



STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL

Vol. 18 No.1, March 2014

The newsletter for women with stories to tell

Stories from the Heart VII: Featured Speakers



Linda Hasselstrom

Our Friday-night keynote speaker, **Linda Hasselstrom**, has been resident writer of Windbreak House Writing Retreats on her western South Dakota ranch since 1996. Her most recent book, *Dirt Songs: A Plains Duet with Twyla Hansen*, received the Nebraska Book Award for Poetry, 2012. The book was also a finalist for best poetry book, High Plains Book Awards, Billings, MT, and finalist, WILLA award for poetry, Women Writing the West, both in 2012. Linda is also the author of *No Place Like Home*. She received recognition for Distinguished Service to the Humanities from the South Dakota Humanities Council in 2011 and is special consultant to the Rural Literature R.A. L. L. Y. initiative, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY. Two of her essays were broadcast by "Living on Earth," *Orion Magazine*, in 2012. Linda's talk is entitled, "Follow the Few: Find your Story."



Nancy Curtis

Our Sunday luncheon speaker is **Nancy Curtis**, publisher and primary editor of High Plains Press, a micro-publishing company specializing in Western Americana and poetry of the American West, headquartered on the family cattle ranch near Glendo, WY. The press has published over 60 books since 1984 which have won five Western Heritage Awards for outstanding poetry from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, two Willa Awards, as well as other recognition. The press was recognized by Western Writers of America with the Lariat Award for special distinction in support of western books and authors.

Curtis is also co-editor, with Linda Hasselstrom and Gaydell Collier, of three collections of women's writing published by Houghton Mifflin: *Leaning into the Wind*, *Woven on the Wind*, and *Crazy Woman Creek*.

Nancy will talk about "The Writing Gene": Does good writing originate with gene, genie, or genius? New research has identified some of the differences between a world-champion chess player and a good player, a concert violinist and a violin teacher, an NBA player and a good playground athlete. Can these same scientific conclusions be applied to making you a better writer?



Linda Joy Meyers

The trio of **Linda Joy Meyers, Amber Starfire, and Kate Farrell** will entertain us during our Saturday luncheon. They will read from their recently published anthology, *Times They Were A-Changing: Women Remember the 60s and 70s*.

Californian Linda Joy Myers, a once-Oklahoman, is president and founder of the National Association of Memoir Writers and the author of four books. You can also join Linda for her pre-conference workshop, **The Three Stages of Memoir Writing**.

Amber Lea Starfire holds an MFA in creative writing from the University of San Francisco. She is the author of two books and has contributed to many anthologies.

High school and college teacher Kate Farrell is founder of the Wisdom Has a Voice memoir project and is editor of a book on daughters' memories of their mothers.



Amber Starfire



Kate Farrell

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Stories from the Heart VII ♥ April 11-13, 2014 ♥ Wyndham Hotel, Austin, TX

Letter From SCN's President—



Stories from the Heart VII is Almost Here!

The time is nearly here. Women from all parts of the country will come to Austin, Texas for a weekend of dreaming, learning, writing, thinking, creating, and connecting. Our chairpersons, Jeanne Guy and Peggy Moody and their committee

members have planned for two years for this beginning.

Savor every moment.

Open your heart and your mind and take in everything that Stories From the Heart offers you.

Be brave. Share your stories, your ideas, and your thoughts. Laugh and cry. Know you are in a safe place, a weekend cocoon for creativity and connection.

I can't wait to see you!

Jude



*Stories from the Heart VII
April 11-13, 2014
Wyndham Hotel, Austin, TX*

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

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

Pre-Conference Workshops

What's It All About? *with Leila Levinson*

You have filled countless journals with free writing, excavating your life. Now what? How do you turn the raw material into a memoir? The most crucial step is figuring out what your story is about. What is its theme? What will be the thrust of its narrative arc?

When people set out to write memoirs, they often find the excavating of their material easy and then stumble when they set out to organize it, to frame it with a specific focus. For someone else to find our stories interesting, they must have a point: a beginning, climax, and resolution that creates insight for the reader into their own life. Yet it is difficult to step far enough back from our own stories that we understand what they are about. This workshop will facilitate your understanding the importance of a narrative arc and how a theme creates universality and the possibility of an arc, of creating order out of life's mishmash. You will leave the workshop with a sense of your memoir's theme.

Methods we'll use to achieve these goals:

- Arrive at the workshop having already identified three or four key scenes from your writing•Bring a list of your three favorite memoirs with a brief description of the books' themes and arcs of those books
- We will share together how those arcs express the theme and how the themes connect us to the memoirs. Leila will have a handout of possible themes.
- We will break into small groups where each attendee will read their scenes and brainstorm with the group about what their theme might be.
- We will come back together into the large group to share our findings and reactions and questions.

Benefits you can expect:

- A sense of the importance of a theme to a memoir having universal appeal.
- How a theme is essential to creating an organization of your material, other than purely chronological.
- Possible themes for your stories.
- Ideas of how the theme can lead to possible narrative arcs for your story.



The Three Stages of Memoir Writing *with Linda Joy Meyers*

Memoir writers need a roadmap to begin, develop, and publish their memoir. Identifying these stages: Kickstart Your memoir, The Muddy Middle, and Birthing your Book can help you start—and finish—your memoir. We will discuss and use the tools you need to get to the end of a first draft.

Methods we'll use to achieve these goals:

You will receive handouts about the skills you need to write a memoir, and we will work on the turning point exercise, putting your turning points in a timeline, and writing scenes that weave story with narrative. Linda Joy will draw from the structure of the book *Wild*, by Cheryl Strayed to show how it is structured and discuss how you can develop a similarly framed memoir.

We will discuss the process of the three stages, and have them define where they are, using the Q&A to get to their specific questions. Writing exercises will offer a hands-on way to proceed with their memoir. They will come away with the stages of publishing, from essays to eBooks, to hybrid to traditional publishing models.

Benefits you can expect:

We will address the arc of writing, developing, and publishing a memoir with practical solutions that really work, tried and true skills that include craft as well as the psychology of writing a full length work. We'll share group discussion and writing exercises to offer support emotionally and to craft skills that you can take home and use. You will leave knowing that other writers run into the same challenges and that there are ways to solve them. You will leave with the ability to define the stages of your writing, locate the stuck places, and work your way through them in the future. You will have two new vignettes as well, and a timeline that you can keep building.



Register at: <http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/frmregister.php>



Stories from the Heart VII

PROGRAM: Schedule

Conference Hotel

Wyndham Hotel
3401 South IH-35,
Austin TX 78741
512-448-244
fax: 512-443-4208

www.wyndham.com/hotels/AUSWC

To get the conference rate (\$109/night plus tax, double occupancy), call the hotel directly (512-448-2444); please be sure to say that you are with Story Circle Network, and make your reservations no later than March 19, 2014. Room rate includes complimentary airport shuttle service, parking, and high speed wireless internet.

Would you like to advertise for a roommate?
See our *Roommates Wanted!* web page:

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



Friday, April 11

- 9:00 Registration Opens
- 9:00 Exhibitors Room Opens (Hrs: 9-4, 5:30-7:30)
- 9:00–11:30 *Heart-to-Heart Coaching* (Register by 3/24. \$10 fee)
- Noon–1:45 *Optional Pre-Conference Workshop* with Linda Joy Myers (extra fee)
- 2:00–3:45 *Optional Pre-Conference Workshop* with Leila Levinson (extra fee)
- 4:00–5:00 *Conference Welcome* with Judy Whelley, SCN Pres.
- 5:30–7:30 Dutch-Treat Dinner
- 6:00 *Silent Auction* opens
- 7:30 Sarton Memoir Award Presentation
- Keynote Address: *Follow the Few, Find Your Story* with Linda Hasselstrom
- Dessert reception following the talk (included in registration fee)

Saturday, April 12

- 8:30 Registration Opens
- 8:30 *Silent Auction* Opens
- 8:30 Exhibitors Room Opens (Hrs: 8:30-12:30, 2-6)
- 9:00–10:30 *Session 1*
- 10:30–11:00 Break: *Sarton Memoir Award Winner Book Signing*
- 11:00–12:30 *Session 2*
- 12:30–2:00 Lunch (included in registration fee)
- Entertainment: Readings from *Times They Were A-Changing* with Kate Farrell, Linda Joy Myers, & Amber Starfire
- 2:00–3:30 Free Time
- Special Sessions*
- 3:00 Drinks & Refreshments
- Sarton Memoir Award Winner Book Signing*
- 3:30–5:00 *Session 3*
- 5:30 *Silent Auction* Closes
- 5:00–8:00 Dutch-Treat Dinner; Special Interest Tables
- 8:00–10:00 Open Mike: *Storytelling from the Heart*

Sunday, April 13

- 9:00–10:30 *Session 4*
- 10:30-11:00 Break
- 11:00–12:30 *Session 5*
- 12:30–2:00 Lunch (included in registration fee)
- Speaker: Nancy Curtis, *The Writing Gene*

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

Stories from the Heart VII

PROGRAM: Sessions

Session 1

Track A: Finding Our Voices

Honestly, how honest should you be in your memoir?
Anne Keier, Philadelphia PA &
Harilyn Rousso, New York NY

Track B: Nuts & Bolts

Raising the Dead
Patricia Charpentier, Orlando FL

Track C: Putting Our Hearts on Paper

Sister Story, Brother Story, Favorite Relative Story
Marilyn Collins, Rogers AR

Track D: Storytelling: Ways & Means

Rising to the Universal
Laura Cottam Sajbel, Austin TX

Session 2

Track A: Finding Our Voices

The Dance Between Dreams and Life Writing
Billie Ortiz, Boulder CO &
Donna Remmert, Boulder CO

Track B: Nuts & Bolts

How Many Hats Does it Take to Publish a Book?
Nancy Curtis, Glendo WY

Track C: Putting Our Hearts on Paper

A Legacy of Story
Amber Starfire, Napa CA

Track D: Storytelling: Ways & Means

When Digital Isn't Real: Fact Finding Offline for Serious Writers
Marlene Samuels, Chicago IL

Session 3

Track A: Finding Our Voices

The Exciting World of OWLS
Judy Watters, Spring Branch TX

Track B: Nuts & Bolts

How to Promote Your Book on a Budget—And Still Have Time to Write
Sheila Allee, Austin TX

Track C: Putting Our Hearts on Paper

Eighty Percent of Success: How to Make Your Journal Sustain Your Writing
Linda Hasselstrom, Hermosa SD

Track D: Storytelling: Ways & Means

From Census to Story: Bringing a Family Tree to Life
Carole Rogers, Morristown NJ

Session 4

Track A: Finding Our Voices

A Goldmine of Life Stories: Genograms
Cheryl Reynolds Linck, Palm Beach Gardens FL &
Fran Reynolds, Columbia MO

Track B: Nuts & Bolts

Is Blogging Right for You?
Judy Miller, Zionsville IN

Track C: Putting Our Hearts on Paper

Telling Healing Stories: Writing a Compelling Memoir
Madeline Sharples, Manhattan Beach CA &
Eleanor Vincent, Oakland CA

Track D: Storytelling: Ways & Means

Truth & Story
Judith Helburn, Austin TX

Session 5

Track A: Finding Our Voices

Navigating through scene, summary and musing in memoir
Fran Simone, Charleston WV

Track B: Nuts & Bolts

Transforming Your Writing Life in Just 20 Minutes a Day
Helen Leatherwood, Beverly Hills CA

Track C: Putting Our Hearts on Paper

Home is Where the Heart Is
Joyce Boatright, Houston TX

Track D: Storytelling: Ways & Means

From Family Documents to Published Book
Susan Morrison, Austin TX

Special Sessions

Session A:

5 Ways New Non-Fiction Writers Can Reach Readers
Debra Winegarten, Austin TX

Session B:

Keep Your Day Going With Restorative, Relaxing Chair Yoga
Regina Moser, Austin TX



Stories from the Heart VII Conference News

Win a Cameo Appearance in the Next China Bayles Herbal Mystery, *Bittersweet*—And Help Your SCN Sisters

You could win a cameo appearance in *Bittersweet*, Susan Wittig Albert's 2015 China Bayles Herbal Mystery. What's more, your raffle purchase will help Story Circle members attend this year's Stories From the Heart Conference by subsidizing registration fees and travel/hotel costs, as well as other SCN projects.

Susan (who founded Story Circle in 1997) will personally work with the winner to develop a character who will represent him/her in Susan's upcoming mystery novel: *Bittersweet*. And don't worry: she won't ask you to be a villain—you'll be the kind of person you can brag about to your friends. You'll also receive a specially personalized copy of the collectible first edition of your book. A big win for a small investment!

How to enter: Cost is just \$5 per ticket, or 6 for \$25; limit 6 tickets per person.

To purchase your tickets: Go to <http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/raffle.php>. Send us your payment (see details on the web page, after you submit the form).

Payment must be received no later than the close of the raffle: 11:59pm CST on April 8, 2014.

Your name will be put on our numbered list when we receive your payment. You'll receive an email Confirmation of Purchase and you will be asked to print or save this Confirmation of Purchase. The confirmation email will contain the number(s) assigned to you on our list. If we don't receive your payment within 14 days from the day you requested purchase, we will have to drop your name and you will need to re-register.

The Drawing and Notification: We will draw the winning name on April 9, 2014. We will draw two additional names as alternates. Susan will contact the winner, and she will announce the winner on her series website and blog, as well as the Story Circle website.

Rules:

- You must be 18 years or older to win.
- You need not be present to win.
- No refunds or exchanges. Void where prohibited by law.

All proceeds go to support the work of the Story Circle Network, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

Call for Donations, Please!



Framed needlepoint wall piece, handcrafted by Susan Albert.

When women come to Stories from the Heart VII, they take home memories... and goodies! We are in need of items for our Silent Auction, which helps to fund SCN programs throughout the year, and for door prizes that will be given during the luncheons. If you can help out by making a donation, please go to

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

[Conference/callfordonations.php](http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/callfordonations.php).

We're looking for unique, interesting, and artful items that demonstrate the artist's creativity and help us raise money for SCN. If you have something you'd like to donate, please tell us about it, and send us a photo! (You don't have to be an SCN member to contribute an item to the auction.)

Some examples of the donations we are looking for: paintings, handcrafted stationery, jewelry, hand knitted items, fabric art, etc. Also welcome would be copies of your latest published book and gift certificates for services such as workshops, massage, editing. This is a good opportunity to showcase your talent and help the Story Circle Network continue to encourage and inspire women with stories to tell.

We welcome pens, pencils, small notebooks, merchandise coupons, cosmetics samples, commercial product samples, etc, appropriate for the use of women with a special interest in writing and documenting personal and family stories. Our committee reviews and approves gift bag contributions, in order to avoid duplication or the inclusion of inappropriate items. We expect approximately 125 attendees; gift bags are given to all 2- and 3-day conference attendees.

To make a donation for our gift bags, please go to http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/callfordonations_gb.php.

SCN is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Your gifts are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.



Woven scarf, donated by Jane Parsons

Conference News Continued

Wanted: Volunteers With Heart!

Want to take on a responsibility that might actually be fun? One that directly affects SCN's ability to put on this phenomenal conference? We are now accepting volunteers for our April 2014 Stories from the Heart VII, SCN's seventh national women's memoir conference. Contact our volunteer coordinator at confvolunteers@storycircle.org to get your name on the roster of volunteers.

Assignments range from working the exhibitors room, registration, sales, open mike, story wall, scrapbook, heart-to-heart coaching sessions; and that all encompassing duty known as floater. We will assign you to a wonderful job and you should be prepared to serve a mere two-hour shift. Assignments, times and contacts will be given to you in March.

Please contact our volunteer coordinator at confvolunteers@storycircle.org, the earlier the better. We're making our schedule NOW and we don't want to leave you out. So please volunteer before you forget it!

NOTE: We are looking for a volunteer to record some/all of the conference sessions, so that those who cannot attend can watch online after the conference.

Bring Your Stories to Austin ...and Share

You will have many opportunities to share your stories at Stories from the Heart VII.

Maybe you have a piece that you already shared with your Story Circle, or a poem or two that you just finished, or a short autobiographical fiction piece. Maybe it's a story to be sung, or danced. Or perhaps you'd like to bring a piece of art that you've made—pottery, painting, textile, whatever—and tell us how and why it is part of your story. The sky's the limit, gals, and the only thing we have to fear (as some famous man said once) is fear itself. So let's see how many different stories, and how many different ways to tell a story, we can all come up with.

To give each story-teller a chance to participate we will be dividing into three separate meeting rooms and will ask each reader to limit her turn at the mike to five minutes including opening remarks. (Please note that it takes ONE minute to read ONE double-spaced page or to read ½ single spaced page and plan accordingly.) There are a limited number of spaces available. Sign up will begin Saturday after dinner and will end when all places have been reserved. Open Mike begins at 8pm. Whether you come to read, listen, share or all of the above, we look forward to seeing you there! And please bring a copy of your piece to post on the Story Wall—and plan to email it to us, as well, for sharing with the attendees!

Your Coach is Waiting

On Friday morning, April 11, we will offer 15-minute mini-coaching sessions with SCN experts in writing, editing, book marketing, and workshop design/development. This activity is open only to those registered for the full conference. (We are giving you this information now, so you can make the appropriate travel plans.)

Here's how this works. All conference registrants received an email on Feb. 19 when the session signup opened. You will have until March 24 to register using the online registration form at <http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/frmcoaching.php>; and pay for the sessions you want (\$10 per session) considering your interests and your specific writing-related questions. You may choose one or two sessions—we will do our best to assign you to your top preference(s). This is strictly first come, first served, so you should plan to sign up early during the registration period.

You MUST use the signup form to register and pay for this event. Please consider your interests and your specific writing-related questions and choose accordingly.

The most productive sessions occur when you bring specific questions to your coaches. The coaches don't mind chatting with you for 15 minutes, but they always feel they can be more helpful when you know what you want to learn. We suggest that you write out five questions, in priority order, to help frame your discussion.

Visit the conference coaching page at: <http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/coaching.php> to see photos and specialties of all the coaches. Here are the names of the coaches you can meet with at the conference:

Susan Wittig Albert
Sheila Allee
Patricia Charpentier
Marilyn Collins
Nancy Curtis
Mary Jo Doig
Jeanne Guy
Linda Hasselstrom
Jazz Jaeschke
Helen Leatherwood

Judy Miller
Susan Morrison
Linda Joy Myers
Marlene Samuels
Carolyn Scarborough
Fran Simone
Amber Starfire
Eleanor Vincent
Judy Watters



<http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/coaching.php>



Nancy Curtis of High Plains Press: On Books, Publishing, and a Life Well Lived

by Lisa Shirah-Hiers

Nancy Curtis is the publisher and primary editor of High Plains Press, a micro-publishing company specializing in Western Americana, poetry, and memoirs of the American West and headquartered on the family cattle ranch near Glendo, Wyoming. The press has published over 60 books since 1984, winning five Western Heritage Awards for outstanding poetry from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, two Willa Awards from Women Writing the West, the Best Woman Writer award at the High Plains Book Awards, as well as other recognitions. The press was recognized by Western Writers of America with the Lariat Award for special distinction in support of western books and authors. In 2011, Nancy received the Governor's Arts Award from Wyoming Governor Matt Mead.

Nancy Curtis is also co-editor, with Linda Hasselstrom and Gaydell Collier, of three collections of women's writing published by Houghton Mifflin: *Leaning into the Wind* (1997), *Woven on the Wind* (2001), and *Crazy Woman Creek* (2004). Lisa Shirah-Hiers interviewed her via email for the SCJ.

SCJ: Tell us a little about yourself, Nancy.

NC: I was raised on the working cattle ranch where my husband and I now live, and we live in the house where I grew up. I love learning new things and think curiosity might be one of my best assets. I'm somewhat of a Renaissance woman if that means I can do a lot of things with mediocrity. I've definitely gotten more detail oriented and better at the fine points as I've gotten older. Someone described me as very "down-to-earth" the other day. I don't know if that is a compliment or not. It sounds pretty uninteresting, but I suppose it helps when it comes to business decisions and organizing book manuscripts.

SCJ: What do you think are the primary reasons you became an editor and publisher?

NC: I love language and words and working with people and stories. I also like design and find designing covers more like playing than working. I'm not particularly motivated by making money, so I'm willing to work for not much more than the joy of trying to make good books.

SCJ: And the love of language and words led you to establish your own press? Tell me how that happened.

NC: I'd always been interested in writing. I had an English degree and as an English teacher I was a school newspaper and yearbook sponsor. I knew a couple of women in the state who had small presses and helped regional authors get their books in print. They both folded up shop. I knew people who had written good regional books, but no one was publishing those geographically regional books. The nearby university presses, like the University of Nebraska, would tell authors they liked their books but there wasn't

enough of a market for Wyoming books to make them profitable. They'd suggest that the author get a grant from Union Pacific or a bank or museum to help pay for the book. That works for some authors, but a bank or institution is only going to help publish a book every now and then. So I decided to give it a go.

SCJ: Once you decided to "give it a go" what was the next step? How did you prepare yourself? How did you get started?

NC: I published a little chapbook of poetry with sixteen poems by sixteen poets and that went pretty well. Then I decided to go to the University of Denver Publishing Institute, which is a month-long course about only book publishing, all day, every day. Most of the students there wanted to go to New York and work for big publishers. I never wanted to work in New York or Boston. I wanted to stay in Wyoming and work from where I was—a ranch in the middle of nowhere. But all the things we learned there could also be applied to a small press, maybe with some adapting to a Wyoming scale.

Strangely, my experience as a faculty yearbook sponsor had taught me quite a few things about book production. I knew fonts and design basics and the language of book publishing. So I came home and started publishing. At first I had a couple of other part-time jobs, but gradually I was able to do it full time and later to hire an assistant.

SCJ: Your desire to work from a "ranch in the middle of nowhere" led you to establish High Plains Press. But besides the location and subject matter, are there other characteristics that distinguish High Plains Press from other publishers?

NC: As a small independent publishing company, High Plains Press has to be committed to every book we publish in order to stay in business. We need to sell them to get our investment back. We try to publish books that will continue to sell for years, which is one reason we publish a lot of history and almost no travel books. History doesn't change too much; travel books are outdated before they come out. I'm all about building relationships. Real people answer the phone here. In my region, I know the bookstore owners, the wholesalers, the gift shop owners, the museum store manager, and many of the writers and readers. We're all in this together. I treat them as friends and some of them become friends.

SCJ: In your experience of Wyoming and the region you must have found some things that are unique. What have you learned through your work about the state and its people?

NC: Wyoming is a state that hasn't had all the "rough rode off" yet. People are still pretty straightforward and really do believe in the Cowboy Way. Wyoming is a boom and bust state because we rely on energy industries and agriculture and aren't very diversified. When ag or energy goes bust the whole state feels it. When things are booming we build wonderful facilities that then may have to last until the next boom. People who live in this atmosphere don't go overboard because they've seen the economy change overnight. There are so few of us that people don't need to put on airs because we know each other personally. We don't put much weight on appearances or degrees. We might be considered backwards; we still read books on paper.

SCJ: "We still read books on paper"—that's a wonderful answer, and true for many of us booklovers! On another subject: You've learned many things about the publishing business that other people might not know. What are some of them?

NC: The one thing about publishing I gently explain to people over and over is that Stephen King does not pay a publisher to print his books and get them on bookstore shelves. The publisher pays him for the right to publish his book. The publisher takes the financial risk from the time the book is under contract.

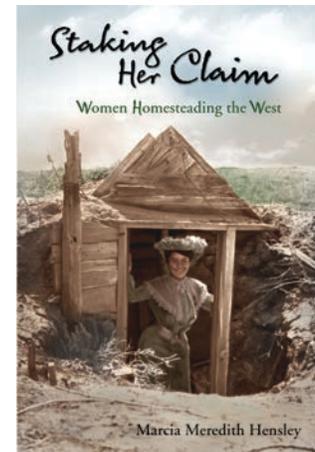
An author who wants to sell books should ask herself who is going to read the book. A book written for "anybody" is often read by "nobody." If the book is written for a targeted audience it becomes much easier to sell than if it is written for a "general audience." A regional book, or even a local book, can sell really well if people take ownership of it: it can become "our" book rather than the author's book. There is nothing wrong with writing a book intended for a small group that is passionately interested in the subject. For instance, our book about sheepwagons sells well. People either have no idea what a sheepwagon is (the Library of Congress tried to catalog the book under "sheep, transportation"—as if sheep drive around in little wagons) or else they know, love, and long to own a sheepwagon and will buy five copies of the book. There is also nothing wrong with an author who doesn't care whether anyone ever reads the book, although that attitude can present some interesting challenges if she changes her mind later.

SCJ: You seem to wear a lot of hats as an editor and publisher. What are your main goals in your work?

NC: As an editor I like to help the author write the best book she can. As a designer, I like to make books with covers that attract readers and an interior design that is pleasing to read. As a marketer and publicist, I like books that are "the first, the best, or the most important" book on a subject, because that gives it a selling platform. As a publisher I enjoy getting to know and appreciate the authors and their knowledge and abilities. As a business person I like books that sell well in the first year and continue to sell steadily, though more slowly, for years to come.

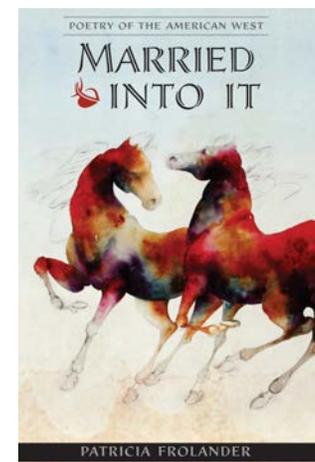
And I'm still striving to publish a perfect book. If that ever happened, I'd be very excited.

Continue reading on page 10



"Reading these accounts by women homesteaders is like discovering a dusty trunk in a beloved grandmother's attic where you sift through stacks of letters bound by faded ribbons, open brittle pages of a diary, or leaf through yellowing magazines. Time will suspend as you are transported to another era, and you may not want to return."

—Susanne George Bloomfield, author of *The Adventures of The Woman Homesteader*



"Once again High Plains Press has published a book worth reading not once or twice, but to keep on our Old West book shelf for continued inspiration. *Married into It* is a book of poetry. Before you let out a snort, be aware that writing good poetry is a difficult task. The writing must be economical, filled with meaning. No time to waste."

—Phyllis Morreale-de la Garza, *Chronicle of the Old West*

"This is a gracefully written, beautifully published book."

—Candy Moulton, *Fence Post*

Continued from page 9

SCJ: You've been in the publishing industry during an interesting time—the move from “books on paper” to digital, from large press houses to small, independent publishers and self-publishing. What are some of the changes you've seen in the business since you founded High Plains Press?

NC: When I began, there was no typesetting and page design on computers. There was no fact checking on the Internet. A publisher spent a great deal of time writing specifications for typesetting and design. Editing was done with pencils, green ones. Making changes once the book was typeset was expensive. When I started, I had typesetting done in Barnstable, Massachusetts, because they knew about book typesetting there. Any change involved clearly defining the “fix,” mailing it to them, and hoping it was correct when I got it back in the mail two weeks later. It was a miracle if a cover came out the way a designer envisioned it. We have more control now—a typographical “fix” takes two minutes on a computer—but editors are expected to do things that used to be “jobbed out.” However, it's definitely easier for someone who lives away from the population centers to get the job done.

SCJ: It's clear that you love what you do. Can you tell me some specific things you love about your life and work?

NC: I love working from my home. I can let a week go by without starting my car. Of course, I do have to drive thirty miles to a grocery store and 200 miles to find an Apple store if my computer goes haywire. But there is nothing like being able to wear slippers to work or drop everything and watch our granddaughter ride her horse. When I can't figure out what an author intends, I can put a load of laundry in the washer and watch the agitator go around and around for awhile.

I love that I get to learn a lot about a new subject or a different way of life from each book. I immerse myself until I become almost an expert. Then, about the time I am sick of the subject, we are done with the editorial work on the book and can move on. I get to select another subject to learn about. At High Plains Press, I make most of the

important decisions and have no one to blame but myself if things don't turn out the way I hoped. I've never worked with a really difficult author; I've had good working relationships with every author I've worked with.

SCJ: That work must have given you an insider's view into the American book culture. What are some of the changes you see coming?

NC: It will be interesting to see how digital sources of information progress. I think we're already becoming ambidextrous. We're learning which stories and information we want to read on paper and which we want to read on a screen. We're learning which material we want to own and place on a shelf and what material we're satisfied to read quickly and set aside, knowing we can get it again if we want it.

Books are a strange commodity; people love to own them. We've never needed to buy books because we can get them free in libraries, yet people stand in line to buy them. They feed something deeper in us than just a need for information or entertainment. I'm not at all sure that standard business principals apply to the book industry. Would you buy a car if you could go to the library and check one out for free? Several years ago libraries tried checking out artwork. People didn't do it. What is it that makes books different? It is all about the stories and the information, not whether we read them from paper or on a screen.

SCJ: What are you looking forward to at the Story Circle Conference?

NC: For me it's always about the people and their stories. I'm looking forward to meeting new people and hearing theirs.

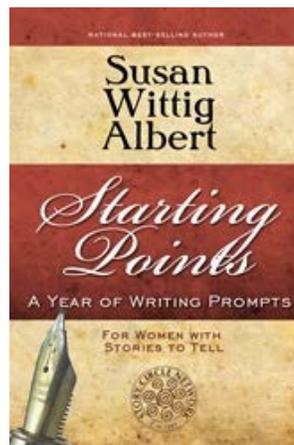
*"To find out more about Nancy and High Plains Press, visit her website:
<http://www.highplainspress.com/>"*

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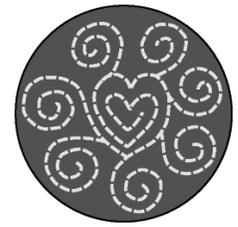
Internet Chapter:

Challenges & Celebrations

by Lee Ambrose

In 2015, Story Circle Network's Internet Chapter will turn 15! Look to the SCN Journal, the SCN Monthly e-Newsletter and the SCN Internet Chapter Monthly e-Newsletter over the remainder of this year as we gear up for a grand celebration in print to honor Internet

Chapter founders and its members - past and present.



If you are now, or have ever been, a member of a writing circle, this will likely sound all too familiar. If you've not ever been a member of a writing circle, it is my hope that what I have to say here will answer some of your questions and even spark a desire for you to join one.

Writing circles are not unique to Story Circle Network. There are local homegrown writing groups in many communities. Perhaps you've checked one out at your local library. If you do an on-line search for writing circles, your returns will be many. That being said, we like to think that Story Circle Network's writing circles are special. The Internet Chapter's writing e-circles are a sub-set of writing circles born from Susan Albert's foresight when she gave birth to Story Circle Network. Originally based in Texas only, Story Circle now stretches its arms all around the world – literally! With members from over 40 states, several Canadian provinces and a handful of foreign countries, Story Circle is, indeed a worldwide entity like none other.

The decision to join a writing circle can be daunting. The decision to join an on-line writing circle is even more difficult for some. The idea of sending your precious words to complete and utter strangers can be very scary. For others, it is easier to do just that than to sit in a room and face those who will be reading or hearing their words.

The challenges that come with belonging to a writing e-circle are as unique as the circle's members. Cultural, religious, ethnic, socioeconomic and educational differences are often tossed out as possible pitfalls to a successful circle. Surprisingly enough – or not so surprisingly – these so-called barriers are not barriers at all. They are part of what makes for a rich exchange between members. Diversity opens our hearts and our minds to new possibilities.

Initially, one of the perceived challenges echoed by new members is getting over the idea of sending your work to strangers. It's a challenge that is quickly put to rest for those who participate, because through regular exchanges, a true sisterhood forms. Our stories prove time and time again that no matter where we come from, what we do for a living, or what our age, women share common threads that bind them together in ways far stronger than we might have once believed.

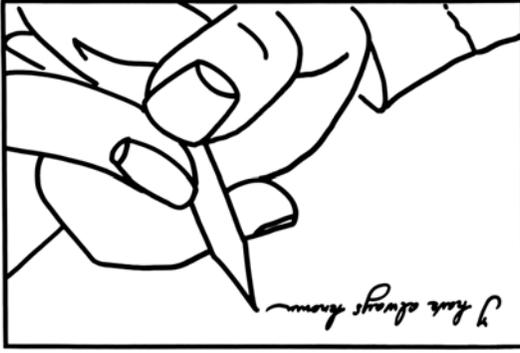
Communication is key to any relationship. With a writing e-circle, communication can be trickier than in a

face-to-face circle. In those "in-person" circles, the sharing of stories is accompanied by the inflections of voice and body language. When writing for an e-circle, you don't have the luxury of being able to experience those two forms of communication. Communication in e-circles is limited to the words on the computer screen. That, and getting to know the author of those words through monthly sharing of stories and responses are the only ways to communicate. Over time, members of the e-circle come to know the hearts of their sisters in writing from those same stories and responses.

For those women who take on the role of facilitator for a writing e-circle, the challenges increase, but only slightly. Our facilitators all started as members of one of our writing e-circles. They participated in their circle and at some point in time felt that it was a good time to step up to lead a circle. They understand the nerves that accompany a new member's first few offerings. They feel the sense of loss when a member leaves the group. They beam with pride when one of their circle members writes a story worthy of a Story of the Month nomination or when the work of one of their members is published in the Journal.

Sometimes, through attrition, they take on that role in the same circle they'd belonged to for some time. Other times, they continue to write for their circle but take on a second circle as facilitator. Each of our facilitators wants to provide a rewarding writing experience for her circle members. They strive to find fun, interesting, challenging and/or probing writing prompts each month. They deal with the ebb and flow of participation levels that are a natural part of any group. Each month, one of our facilitators writes for the Internet Chapter's Monthly e-Newsletter in the Facilitator's Corner – a column where she can write about anything related to anything SCN related. I hope that you take the time to read their insightful columns. Story Circle is blessed to have many talented and dedicated women serving in the role of facilitator. What they share in their columns can be heartwarming, enlightening, educational, or just plain fun – but is always worth the time it takes to read it!

If you've been toying with the idea of joining a writing e-circle but haven't done so yet, maybe it's time. There is no challenge too great. There is no story too insignificant. No experience is necessary. All are welcome. You won't regret it. I promise.



True Words from Real Women

Action

A selection of short pieces of lifewriting by our members, edited by Mary Jo Doig. Please be sure that, if your story includes other people, you have not violated any privacy rights, that there is nothing defamatory in it, and that it does not infringe copyright or any other rights. Contribute your own True Words to the Journal. Future topics are listed on page 28.

Action or Non-Action

Ardine Martinelli, Tacoma WA
 amart@nventure.com, w-ecircle 6

While meditating I received the most amazing message: “Change your image from Warrior to Dancer.” This jolted me back to the present as I began to reflect on what that might look like. I continue turning the two images over in my mind and wonder how they both show up on my life.

I have been a warrior most of my life. It seemed necessary for me to prove, achieve, and do. I lived life like I had to conquer it. I am a high action person, moving out into the world, believing I have to make things happen. This mode served me well for a long time. I built a successful career, built a business, and created a sense of competency and worth around my achievements. I am now 71 years old and this image no longer serves me; in fact, it drains me. I am tired of pushing through; I want to rest and let life come to me.

Ah, this is the image of the dancer. As I began playing with the dancer image I realized I craved the idea of letting life flow through me. As a dancer, I am a partner with life not a conqueror of life. My whole body relaxes as I let this image flow through me. It is hard for me to imagine waiting for life to come to me. This requires a deep level of trust. Not a quality that comes easily to me.

Clearly, my warrior is high action. Dancing is also action. What about waiting, is that action or non-action? My dancer waits, trusting in life and knowing all is well. My warrior believes she needs to create life. The shift of image is a process and I trust in its slow movement through my being.

This New Walk

Anna Turpin, Lockhart TX

I am a 42-year-old woman seeking a new direction. For the first time in my life, I am asking for help every step of the way. I wake up to doors slamming closed every morning and remember where I am and why. I start this new walk by opening my Bible and asking for guidance. As soon as I walk out the door of my cell I am reminded that I am responsible for my role in my new direction. The next 42 years of my life will be something far better to remember, for I am more than the sum of all my mistakes.

Hope in Action

Lutricia Youngblood-Smoos, Lockhart TX

Hope came into my life with one simple request: Put hope into action. To me, this means believing you will receive restoration and assurance.

When I stop to think of all the foolish things I’ve done, I’m inclined to smile a bit and then hunch my shoulders in shame and regret. I think of all the people I could have hurt—or did hurt—as I made hasty choices, spoke carelessly, or remained silent. I recall selfish acts rationalized with, “I must do this for me.”

Some of the smiles fortunately became the smiles of wisdom, my youthful mistakes understood from a different perspective. But some of the choices cause my stomach to knot up. Past choices may be forgiven, but they are not forgotten.

I am left leaning on hope.

These days, putting hope into action means helping abandoned, abused, and mistreated dogs. I’ve been a dog trainer in the Paws in Prison program for seventeen months. This program allows me to restore dogs’ bodies and spirits.

It has also helped me to see the difference it makes to train, nourish with love, and teach a dog to do the same. It’s like I’m paying it forward. I recently helped a dog named Miles get adopted. He was in bad shape when he came in, with severely matted hair. Miles trusted no one. We took action to restore his confidence before he could even begin basic obedience training. With proper training, love, affection, and structure, Miles flourished. He became obedient and trusted those who cared for him. It was so rewarding when he was adopted.

I often think that if I hadn’t been put in a situation where I could serve as a healer, I never would have learned how to put hope into action.

Action

Mary Devries, Hutchinson KS
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I have several friendships which have lasted decades. But I wonder why these bonds were formed. What action of mine did they respond to or what action of theirs did I respond to? What caused one of us to stop to lay the foundation? Action and reaction is the law of life, is it not?

Berniece and I are the same age though she had married ten years earlier. We met when I wed her hubby's classmate. We raised our children together—her boys and my girls. A small town, Bible studies, sick kids, morning coffees, playing cards—all the everyday things created memories. I lost my husband to divorce; she lost hers due to a long decline. Yet, I feel if I needed her, she would come. Which action? Her offer to babysit or mine? Does it matter?

Stacey and I worked together. More my daughter's age, our concern for students drew us together. One student in particular bonded us. Brian was an angry child and graduation was a fading dream. We opened our rooms to him: "Do not strike out; come sit with us." He made it; we celebrated. Two divorces (hers and mine), job changes, and though we are miles apart, the bond exists. No need to wonder about the action here.

Joyce. How can one explain this soul sister I found? She had married, like Bee, right out of high school. I taught her kids. She was a librarian by default in the small South Dakota town. Blizzards, stitch and chatter nights at the library, the shared love of books, and loss of mates again helped the bond. She knows me better than my girls and has helped me face joy and trouble. I have done the same for her. The action that began the bond is lost in time, but I am blessed it happened.

Action can mean movement to a goal. It can also be the hello that leads to friendships. But simple action that creates friendship is the richer. We who have experienced it are enriched

Preparing to Go

Madeline Sharples, Manhattan Beach CA
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Even on the elliptical machine this morning,
reading my *New Yorker*
about the faux Rockefeller, Clark,
I kept thinking: should I add a couple
more shirts? Should I pick out some
silver jewelry? Do I need a pair of dressy heels?
Even while Jeffery complimented my Pilates form,
I kept seeing the piles on the sofa:
shirts, pants, undies, jackets, hats, and scarves,
shoes scattered on the floor, and the stuff bought
especially for safari in Kenya and Tanzania:
a camera with built in telescopic lens,
insect repellent, and a bite-itch eraser,
I couldn't stop asking myself
what could I add or take away?
Even while I did my last Yoga stretches,
I churned about what else I had to do:
gather up my toiletries
and put them in travel containers,
pack my contact lens solutions and case,
lay out clothes for traveling tomorrow.
At least I had distributed
my vitamins into separate baggies.
At least I picked everything up at the cleaner
and finished the last load of laundry.
Yet, still weighing on my mind was
how much everything weighed.
Would my soft duffel be allowed
on those teeny African two-engine planes
if over the imposed thirty-three pound limit?

Lights. Camera. Action.

Stephanie Turner, Lockhart TX

Here I am again, starring in my most famous role: Prisoner.

Will I ever learn? You see it's my fourth time playing this role. And this time, I can't take it anymore.

Something must change, so I sit back and think. And I pray. Instead of always trying to do it myself, I decide to get help.

I tell myself I must take action, so I sign up for everything that has a dotted line. I take a Truth Be Told class. It helps me to unfold. I am trying to drop the negative thoughts my mind can no longer hold.

I stop dwelling on the past, and I put God in my life. I put the past where it belongs.

My former role is at an end, and I want to star in a new role. I am ready now.

Lights.

Camera.

Action.

A Knock

Madonna Aguirre, Lockhart TX

I'm home with family, lounging around and watching movies. It's late. We all hug and say goodnight. I lie awake, listening to the giggles of cousins.

Suddenly I hear gunshots. My heart starts to race. My aunt calls out, "Did you hear that?"

A bang at the door is the next sound I hear. Someone yells, "Open up!"

Grandma Nina has been shot.

More yelling. More banging.

My mom runs out the door to the hospital.

I am 16, the oldest. So I stay back with the young, waiting for the door to open or the phone to ring.

Hours go by. Finally there is a knock. I don't want to answer.

I open the door. My aunt, red-eyed, speaks the words that pierce my heart to this day.

"She's gone."



What We Remember

Ronda Armstrong, Des Moines IA
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As a young child born with hearing loss, I scanned surroundings to help gather clues to guide me.

What did others do?

How?

When?

Reading lips of adults and children filled in some blanks. Being a partner with an encouraging adult or peer further prepared me. Continued watchfulness told me when to modify actions.

Growing up, novel pursuits boosted confidence: youth group president, church camp counselor, after-school child care provider, presenting programs for Mom's women's groups. Voice and speech concerns, the aftermath of throat surgery, joined hearing loss. I discovered that facing vulnerabilities built strengths and assets, such as in observation, listening, problem-solving, and tenacity.

This pattern prevailed during young adulthood and beyond when rare tumors intermittently popped up. Undeterred I yearned to influence lasting change. Boomer classmates gravitated toward social causes, community development, and civil rights and, by choosing social work, so did I. First-hand experiences made me a passionate advocate for the new mandate to educate all children,

Miracles for Ariel

Marguerite Bouvard, Wellesley MA
marguerite@bouvard.us

We don't speak of miracles,
but of cause and effect.
Nor do we speak

about history although it has cast us
on its shores.
But there are miracles

everyday; the child who entered
this world with eyes that see
our everyday lives

more clearly and who finds beauty
wherever she goes,
awakening us

to our surroundings, a night
without pain, the person who sees
beyond himself and honors

the differences with everyone
he meets, a flower spilling its fragrance
and colors in a bare field.

including those with developmental and health conditions.

Today, in my 60s, retired after a satisfying career, lifelong health issues accompany me. Making a difference transpires in incremental moments: replacing annual goals, long-range plans, and decade-driven destinations. Small acts of courtesy and kindness punctuate routine interactions or chance encounters in scenes of daily life: waiting areas, hospital rooms, elevators, church, neighborhood establishments, and dance floors. Caring acts ripple from one to another. I give and I receive. Encouraging smiles. Comforting touches. Listening without interrupting. Sharing meals. Saying thanks. Offering help.

Looking back, now living more spontaneously and at a less-hurried pace, I muse what matters, what lasts. Actions without compassion don't move us forward. Feelings do—when parties feel valued and validated, connected and supported, respected and inspired. Skimping on caring gestures dilutes broader aims.

The shine of success recorded in history and on award walls dims. Memories of the heart, stored moments celebrated time after time, collect tiny ways we love each other. Treasured goodness—vignettes of comfort, inspiration, encouragement—compose the crux of stories, slivers of life fully lived and fondly remembered.

The Instinct to Help

Marian McCaa Thomas, Leawood KS
mmccaat@kc.rr.com

I was in the kitchen when I heard the impact, and knew right away it had to be serious. I ran out the front door, and saw that a car had rammed into a parkway tree just across the street. It had veered into the left lane from the right, and from the crumpled front end of the car I knew the driver must have been hurt. I ran across to the other side of the street and saw her: she was lying in the parkway, thrown from the driver's seat onto the ground. Her face was bruised and swelling badly, and she was moaning in pain. I looked back across the street and saw my neighbor standing on her porch.

"Call 9-1-1, and bring me some ice, quick," I shouted. I sat down on the ground beside the woman, put her head in my lap, and talked to her, telling her help was coming soon. My neighbor brought the ice wrapped in a towel, and I gently held it against her swollen lips and cheeks, still talking quietly to her. Within a few minutes an ambulance came, and the professionals took over.

After they lifted her into the ambulance, I went back to my house, sat down, and realized I was trembling. A bit later my neighbor called to ask if I was okay.

"How could you do that?" she asked. "How were you brave enough to go right up to her?"

"I didn't stop to think," I replied. If I had done that, I might have been frozen in place just as she had been. There are times when an act is carried out by instinct, when the urge to give aid overcomes hesitation. I am hoping that if I am ever injured and unable to help myself, someone with the instinct to help will be nearby.

A Simple Action

Cindy Flora, Clearwater FL
lonestargs@aol.com, <http://cosmiccochiticowgirl.wordpress.com/2013/06/>

"You always find pleasure in simple things," my husband interjects in the middle of my story of discovering a vintage commercial sign welcoming folks to "The Sunshine City," suspended from the ceiling of a local restaurant.

"Why do you always say that like it's a bad thing?" I respond.

It's true, in his eyes, I am guilty as charged. Yes, I do deliberately seek out pleasure in daily adventures—finding a cool nostalgic artifact, harvesting beans in my garden, writing stories—but I think the real culprit he sees, the person who makes him just a little uneasy, is the person who takes small daily action steps to capture joy in living and will most likely glide gracefully into retirement.

And so it has been most of my life really. Even when I had very little except an old '64 Chevy Malibu that dropped more oil than it used and a small yellow rescue dog from the pound, I found pleasure in simple things: going to the beach, traveling to North Carolina with my best friend with no more than \$60 dollars between us and a Gulf credit card, and, of course, writing stories.

"You never seem to have a dull moment in your life," observed a casual acquaintance and fellow commercial archaeologist when I relayed the same discovery.

That, of course, has been the unexpected bonus to a life always open to ideas and experiences. Not that there haven't been moments which I would have preferred to have been dull, but those moments ultimately, represented the challenges and changes in life which shaped who I am and who I am yet to be.

Like the challenge of writing my way to this personal revelation today. Surprisingly, not such a simple action at all, but still a pleasurable one, nonetheless. Almost as pleasurable as returning to that same restaurant this afternoon for a bowl of their wonderful clam chowder, having a conversation or two with the employees and then seeing the smile on my flu-suffering husband's face when I bring a bowl home for him too.

Labor

Gloria Ramirez, Lockhart TX

Young, pregnant with number four and my heart full of emotions, I stand on a sidewalk covered with virgin white snow and face the front of the payday loan store. I pray for the compassion of a stranger.

What will I do if my daughter arrives and I don't have next month's rent?

With a last look at the exhalation of my chilled breath, I walk inside, ignoring the pains that started early that morning. No pain compares to the shame of knowing I cannot provide.

With the heart of a soldier and the humility of a servant, I greet the man in charge. His smile is a warm one. I think: *If only he could see the real me.*

The discussion never begins. Labor catches up with me. I double-over in pain. Disappointment lances my spirit. With the bearing of a regal queen, I excuse myself to rejoin my growing family in our small car.

On a hospital bed, I twist in agonized pain, meeting each contraction with strength shouldered only by God. In the blink of an eye, the doctor announces, "You have a beautiful baby girl!"

Afraid to look, I in mine and she in hers, my body moves on its own. I see a tiny picture of perfection, one I know I do not deserve but will fight the world to keep.

I didn't know then, like I don't know now, how I will provide. But I give my word that I will always try, my beloved daughter.

A Love Like This

Betsy Boyd, Maryville TN
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It took a few minutes to sink in, and while I sat there processing, I was keenly aware that my world just shifted.

Her message was brief and simple: “Hi Betsy, it’s Kris. I was just listening to Enya’s *Memory of Trees* and thinking about all of the great times we had at your apartment. I hope you are well.” The sub-text, however, spoke volumes.

Although her dad and I had never married during our ten-year relationship, Kris and I claimed each other as stepmom and step-daughter from the time she was eleven. We enjoyed a dozen years’ worth of Mother’s Day cards and graduation presents and trips shuttling her between North Carolina and Knoxville for college. When her mom threw her out of her home to appease a new husband, Kris called me. While she was mustering up her nerve to “come out” to her dad, I offered reassurance and advice. I brought her to my house for a few days of comfort and healing after her very bad break-up.

Then came the time of misunderstanding, resentment, grudge-holding, anger, taking offense and, finally, separation. She hadn’t spoken to me in eight years.

Until last night. I sat paralyzed as the parade of emotions—elation, nostalgia, curiosity, suspicion, anticipation—marched by. One moment I wanted to tap out a volume of eight years’ worth of catch-up news while the next I wanted to upbraid her for the books not returned and the loaned money never repaid. In the next I resolved to ignore the whole thing, self-righteously musing that my silence would serve her right. Ultimately, I decided to do nothing and sleep on it.

Rifling through the stacks of papers and books on my bedside table this morning, I found a poem I had scribbled on a scrap of torn envelope months ago:

*Even after all this time
The sun never says to the earth,
You owe me.
Look what happens with a love like that.
It lights the whole sky.*

~Hafiz

“Hello, Kristy,” I shall write. “It’s nice to hear from you.....”

Cutting the Umbilical Cord

Sara Etgen-Baker, Allen TX
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I pulled into the gravel driveway and saw him sitting on his front porch. As I crossed his yard, Granddad stood up, waved, and mechanically walked towards me. “I’ve been expecting you. Come sit beside me,” he said pointing to a chair on the porch. “What brings you to Springfield?”

My face beamed. “I’m on my way to Muncie, Indiana, for my first job.”

“Why so far from Texas?”

“I just felt too confined living at home after graduation—almost like a fetus strangling on its own umbilical cord.” I glanced at him uneasily. “I thought moving would help me cut that umbilical cord and be independent.”

Granddad wrinkled his forehead. “So putting some distance between you and your family is the best action for accomplishing your independence? Hmmmm.” He tilted his head and paused. “If you say so.”

I squirmed in my chair giving him a slightly glassy stare.

Granddad changed the subject. “You had dinner yet?”

“No, I haven’t.”

He walked toward his front door. “Well, come inside and eat with me.” He stumbled for the right words. “Uh....didn’t you know? Muncie’s my boyhood home.”

My heart sank into my stomach. What an odd coincidence, I thought.

“In fact, my brother and his family still live there.” He reached for his telephone.

“Um, Granddad, wait! No!” But I couldn’t stop him.

“Hello, Claude. Bert here. Oh...fine. My granddaughter’s moving to Muncie. When? Uh...tomorrow. Sure. I’ll give her your number. Thanks.”

He hung up the phone and handed me a piece of paper with Uncle Claude’s number on it. “Claude’s expecting your call.” What’s Granddad thinking? What about my independence? Then he flashed me a smile so sweet and warm that I couldn’t even lash out at him.

I had to chuckle at the irony of the situation. What were the odds I’d take a job in the one city where I unknowingly had family? Gotta be a reason. Indeed there was! Uncle Claude and my Muncie family supported me and shared with me a part of my family history I wouldn’t have otherwise known. Job well done, Granddad!

Making Every Day Count

Carole McGhee, Riverview FL
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 Facilitator for "Busy Pens" Valrico, FL

Several mornings on my way to work, near a corner stop sign stood a man holding a sign: "Out of work, need help." The man was cleanly shaven, and was dressed in clean clothes.

On the days that my car had to stop, I handed the man a dollar, and sometimes two. He was very thankful, and said so.

Weeks passed. The man was not on the usual corner, and I worried that something had happened to him. I said a silent prayer, hopeful that he was okay.

A few weeks later, not far from that same corner I spotted the man carrying what appeared to be a small brown lunch bag. He was on his way to work.

Yesterday, a young single mother was on a corner near our neighborhood holding a sign asking for money to purchase dinner for her children. I once was also a single mom, and my heart hurt for her. I gave her some money, and she was appreciative.

Helping with money, or any kindness that we can share, never goes unnoticed. If we are blessed, we need to pass it on.

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A Fourth-Grade Memory

D. Maya Lazarus, Cartagena, Columbia
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What did you think would happen, dear dad, when you suggested I keep track of who my fourth grade teacher sent on errands? Did you think it was a good idea? Did I think it was a good idea? Wasn't I upset with her for not sending me on those coveted out-of-classroom tasks? Did I keep track of my teacher's choices and show you the results every day? Did you encourage me and suggest that I show her the results at the end of two weeks? How did I work up the nerve to show her that she was unfair and didn't give all the students a chance to go on errands? What did we think the outcome would be? Was I shocked when she called me a "first-class sneak?" Did I feel like I had been punched in the stomach? Was I even able to get words out of my mouth to refute what she called me? Did I cry in front of her or did I wait until I was on the street on my way home? Was I angry at you? Did I feel that you had led me astray in some way? Weren't we both naive? Did I ask you to speak to her and explain what we were trying to do in the name of fairness? How was I able to return to school the following Monday and face her? Was I afraid she would hate me for the rest of the school year? Did I learn that people don't always react the way you expect them to, especially when confronted with their own behavior? Is fairness a relative term? What other lessons did I learn from watching you fight for fairness and justice?

What We Carry

Jennifer Payne, Branford CT
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"For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction," Isaac Newton said.

"You overcome old habits by leaving them behind," author Wayne Dyer said, some 300 years later.

I don't think either of them was talking about keys...but I am.

I was walking through the woods the other day, thinking about the things we carry with us. The physical things—like keys—and the less tangible, like memories. The things we carry with us can be heavy—grudges, a responsibility. Or they can be light—kind words, or pieces of a poem.

*The bee is not afraid of me,
 I know the butterfly;
 The pretty people in the woods
 Receive me cordially.*

~Emily Dickinson

Often, the things we carry with us are no longer necessary. For example, the key chain I carry holds eleven keys, three key fobs, and bar-coded tags for access to my library, AAA, and mile-long receipts from CVS.

Of those keys, I use three: house, car, and post office box. One opens the door to a friend's house, but I can't remember the last time I used any of the other ones. That's seven keys—or about four ounces—I carry around with no purpose.

Imagine if the non-tangible things carried weight as well? An ounce for that grudge, another for that resentment. Two ounces for that grief, and two more for that heartache. Perhaps they do.

But can I leave them behind? I wonder as I walk. Can I let go of those old things that no longer serve a purpose? Can I overcome stale habits and welcome new ones?

If I want to change things, according to Newton, I must do something: every object tends to remain in its state of motion unless an external force is applied to it. If I leave them behind, and there is an equal and opposite reaction, will I manifest positive change? What new doors will open?

And won't I need a new key?

Love in Action

D. Maya Lazarus, Cartagena, Columbia
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How could I know,
How could I fathom
that you were the man
I was destined to marry.
With coffee-colored eyes
and black curly hair,
I was impressed
with your lying there,
listening to waltzes
and dreaming of eras past
you looked so complacent
I hurried to ask,
Are you the nephew
of the landlady here?
I'm new in Cartagena.
Do I have anything to fear?
You assured me with a smile
that I was in the right place.
My life wouldn't be golden
but I would always look
upon your face.
With 32 years of a life together,
we have surmounted all barriers,
and continued to weather
every hint of a storm
from then until forever.

Full of Action

Roxinia Ware, Lockhart TX

I have been on an "action" journey for many years. For the past ten years, the action has revolved around entering, leaving, and re-entering imprisonment.

I readily acknowledge that my actions have included credit card abuse, delivery of a controlled substance, possession of the same, possession with intent, and organized crime.

But during this same time, I have also worked hard to earn a GED, a word-processing certificate, an on-the-job training certificate, and other certificates from many Bible study classes.

My current actions consist of singing in a choir, attending religious retreats, mentoring for a prison service group called Truth Be Told, acknowledging my love of writing, and getting published in Story Circle Journal.

I have been taking responsibility for the bad choices and ugly choices I've made in my life.

I am now trying to make good choices. I am trying to make myself a better person who has truly learned from her past.

I now know better and can do better.

Taking positive action has become a must in my life. Without taking action to make new beginnings, there is nothing. And nothing from nothing leaves nothing.

I will keep trying to take positive action every day until my journey ends, and only God knows when that will be.

My Busy and Wise Mom

Judy Watters, Spring Branch TX
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With Mom in the car this morning, I took mileage for a new walking route. Since a back injury, I have only walked one mile each morning and night. I used to do three miles twice a day. However, my doctor said no more hills for a while, but I do need to walk more. And I think I found it all on level land. Of course, this tracking mileage led to a great discussion with my passenger.

"I don't understand why everyone wants to walk today."

"It's an easy way to exercise, Mom," I explain.

"I think it's silly. Where do people find the time to just walk along the road? Don't they have anything better to do?"

"What would you suggest they do for exercise, Mom?" I wanted to hear her answer. If I could get exercise an easier way, then I was all ears.

"Well, they could clean their houses. Moving from room to room, sweeping, mopping, dusting; that should be exercise enough."

"But Mom, it doesn't get your heart rate up. Doctors

say today that we need to walk for a healthy heart." I thought that made sense and she would agree.

"Oh, that's nonsense. I never had to worry about getting my heart rate going. And I ate seven slices of bread a day."

There's something unsettling about my mother. She is able to chase many rabbits within one conversation. "What does the eating of seven slices of bread have to do with walking?"

"And I picked berries for jams and jellies, too."

"So if I clean my house and pick berries, then I can eat seven slices of bread every day and be thin?" I don't know why I do it, maybe it's because I really do love my conversations with Mom, but I thought I would see where we'd go.

"I don't know about that," she said, "but I guess you could live to be 92 like me."

I couldn't argue with that. Mom has lived a long and busy life. With her active mind, she doesn't plan giving up anytime soon.

Water is Life

Fran Simone, South Charleston WV
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In mid-January approximately one sixth of the population of West Virginia (300,000 people) was warned to not drink, wash, or cook with tap water due to a chemical leak that polluted our water supply. Alerts were posted, actions taken (some too slowly), schools and restaurants shut down. State and federal officials held press conferences, local and national media reported this disaster, and Facebook exploded with alarms and advice. Fingers were pointed and law suits filed. Freedom Industries, the company responsible for this tragedy, declared bankruptcy. (No surprise.) Erin Brockovich arrived and called for stronger environmental regulations.

Everyone scrambled for clean water. On the morning after the alert, I sat in heavy traffic to reach a water-distribution site. When I finally arrived, a police officer waved cars away because the supply ran out. At Krogers, shoppers loaded carts with gallon jugs and cases of bottled water. I loaded up too. Sam's Club sold 4,200 cases of water in an hour and a half.

Family and friends who lived nearby and weren't affected by the spill sprang into action, offering a place to stay, hot showers, and jugs of clean water. The National Guard, Boy Scouts, and other organizations worked tirelessly to meet the demand. Trucks loaded with bottled water crisscrossed the area.

I volunteer at Manna Meal, a non-profit that provides free breakfast and lunch 365 days a year to anyone who needs a meal. No questions asked. The director sent an SOS requesting clean water. Volunteers acted quickly. No one went without a meal for the duration of the alert.

Now that the ban has been lifted and systems flushed, folks continue to act. Businesses have posted "Rehydrate after aquapocalypse" signs and offer discounts. "Clean water" bumper stickers have appeared. Recycling locations have been set up to handle tons of empty plastic bottles. And many of us have decided to not drink, cook, or wash with water that still may not be safe. We demand that our government representatives take action to prevent another disaster of this magnitude. Water is life. Keep it clean.

Missing

Donna "DJ" Branson, Lockhart TX

I feel like I lost myself, so I've been on the hunt.

I had worked to make positive changes in my life, my character, and my attitude.

But I've been slipping back into my old self. You know, the one with old behaviors and attitudes: unwanted and negative.

Where did the positive woman go that I'd searched for and found not so long ago? Have you seen her?

She's missing. I'm afraid I've lost her.

I miss her so much. She is lost somewhere in the walls of this place.

I will never give up searching for her. When I find her, I will fight hard to never let her go again.

My Loving Grandmother

Charmaine Beaver, Lockhart TX

One cold October night when I was 13, my family was playing board games and watching TV.

The phone rang. It was hospice calling to tell us that my loving grandmother was gone.

All of a sudden, my auntie was yelling and my family was crying.

On the day of her funeral, my auntie lost it.

She jumped onto my grandmother's casket, screaming: "Why? Why? Why?"

We are still waiting for the answer.

Unconditional Love

LaShun Franklin, Lockhart TX

When I was five years old, I recognized the unconditional love of my great-grandmother.

She always wore long, colorful dresses with knots tied in her pantyhose. She got up before the sun every day, cooking, cleaning, and plucking chickens.

I asked her one day if she would ever go away. She truthfully replied, "Yes."

When I was seven, she was called home. My great-grandmother has been spreading her unconditional love from up above ever since.

Social Justice Grows in Families

Laura Strathman Hulka, Sacramento CA
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We are often informed that our past does not need to define us. Yet my family created a nexus for me, one I still continue to emulate in my life: caring for others through social justice.

My grandmother graduated from college in 1912. She wanted to promote social change, espousing the creation of a new platform for women. She was known in her Midwestern town as one of the “good women” by hobos. She raised her three sons and one daughter (my mother) to be sensitive to social justice and equal opportunity for all, regardless of color, sex, or financial status. My mother, at age six, recalled marching alongside of her mother in 1920 in suffrage parades.

My mother was the first woman at her college (graduating class of 1937) to major in Business Administration. In her lifetime she created several volunteer groups that followed her mother’s teachings on social justice and equal rights. She continued to be active in volunteer work until cancer slowed her down when she was in her 80s.

My sister, born in 1941, began her livelihood after college as a Methodist minister. But as her career evolved, the principles taught to us by our grandmother and mother began to present themselves through her, and her passion developed for low-income/affordable housing in California. She worked for an organization for affordable housing for almost two decades, and then, after retirement, she used her knowledge in her own affordable housing organization. Oma Village has won many awards and participation by such leading lights as Warren Buffett.

For me, (born in 1952) I have tried to set an example for my grown children, serving organizations for the homeless, working for Girl Scouts as an Outreach Leader, using my love of crafts to crochet countless small blankets for Project Linus, and doing volunteer work through public service organizations.

Each action is just a drop, but, as the beloved Mother Teresa said, “We know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something.”

Bullet

Abby November, Austin TX
Judith Helburn Writing Circle, Austin TX

Mom told us, “If I get to a point in my life where I can’t read or think, put a bullet through my head,” but my siblings and I ignored her words. Later that year, when she was scheduled for a triple bypass, Dad was uncomfortable in his role as caregiver. My older sister lived nearby but was unavailable to help, leaving my brother, my other sister, and I to “parent” from afar.

After the bypass, Mom suffered a stroke while in cardiac care. I clearly remember the impotence I felt as I sat beside her, holding her hand as she cried for her “Momma.”

Once I asked the nurse to page the doctor, to which the nurse replied, “Use the payphone; it’s faster!” This was a major New York City teaching hospital and we expected at least courteous service. We were mistaken.

Eventually my mother improved enough to be discharged. She refused the rehabilitation center care, saying, “They will harvest my organs for sale.” My elder sister and Dad agreed that being in her own bed was best. A visiting nurse came twice a week for two weeks to check my mother’s vitals and do dressing changes. During this time, I was living in Athens, Georgia, and called daily. My mother’s conversations were confused and monosyllabic. If she spoke a sentence it was mangled, such as when she said her shoes hurt. She wasn’t wearing shoes at the time and probably meant her feet.

Dad was deaf in one ear and refused to get a hearing aid for his good ear, so he missed large chunks of spoken life. One day he called and said to me, “Talk to your mother and tell her to eat,” then handed me the phone.

I told her to have a cup of hot sweet tea and rye toast, her favorites. She parroted, “Hot tea,” and those were the last words she spoke.

Suddenly Dad said urgently, “She’s slipping off the bed.”

“Dad, call 911!”

I flew to Brooklyn to say goodbye before she died. As I was cleaning the apartment, I found many un-swallowed pills under the pillows and bed. It was then that I realized she had made her own “bullet” and did it her way.

Too Much Action

Andrea McClain, Lockhart TX

Where is the action tonight?
That’s the question of the day.
Every day.

The club is jumping.
The sugar-shack is trapping.
The streets are talking.
The FBI is asking.
The informants are knocking.
Surveillance is running.

These shackles sure are tight.
And I’m thinking...
I should’ve stayed home last night.

Play-Sleep

Gladenia Sosa, Lockhart TX

It's Saturday morning, and I'm lying on the couch trying to recuperate from an all-night binge.

My head weighs a thousand pounds, and I can't quiet the marching band practicing inside it. My mouth is as dry as a case of cotton balls, and my eyes are filled with the Sahara Desert.

In the distance, I can hear my kids say, "Mom's sick. Let's make her feel better." I keep my eyes closed because I don't want them to know that I know what they're up to. I can hear them giggling.

As I play-sleep, one of my sons jumps right on me. I open my eyes to see my boys dressed in my short jean skirts and high heels with bandanas as tank tops. They are acting just like me.

I laugh so hard that I forget about my hangover. I am so happy.

Acting Reluctantly

Patricia Roop Hollinger, Westminister MD
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My son Stephen's disabilities are profound
Daily his body is wheelchair bound.

After his birth doctor's words rang in my ears,
They gave voice to my worst inner fears.

"Take Stephen home...for he soon will die."
These words I desperately tried to deny.

Death did not come as anticipated,
His ongoing care was often debated.

Never ending care was too much, that's a fact;
No more debate it was time for me to act.

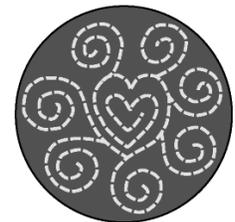
His care is now in the hands of others
A decision so difficult for many mothers.



Circles: The Heart of Story Circle Network

Write in Circles

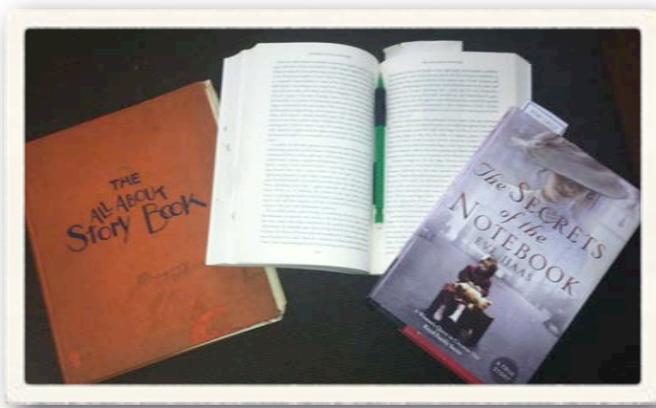
by Nancy J. Wurlitzer
Story Circle Coordinator
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The weather has been awful these last few months, but the good thing about it was that many of us were housebound and had time to write more stories!. We also saw a good amount of inquiries about starting a story circle from many interesting women who are feeling that desire to write their stories! As I contacted these women and sent them information on how to connect by joining with either a local, regional or an online Story Circle Groups, I also suggested they form a group within their community. They can belong to several groups and see what works best for them. It is wonderful to hear back from so many of them that have connected and are enjoying it. Many are planning to attend the Story Circle conference at the Wyndham Hotel in Austin, TX, April 11-13-2014. Check out the website for more info: www.StoryCircle.org

The Story Circle inquiries I have received over the last couple of months are from new members from Maine, Colorado, Texas, New Jersey, Florida, California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Massachusetts, and Ontario.

I have corresponded with women wanting to connect and tell their stories, looking for information on how to start and how to write their stories, how to get published, and how to connect even when there is distance involved. Leading a circle or belonging to a local group or on online group may seem like an challenging step for some people, but you will find yourself becoming a better writer, making new friends, and becoming more active in the Story Circle Network. Even if you cannot commit to a specific day or time, that's okay, too. There are some groups who connect only online and you log in and participate when you can. The rewards are exciting!



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Story Circle Network's Book Reviews

Serendipity

by Trilla Pando

"You can't read all day unless you start in the morning," a friend recently advised. Many a day that's advice I follow happily. I'm not a reader who takes a book and reads from start to finish before looking at another. No, what I'm reading depends on the time of day, my mood and even the weather.

I read across the spectrum. I may escape in some light detective fiction just before bedtime, but daytime hours are likely to find me deep in biography, travel or serious fiction. Although I enjoy them all, I do have a favorite genre—memoir. That's why I was more excited than usual yesterday when a book package appeared by the front door. A new memoir to review for Story Circle Book Review! This Saturday morning, rain, shine or (I hope not) sleet, I'll be at Black Hole Coffee House sipping a latte while I read *The Secrets of the Notebook: A Woman's Quest to Uncover Her Royal Family Secret* by Eva Haas. I can tell from the first few pages—no, I couldn't wait—that I'll be having two or three lattes. This is one I will read straight through. I hope my review will be posted by the time you read this. Check at <http://www.storycirclebookreviews.org/reviews/secretsofthenotebook.shtml> and see what I think.

I read all sorts of memoirs, not just for reviewing but for pleasure and learning. Right now, I'm taking a personal writing class; we are using a memoir by Emily Fox Gordon as a source for our writing prompts. I became intrigued by the author's style and bought one of her earlier books, *Are You Happy?* It addresses memories of her early childhood. I stepped right into her Mary Janes. Or mine. For as I read about her life in Williamstown, Massachusetts, I remembered the little girl in Amarillo, Texas half a continent away.

While reading, I started a list of those suddenly-surfacing memories, a patchwork of little Trilla's life. And, no surprise, the earliest memory I have is about a book. My sister is in the brown chair reading from an orange story book. I'm tucked between her and the arm of the overstuffed chair. I look at the pictures and wish I could read too. She starts to read the story about a chicken to me, but she's only in the second grade; she gets tired of stumbling on the big words. Mother promises she'll read it to both of us as soon as the ironing is finished and supper started. I know she'll keep her word, but I want to be able to read it to myself right now.

A few days after I enjoyed this memory, serendipity struck. When I'm not reading or writing, I often spend time trying to simplify our lives. Part of this involves going through boxes that have remained unopened for (sometimes) many years, deciding what we can live without. That day I opened yet another box marked "miscellaneous papers" to find not papers but old books. Near the top was a bright orange, well-worn book, *The All About Story Book*. The book! What was it doing here? When I'd remembered it, I assumed it was long gone; now, I held it in my hands. I turned crumbly pages until I got to page 37 and found "All About Miss Fluffy Chick." I sank down to the concrete floor and read it.

Later, I went to the computer, did some detective work, and found an affordable copy. Guess what my sister can look forward to for her birthday? (If I can wait that long.) She knows she'll likely be getting a book—she almost always does—but this one will be a real surprise.

Choosing a book is not always that easy, as I've stated on this page before. I know what I like, but will the recipient like it? All tastes are not the same. That's why I often rely on *Story Circle Book Reviews*. Books "by, for, and about women" are listed both by author and category. Almost always I find exactly what I think my friend will enjoy.

For yourself or for gifts, check out the site. While you are there, do a bit of exploring. If it's your first visit you may be surprised by how many books we've reviewed and what variety. If we've missed a book you enjoyed, perhaps you'd like to review it for us, or think about taking on one of the new books we offer for review. If so, you'll want to go to the "reviewing for SCBR" page and find out more. Perhaps you have written a book that you want to see reviewed. "Getting reviewed" is the place for you. SCBR is a great place to reach many readers—readers who want to read you.

Now back to my books! If you'd like to share more of my reading life, be sure and visit my monthly blog at Story Circle's great blog collection "Telling Herstories" at <http://storycirlenetwork.wordpress.com>. Find me at the "Book Learning" tab.

Happy Reading!

The Susan Wittig Albert LifeWriting Competition May-June, 2014

SCN is proud to announce its fifteenth annual lifewriting competition, named in honor our founder, best-selling mystery writer Susan Wittig Albert.

Topic: This year's topic focuses on **balance**. You may choose to focus on the word as a noun or as a verb but either way there are stories to be told and we look forward to hearing them. Here are some wise words to help you get started:

"Balance is not better time management, but better boundary management. Balance means making choices and enjoying those choices."

—*Betsy Jacobson*

"I've learned that you can't have everything and do everything at the same time."

—*Oprah Winfrey*

"I always try to balance the light with the heavy: a few tears of human spirit in with the sequins and the fringes."

—*Bette Midler*

"Women in particular need to keep an eye on their physical and mental health, because if we're scurrying to and from appointments and errands, we don't have a lot of time to take care of ourselves. We need to do a better job of putting ourselves higher on our 'to-do' list."

—*Michelle Obama*

"My point is, life is about balance. The good and the bad. The highs and the lows. The pina and the colada."

—*Ellen DeGeneres, Seriously...I'm Kidding*

Thank you, Jude Whelley, for this topic.

Awards: One prize of \$100, one prize of \$75, and two prizes of \$35 each. Winning stories will be published in a special section of the September *Story Circle Journal* and will be featured on the SCN's award-winning website. Upon the judges' recommendation, other entries may be published in later issues of the *Journal* and in other SCN print or on-line publications.

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

Deadline: Your entry and your entry fee must both be postmarked (if by USPS) or date stamped (if online) NO LATER THAN midnight EDT June 30, 2014. It is unfair to writers who observe these rules to ask for an exception.

Notification: Winners will be notified by August 1, 2014.

How to Enter: All contest entries should be made via the web form, <http://www.storycircle.org/Contests/> The contest opens on May. 1. 2014.

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

~*Susan Wittig Albert*



Take A Bow!

New Board Members



by Pat Bean

Story Circle Network's four new board members are **Penny Appleby, Mary Jarvis, Juliana Lightle** and **Sallie Moffit**. While three of them are new to the leadership positions, one is a familiar face. All, however, are rich in praise of SCN, and its goals of helping women tell their stories.



Penny Appleby is the familiar face. She has been with SCN since its 1997 infancy. She served on its board for 10 years, and then became the organization's president. At one point, she was also treasurer of SCN.

"I'm happy to be back on the board again, in order to be more actively involved in what is going on in the organization," she said.

A Georgia native, Penny now lives in Austin, Texas. She earned a bachelor's degree from Florida State University, but after deciding that careers as a teacher or a secretary (jobs she held for a while) were not for her, she went back to school and earned an MBA from Auburn University in Alabama. After graduation, Penny went to work for IBM, and stayed with the company from 1966 until 1996.

Penny's brother and his kids and their kids are her family. "I went looking for a husband, but ... eventually I came to the realization that I didn't need one, and decided to do my own thing, and if one came along that would be great. And if one didn't come along, that would be equally great. As it turned out, one never came along."

Penny, who had formerly lived in Austin, moved back to Texas' capital city after she retired from IBM. She actually attended SCN's first meeting in 1997 – but thought at the time that it was just a book group led by Susan Wittig Albert. "I was already a big fan of Susan's through her China Bayles mysteries, so I joined the group ... it was only later that I learned it was part of Story Circle," she related.

Penny's primary interest in SCN is the Reading Circle, though she has attended writing workshops and facilitates one OWL (Older Women's Legacy Circle) group.

These days, Penny focuses on keeping herself healthy, is a volunteer in an English as a second language class, is active in an American history club, sings in her church choir, attends continuing education class at the University of Texas—and of course now has her SCN board member duties.

Mary Jarvis, who lives in Amarillo, Texas, has been an SCN member since 2000. A librarian by training and life's work, Mary has been in one library or another for over 40 years. She is also the author of "A Reader's Guide to the Suspense Novel," published in 1997. She now thinks it needs to be revised.

Mary, who considers herself a thoughtful person and one who looks out for the details, has also written a number of reviews for professional library journals, as well as several reviews for "Texas Books in Review" and "Southwestern American Literature." In addition, this new SCN Board member has served on the board of several regional/state library associations, including the Texas Library Association.

Mary said she joined SCN because she wanted to be in contact with women who were writing stories from their lives. "As a fledgling writer of my own stories, I wanted the opportunity to work with those who were more experienced, so I could learn from them," Mary said.

As a board member, she would like to make sure that opportunities for women to write and publish their stories continue to be the focus of the organization. She would especially like to broaden these opportunities for women who live in Texas' Panhandle, which is her home. "I would just like to continue the wonderful work Story Circle has done, and to make it accessible to as many women as want to participate," she says.



Sarton Memoir Award

[http://www.storycircle.org/
SartonMemoirAward/
guidelines.php](http://www.storycircle.org/SartonMemoirAward/guidelines.php)



Juliana Lightle lives in the small town of Canyon, Texas, “on a canyon edge,” where she raises horses and gets away to sing with the Amarillo Master Chorale. She is a former board member of Planned Parenthood and a former high school English and math teacher.

Juliana discovered Story Circle Network in 2006, and immediately began taking SCN classes, which she says has

improved her writing. “I received very positive feedback, and was encouraged to do something with my writing,” she said. That “something” was becoming a finalist in a flash fiction contest before she switched to taking poetry classes and writing poetry.

The poetry classes, she said, inspired her to write her own poetry book, which she hopes to see published in the coming year.

Two years ago, Julia began her blog <http://writingontherim.wordpress.com> which won her the SCN Star Blogger award in January of 2013. She still feels she has a lot more to learn about the writing form, however. One of her goals as a board member is to encourage more technical workshops for women new to blogging, or who want to create their own web site. She would also like to encourage high school and college women to join SCN, as well as to additionally expand the program to women from other countries.

“I feel blessed to have found SCN and the inspiration it has given me and the women I have met through it,” said Juliana. She said its greatest benefit is the inspiration it gives to women to “keep writing, and that every woman’s voice counts.”

Sarton Memoir Award

The Story Circle Network (SCN), an international nonprofit association of women interested in writing about their lives, sponsors this annual award. It is named in honor of May Sarton, who is remembered for her work as a memoirist, novelist, and poet.

The award is given annually to the author of the best woman’s memoir published in the United States and Canada and selected from works submitted. Memoirs by women authors published during **January 1, 2013 - December 31, 2014** in the United States and Canada are eligible. The award is limited to submissions from small/independent publishers, university presses, and author-publishers (self-publishing authors). Professional librarians not affiliated with SCN will select the winner. The winner of the 2014 award will be announced on the Story Circle Network websites and to its extensive email list.



Sallie Moffitt accepted the job as a new board member because after eight years as a member, she felt it was time to get more involved with the organization—in the same way that, since joining the organization, Sallie has gotten more involved with her writing.

Her personal essay, “Waterwheels,” earned a 2010 Mayborn Nonfiction Award that came with a prize of \$2,000. Currently she is polishing another nonfiction essay about surviving and overcoming a painful family life.

But until she attended SCN’s 2006 Stories from the Heart Conference, she said she felt she had been discouraged from writing her entire life. “I was apprehensive about attending my first writing event ... (but) all week long, Story Circle members cheered me on whenever I shared something I had written. That conference helped me find the strength to move forward with my dream, and the courage to tell my story. After having such a powerful experience, how could I resist getting involved?”

One of her first involvements is serving as chair of the upcoming conference’s Hospitality Committee, a chore that has had her designing and creating centerpieces for the Sunday luncheon finale, during which her creations will be given away as door prizes.

Sallie writes from the small town of Ovilla, Texas, where she lives with her husband in a home that has been recognized by the National Wildlife Federation. It’s a haven, she said, for northern cardinals, red-bellied woodpeckers, finches and numerous other birds that feast from the birdfeeders in her yard.

But when she’s not out in her yard, feeding the birds, growing native plants or taking photographs, you’ll often find her writing.

Story Circle members, she says, “taught me that I didn’t need to apologize for not writing as well as somebody else, but to accept myself and my craft for where I was at the time. I learned to express my inner feelings, and to dig deeper in my writing.” And she notes that the more Story Circle events she has participated in, the more she has grown as a writer—something that almost every participating Story Circle member could echo.

Please join us in welcoming these four new members to the SCN board of directors!

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



Memoirs by women authors published during **January 1, 2013 - December 31, 2014** in the United States and Canada are eligible.



Members in Print & 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 over the past three months.

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.

November, 2013

(missed the December issue of the *Journal*)

Merimee Moffitt's first collection of poems, *Making Little Edens*, was recently published.

Sara Etgen-Baker's story, "The Christmas Helicopter," will appear in the December 20th issue of *Page & Spine Magazine*. Another manuscript, "The Butterfly Whisperer," will appear in the December issue of *Praise Writer's Magazine*. Sara tells us, "I have indeed been blessed with so many publishing opportunities throughout 2013."

December, 2013

Susan Wittig Albert's novel, *A Wilder Rose*, was named to the Best Indie Fiction 2013 list by *Kirkus Reviews*. Susan also reports that Thornton will publish the large-print edition of the book in March 2014.

Bette Lafferty's story, "The Old Wicker Basket," was published in *I Have a Story to Tell: A LISTEN Anthology*, published by Bette's writing circle, the Bloomingdale Writers Connection, Friends of the Bloomingdale Regional Library, Valrico, Florida.

Donna Remmert's story, "An Independent Woman," will be published in the "Sifting and Winnowing" column in the Spring 2014 issue of *On Wisconsin*, a magazine for UW alumnae.

Ruth Crocker's essay "Sam's Way," originally published in the *Gettysburg Review*, is listed as a notable, distinguished essay in *Best American Essays 2013*.

January, 2014

A new edition of **Susan Wittig Albert's** writing prompt book, *Starting Points*, first written for the Internet Chapter, is now available as a Kindle book. Her two earlier books (previously published by Jeremy Tarcher) are also available in both Kindle and Nook: *Writing From Life* and *Work of Her Own: A Woman's Guide to Right Livelihood*.

Lois Halley's first work of fiction, "Christmas Storm," was published in the October/November/December 2013 issue of *The Storyteller* magazine.

Sara Etgen-Baker had three pieces selected as contest winners in the 2013 Soul-Making Keats Literary Competition. "Pink Pearls of Wisdom" took First Prize in the Memoir Vignette category; "Ode to Twiggy's Eyes" won Honorable Mention in the same category; "Season to Season" took Honorable Mention in the Creative Nonfiction category. Also, her non-fiction piece, "Skeletons in My Closet," won a January writing contest sponsored by Midlife Collage; read her winning piece here.

Patricia Fiske's memoir, *Secrets I Couldn't Tell My Children*, has been published by Ripe 'n' Ready Press.

Renee Cassese's short story "Martini with a Twist" is now out in the anthology *The Best of Spiritual Writers Network 2013*. Her poetry collection, *I am My Mother's Only Poem*, is currently being designed by Cherri LaMarr & will be available on Amazon later this year. Renee wrote and revised this collection through Lorraine Mejia-Green's course "Your Life in Poems."

SCN members **Kate Farrell, Linda Joy Myers, and Amber Lea Starfire** held a book launch in Napa, CA, for their new anthology, *Times They Were A Changin'*.

February, 2014

Patricia Daly-Lipe's new book, *Patriot Priest: The Story of Monsignor William A Hemmick, the Vatican's First American Canon*, has just been published.

Kendra Bonnett & Matilda Butler have just published a 4-volume e-book series, *Seasons of Our Lives* (*Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter*). The books quickly became Amazon bestsellers in the Kindle Bookstore: #2, #3, #4, #5 in Writing Skills on the bestseller list and in the mid-20s for Memoir, Women for several days and are still doing quite well.

Janet Riehl's story, "Passage Into Elderhood," was published in Kendra Bonnett & Matilda Butler's new 4-volume e-book series, *Seasons of Our Lives*. Janet's story appears in the winter volumes.

Sherrey Meyer has two stories published in Kendra Bonnett & Matilda Butler's new 4-volume e-book series, *Seasons of Our Lives*. Sherrey's stories appear in the autumn and winter volumes.

Stories from the Heart VII Registration Form

Send this form with your check to:
Conference Registration, Story Circle Network
PO Box 500127, Austin TX 78750.
To register online and use your credit card, go to
www.storycircle.org/Conference/frmregister.php

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Current Member of Story Circle? yes no

Registration Type		Early Registration (through 2/11/14) member/non-member	Regular Registration (2/12/14 to 4/01/14) member/non-member	Late Registration (after 4/01/14) member/non-member	Amt Due
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Registration (Fri keynote / Sat / Sun)		\$260/\$310	\$285/\$335	\$310/\$360	
Partial Registration (please check all that apply):	<input type="checkbox"/> Friday (Keynote/ dessert reception)	\$35	\$40	\$45	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday only (includes lunch)	\$128/\$153	\$138/\$163	\$148/\$173	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday lunch only	\$35	\$40	**	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday only (includes lunch)	\$97/\$122	\$107/\$132	\$117/\$142	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday lunch only	\$35	\$40	**	
Friday Pre-Conference Workshop (Not included in full registration: optional, extra charge.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Noon-1:45 pm session	\$30	\$35	\$40	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 2-3:45 pm session				
Saturday/Sunday lunch preference: <input type="checkbox"/> chicken <input type="checkbox"/> vegetarian				Total due:	

What is included in my full registration fees?

- All General Sessions
- Workshop Sessions
- Friday Evening Keynote Address & Dessert Reception
- Two Meals (Sat. & Sun. lunch)
- Refreshments/Snacks
- Plus Informal Sessions and Networking

What is not included in my full registration fees?

- Optional Friday Pre-Conference Workshops
- Hotel rooms are not included. Contact the hotel to reserve your room.

Male guests are welcome at our three public events: the keynote address and the Saturday and Sunday lunches. Our conference sessions are designed for women only.

* Non-Members who choose to join prior to the end of the conference on Sunday, April 13, 2014 will have a portion of their registration fee applied to their dues.

** You MUST register for lunches by April 1, 2014! Registrations for these events will NOT be accepted at the door.

Refund Policy: Cancellations are accepted until March 11, 2014, and are subject to a cancellation fee of \$50 for a full conference registration or \$25 for a one-day registration. No refunds after March 11, 2014.

Story Circle Network, Inc.
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Austin TX 78750-0127

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Stories from the Heart VII
April 11-13, 2014
Wyndham Hotel, Austin, TX

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.php>

Future Topics and deadlines for upcoming Journals:

- June, 2014 (due April 15)—Clutter
- September, 2014 (due July 15)—Grace
- December, 2014 (due Oct 15)—Friendship
- March, 2015 (due Jan 15)—Childhood

