chef uses, only this one had a wooden box on it big enough to hold a head of cabbage and the cutting part had a wooden frame that supported it over a galvanized washtub. Yes, a washtub.

Grandpa was a big man even in his old age. He'd get a pile of cabbage heads in another tub and seat himself by the one with the slaw cutter on it. Arms moving like pistons, he could empty one tub of heads and fill the other with sliced cabbage in record time.

The sliced cabbage would be salted down and brine would form. Most people packed their kraut into crocks to ferment, but not Grandpa. The salted cabbage would be packed into sterilized quart canning jars and the lids would be placed on loosely. The filled jars would be placed on thick layers of folded towels on top of our electric water heater in the bathroom where the rising moderate heat would start the fermentation. And oh, did it ferment! The brine would foam and pour out from under the lids and the towels would be replaced as often as needed.

Eventually, the bubbling would stop, the jars would be taken down to have their rims wiped clean and lids tightened, and the next batch of kraut would take their place. The house would have the biting, pungent, sour smell of sauerkraut for weeks on end as one batch replaced another. It wasn't an unpleasant smell, though, or at least not to me. But then, I love sauerkraut.

The jars would be placed in the aboveground cellar we had behind the house. Our house had been moved from its original site back about a hundred feet to make room for the railway when it came through; re-siting it over a ready-made basement cellar would have been impossible. Our cellar was constructed of sealed hollow concrete blocks about a foot wide and high and at least two feet long. That's great insulation material and construction. It was cool in that building in the summer time and it stayed above freezing in the winter; not an easy thing to accomplish in northwest Ohio.

But the best thing about this memory is the kraut. I loved to go out to the cellar in the wintertime and get a jar of kraut and just fork it straight out of the jar into my mouth. Oh, it was so sour it squeaked when I'd chew! That was good kraut. I haven't had kraut that good since Grandpa died.

Salty Corn Fritters

Patricia Roop Hollinger, Westminster MD

Ah! Enough corn left over to make some fritters
Corn can never be thrown out to be eaten by critters.

I followed the recipe with great precision
My husband could tell I was on a great mission.

You see, wife #1 and wife #2 were the neatest of cooks
I often just winged it without any books.

He attempted to "help me" with the best of intentions
I tried to ignore him without any mention.

Ah! The salt... I recalled would enhance the flavor;
I intended to just give it a pinch to be savored.

My husband continues to hover around;
My patience is waning...my heart begins to pound.

"Oh my God, what have I done?" As salt pours from the shaker;
I yell, "Go away...leave me alone" forgetting I am a Quaker.

"Am I Julie or Laura when I am in this kitchen?" I scream,
"When you stand by to help I don't know if I have salt or cream."

I served up the fritters; smothered with butter and syrup;
We ate them in silence...there was not even a burp!

The salt taste lingered for better or worse;
We drank gallons of water to quench our thirst.

There is no recipe for these salt laden fritters;
But if this happens to you, just feed to the critters.



To Harvest or Not to Harvest

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When I was knee-high to a grasshopper, I wondered why my parents were passionate about gardening. My dad always had a hoe in his hand, my mom a watering can. *Yuk*, I thought. When my husband and I moved into our first home, a one-story two-bedroom garden apartment in Mountain View, California for which we paid \$140 a month, my own gardening passion began to emerge. I had about 12 inches of soil along the path to the door and a four-foot-by-four-foot area of soil within an enclosed garden. One morning in October 1963, I went to my parent's house.

"Can I borrow a shovel? I bought three pyracantha plants yesterday."

Remembering my comments about dirt and icky bugs, Dad howled, "You a gardener?"

When we bought a house, I planted a fall vegetable garden. I had visions of harvesting baskets of broccoli, cauliflower, and tomatoes. The harvest was cut short when I learned that tomatoes should be planted in the spring, broccoli die in the September heat, and my Saint Bernard liked to eat head-forming cauliflower. Hey, he was into harvesting.

I got more serious about gardening in our next home. My husband and I built a raised-bed vegetable garden. We creosoted the boards. I heated the creosote in the kitchen and carried the hot pan outside. Doing this, I spilled some creosote on my Sak's ski jacket. Was I thinking I had to look fashionable while creosoting? Actually, not thinking!

Herbs and vegetables spilled out of the raised beds. The vegetable we found we loved best was zucchini. Each year we harvested enough zucchini to make bread, spaghetti sauce, and zucchini fritters. In 1977, our daughter was born in late June. By then we had harvested fifty pounds of zucchini. Three days after giving birth, I harvested another fifteen pounds of zucchini and carried two overflowing buckets up the hill to the house; bad idea. The doctor was called. He ordered me to spend the next three days in bed. I discovered there are times to harvest and times not to harvest.

My husband picked the rest of the zucchini that summer. The final tally was 150 pounds. Thanks Mom and Dad for introducing me to harvesting.

"It is not because the touch of genius has roused genius to production, but because the admiration of genius has made talent ambitious, that the harvest is still so abundant."

~Margaret Fuller

Zucchini Fritters:

2 cups flour
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 1 egg, beaten
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon white pepper
 ½ to ¾ cup milk
 ¾ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
 1 large zucchini, grated, about 2 cups
 2 garlic cloves, grated
 1 tablespoon shallot, minced
 2 tablespoons parsley, minced
 oil for frying

Catsup-Horseradish Sauce:

½ cup catsup
 1 tablespoon horseradish
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Directions:

Mix sauce ingredients together; set aside. Mix the flour, baking powder, egg, olive oil, salt, pepper and 1/4 c milk. Then add the Parmesan, zucchini, garlic, shallot and parsley and enough milk so dough is stiff. Drop 1 tablespoon of batter into hot oil (375°F). Brown on both sides; drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with salt; serve with sauce. Yum!



Toni's Cornbread

Julia Whitmore, Bandera TX
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In the spring of 1980, I found myself with a three-year old, a newborn, a full-time job, and no child care. Institutional childcare (at the local YWCA) for two children was more costly than having a nanny in the home, so my husband and I advertised in the local newspaper.

The pickings were discouraging. One applicant stated upfront that she wanted to be paid cash because she already collected aid to dependent children. Unfortunately, we needed the child care credit to assure the mortgage payment, apart from moral principles. Another said she would need time off to attend beauty school. She also asked if there was a television in the children's room. We were not optimistic.

Then, the second week, two Haitian immigrant brothers appeared with their older sister Antonise. Felix and Roland both worked at the U.S. Steel Southworks plant, a prominent feature of the Chicago skyline, and had accompanied "Toni" as we came to call her, because her English was sketchy. Her main language was Haitian Creole, but she also spoke French, which both my husband and I could make do with.

Toni was the last member of her family to emigrate to the U.S. Felix and Roland had two requests: that we pay her Social Security tax, and that we try to teach her English. When the children appeared, she smiled and reached for the baby, Miranda.

With my return to work deadline approaching, and her good vibes with the kids, we said yes. At the time, we had no idea the richness of experience and adventure our employment of her would add to our lives.

In addition to her childcaring duties, she also loved cleaning and ironing clothes. My children—five of them eventually—had the whitest athletic socks at school, and every ruffle of little dresses stood out crisply.

Standing outside the dream, looking in, I witness the actions of a tiny indigenous woman, a familiar figure. Her skirt and blouse add the flavor of a Mexican grandmother. Last time I saw her she was in Native American attire, communicating whole stories in one word.

She is listening intently on the telephone, brow furrowed, lips pursed, head tilted slightly to the right, a person in the depth of thought. The message she is receiving stirs the air of importance. She takes no notes, simply breathing in each word, absorbing them into the cells of her body. It is a nutritious message, a recipe she consumes bit by bit, poco a poco, allowing it to become a part of who she is.

Straightening her tiny spine as best she can, Abuela turns to face the circle of grandchildren at her feet.

"How do I impart the true meaning of this recipe?" she asks. A phrase comes to her. She speaks it first in her mother tongue. One young Chica stirs, holding a question mark of confusion on her face. The words are not enough. A strong

She also introduced us to plaintains, peas and rice, supremely creamy cream of wheat, and a cornbread which became a weekly staple. Despite years of effort, I never managed to duplicate her dried beans and rice, sometimes cooked as a vegetarian dish, other times with ham or sausage added. But her cornbread was a "Mom, please" request for every dinner or party, and always, the first pan emptied.

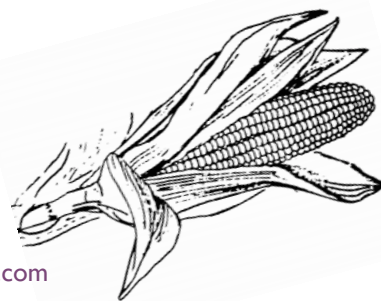
She enriched our French conversation, once ended a six-month mysterious cough incurable by Chicago's best physicians for my son, and eventually enjoyed a retirement in Miami surrounded by extended family. Most important, she taught us the benefits of cultural and racial diversity by her simple existence. Thank you, Toni.

Toni's Haitian Corn Bread:

2 packages Jiffy cornbread
1 cup evaporated milk
1 stick (1/4 lb) melted butter
1 cup sugar
Dash salt
2 ripe bananas, mashed
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Directions:

Mix all ingredients in blender or mixer. Bake in greased 9 x 13 pan at 375 degrees for 45 minutes. Sprinkle sugar on top when removed from oven. Can make 1/2 recipe in an 8 x 8 pan. Also can substitute canned coconut milk for evaporated.



Ingredients for Life

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seasoning of energy is needed. Breathing rhythm and gratitude into each word, Abuela sings it this time, in a language the girl understands, *Shawn does it this way... Shawn does it this way.*

The heat of recognition shines brightly on Chica's face. The flavor of the words hold the taste of memory where love was savored. I shift from witness to participant, from outside the bowl to inside. I become Chica, filled with the knowledge of something evocative. When I hear Abuela speak my brother's name, the meaning of the chant nourishes my body with music. I jump up, gather her in my arms and begin to chant and swirl.

A clear memory runs through my mind, watching my brother dance around the room, holding his first-born son in his arms, celebrating the miracle of this long awaited relationship. Love and gratitude pour out of him, filling me with the heat of the moment. I am the young girl. I am the grandmother. I am the mixture of breath, motion and gratitude, healing from within. Awakening from this dream, I know the use of this recipe will feed me the rest of my life.



Take A Bow:

New Board Members

by Robin Wittig

Story Circle Network is a dynamic and empowering force in the lives of hundreds of women thanks to the work of the fantastic volunteer SCN board. We are excited to introduce our newest board members, **Susan J. Tweit**, mentored by Lisa Shirah-Hiers; **Pat Bean**, mentored by Rhonda Esakov; and **Judy Watters**, mentored by Marcy Bashore.

Susan J. Tweit

Susan learned about Story Circle Network when she submitted an essay to the anthology *What Wildness Is This*. Susan says, "I was so impressed with the anthology, and the organization's commitment to nurturing women's voices and stories that I joined SCN in about 2007." Susan is interested in helping to enhance the website, and explore ways we can use social media in our marketing efforts. Susan reflects, "I think SCN is an amazingly empowering organization and I'd like to see it reach more women."

Susan is an active SCN member, inspiring members through her engaging talks at our conferences and workshops. She also contributes to the Journal, and reviews books and conducts author interviews for SCBR, she taught an online workshop, and participates in SCN's listserv.

Susan describes the benefits of SCN membership: "I've enjoyed the community of life-writers and the camaraderie of a group of women who are passionate about writing and voice; I've expanded the audience for my work; I've gained insights about writing and life; I've learned how to use social media; I've gotten to review some great books and talk to interesting authors."

The Story Circle Board will benefit from Susan's experience on several boards. She founded, co-founded and served on the boards of several arts and public-service organizations, including the Border Book Festival in Las Cruces, NM, Writers Without Borders (Las Cruces), Salida Parks, Open-Space and Trails (Salida, Colorado), and Art Works for the Heart of the Rockies (Salida). She adds, "I'd like to bring my knowledge of writing, social media, conference planning and organization; I'm good with people and I enjoy nurturing women's voices and writing."



Pat Bean

Pat joined Story Circle Network to be involved with a community of female writers, and jump-start her writing. She says, "I've found my 'voice,' received tremendous encouragement and support for my writing, have learned a lot and made new friends." Pat describes her service on the board as "a way to give back for the wonderful support SCN has given me. It's a way to be part of something I believe in. And it's a way to network with other writers."

Pat brings to the Story Circle board her experience of serving on a newspaper editorial board, and she served on a board for continuing education while working at Utah State University. She also participated in the daily news meeting that decided content for the Standard-Examiner newspaper.

Pat hopes to help SCN continue in the positive direction that she has experienced as a member. "While I am sure there are areas in which it can grow, I would like it to continue to be a positive experience for both aspiring and already successful women writers." Pat feels that members benefit from positive support, a writing community of women, and opportunities to improve their writing and marketing skills.

Pat was a journalist for 37 years, climbing the ladder from green reporter to city and associate editor positions. She won numerous writing awards, and supervised her paper's coverage of 9/11 and the 2002 Winter Olympics, held in the Utah paper's backyard. Pat adds, "I think this is bragging, but since I went from being a high school drop-out to a top editor perhaps I'm allowed."





Judy Watters

Judy was attracted to Story Circle Network by “the opportunity to be challenged in my writing and to read about other women’s lives.” She has taken advantage of SCN’s online classes, and attended the national conference and workshops.

Judy feels she has benefited as a member through continued growth in her personal writing, and contact with several well-

versed professionals who have provided help along the way to publication.

Judy’s vision for the future of SCN is for the organization to be accessible and useful to those women who have a need to express themselves through writing of their frustrations, their loves and their joys. She sees SCN as a safe haven where women can feel comfortable sharing their stories.

Here’s a little of Judy’s background that we would like to share: “I was born in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, and spent the first 18 years of life on a small farm snuggled into the Allegheny Mountains. My total sanguine personality has been married to my phlegmatic Larry for 25 years (a lot of good writing material there, later maybe!). We are the proud parents of 3 college students (more material). I have taught high school English, Speech and Drama in a small private Christian school in Bulverde, Texas, for 11 years. For the last 20 years, I have dabbled with writing, mostly about life lessons learned growing up on the farm. I have written two sales manuals for two different companies, a Bible study for our ladies ministry at church and sporadic writings for my children when they would cry, “Mommy, tell me a story of when you were a little girl on the farm!”

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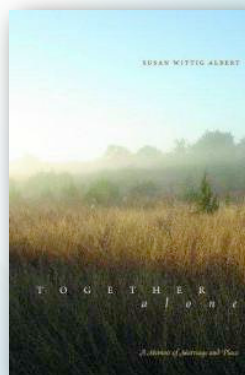
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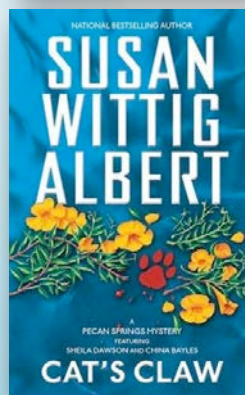
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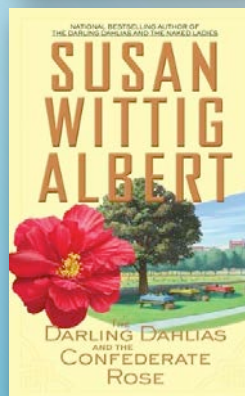
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~Library Journal~



Donna Van Straten Remmert

The Jitterbug Girl Grows Up

by Lisa Shirah-Hiers

Donna Van Straten Remmert is the author of *The Littlest Big Kid* and *The Jitterbug Girl*. She is a long-time member of the Story Circle Network and past president of the Austin chapter. Her professional background includes teaching high school English and working as a journalist. For more than twenty years, she has pursued an informal study of Jungian psychology, especially as it relates to dreams. The hysterically funny third installment of her memoir, *Head Over Heels: Stories about the 1950s*, describes her transition from

small town Catholic party girl to campus co-ed at UW-Madison. She and her husband live in Boulder, CO. Lisa Shirah-Hiers interviewed her via email for the Story Circle Journal.

SCJ: How do you get your stories/memories out of your head and onto paper? How do you organize them and when?

DVR: My process is quite random. When a memory pops into my head, I scribble it on a piece of paper, let the story marinate for a while, and then I start banging it out. I'm always amazed how one small memory triggers another and another until there's a story that actually has a purpose. When I have several that are somewhat complete, I decide where they belong in the book and how they need to expand in order to reflect the era. I also add details about political or cultural events, clothes, hairstyles, movies or book titles. I could save myself a lot of time by outlining, but it's just not in my nature to do so. I usually share a rough draft of each story with my writing circle and ask them to help me decide how to improve it and if it serves a purpose within the book. This kind of support is such a great motivator, and for an extravert like me it makes the writing process less lonely.

SCJ: What were some of the challenges you faced in writing your memoirs? How did you overcome them?

DVR: I didn't want to offend people I wrote about, and I wanted my stories to have pizzazz and reflect the culture as much as tell my own story. When I wrote *The Littlest Big Kid* and *The Jitterbug Girl*, I used last names and got signed permission slips from everyone. I was amazed at how few objections I experienced; they understood my humor and liked having their names mentioned. The "kid" voice I'd used in my first two memoirs had been such fun to remember and such a part of my humor yet inappropriate for *Head Over Heels*. My greatest challenge for this memoir was to find a voice that would be equally entertaining and also sound like the college student I remember myself being. Another challenge was to write the truth but limit the characters mentioned, so my reader could make sense of the story being told. My solution was to use only first names most of the time, allowing me to create composite characters. In my disclaimer, I explain that while everything I wrote about actually did happen, I've granted myself the freedom to invent characters when necessary, create dialogue that is representative, and amplify and embellish scenes when

necessary for clarity and entertainment. My memoir is, therefore, creative nonfiction. I think it's more fun to read and more representative of the era than if I had stuck too rigidly to the facts. Giving myself this freedom helped me express more truth about how things were in the late 1950s.

SCJ: Initially your father and mother were reluctant to let you go to college. Your mother was worried you'd lapse from your Catholic faith and your father that you'd be tricked by communists into signing something incriminating. You even had to forge your father's signature on your application!

DVR: It wasn't only my parents who didn't encourage me. My teachers also never suggested I go to college. I was a girl, and my intellectual capabilities seemed mediocre at best. I was encouraged to become a secretary for the short time period before I'd most likely get married and start having babies. My wacky personality didn't help much. And my dad was right about my gullibility; communists *almost* got me to sign something incriminating. It's one of my favorite stories in *Head Over Heels*. Looking back I'm quite sure I had a learning disability of some kind, but no one diagnosed those when I was a kid in the 1940s, nor did anyone offer special help for kids struggling to learn. My self-esteem didn't suffer that much since I was nevertheless loved, treated equally, allowed freedom, and was cute. Back then, cute counted for a whole lot more than now. Girls often wanted that label more than the smart one, strange as it seems. I think I was motivated to try being a college student because I thought this was where I'd have the most fun and meet the right kind of guy to marry. I know how shallow this sounds in today's world; even then it was something girls were reluctant to admit. But that's how I was conditioned to think, having grown up in rural Wisconsin without much exposure to the rest of the world. People back then joked about girls going to college to get their MRS degree, but for many, including myself, it was true. While in college, I gradually woke up to my own ambitions to achieve and become more than just an appendage to "the man of my dreams."

SCJ: You did some pretty daring things in your college years: getting drunk at a frat house full of horny pre-med males,

touring Rome on the back of a motorbike with a policeman you'd just met, traveling with an older German Baron and fending off his advances. Were your father and mother's objections to your going to college valid?

DVR: I'm laughing! Daring things? Yes, I did a few, but compare what I did to what young unmarried women are doing today! I think my 1950-style wildness was helpful to my development. It provided the adventure I craved, and it helped me discover what my values were through trial and error rather than by just listening to adult authorities. I actually did my wild things safely because I had boundaries, thanks to my family, community and religion. In *Head Over Heels*, I argued about the religious and societal rules that made no sense, but I rarely broke them. In addition, I always knew that I had to be responsible for my actions, and there was no rich daddy in my life to pick up the pieces and pay for my mistakes. Growing up poor has this advantage. My parents had reason to worry about me leaving home and going to college. They saw my vulnerabilities, and they knew I wasn't a serious student. Their skepticism helped in that I was determined to prove them wrong.

SCJ: In your book you describe clothing in some detail. How does the clothing we wear define us in our own and other's eyes? How can clothing details enhance a memoir?

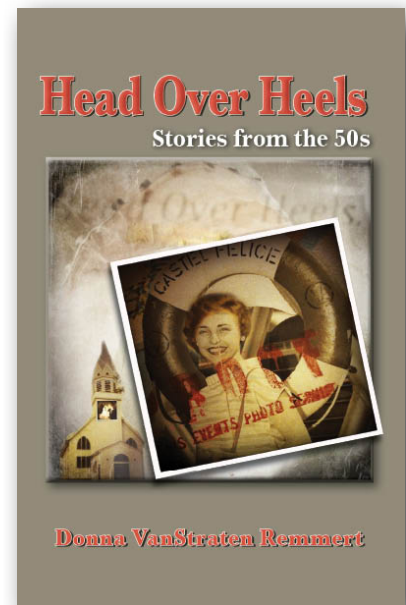
DVR: I use clothing details to describe my characters' personalities and their economic status, to evoke the era and show how few belongings most college kids had in the 50s compared to now. My favorite fashion statement belonging to the 1950's is the spiral-stitched Maidenform bras we wore to push our breasts out to a peak, like the movie-star paper dolls we'd played with as kids. And the girdles that even skinny girls wore to eliminate the jiggling. No wonder the flower children of the 60s rebelled! How we look and what we wear contributes to our persona just like how we smile or frown. When I went to college, everything I owned fit into only three feet of hanging space, the shelf above it, and two dresser drawers. Later I'll admit I splurged on clothes a bit too often, rationalizing that it was "artistic expression." Now that I'm an elder and living in Boulder, I shop less and am content to have less, but I still think attire is an important way to show the identity you wish to project to the world.

SCJ: What are some other techniques you used to set the scene, reveal character, themes etc.?

DVR: When I read books, lengthy scene descriptions bother me, and I keep wishing the author would just get to the point since I can create a satisfactory picture of the setting from only a few well-chosen words. An exception is when a scene description shows the era, like the one of my family's kitchen. Otherwise I don't see the point of lengthy descriptions of, for instance, a scene in nature. This is my bias, and other readers must love those long descriptions because they're so often in award-winning books. I think the point of the stories in my memoirs is more about what people are saying and doing, not what the sky looked like. I used a lot of dialogue to show the personalities of my characters because I think this is the best way to "show not tell" the story, and because I love using words that belong to the era. I love slang; it's got pizzazz and it's funny.

SCJ: You self-published all three of your memoirs. Can you speak about that process?

DVR: The new catch phrase for someone who self-publishes is "indie," short for independent. Words matter, so that's what I am—an indie; and from what I can tell, the process is far easier, less stressful, and much more fun than trying to find and then satisfy agents and publishers by laboring over one re-write after another, until your book starts to feel like it isn't yours anymore. That's my bias because that's what I've witnessed from a few women in my writing circle. I haven't sent proposals to agents and engaged in that process at all, but how would I respond if an agent or publisher approached me? I think every writer fantasizes that this could happen. It's hard to say how I would respond. My book was edited by SCN friends and by my siblings who did an advance read. My dear



"What Daddy didn't realize is that I was also embarrassed about not being smart enough to get a scholarship based upon academic excellence. And the really unfair part was that getting one based upon athletic excellence was impossible for me since girls didn't get to play on teams."

"I looked out the back window of the bus to see Mama waving and Daddy standing tall. I knew they loved me, although they never actually said so. As I watched them get back into the car and drive away, it came to me that without my family, I didn't know who I was."

"I thought about how I'd never once felt poor at home the way I did in college. My family had as much as everyone else in Black Creek, so of course I didn't feel poor. Well, except for the doctor and the undertaker. They lived in much nicer houses than ours, but somehow it didn't matter. They went where we went and did the same things we did, so it didn't show that they were richer."

"There was some kind of magic in the air that made me feel proud and confident that with this man as my partner for life, I wouldn't lose track of the person I'd become and how I wanted to live my life."

"He was the kind of man who'd want me to be a modern woman, not afraid to disagree with him or say it right out that I wanted a career of my own. I could teach school kids more than just English. I'd teach them to believe in themselves. And maybe I'd find ways to make at least a little bit of the world a better place."



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sister, Joan, is a former English teacher who published her own book a few years ago. She read my final draft three times to catch typos, punctuation errors, and tense mistakes. I printed with Morgan Printing in Austin, TX (now called Ginny's Printing) twice before, and because I love and trust my contact person, Terry Sherrell, that's what I've done again. The marketing of my book will, of course, be up to me. I'm told that that's true when publishing with a small press as well.

SCJ: Can you talk about your decision to publish an e-version via Amazon Kindle?

DVR: I like reading e-books but felt an initial disappointment when I saw my own on my Kindle. My paperbacks look and feel so much better. However, e-books are inexpensive to publish, the market is extremely broad and the shelf life is forever. I'm not very computer savvy, so I paid someone to do the conversion. Then, since I'd ventured this far, I decided to pay for a website design. As you may have guessed by this time, I didn't publish under the assumption that I'd make money, but based upon the experience of publishing my first two books, I expect to at least break even with both my paperback and my Kindle edition.

SCJ: Why do you write memoir?

DVR: Life review is a Jungian concept that I seem to do automatically, through reflection and more specifically through dream work. That's in-depth and solitary work, but since I was born with what's called "the happy gene", I felt compelled to put this work to another use by writing happy books about the value of having had a wholesome and ordinary upbringing. Returning to my roots through writing memoir has helped me remember who I really am and take pride in knowing that my life has been well lived. Reflecting on my childhood and young adult experiences has also served as an escape. Today's world is not an easy one to comprehend or tolerate, especially as an elder. When I am experiencing sadness, disappointment, or crisis within my family, I find relief in writing about a time when everything was less complicated. It's a better way to relax than popping a pill, isn't it?

For more information on the author and her books visit Donna's website: www.donnaremmert.com.

Book Talk & Signing with Donna

Monday, October 8th 7:00-9:00 (Refreshments at 7, discussion/book signing to follow)

St. John's Episcopal Church
11201 Parkfield Dr.
Austin, TX 78758

<http://www.austinstjohns.org/>



Circles: The Heart of Story Circle Network

Finding Your Voice

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.

The writing circles of Story Circle Network are one of the places we gift each other in this organization. Each circle is made up of women from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. We each have a story to tell and join a story circle because we want to get that story out.

We have many reasons beneath our desire to write memoir:

- to share the hard-earned wisdom of our senior years;
- to discern the realities of our own journey;
- to speak without fear about who we really are;
- to affirm our own accomplishments;
- to leave a legacy;
- to tell the family story our way.

During twelve years of being part of a writing circle I have witnessed many women find their own voices, often after many years or a lifetime of believing they had no voices at all. Mary discovered that she can determine her own spiritual path after being spiritually abused by her family as a child. Jennifer can now affirm her life choices to be a stay-at-home mother and community volunteer, despite the immense pressure to “go to work” from her peers. Penny realizes that she truly has made a difference in the larger world through her lifelong dedication to an historical association. Elizabeth can affirm that her story is unique, that she has been a model of openness and inclusivity for others.



"Because we are engaged in a day-by-day process of self-invention—not discovery, for what we search for does not exist until we find it—both the past and the future are raw material, shaped and reshaped by each individual."

—Mary Catherine Bateson

All of these outcomes, and many, many more, have been the gifts of writing in community. The most powerful thing we do for each other is to listen each other into speech. The writing circle ground rules of confidentiality, nonjudgmental listening, affirmation, and critique only when asked for make each group a safe place to delve into our personal narratives.

Are you in a writing circle? If not, consider facilitating a circle in your area. We now have a group of mentors who are ready to assist new facilitators for up to one year. Remember! There is a Facilitator's Guide for organizing a circle that is free to members of SCN. YOU might well be the woman to give other sisters the chance to find their voice again, or for the first time.

Call me (512-433-6121) or e-mail me (barbaralindq@gmail.com) with any questions, proposals and suggestions you have for furthering our writing life together.

Great Gifts for Yourself... or the Writers in Your Life

Visit our online store!

Choose from a number of products with the Story Circle Network logo, and some with quotations by, for, and about women.

Your purchases help support the Story Circle Network.

We plan to add new products, so stop by often.

www.cafepress.com/storycircle





Members In Print & In The News

SCN members make the news by publishing books, articles, essays, poems, dramas, and art. They also make presentations, lead workshops, facilitate groups, and organize programs. Below are some of our members' achievements this year.

If you're an SCN member who has made the news, please let us know by sending email to news@storycircle.org. If you've published a book, we'll also add you to our SCN Authors page.

June

Lois Halley's poem, "Nurse's Journal, 1963," was published in *The Storyteller* magazine, the April/May/June 2012 issue. Lois tells us, "I am grateful to the editor, Regina Williams, for publishing the first submission I ever sent her."

Lee Ambrose had a book review published in the Knowledge Central section of the *Oncology Nursing Forum: the Official Journal of the Oncology Nursing Society*. It was the lead review out of 6 in the current issue!

Ronda Armstrong's piece, "Puttin on the Mask," was a Halloween Vignette winner on Women's Memoirs and was published on June 7, 2012.

Khadijah Lacina's latest book, *Fasting from Alif to Yaa: A Day to Day Guide to Making the Most of Ramadhaan*, has just been published. Her first children's book, *A Slice of Sunshine: The Poetry Book of Colors*, is also now available.

Kira Janene Holt has published her debut novel, *Rapid Descent: Nightmare in the Grand Canyon*. While a work of fiction, the story stems from a rafting trip through the Grand Canyon that changed her life. *Rapid Descent* short-listed in the 2010 Pirate's Alley Society William Faulkner Wisdom Creative Writing contest. It is available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other fine book stores.

Helen Ginger's first fiction book, *Angel Sometimes*, is now available on Amazon and is part of the KDP program. Although fiction, parts of it are based on Helen's life. Angel, the protagonist, swims as a mermaid—as Helen did for three years. Two of Helen's short stories, "Gila Monster" and "One Last Run", are included in the anthology, *The Corner Café*, available through Amazon. All royalties go to charity. Neree, who parked her beat-up truck, Gila Monster, in the senior parking lot, hopes to find it still there at the end of school, but what she finds is an unexpected possibility, in "Gila Monster" by Helen Ginger. When a couple ski a black diamond run in a blizzard, the truth of what happened is in the blood, in "One Last Run" by Helen Ginger.

Renee Cassese's short story spoof on Cinderella, "After the Ball," was published on Metro Moms' fiction page. A member of Renee's real time critique group told her that the website had started to publish fiction thus proving how well networking pays off.

Susan Wittig Albert's article on native plant medicines of the Southwest appeared as the cover story in the Summer issue of *Wildflower Magazine*.

July

In the last two months, **Paulette MacDougal's** new drama, "Sisters Under the Skin," was produced for a three-weekend developmental production in May 2012, with actors Rae Petersen, Peggy Schott, & Rodnesha K. Greene, & director Gaia Farnam. This production included live music by the 12-member Heritage Chorale, directed by Madeline McCauley.

Also, the play was chosen in national competition to undergo further development at the Great Plains Theatre Conference in Omaha, NE in June, 2012. This involved a rehearsed public reading, audience feedback, advice from two professional theatre panelists, and hours of personal consultation with a dramaturg (a professional play-writing coach.)

August

Actress & author **Patricia Fiske** will be the Featured Poet at the book launch of *Spirit Rocks* at 7pm on Saturday, September 1, 2012 (doors open at 6pm) at the Austin Bahai Center, 2215 E.M. Franklin Ave, Austin TX. Hosted by Thom the WorldPoet, the launch will feature Patricia Fiske, Kathryn Lane, Alex Krysinski, & Sharon Meixsell.

Donna Remmert's new memoir, *Head Over Heels: Stories about the 1950s*, has just been published. She will be in Austin to celebrate her new book on Sunday, October 7, at 4pm at Satay Restaurant, 3202 W Anderson Ln; please call 512-467-6731 to RSVP to Satay. Donna will also discuss/sign her book at St. John's Episcopal Church, 11201 Parkfield Dr, Austin TX 78758 on Monday, October 8, from 7-9pm.

Sara Etgen-Baker's memoir, "Ticket to Ride," was selected by Tales from the South to be read (by the author!) before a live audience at the Starving Artist Café in downtown North Little Rock Arkansas. It was also broadcast on the radio and can be seen on YouTube.

A memoir Sara wrote last November was just published at Womens Memoirs.



Ordinary and Extraordinary Days

One Woman's Day

Story Circle Network's One Woman's Day blog (<http://onewomansday.wordpress.com/>) features stories about ordinary and extraordinary days in the lives of our members. We welcome submissions at <http://onewomansday.wordpress.com/about/>.

Recently we were delighted to feature the following post entitled Good Morning submitted by Andrea Savee.

Tomorrow, my brain will be both bombarded and caressed and sections that have been asleep for forty-three years will wake up. My perception of the world, and maybe myself in it, will change, without me taking a drug, staring at a wall for a week, or having a near death experience.

I feel giddy and special. Like it's the night before the biggest birthday party of my life. A party with one whopping \$5600 gift to myself of Danish technology: hearing aids.

My childhood ears were ravaged by chronic infections. Surgical and pharmaceutical interventions--a steady dose of prescription strength Sudafed and Actifed, tonsil and adenoidectomies, drainage tubes, and finally a tympanoplasty -- couldn't prevent severe damage to the ossicular chain, that trio of articulating bones we learned about in elementary school: the hammer, anvil, and stirrup. By age nine, I'd lost considerable hearing in my right ear and was nearly deaf in my left.

Somehow, I've spent four decades never even considering hearing aids or the surgery that I've learned could restore my hearing to normal. Seeming to naturally embody the phrase It is what it is, I adjusted. In school, I sat up front. In work and play, I reflexively positioned myself to the left of someone I wanted to hear. I watched the mouth of the person speaking more than I did their eyes.

Tomorrow, I'll immerse myself in a surround sound scenario that will reportedly rock my world as the brain

scrambles to sort it all out. Alicia, the audiologist, warns me that as the upper registers of my hearing range flood with information, I may be distressed by the simplest sounds of living: Dishes clanking. Keys jangling. Freddie Mercury.

But there will be soothing sounds, too, as the lower registers open up and round things out. The hooting desert owl. Eggs boiling in the covered pot. The cat purring from the far end of the couch. I can hardly wait for someone to whisper in my ear.

And being buttressed on both sides now by the sounds of the world will bring clarity. No more mistaking the dribbling hose for chirping birds. The whirring motor several lawns away for bees humming in the trees overhead.

After my initial workup, the otologist asked me with a softened voice how I've managed all my life. I was touched by her tenderness. She asked if I'd grown up in a small town without access to good medical care. I hadn't. In fact, my dad was a doctor. What ifs swirled around the exam room and around the question of why I hadn't been treated with antibiotics. My later Google search suggests that whether and when to treat children with antibiotics is still the judgment call my parents made back in the 60s.

The child who lost access to half her world when the left side dropped away doesn't need what ifs. She just needs hearing aids. The ReSound Alera 961 to be precise. I like the sound of that.

2012 SCN Anthology Deadline: September 15

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 15, 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.



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, laugh-ing, 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> <p>My name and address:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>My phone and e-mail:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</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>Make your check to Story Circle Network PO Box 500127 Austin TX 78750-0127</p> <p>09/12</p>
	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____ Amount enclosed _____</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

2012 May Sarton Memoir Award

Entry deadline is December 7, 2012

For details, visit
[http://www.storycircle.org/
SartonMemoirAward/](http://www.storycircle.org/SartonMemoirAward/)



True Words:

Looking Ahead

We're always looking for stories rich in evocative detail, showing the struggles, challenges, and resolutions of real people living real lives. We prefer that you submit your work directly to the website at:

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

Future Topics and deadlines for upcoming Journals:

- December, 2012 (due Oct 15)—Country Roads/
City Highways
- March, 2013 (due Feb 15)—Silence

It's back-to-school time!
Get in on Story Circle
Network's online classes. See
the list on page 8, and visit:

www.storycircleonlineclasses.org

