



STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL

Vol. 19 No. 4, December, 2015

The newsletter for women with stories to tell



Stories from the Heart VIII Story Circle Network's Eighth National Women's Writing Conference April 15-17, 2016 Wyndham Hotel, Austin, Texas

Plan now to join us for a unique and exciting event: the *eighth* national women's writing conference of Story Circle Network! This issue of the *Journal* is PACKED with information to help you plan for your most successful conference ever. (See pages 3-9)

If you have never been to a conference we know it will be a memorable and worthwhile experience. If you have been to conferences in the past, you will find that this one is a little bit different...and better. Based on your feedback, we have made some changes! For example:

- Presentations will be 60 minutes rather than 90 minutes, which means we are offering four additional sessions; 24 to choose from rather than of 20!
- Two types of presentations will be offered: workshops with writing opportunities and (a new addition) interactive and engaging lecture-style presentations.
- We've expanded the topics to include fiction as well as non-fiction, memoir, personal essays, poetry, drama, dance, music, art and more.
- For the program, we've moved away from "tracks" to "Topic Areas" covering a wider variety of writing and publishing activities. Our topics will include the writing craft, the writing life, publishing, marketing, and writing as a business.

Of course we will repeat our favorite conference features...the Silent Auction, Heart-to-Heart Coaching, presentation of the Sarton Literary Award, Works of Heart Marketplace, Story Wall, Heart-to-Heart Table, and Open Mike Saturday Night! Also NEW this year is the Hot Flash—Flash Fiction Contest (see page 9).

Don't wait!! Best-price registration (members only!) ends Dec. 27—save \$80 over full conference price!

Register today at:

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



"We began planning for this conference almost as soon as we unpacked our bags from the previous conference. Yes, it's a lot of work. But getting together, learning new ways to write and think about and share our stories, trading hugs and meeting SCN sisters we've only met online—all this is such a deeply, delightfully heartening experience that we can't wait to do it all over again.

We hope you'll join us. If this is your first time, we know you'll have the time of your life. And if it's your eighth time . . . well, you already know as well as we do: your presence and participation makes it a not-to-miss, meaningful and worthwhile experience for all who attend. We can hardly wait!"

~Jeanne
Jeanne Guy, Co-Chair
2016 Stories from the Heart Conference

In This Issue

President's Letter	2
Pre-Conference Workshops.....	3
Conference Presenters	4
Conference Program.....	5-7
Conference Events.....	7-9
Interview: New Board Members.....	10
Internet Chapter	12
Writers' Tools	13
Circles.....	14
Real Women Write Anthology	15
One Woman's Day	16
SC Book Reviews.....	17
True Words from Real Women	18
Remembering Helene Benardo.....	28
SCN Donor's Circle	28
Sarton Literary Award	29
Conference Registration Form	30
New Professional Membership	31
SCN Registration Form	31

Letter From SCN's President—



Dear SCN Sisters—

There is a great deal going on at Story Circle, as we wrap up 2015 and look forward to a new year—a conference year, which makes it extra busy. A quick look through this issue of our *Journal* will give you an idea of the amazing vitality that empowers our unique community of women writers, working together to share the stories of women's lives.

Of course, we all want to know about the conference! You'll find the entire program on pp. 5-7 of this issue, along with the many peripheral activities—the flash fiction contest, the silent

auction, the story wall, the open mic sessions, the announcement of the Sarton winners, the exhibitors and bookstore—that make it so much fun. I'm especially looking forward to hearing our Friday night keynoter, Brooke Warner, who will let us in on important changes in the publishing industry, making it easier for us to send our work out into the world. I'll also be sharing my thoughts and dreams about SCN and its future as a women's writing community. Jeanne Guy, Mary Jo Doig, and Peggy Moody are the women behind this wonderful conference—big thanks to them for all their energy and ideas.

But the conference isn't the only thing we're working on. In January, we will launch a new Professional Membership category (p. 31) to feature our members who are offering helpful writing-related activities and services. Also coming in January, the launch (p. 13) of our new weekly "Writers' Toolkit," with writing exercises, tips from the pros, and helpful resources, designed to boost your writing practice. (Thanks to Joyce Boatright and Pat LaPointe for their creative development work on the Toolkit!)

Many of our traditional activities are taking on a new energy. Lee Ambrose, our Internet Chapter president takes a long forward look at our e-circles (p. 12). Mary Jo Doig, our new Circles Coordinator, takes a look back (p. 14) at our two longest-running circles, Jackie Newman's "Millwood Group" and PJ Pierce's "WordWeavers." (Mary Jo would love to include your writing group in her upcoming survey of our circles!) Susan Schoch, the editor of Volume 14 in SCN's anthology series, *Real Women Write: Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Lives*, brings us up to date (p. 15) on that important project. And Pat Bean gives us an inside look (p. 10) at two board members: one returning member, one renewing. Our board is committed to undertaking serious work on important new projects, and we're delighted to have Jo Virgil and Pat LaPointe with us.

As always, this issue of the *Journal* features plenty of your writing! We have 10 pages of "True Words," compiled by our retiring "True Words" editor, Mary Jo Doig, and our new editor, Jo Virgil. Linda Hoye, the editor of our blog, *One Woman's Day*, brings us a thought-provoking blog post from Letty Watt. We're also reprinting a powerful piece, "Getting a Life" (p. 28) by Helene Benardo, a longtime SCN member who died recently. Her work, shared with her Internet Chapter writing sisters, made a powerful impact on many.

One final note. Our annual fund drive is almost two-thirds of the way to its goal of \$3,000. We'd love to be able to say "We made it!"—and we will, with your help. You can use the form that you received in the letter I sent a couple of months ago. Or you can go to our webpage and donate online: <http://www.storycircle.org/frmdonate.shtml>. Our community depends for its life and health on the energetic participation of every member. We depend on you.

With joy for your journey,
Susan
Susan Wittig Albert
SCN President, 2015-2017

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.

Editor: Robin Wittig
journaleditor@storycircle.org

This Month's Contributing Editors:

Susan Albert
Lee Ambrose
Pat Bean
Mary Jo Doig
Jeanne Guy
Linda Hoye
Pat LaPointe
Susan Schoch
Amber Starfire
Jo Virgil

We welcome your letters, queries, and suggestions.

Story Circle Network
PO Box 1670
Estes Park, CO 80517-1670
970-235-1477
ISSN: 1093-7528

©2015 Story Circle Network
Copyrights to all contributed works remain with the authors.

Membership Rates

One Year \$55 if receiving
online publications;
\$65 (US) if receiving *printed*
publications
\$85 Canada & Mexico
\$90 Elsewhere
Foreign Memberships: Please pay by
International Postal Money Order.

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

Breaking Ground with Brooke Warner and Linda Joy Myers

In "Breaking Ground on Your Memoir," Brooke Warner and Linda Joy Myers lay the foundation every memoirist needs to tell a good story. You will gain new tools and a new perspective and be energized by the discovery of new ways to push deeper, go farther, and write the heart of your story. You will leave the workshop with skills and information that will make your memoir more heartfelt, powerful, and resonant—both for yourself and your readers. Expect a shot in the arm! Just \$30 (Early Registration)

You can expect:

- Energetic co-teachers, fully informed, widely experienced
- Engaging interactive lecture with PowerPoint
- Writing prompts that will take you deep into the teaching
- Important information and help for writers at all levels: beginners to advanced

Your Take-Away:

- A deeper understanding of the art and craft of memoir
- A firmer grasp of important craft elements
- A renewed energy and motivation—a shot in the arm!



Brooke Warner



Linda Joy Myers

Paths to Publishing with Susan Wittig Albert, Connie Spittler, and Debra Winegarten

In "Paths to Publishing," Susan Wittig Albert, Connie Spittler, and Debra Winegarten will outline the requirements, pros and cons, and challenges of traditional publishing, independent and small-press publishing, hybrid publishing, and self-publishing. You'll learn about time and costs, pre- and post-publishing tasks, and marketing strategies. You'll also complete and discuss a checklist of your own personal aims, experience, and resources. Whether you're writing memoir, fiction, or nonfiction, expect information and inspiration! Just \$30 (Early Registration)

You can expect:

- A deep look into the fast-changing world of publishing
- Practical information from writers/publishers who have been there, done that
- Instructive handouts and resource guides for marketing, pre-post publishing work
- Interactive, engaging, stimulating discussion of strategies and best practices

Your Take-Away:

- An understanding of the publishing/marketing process for each of several publishing paths
- Resources for further exploration
- A sense of community in what is often a lonely business



Susan Wittig Albert



Connie Spittler



Debra Winegarten



photo credit: Edgar Valdes

Brooke Warner: Friday Night Keynoter

Our Friday-night keynote speaker is Brooke Warner. Brooke's professional expertise is in book publishing, writing, and coaching writers through the completion of their book proposals and manuscripts. She offers writing coaching and professional publishing consulting to a broad range of clients who are looking to build their author platforms, better understand the complicated world of publishing, and get published. She has worked with novelists, memoirists, screenplay writers, poets, and artists. If your ultimate goal is to get your work published, Brooke can help you get there. She launched She Writes Press in 2012 with Kamy Wicoff, founder of SheWrites.com. Read more on her website at warnercoaching.com.

Brooke uses her publishing/teaching platform to reach out and help other women achieve their creative goals. Another woman championing women!

Susan Wittig Albert: Sunday Keynoter



Our Sunday keynoter will be **Susan Wittig Albert**, SCN's founder and president and a *New York Times* bestselling author. Susan will share her passion and vision for SCN's *community*.

In addition to her acclaimed women's mysteries, Susan has written two novels about the real lives of real women: *A Wilder Rose*, about Rose Wilder Lane and her mother, Laura Ingalls Wilder; and *Loving Eleanor*, about the intimate friendship of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok. Susan will also participate on a panel, "Paths to Publishing," with Deborah Winegarten and Connie Spittler. Visit Susan's website at: www.susanalbert.com.

...most important, as we become aware of ourselves as storytellers, we realized that what we understand and imagine about ourselves is a story. And when we know all this, we can use our stories to heal and make ourselves whole."

—Susan Wittig Albert, *Writing From Life*

Our Talented Presenters Offer Wisdom and Inspiration

Stories from the Heart VIII will bring women from around the country to celebrate our stories and our lives. Through writing, reading, listening, and sharing, we will discover how personal narrative is a healing art, how we can gather our memories, how we can tell our stories. We welcome readers, writers, storytellers, and any woman with a past, present, and future. There will be opportunities to explore difficult or hidden issues, expand our relationships with other women, and discover different modes and media—such as art, dance, and drama—for sharing our stories. Come, learn, share, celebrate with us as we honor our stories!

Our 24 presenters come from all over the country; they represent 11 states, and are from the Northeast, the Midwest, the Heartland, the Mountain States, the Southwest, and the West. They will present 24 different sessions that are organized under the topics of: The Writing Life, Breaking Into Publishing, Getting Personal, and Craft Matters.

Here is the list of women who will offer their wisdom and inspiration:

Lynn Bojinoff, Dillon CO
Marilyn Collins, Rogers AR
Ruth W. Crocker, Mystic CT
Cindy Eastman, Watertown CT
B. Lynn Goodwin, Danville CA
Ann Haas, Akron OH
Kay Kendall, Houston TX
Pat LaPointe, Prospect Heights IL
Len Leatherwood, Beverly Hills CA
Linda Joy Myers, Richmond CA
Lisa Dale Norton, Santa Fe NM
Yelizaveta P. Renfro, Hartford CT
Carolyn Scarborough, Austin TX
Jan Seale, McAllen TX
Suzanne Sherman, Sebastopol CA
Noelle Sickels, Los Angeles CA
Connie Spittler, Omaha NE
Penelope Starr, Tucson AZ
Susan Tweit, Salida CO
Carol Walkner, Pt Pleasant NJ
Rhonda Wiley-Jones, Kerrville TX
Debra Winegarten, Austin TX
Dawn Wink, Santa Fe NM

Learn about our presenters at:

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



Stories from the Heart VIII PROGRAM

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 (\$117/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, 2016. 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 15

- 9:00 Registration Opens
Exhibitors Room Opens (Hrs: 9-4, 5:30-7:30)
- 9:00-11:30 Heart-to-Heart Coaching (sign up required)
- Noon-1:45 **Optional** Pre-Conference Workshop, "Breaking Ground on Your Memoir" with Linda Joy Myers & Brooke Warner (extra fee)
- 2:00-3:45 **Optional** Pre-Conference Workshop, "Paths to Publishing with Susan Wittig Albert, Connie Spittler, & Debra Winegarten (extra fee)
- 4:00-5:00 Conference Welcome Session
- 5:30-7:30 Dutch-Treat Dinner
- 6:00 Silent Auction opens
- 7:30 Sarton Memoir Award Presentation
- Keynote Address with Brooke Warner; dessert reception following

Saturday, April 16

- 8:30 Registration Opens
Silent Auction Open
Exhibitors Room Opens (Hrs: 8:30-12:30, 2-6)
- 9:00-10:00 **Session 1**
- 10:00-10:30 Break: Book Signing with Sarton Award Winner
- 10:30-11:30 **Session 2**
- 11:30-noon Free time
- 12:15-2:00 Lunch Entertainment: Readings from Sarton Literary Award winner's books
- 2:15-3:15 **Session 3**
- 3:15-3:30 Break
- 3:30-4:30 **Session 4**
- 5:30 Silent Auction Closes
- 5:30-6:00 Cash bar
- 6:00-8:00 Dutch-Treat Dinner; Special Interest Tables
- 8:00-10:00 Open Mike: *Storytelling from the Heart*

Sunday, April 17

- 9:00-10:00 **Session 5**
- 10-10:30 Break
- 10:30-11:30 **Session 6**
- noon-2:00 Lunch with speaker Susan Wittig Albert, *Community*

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

Stories from the Heart VIII

SESSIONS



Session 1: Saturday, 9-10am

The Writing Life

Write Like a Heroine! Ruth Crocker

This inspiring workshop will help you find your spiritual writing center and embrace yourself as heroine.

Breaking Into Publishing

Spin Your Stories into Magazine Articles: Marilyn Collins

Join this lively/interactive workshop and learn to convert life experiences and talents into regional/special interest magazine articles—print and online formats.

Getting Personal

Writing in Sorrow/Writing in Strength: Jan Seale

This workshop will help you learn techniques to deal with grief both passionately and effectively and turn your words on personal testing, crisis, and loss into a reader's solace.

Craft Matters

Creating Characters Through Dialogue: Susan Wittig Albert

In this workshop, we will practice turning narrative passages into dialogue that reveals characters' personalities, fears, intentions, and desires.

Session 2: Saturday, 10:30-11:30am

The Writing Life

Creating a Writing Practice: From Discovery to Action: Lynn Bojinoff

This interactive workshop uses journaling exercises and worksheets to help you discover your present priorities, write goals, make a commitment, and take away an action plan that will keep you moving along on your next writing project.

Breaking Into Publishing

Putting Your Book on Amazon is Not a Marketing Plan: Creative Ways to Market Your Book and Find New Audiences: Debra Winegarten

In this workshop, you will learn how to go outside the ordinary venues (retail and online bookstores) to sell your book.

Craft Matters

Having Fun in the Liberating World of Flash Fiction/Memoir: Len Leatherwood

This workshop will discuss what "flash" is and isn't, the essentials of publishable pieces, and markets for your work.

Craft Matters

Building Your Memoir with Scenes and Narrative: Linda Joy Myers

In this workshop, you will discover how to manage the elements of scene, dialogue, description, and narration to build a memoir that reaches the reader emotionally.

Session 3: Saturday, 2:15-3:15pm

The Writing Life

Story Circles: Sharing Women's Stories: Susan Wittig Albert, Pat LaPointe

In this workshop, we will learn ways to create, market, and facilitate circles; explore "from the field" stories of the way circles operate; and practice the process by doing some circle work. You will receive a copy of SCN's revised Facilitator's Guide and learn how to connect your communities with SCN's Story Circle Program.

Breaking Into Publishing

Getting Comfortable with Social Media: Overcoming Your Fear and Promoting Your Writing: Kay Kendall

In this workshop, we'll survey the different media, their demographics, costs, and their best uses; share experiences; and learn what types of social media suit our particular needs.

Getting Personal

Sharing the Tough Stuff—Digging Deeply: Lynn Goodwin

We will use acting exercises to help you think and speak as a particular character, spark your imagination so you can come up with your own methods for digging deeply.

Craft Matters, Getting Personal

Writing from Found Texts: Deepening Your Fiction and Nonfiction: Yelizaveta Renfro

In this workshop, we will learn to become aware of the found texts in the world around us, increasing our writing repertoires and giving our storytelling more depth, edge, invention, and nuance.

Session 4: Saturday, 3:30-4:30pm

The Writing Life

Getting There... From Here: 5 Strategies to Creating the Successful Writing Life You Love: Carol Walkner

This experiential, interactive workshop will offer creative strategies to help each participant determine what her ideal writing life might look like, consider the steps she needs to put it into practice, and gain deeper clarity about herself, her writing life, and her passions.

Getting Personal

The Treasure of Your Coming of Age Stories: Suzanne Sherman

Explore what coming of age means to you and uncover the wealth of writing topics in this fertile subject. You'll write from one of your topics and take home a new story and a rich list of topics for future writings.

*Craft Matters***Creating an Ethical Will: Ann Haas**

We will learn about the ethical will as a storytelling method, survey steps in documenting our legacies using this format, and examine examples of ethical wills.

*Craft Matters***It's All about Voice: Writing Memoir That Readers Will Love, Buy, and Recommend: Lisa Dale Norton**

Writing memoir is about voice, the persona you bring to the page. We'll tease out your way of perceiving the world—and are you a closet essayist or fiction writer?—and use those strengths to create your voice. We'll explore key skills: writing with compassion, and casting yourself as a heroine.

Session 5: Sunday, 9-10am*The Writing Life***Transforming Your Writing Life in Just 20 Minutes a Day: Len Leatherwood**

Participants will understand the elements of daily timed writing and publishing via a blog and Facebook, gain information on the benefits of daily writing practice, participate in and share a timed writing, and learn strategies to face the obstacles inherent in this practice.

*The Writing Life***Trust Your Writing Voice: Cindy Eastman**

In this facilitated workshop, you will learn strategies and models for writing practice, understand the value of taking risks in your writing, and be guided to identify, hear, and trust your own writing voice.

*Craft Matters***Place as Character: Susan Tweit, Dawn Wink**

Learn how to evoke place and setting in vivid detail, how to use place as a character, how to employ place to illuminate often-unexamined truths, and how to weave place into your writing.

*Craft Matters***Oral Story Telling for Writers: Penelope Starr**

In this interactive workshop you will learn how oral storytelling can support your writing, become aware of your potential as storytellers, learn important elements of organization and presentation, and gain confidence in speaking to an audience.

Session 6: Sunday, 10:30-11:30am*The Writing Life***Travel Touchstones: Making the Most of Your Travel Journal Writing: Rhonda Wiley-Jones**

In this workshop, you will match types of travel with journaling tools and techniques you can use, learn narrative modes to enhance your travel journal, and discover ways to use your travel writing to enhance your memoir, create blog posts, and expand your writing portfolio.

*The Writing Life***Creating Powerful Writing Agreements: Carolyn Scarborough**

In this workshop, we will create a list of powerful intentions that motivate us in our writing and our lives. To find the ones that deeply resonate for us, we will use writing prompts, guided visualizations and practical exercises.

*Breaking into Publishing***Practical Tips to Market You, Market Your Book: Marilyn Collins**

In this practical workshop, you will learn doable (and often inexpensive) tips to successfully conduct a pre-launch campaign, launch your book, conduct successful book signings, exhibit at conferences, present workshops and identify/reach primary/secondary markets.

*Craft Matters***Research for Writing: Digging Deep and Avoiding Pitfalls: Noelle Sickels**

We'll explore ways to determine your research needs; avenues of inquiry beyond the obvious; interviews; using your research without overwhelming your story; and the role of courage and ethics in conducting and using research.

Volunteers Needed!

Want to take on a responsibility that is fun and makes a positive impact on this phenomenal conference? We are seeking volunteers for our April 2016 Stories from the Heart VIII, SCN's 8th women's writing conference. Contact our volunteer coordinator (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. You'll be assigned a wonderful job and should be prepared to serve a mere two-hour shift.

Please email 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 NOW...before you forget!

**Story Wall
& Heart-to-Heart Table**

We'll have a section of wall set aside where we can all post stories, photos, and other goodies that tell something about ourselves. Be sure to bring anything you'd like to post. You can take it home with you, or (better yet!) bequeath it to our creative Scrapbook.

Story Wall: For those who would like to participate, please bring a short introduction of yourself, and if you like, a current photo of yourself. You may also want to bring a postable item that illustrates a part of your story. (This might be something you've created, a different photo, a newspaper clipping, or a symbol.)

Heart-to-Heart Table: Do you have brochures, descriptive literature, or cards that you'd like to share with conference participants? Bring up to 100 copies of one or two items for the table. Conference registrants only.

Your Coach is Waiting!

In fairy tales, a coach takes Cinderella to meet her prince. At Stories From the Heart, a coach can take you anywhere you want to go, for our coaches are expert writers and publishers who can answer your writing and publishing questions and get you started on your route to success.

Our FREE 15-minute Heart-to-Heart Coaching sessions take place on Friday morning, 9:00-11:30. When the coaching sign-up is available on the website (early February), all registered conference attendees will get an email directing them to the website. 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 sign-up form to register 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, prepared questions to your coaches. You can read more about this process here: <http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/coaching.php>

Here's what people said about their coaching experience on their post-conference evaluations:

*Absolutely superb! I am so grateful to my two coaches for focusing in right on my issues and giving professional and specific advice!!! THANK YOU!!!

*Both of my coaches were wonderful and I've put new processes in place as a result of both. They are making a great difference!

Of course, you only get as much out of a coaching session as you put into it. People who come with clearly focused questions leave with the feeling that they've moved miles along the road toward their writing destinations.

And that's what our SCN coaches are all about!

~Susan Wittig Albert



Donation framed
needlepoint art.

Call For Donations: Silent Auction, Door Prizes, and Gift Bags

Call for Donations deadline: April 14, 2016

Gift Bag Items

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 140 attendees; gift bags are given to all 2- and 3-day conference attendees.

We will display your photos and info about auction and door prize donations on our Silent Auction page at <http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/silentauction.shtml>. SCN is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your gifts are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Email a high-resolution, jpg or gif formatted photo of the item to storycircle@storycircle.org. We would love to have a photo of the artist/creator/donor, too, if at all possible, to personalize the item.

If you can help out by making a donation, please fill out the form at http://www.storycircle.org/Conference/callfordonations_ad.php. If you have more than one donation to make, please fill out a separate form for each item.

Want to help SCN continue to provide women with resources and a community in which to learn and grow? We need items for our Silent Auction, and door prizes that will be given during the luncheons.

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.)

Silent Auction Items & Door Prizes

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.

Open Mike Saturday Night, Live, in Austin Texas

It's Saturday night in Austin TX—what would you like to do after you've enjoyed a fine dinner at one of Austin's many great restaurants? Well, we could all hang out together and swap stories.

Swap stories?

Hey, what a great idea! After all, isn't that what Story Circle is all about? And who has more stories to swap than women—women who have loved and laughed and cried and succeeded and failed and survived and, yes, triumphed! Creative, canny, crafty, clever, courageous women. Women who have lived ordinary, extraordinary, and sometimes downright outrageous lives!

And all you have to bring is you, and your story. Maybe it's a piece you've already shared with your Story Circle, or a poem or two that you've just finished, or a short autobiographical fiction piece. Maybe it's a story to be sung, or danced (if you need music, let us know ahead of time). 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.



Enter your flash fiction (no longer than 600 words) in our Hot Flash contest, open only to SCN members who are attending our **2016 Stories from the Heart conference** in Austin.

What is flash fiction? It's a short-short story (sometimes called a micro-story) that usually contains the four classic elements: protagonist, conflict, complications, and resolution. But there are no rigid requirements. Here, for example, is Hemingway's famous six-word story: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." There's an art to wrapping up a big story in a tiny package.

Your flash fiction topic for this contest: Stories from the Heart. Consider (but don't feel confined to) these possibilities and more: heartache, heart throb, heart attack, heartfelt, broken heart, beating heart, bleeding heart...

Hot Flashes gives you an opportunity to explore the short fiction form and share your work with other conference goers. Of course, our Stories from the Heart

Call for Exhibitors: Works of Heart Marketplace

Application deadline: March 1, 2016

We welcome exhibitors (including small publishers) who would like to sell books that they have written or published, paper products, print-related services, writing-related items, and hand-crafted items of interest to women. We have a limited number of tables available in a reserved "shopping area" for Friday-Saturday, April 15-16. Exhibitors must be members of SCN. (To join, when you apply simply click the button in the application.) Apply early! Postmarks will be considered when assigning table location to accepted artists. Application deadline: March 1, 2016.

If you are a presenter-author and you are considering applying for exhibitor space, please be aware you may **INSTEAD** bring copies each of one or two titles (books or CDs only) you have authored to be sold on consignment by Bookwoman, the conference bookstore.

For details visit:

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

We're having a Hot Flash, and You're Invited to Join Us!

conference is always a great time for connecting, and for growing your writing skills. So sign up for our conference now and get started on a story.

The winning story will be announced at the Friday evening keynote. Our prizes: first place—\$100, second place—50, and third place—25. The first prize story will also appear in the conference program and in the Story Circle Journal. The author may read it at one of the conference luncheons.

Entries due by midnight EDT March 1, 2016.

Entries must be submitted via the web form and require a \$15 entry fee:

<http://www.storycircle.org/members/frmhotflash.php>

For Sale:
baby shoes,
never worn.



Pat LaPointe

An Interview with Pat LaPointe and Jo Virgil

New Board Members Bring Experience to the Task

by Pat Bean



Jo Virgil

Pat LaPointe and Jo Virgil both bring a bit of baggage with them as they become the newest members of Story Circle's Board of Directors. But it's all good. Their totes are packed with experience for the tasks ahead of them. Both are former members of the SCN board, with Pat serving as president (2012-2013).

In an interview, they gave their reasons about why they decided to serve once again, as well as giving us a view of whom they are, how they write and what inspires them.

Tell us a little bit about yourselves.

Pat: I was born and raised in Chicago, have a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology, and master's level graduate education in clinical psychology. Currently, I live in Prospect Heights, a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. I'm married with four adult daughters and nine grandchildren/

Jo: I'm a fourth-generation Texan, born in Amarillo. I grew up in Odessa and Amarillo, and that big ol' West Texas sky still owns my heart! Now I live in Austin (for the fifth time in my life; 16 years this time). I have a Bachelor degree in English from Texas Tech University and a Master of Journalism degree from the University of North Texas. I've worked a variety of jobs, from freelance writing for the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, to serving as Community Relations Manager for Barnes & Noble, to my current job as Community Outreach and Information Specialist for the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. I was married for 33 years before a totally unexpected divorce 11 years ago—there is a story there. I have two adult children (one daughter and one son) and two precious granddaughters. I will be retiring at the end of 2015, and hope to have more time to write, travel, read, hike and explore—those are all my true passions.

What prompted you to accept board membership, and what do you hope to bring the table?

Pat: I have always worked with women: in psychotherapy, business management, and through my empowerment workshops. I believe I can use these experience to assist in furthering the SCN mission.

Jo: Now that I am close to retirement, I have more time to work on the things I love, and supporting people to tell their stories is certainly one of them. I heard a wise person once say, "Stories are what make us matter." That is so true. I have taught many writing classes with a focus on telling

personal stories, and I truly believe that getting in touch with our storytelling self is one of the most important things we do in this life; it helps us genuinely define ourselves, and it works as a bond and a gift for others in our lives. I want to do whatever I can to encourage that.

What do you think is the best thing about SCN?

Pat: It's really hard to choose just one thing. But most of all it is a unique community of like-minded women writers. There are so many opportunities for women writers to grow and have their words honored and validated by other women.

Jo: Hands down—encouraging women to tell their stories. When I first met Susan Wittig Albert, I asked why the group was exclusive to women. She said it had been her experience that women are more likely to openly tell their stories when their audience was other women, and that most women seemed to feel more open, more genuine, and more comfortable in sharing personal tales with others who had traveled the same path—or at least had insight into what that path was like. I had never really thought of that before our conversation, but I know now that Susan was absolutely right.

How has SCN affected your life?

Pat: Working with so many talented, creative women has been an empowering experience. I have become a more confident writer as a result of being a part of SCN.

Jo: Being involved with SCN has encouraged me to find time to write. I've learned how important it is to capture my stories and wrap them up in a way that gives me insight, and helps me share some of what I've learned from life with others. I've also made some great friends by being connected with WordWeavers [an Austin Story Circle], and have learned a lot from them and from their writing, also.

How long have you been a member of SCN, and what prompted you to join in the first place?

Pat: I have been a member for 12 years. Each career I had required at least some writing. I found that it was my favorite aspect of each job. When I left my last position as a psychotherapist, I was searching for ways to focus solely on writing. At first it was a pretty frightening idea and I asked the same questions so many other writers have asked: “Am I good enough?” and “Will anyone want to read what I write?” Joining SCN helped to erase these fears and move me into being a “real” writer.

Jo: It’s been a long time – probably 12 years or so, maybe longer. It’s such a part of me that it’s hard to set a timeline on it! It was my conversation with Susan that first got me interested, and then having attended some workshops and a couple of conferences added depth to my grasp of the importance of SCN’s mission. Also, I used a lot of what I learned from SCN to help facilitate writing workshops while I was at Barnes & Noble, working with the Texas Department of Aging and Disabilities on gathering submissions and publishing the two-book series titled *The Noble Generation* – stories shared by people from the World War II generation; similar to *The Greatest Generation* by Tom Brokaw. So many of the people at the writing workshops would start out by saying, “I have some great stories to tell, but I’m not a writer ...” Well, after a bit of encouragement, they found that telling their story was easier than they thought—and we collected some phenomenal tales.

What’s your writing space look like, and do you have a writing schedule?

Pat: My writing space is best described as an organized mess. I’m an early riser, so I try to get my writing done before anything else interrupts it.

Jo: I do most of my writing on my laptop at my desk, looking out my second-story window onto my simple, beautiful neighborhood. Most of my ideas for writing, though, come from my wilderness hikes; I always take a notebook and pen to jot down things that nature is teaching me when I pay attention. And no, no schedule. I like to just dip in when the muse grabs me. Unless, of course, I have an assignment, and then I’ll get disciplined and make a schedule.

What are your works in progress, and publications?

Pat: I have two novels that are my works in progress. I published an anthology of women’s stories: *The Woman I’ve Become: Thirty Seven Women Share Their Journeys from Toxic Relationships to Self-Empowerment*. My personal essays and short stories published in several Durham Editing and e-books’ anthologies include: *Snowflakes and Memories*; *Aspiring to Inspire*, *Summer Shorts II: Best Kept Secrets*, and *It’s About Living*.

Jo: I’m working on two major projects right now; One is a novel (a real challenge for someone with a journalism background!) titled *Limestone Buddha*, which is a modern-day tale loosely based on the life of Siddhartha Gautama, the man we know as the Buddha, who walked away from his wife and young child in order to seek enlightenment. My other project is a non-fiction work titled *Rock, Water, Sky, Green*, exploring how our perception of nature reflects who we are. I’ve had many stories published – dozens when I worked for the Fort Worth newspaper, and then some in books such as *Old Timers and New Timers*, published by the Texas Folklore Society and *Quotable Texas Women* by Susie Flatau. I also recently won Honorable Recognition from the Texas Observer in their Short Story contest—which was another real challenge for a journalist to learn to write a fictional short story.

When did you know you wanted to be a writer, and when did you accept that you were one?

Pat: I would have to say that there was always a desire to become a writer. Working with the talented and creative women in SCN allowed me to accept myself as a writer.

Jo: I’ve loved writing and reading since I was a young child. The journalism side of it grabbed me when I was a stay-at-home mom. One day, I ran across a job opening for a feature reporter. I immediately signed up for a master’s degree in journalism to get the skills I needed to do that job, and once I graduated I was accepted as a mostly full-time freelance writer for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

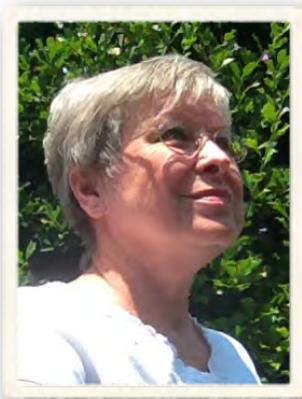
What’s the best piece of writing advice ever given you, and what piece of advice would you give to other writers?

Pat: There is no bad writing, only the opportunity for good writing.

My advice: Write for the reader.

Jo: That brings me back to the writing workshops for *The Noble Generation*. The best advice I ever heard, and shared, was to “just tell your story.” You don’t have to question your talent, your skills, your ability to write like a classical author—just tell your story in your own words, from your own perspective. Then go back and edit where need be.





Internet Chapter: Looking Forward to the Next Fifteen Years!

by Lee Ambrose

"At the end of the day everyone wants to be heard...[storytelling] brings our community together and ... makes the love and support get deeper and stronger."

Miki Agrawal

Throughout 2015 we've been concentrating on the fact that our beloved SCN Internet Chapter has marked its fifteenth year anniversary. As this calendar year draws to a close, we reflect on all the reasons why we love the Internet Chapter and we look forward to the next fifteen years.

Story Circle Network's founding mother, Susan Albert, returned to the key leadership role of SCN President during this year. Her vision for the Internet Chapter was, and is, to create a safe place for women to share their stories. Remaining true to that vision is a core value of all those on the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. SCN's Internet Chapter is poised to be even better in the next fifteen years because of the tireless efforts of so many women dedicated to the SCN cause.

We took time out of our busy schedules to share reasons why we joined SCN's Internet Chapter and why we remain. This is something that, as President of the Internet Chapter, I encourage members to do on a regular basis. Sometimes we need to reassess where we are and what we hope to accomplish. Then, and only then can we be certain of where within the framework of Story Circle Network we can feel most fulfilled and how we best can accomplish our own goals. For some, that means changing circles. For others it means stepping up to become a facilitator. Perhaps it means taking an on-line class or attending a workshop. There are so many opportunities here at Story Circle Network that there is absolutely no reason for anyone to become stagnant.

Over the past fifteen years, many women have come and gone through the writing and reading e-circle program. Just a few weeks ago, I took a "stroll down memory lane" by heading out to the Yahoogroup page for my original circle. When I joined nearly fifteen years ago, it was an entirely different group of members than it is now. It is on its third facilitator and I am the only remaining "original" member in that circle. But the current circle is a group of

lovely, supportive, cohesive women who support one another not only in their writing goals but through life in general.

If you've been a member of your circle for quite some time, I encourage you to take the same trip down memory lane. Go out to the Yahoogroup page and click on one of the original years and look through the stories and responses from members who may or may not be with your circle now. Reflecting on that circle of women and the impact each of those women had on you is an amazingly rewarding experience. It's like sitting down with a dear long-time friend. I promise you that you won't regret the time you spent there!

In some cases, such a visit to the group of yesteryear may be bittersweet. Recently, one of our circles lost a beloved member. My original circle has lost two such amazing women in the time I've belonged to the group. To read their stories and hear their voices all over again brought such a rush of emotions. I miss them terribly but my circle experience was so much better because of them and I am glad to have shared stories and life with each of them.

As we begin to focus on 2016, it's time to turn our attention to the task of looking forward – to determine how we can best meet our own writing goals and what we have to offer to our SCN community. With that in mind, we recently sent out member surveys—both general membership surveys as well as surveys specific to the e-circles. Results of those surveys should be tabulated in the near future and will be shared with members.

Plans are in the works for the next Stories from the Heart conference slated for April 2016. Be sure to stay alert to the emails with updates for that event.

2016 will be here before we know it! How will you plug into SCN's Internet Chapter during the upcoming New Year?

Online Classes New Sessions Starting in January

Amber Starfire

Winter is a wonderful time to cozy up and write! Join Story Circle Network's online classes program this winter, and dig into brand new, creative approaches to journaling, life-writing, memoir, travel writing, fiction, poetry, and more. The Winter schedule and full course descriptions will be posted on Story Circle's Online Classes website in early December. Be sure to visit now and subscribe to our Online Classes Program e-newsletter for announcements and class updates delivered directly to your email inbox. Winter term begins January 11, 2016.

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

Teachers! Do you love empowering women writers? Have you taught memoir, journaling, life-based fiction, poetry, and other life-writing forms online? If so, please see the course proposal page for details and to submit your proposal. The deadline for Spring term (March 14-May 9, 2016) is January 17, 2016. We encourage you to submit your proposals in advance!

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

A New Writing Opportunity Coming to Your Inbox in January

Pat LaPointe

With working, family obligations, and a multitude of interruptions each day, it's often hard to find enough time to write. We understand—and want to help you carve out some time each week to sit with your pad of paper or at your computer and let the words flow.

Each Friday, beginning in January, we will send you the “Weekend Writers’ Toolkit” containing writing exercises, advice from an array of women authors, and links to books and articles about the writing life and the writing process.

We hope you'll grab your cup of tea or coffee, pen, paper or laptop, flex your writing muscle, get comfy and write!

*Stories have to be told or they die, and
when they die, we can't remember who
we are or why we're here.*

— Sue Monk Kidd

One of SCN's Finest Programs at a Discounted Price!

Pat LaPointe

Do you know about the Older Women's Legacy (OWL) program? It is a program that has held a special place in the Story Circle Network for many years.

OWL began as a two-year project offering guided workshops for senior women. Through funding from the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, SCN was able to offer nearly fifty workshops to more than five hundred women. The project created five two-and-one-half-hour OWL workshops, which continue today to provide women in this age group the opportunity (for some, the first opportunity) to tell their stories and have their voices heard and validated.

Are you part of a seniors' group? Have a book club? Belong to a women's group at your church, mosque or synagogue? Take a fitness class for women? Or just have some friends you enjoy spending time with? You can become an OWL facilitator and provide women with the opportunity to tell their stories.

In keeping with SCN's mission to provide an opportunity for all women to share their lifestories, we are offering the OWL Facilitator's Manual and Workbook—normally \$100—for just \$25. The Manual, along with a promotional brochure, will provide you with everything you need to develop, market, and teach an effective memoir writing workshop. And remember: you need not be a senior woman to facilitate an OWL workshop!

If you are interested in purchasing the OWL Facilitator's Manual and Workbook, go to www.storycircle.org/owlcircle for details.

Online Writers' Roundtables

For SCN members looking for support and encouragement with their writing, we offer three Online Writers' Roundtables, designed to connect writers at different levels of experience.

- LifeWriters is for startup writers who are looking for encouragement and help in developing a consistent, focused writing practice..
- Writer2Writer is an intermediate group for writers who are working on defined writing projects in any genre.
- WorkInProgress is for writers who have either been published or are working on specific projects aimed at near-term publication.

For more details about each group, go here: <http://www.storycircle.org/WritersRoundtables.shtml>



Circles: The Heart of Story Circle Network

Writing Circles Corner

by Mary Jo Doig, Chair, Writing Circles Work Group

The words Story Circle Network evoke a striking image in my mind of a large, lusciously purple circle embracing a myriad of smaller circles representing the varied parts of our organization. My favorite circle glows brightest, like a sunny July day, and is filled with smaller rainbow-colored circles. These represent the heart and soul of SCN—the Writing Circles Group, comprised of women's writing circles all over the country. Recently we looked back to find our longest existing circles and found two in Austin TX: Jackie Newman's Millwood Group, and PJ Pierce's Wordweavers, each more than ten years old. Let me introduce you....

Jackie Newman inherited the Millwood Group in 2005 when the previous leader abruptly resigned at a meeting.

She says, "We had no warning that the leader was leaving and were stunned. In the confusion that followed I raised my hand and said I would assume the leadership role unless someone else wanted to. We'd been meeting in a local library which, about the same time the leader resigned, notified us groups limited to only women or only men could no longer use the meeting rooms. Luckily my dining room table seats ten people, so I volunteered my home; we've met there ever since. We meet nine times a year, once a month for 2-2 ½ hours, skipping June, July, and August. We also have a Xmas luncheon which I sponsor every year at a nice restaurant."

As the Millwood Group evolved, this structure emerged:

We have grown so familiar with each other's likes, dislikes, families, and more; we also sense how each person is feeling before we even start our meeting. ~ Jackie Newman

Our normal meeting starts with ten minutes of chatting before we settle down to reading stories. All members actively participate unless ill or having a serious problem. We go around the table, everyone reads their piece, then we have discussions about the stories when the writer asks for input. Members bring writing related to the assignment I gave, or choose another that speaks to them. We do no writing during the meetings, preferring to use our time for reading and commentary.

As with all groups, the *Millwood Group* experienced challenges and riches through the years...

- In early years, before we knew each other well, a member sometimes gave hurtful feedback, which I quickly ended, but 99% of the time everything went just fine
- A present challenge, after several years: it is difficult for us to bring in a new member who would feel comfortable.

- One of the most difficult aspects of leading a writing group is finding topics for writing. Over the years, I've listened to members' stories for ideas as well as used many resources, including newspapers and magazines. I keep a notebook of ideas.
- Our attendance has always been quite good and I feel blessed by my group's loyalty. Most members dislike missing a meeting.
- After ten years of giving prompts and writing stories eight or nine times each year, I printed out my stories and found I had over 80. Our group members also have large numbers of stories.
- Three years ago I asked our group to participate in a collection of our writings. Each could submit up to 10 stories, which I took to Office Depot and printed a book of our stories for each of us. These were not for public consumption, but everyone had families who wanted to read them.

PJ Pierce was a member of two SCN writing circles in Austin in 2002-2003. Also a SCN board member, PJ saw that the increasing numbers of women wanting to join writing circles was greater than the existing circles could accept. She decided to take the best ideas from her circles, resigned from each, and formed a new group, which members named *Wordweavers*. When membership quickly grew to fifteen, PJ closed the group to keep the small-group intimacy and allow time for everyone to read aloud.

As *Wordweavers* evolved, they settled into this meeting structure:

- Meetings are 7-9 pm one evening a month. (Some years they've taken a hiatus in August and December, but declined to this year.) During winter or spring *Wordweavers* hold an annual retreat in PJs and another member's weekend cabins in the Lost Pines, about 60 miles southeast of Austin.
- Participants who wish bring wine, cookies, or snacks to share during socialization in the first 15-20 minutes.

Then, PJ “reins in the conversation to get started by 7:30 latest.”

- *Wordweavers* starts with a ten-minute warm-up writing called “What’s on My Mind,” a purposeful practice to get thoughts onto paper. A volunteer then reads her warm-up piece, discussion ensues, and she’s followed by others who want to read.

Opting out of reading is fine but rarely happens.

- Next, PJ asks a volunteer to read her story. (She sends prompts before the meeting; optional topics are also honored.) The stories need to be short enough to read in 10 minutes. With 10-12 women present, reading and commenting takes the remaining meeting time.

PJ notes: “It is a powerful experience to hear other women’s stories and to tell your own in the nonthreatening environment of a group of like-minded women. The

discussion stemming from the writing always turns out to be as rich as the writing itself.” She adds: “Every writing circle has challenges and strengths. A *Wordweavers* strength is that our members represent various decades of life. Several are now in their 80s and 90s, and are our most dedicated members. Our youngest member is in her 30s with the rest somewhere in between. The age span gives a rich experience to everybody.”

If you’d like to start a writing circle, or tell us about your writing circle, or have questions we could respond to here, please contact me at maryjo_d@yahoo.com. Or, if interested in joining an online writing circle, contact Lee Ambrose at leesmuse2@gmail.com. There’s room inside that golden circle for many more rainbow-colored circles.

After years of sharing stories monthly about our lives, we feel as if we have known each other forever. ~ PJ Pierce

Real Women Write

Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Lives

The selection process is complete! A wonderful collection of writing by our members is once again about to become a beautiful Anthology. This will be **Volume 14 in Story Circle Network's Anthology series**, with each one a remarkable grouping of work by SCN members, and this edition is no exception.

From the Introduction: "Despite enormous variance in culture, income, and experience, women are more alike than different, and we recognize our common ground. In the writings here are stories of life events that we share, and specifics that are wildly individual." A girl's life is changed on a Ferris wheel ride. A betrayal leads to unintended tragedy. One mother fights for the life of her child; another teaches her child to feed the birds. One writer imagines romance; one imagines homelessness. From birth to death, and many things that can happen in between, there is a story or poem here that will resonate for every woman.

In this edition of **Real Women Write: Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Lives**, we are, for the first time,

including works of fiction. This has expanded the flavor and feeling of the collection, and has given our fiction-writing women an opportunity to strut their stuff. It's an exciting time of growth at Story Circle Network, and this broader range of forms feels timely. Our new title also reflects that change, as well as the deepest part of SCN's mission.

Publication date is **January, 2016**. As an SCN member, if you chose the PRINT publication, you will receive a beautiful print edition of **Real Women Write** in the mail. (All others will read/print the expanded online version.)

We hope you are inspired, amused, made nostalgic or proud, feel touched or energized, or in some way recognize yourself in this issue of **Real Women Write**, where our members do, indeed, share their stories and their lives.

~Susan Schoch, editor





From the Blogs:

One Woman's Day

by Linda Hoye

What can you say about an ordinary or extraordinary day in your life in five hundred words? A lot, if you ask the over seventy Story Circle Network members whose stories we've been privileged to share on our One Woman's Day blog. We would love to have the opportunity to share a story about a day in your life too. Learn more, and find a link to our One Woman's Day blog submission page at: <http://onewomansday.wordpress.com/about/>

Recently we were pleased to feature a post by Letty Watt called **"The Move,"** about a conversation with her mother-in-law on what was a challenging day. It reminds us that some stories end with a question.

"Sometimes I prayed with every breath that my children would grow up healthy, and sometimes I prayed that we just had enough food to feed five hungry mouths. When we had more than enough I thought it was a miracle."

My 91-year-old mother-in-law, Alleen, paused. "I don't remember a time when I didn't pray for a miracle in those years. Oh, Lord! And most of the time He answered."

"Alleen, sometimes I prayed so hard for Katy and the boys that I was afraid I'd use up all my angel requests but I didn't always recognize when God answered my prayers," I replied, as we avoided the subject of her impending move to assisted living at Arbor House.

"But, oh Lord, I've prayed at night and prayed at day that the Lord let me stay at home and not have to move. I've lived here 60 years. You can't make me move. This is all I know. I'm healthy. I can take care of myself. Why can't I stay?"

This conversation we've had nearly every day for six months when we turn the discussion to assisted living. Now we are making the move.

"Alleen, I've been praying too. . ."

Alleen cut off my words. "But you are praying that I go and I'm praying that I stay. That can't be good."

For a while it was quiet between us as we drove to Arbor House and the new apartment that she'd soon call home. Then I began to think about God and how tormented he must be when people pray opposite prayers.

The street light turned red and I turned to her and said: "My experience is that God answers my prayers with his guidance, meaning I don't always get what I pray for, but I do receive what I need."

At that moment I was merely praying for strength and love to help her make this move.

At Arbor House I put the car in park and she mournfully turned her head to me and spoke: "I can't believe you're doing this to me."

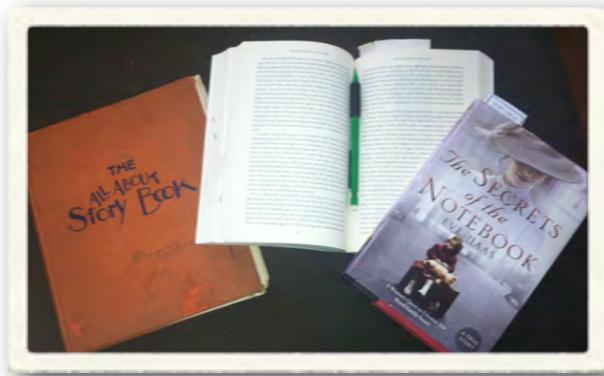
"Alleen, we (all of your children) only want the best for you. You are lonely and scared in your home and are afraid to cook. Please give this a chance. You might really like your new apartment," I pleaded.

"I don't see how I can."

Then she put out her bottom lip and dropped her head in resignation. My heart sank even lower and I asked myself: Whatever have we done?

Letty is a writer by winter and golfer by summer and last year she became a mover. The first move was her daughter, hers came second, her son came third, and before the year ended she moved her mother-in-law to assisted living. She is looking forward to the adventures of 2015 and more stories to tell.





SCN's Book Reviews

Featured Review: *Home with Henry: A Memoir* by Anne Kaier

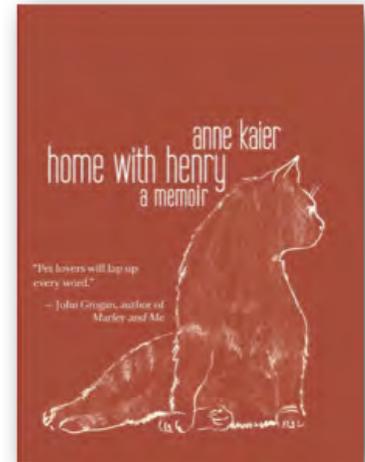
StoryCircleBookReviews.org
Review by Judy Alter

Back in July, Judy Alter reviewed Anne Kaier's book, *Home With Henry*. Shortly after, we discovered a blog post by Anne, where she talked about her book.

Read Judy Alter's review of Anne Kaier's book, *Home With Henry*, for SCBR:
<http://www.storycirclebookreviews.org/reviews/homewithhenry2.shtml>

And here is Anne's story about how she came to write her book, reprinted with permission from the BloodRedPencil blog:

<http://bloodredpencil.blogspot.com/2015/07/HomewithHenry.html>



Writing Memoir

Anne Kaier

Memoir can get a bad rap. It's been likened to reality shows, panned for TMI, pigeonholed as mere publicity for politicians. My favorite peeve is the ghostwritten celebrity memoir—or, worse, the simpleminded recovery story in which the protagonist falls into drink or illness and, inevitably, regains health by page 300. It's the "inevitably" that bothers me. These memoirs, written according to formula, often gloss over the real difficulties of people trying to make and keep their lives better.

The "my cat saved my life" story bugs me no end, as you can imagine. So why did I write a memoir about a feral cat who helped ground me emotionally in an uneasy period of my life?

The most important answer is that Henry, the ginger cat I rescued one night after someone's car had hit him on a busy road, turned out to be one of the sweetest creatures ever. Oh, he hissed and spat at the beginning and hid under my spare room bed for six months. But when he finally began to trust human beings, he showed himself as a loving, friendly companion. So I wrote to celebrate him. However, I was determined that I would write a pet memoir which showed the complexity of my feelings around the time he came to live with me—as well as his initial distrust of me.

When I rescued Henry, I had just moved into my first house, as a single woman, at age fifty. I was afraid of everything: the mortgage, the weird house sounds at night, and the self-image this move drove home. I was a single woman living alone with a cat. Talk about a stereotype. I had to break out of it. Learn to include my friends and neighbors and nephews in my idea of "family," learn to trust that my home was as enticing as one defined by a married couple, children and a white picket fence. Just as Henry needed to learn to trust me, I needed to trust my own core self.

I aimed for emotional complexity in *Home with Henry*. I wanted it to echo great pet memoirs such as Peter Trachtenberg's *Another Insane Devotion*, in which the philosophical author explores the whys of cat love. Or Mark Doty's *Dog Years* with unforgettable scenes about his dogs and his lover and the meaning of life. Books such as these set a high standard. Henry, a contemplative sort of cat, perched in a chair next to me while I wrote, muttering under my breath, trying to get our story down in the most honest memoir I could manage. Henry and I hope you like it.

For a list of classic pet memoirs, check out a free pamphlet: "Tall Tails: how to write about your cat" on the *Home with Henry* page of my website: www.annekaier.com.



True Words from Real Women

A selection of short pieces of lifewriting by our members, edited by Mary Jo Doig and Jo Virgil. 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 32. This month's topic is A Winter Memory.

The Gift

Linda D. Menicucci, Paradise CA
ldmphd@comcast.net

It was dawn on Christmas morning and my husband John and I were wrestling the 40-pound turkey into the oven. I needed a turkey this size because we were having 20 people for dinner. The number of people always puzzled me. I was an only child and my husband had one unmarried brother—how did we get to twenty?

The guest list was eclectic. John, my friend Pat, three children and myself totaled six. We were the younger group. The other fourteen guests ranged in age from 65 to 85. My mom, her two brothers and her three older sisters always came for the holidays. Pat brought her aunt and uncle, and my mom always invited people she knew who, as she put it, had nowhere to go. This habit added interesting people to our family circle: Lillian, Chick and Annie, who were Jewish; Inez and Kathy, from the county home; and generally a surprise guest my mom would find Christmas morning.

As a group, my mother's family and her friends had all survived the depression, all lived through one or two world wars. They were not educated but they were real. Their lives had made them genuine, compassionate and hard working. They were opinionated, sometimes ill-informed and funny. The table meant for eight was packed with people, conversation and laughter.

They came at noon, we ate at 2:00, they stayed until 6:00, and I sent them all home with plates of Christmas dinner—the reason for the 40-pound turkey.

It may not have been a Norman Rockwell painting but it was beautiful. No matter how many years I repeated the scene over uncounted holidays, it was fleeting. It was gone in a moment when I wasn't looking. One by one they passed from this life and from my world. But the joy they gave me balanced the grief I felt at their loss.

My life and memories are rich because they were rich—rich in experience, in simplicity, in honesty and in love. They gave me a Christmas gift that lasts forever.

Peaches, Tennis Balls and Ralph Waldo Emerson

Pat Bean, Tucson AZ
patbean@msn.com, <http://patbean.wordpress.com>,
w-ecircle 6

I have 50 years of journals stashed away in bins, most of which, once finished, have never been opened again. The early years of my journaling were a haphazard kind of thing—cheap steno pads, sometimes with only a few pages filled and more dates missing than captured. Sometime in the 1980s, I switched to fancy journals, and filled them more faithfully. By the 1990s, journaling had become almost a daily routine. Recently I decided I should try reading my past thoughts, and so I randomly chose a journal in which to begin.

The journal I picked chronicled the end of 1998 and the beginning of 1999. It was a time when my canine companion was a golden cocker spaniel named Peaches, who was addicted to tennis balls.

“Dec. 19, 1998. It's snowing outside, steady, tiny flakes that stuck to Peaches fur...I feel as if I would like to sit here all day, curled up in the comfy, warm quilt my daughter-in-law gave me, and simply watch the snow fall. No such luck. Instead, I'll read a few pages of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Journal, throw a few tennis balls for Peaches, then go to work.”

I was amazed, reading Emerson, how alike were so many of my own thoughts, especially the one that would find its way onto my resolution list for 1999: “Do not be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better. What if they are a little coarse and you may get your coat soiled or torn? What if you do fail, and get fairly rolled in the dirt once or twice? Up again, you shall never be so afraid of a tumble.”

And through all this journaling, Peaches was there with me, sometimes sharing my chair, but mostly standing before me with a tennis ball in her mouth that she wanted me to throw for her to fetch. I am so blessed to have had her in my life, and for Ralph Waldo Emerson, too.

A Magical Christmas

Gayle Cain, Visalia CA
c-cain@sbcglobal.net

Christmas was the most anticipated holiday of the year in our family. It was the time when family from near and far converged at my parents' home. My mother spent weeks in preparation. Cookies, fudge, stuffed dates, and pies were at the ready. She decorated the house with carefully placed nativity scenes, snowmen in glass globes, and a cheerful Santa here and there. Sprigs of juniper and holly colored the doorways and window sills. The Christmas tree, bursting with the scent of pine and covered in lights, ornaments, and sparkling tinsel, towered in the living room.

Our grandparents from Idaho would be arriving, as well as aunts, uncles, and cousins from throughout the state. The excitement was fever pitch. It was 1955, in the Central Valley, California, and our little town was about to be introduced to the worst flood in the area's history.

Two days prior to Christmas Eve, it rained solidly, rarely abating. The creek that ran beside our house was rising slowly and the neighbors had gathered to watch. By evening, grim-faced men began filling sandbags and dragging them to line the soggy creek banks. That evening my parents received word that my grandparents had been turned back by the highway patrol, who warned them that the road conditions were worsening all over California.

Later that night, our father gently shook us awake. "Girls," he whispered, "come with me."

He led us out to the living room. As he pulled back the heavy drapes on the picture window, we saw it. Shimmering in an almost full moon was a lake, covering everything. He warned us about drinking the tap water, which had become contaminated. We saw my mother's flashlight blink on in the kitchen.

That year our Christmas was sparse. Not a houseful of relatives, not a huge turkey on the table, not a gaggle of cousins outside playing with toys. Our dinner that year was cold sandwiches, a fruit plate, and mother's cookies for dessert. But we were all together, everyone was safe, and the outside, through the eyes of a child, was magical.

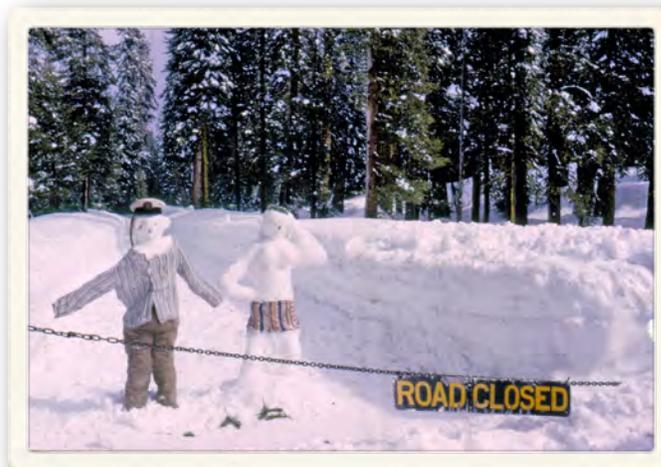


Photo courtesy of Arlene Howard

He Changed My Life

Arlene Roman Howard, Rancho Mirage CA
arlene@alum.calberkeley.org

Downhill and cross-country skis packed, we were off on our thirty-first meeting anniversary weekend.

"Oh no," I declared when we got far enough from home that we couldn't turn back. "I forgot my downhill skis."

"Oh, Mom, you can rent some. It's your anniversary. You don't want to miss night skiing with us."

"What a good idea," I said reluctantly, not believing what I had just said. I never had enjoyed skiing on my six-foot Head skis. Those gigantic skis scared me. I didn't know how to control them. Head skis were the "must-have" skis when we bought them in 1967. But until I discovered cross-country skiing in Austria, I hadn't enjoyed skiing.

We drove to Hidden Valley Ski Resort in Western Pennsylvania, a three-hour drive from our home in Annapolis, Maryland. As soon as we arrived, my enthusiastic 12-year-old daughter said, "Mom, let's get your rental skis."

"How can I help you?" the cute, tanned, blond ski-rental guy asked.

"I need to rent a pair of downhill skis. I forgot mine."

"What have you been using?" When I told him I skied – well, tried to – on six-foot Head skis, he looked at me and shook his head. "I am going to suggest different skis for you. If they don't work, bring them back."

He fitted my boots onto the rental skis. Within an hour I was shushing down the slope on short skis, passing my daughter and husband.

"Wow, wheel!" I exclaimed.

When I got home, I bought a pair of used four-foot skis for \$35 from a friend's twelve-year-old son. For the next eighteen years, the short skis gave me many great runs at Winter Park, Colorado. Skiing down a four-mile packed-powder run while looking out to the 11,000-foot high Colorado Rockies is an image that will forever remain in my mind. I stopped using the \$35 skis when Santa put a new pair of short skis under the Christmas tree.

I am wondering, do you think the ski-rental guy knows how he changed my life?

My Joyful Inner Child

Linda Hayden, Paradise, CA
lindahayden@sbcglobal.net

While enjoying the quiet aftermath of the Christmas celebration, I walked into my aunt's wonderfully decorated living room. The Christmas tree now stood less majestic than when I had arrived that afternoon. Earlier, beneath the tree were more than thirty beautifully wrapped gifts, one for each of my cousins who had attended Christmas dinner. Now the tree looked empty; all the gifts were gone. Left behind were discarded wrapping paper, packing straw, empty boxes and a few broken toys. The room, now without its many guests, still held the voices of my squealing cousins, delighted with their gifts.

In the dining room, my heart still heard my grandfather saying grace and the voices of my many aunts and uncles chatting and laughing during Christmas dinner. The tablecloth, which had been starched and unwrinkled this afternoon, was now littered with crumbs and soiled with gravy and cranberry stains. Still on the table were lipstick-stained napkins, cups, saucers, and dirty dessert dishes.

Anyone else would have looked around and seen nothing but a big mess. I saw only Christmas magic, and I felt blessed to have experienced my aunt taking holiday entertaining "over the top." At the young age of six, my one overriding thought while looking around those two rooms was "Who will I marry who will help me create a Christmas like this?"

Many years later, on the first Christmas of my marriage, my husband and I sat in the den of our new house, opening gifts. He placed a small jewelry box in my hand. I opened it to find beautiful diamond earrings. I glanced up at him with a loving smile, because he had given me so much more than diamond earrings. He had answered a question that my inner child had asked so many years before. That morning, while I was 3,000 miles away from family, he had magically reconnected me to my inner child's joy of the holidays. I knew then that I had married a guy who knew how to do Christmas.

Predicted: 20 Inches or More

Patricia Roop Hollinger, Westminster MD
woodschrone@gmail.com

The living room had become a sanctuary as my husband, under the care of hospice, lay dying there. The steady drone of pellets dropping into the pellet stove emitted heat as well as dancing flames that filled the room with warmth. As we listened to Soundscapes, it was as though a heavenly orchestra had descended to assist in his ascendance to the next realm, the notes surrounding him with their musical embrace.

His hospice bed was placed by windows that overlooked a deck where flocks of tufted titmouse, cardinals, nuthatch and dark-eyed juncos would vie hungrily in what appeared to be a choreographed dance for the seeds I scattered for them.

Hospice aides came daily to care for my husband's bodily, mental and spiritual needs. My own physical, mental and spiritual reserves were very near the empty gauge.

"The northeast is predicted to have a snowstorm that could well be at least 20 inches." Those were the words announced from the television that brought me to a more alert state of being. We lived on an 18-acre woodlot that was two miles from any major highway.

My husband's breathing was becoming more labored. On occasion, he was talking to someone that neither I nor his son could see. If he died at home in the middle of a 20-inch snowstorm, I would have to place his body in the freezer along with the frozen vegetables, so I made a call to hospice, requesting that they consider moving him to Dove House, where many hospice patients have their final exit; it is located in a town that would be cleared of snow. This is where his death occurred.

A memorial service took place despite still another snowstorm. It was impossible for friends to attend, with the exception of a few guy friends of his sons who loved the challenge of driving their four-wheel vehicles in a snowstorm, no matter what the event.

The most memorable quote at his service: "You know, your father really had a sense of humor choosing this moment to die."

Snowmobile Weekend

Janice Kvale, Austin TX
janicekvale@yahoo.com
r-ecircle 1, w-ecircle 6

By day we gassed up our Arctic Cats, checked the spark plug gap, rode trails through cold, white-draped forest free as black panthers in snow. Navigated tight turns past sleeping trees, revved around a ridge, vaulted over fallen logs. Open field, no traffic. Squeezed the throttle accelerated to the max, carved deep curves in fresh snow. We stopped for hot cocoa and felt machine vibrations echo in our limbs. At night we swam in the motel pool, sweated in the sauna. For breakfast we ate pancakes and watched rose-breasted grosbeaks devour sunflower seeds outside the window.

The Lampadedromia

Sara Etgen-Baker, Anna TX
sab_1529@yahoo.com, <http://saraetgenbaker.blogspot.com>

It was September 28, 2001, when Airborne Express rang our doorbell and handed me an envelope. Inside were a letter and some paperwork that had the Salt Lake City Olympics logo at the top. My heart raced. I'd been nominated and selected to be a Support Runner in the upcoming Olympic Torch Relay. Soon I'd get a blue Support Runner uniform!

Fast forward 16 weeks to January 12, 2002, a blustery winter day in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where I was to run my segment.

"One of today's Torchbearers can't run her segment," the Torch Relay organizer said as she dropped folded pieces of paper into her hat. "So, one lucky Support Runner will become a Torchbearer. Select a number from this hat as it's passed around."

My hand shook as I reached into the hat, stirred its contents, nabbed the first piece of paper that stuck to my fingers, and waited.

"Who has Number 32?"

I unfolded my piece of paper. "Me! Oh my God...me!"

My head all but exploded! Within seconds, I changed into the official white Torchbearer uniform; I was given a new set of instructions, then whisked to the shuttle bus.

With the Olympic theme song blaring from the loud speakers, the bus drove past throngs of people waving American flags. I choked back the tears, caught up in the magic and intensity of the moment. One by one, Torchbearers and Support Runners were dropped off at their designated segments. At segment 32, I stepped off the bus and positioned myself to receive the flame.

The flame was transmitted to my torch, and I ran without my feet ever touching the ground. I waved and smiled as I floated past the bystanders, and for an instant I thought I saw Konstantinos Kondylis, the first modern-day Olympic Torch bearer, in the crowd.

"The *lampadedromia* is not about you," he murmured. "It's about sharing the Olympic spirit and giving the flame of strength and inspiration in others."

Although participating in the Torch Relay was a fleeting moment, I was forever changed. I vowed to carry the Olympic spirit with me and inspire others.

Annunciation

Claire McCabe, Elkton MD
cmccabe@udel.edu

The owl's call woke me
on that crisp night,
velvet sky sprinkled with stars,
air so still it could shatter.
Had I dreamed you into my belly?

The sliver of moon
etched the great bird's form
perched in the towering spruce.
Her query hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo
dared me to believe.

She flapped away,
leaving you to swell
as quiet as a snow drift,
as perfect as a crystal flake.

Sounds of the Sound

Jane Steig Parsons, Austin TX
smilingjsp@gmail.com,
Millmont Writing Circle

The sounds of Puget Sound washed
over me as darkness fell,
merging the barely visible shapes
of mountain, sky, water, boats and docks
into two-dimensional cut-outs

My breath mimics the tide,
or is it the other way around?
In and out with the regularity
of timeless human experience.

My body surrenders to restful
unconsciousness, healing oblivion.
We call it sleep. With eyes closed,
my ears awoken to bird sounds
as a dog's bark echoes across the water.
Eyelids flutter, not yet willing to greet the day.
Instead, I luxuriate a little longer
within the subtle, varied, harmony sounds.

A smile plays across my lips
as each inch of my skin
sings out in a rested voice.
Gentle sensations assert themselves
as unseen butterflies move about
from place to place
above the vast universe of my body.

Winter's Silent Retreat

Marilyn Ashbaugh, South Bend IN
ashbaugh108@gmail.com

The beauty of the season whispers in the gentle snow;
How can bitter cold provide warm nurturance?
Proclaiming with silence the invitation within
As the soul turns inward,
The mystery of darkness surrounds
The newborn light.
In darkness, the seed germinates.
The mystery feeds the soul-seed,
Where eyes cannot alter
The beauty of the altar,
Hidden deep within.



The Weaning

Mary Devries, Hutchinson KS
flossiehanna@gmail.com

Winter of 1944 was a time of Mickey Rooney movies, ration books and war reports—and fearful knocks on the door. For our family, it was also a time of weekends at my grandparents' farm, gathered in the huge kitchen warmed by a wood burning stove. My actual memories of the time are faint glimmers kindled by the smell of wood smoke, bacon frying and strong coffee. However, secondary memories also abound, created by the stories shared later by our parents.

It was one of those winters when the snows began early and lasted until late the next spring. The family would gather on Sunday morning after church for the day. The men would smoke and grouse about farm work and the steel mill where my dad and his brothers-in-law worked; the women cooked, gossiped and tended the three little girls who played in the kitchen. It was a comfortable time.

There was only one fly in the ointment, and that fly only bothered my three-year-old self and my two-year-old cousin, Patty. That fly was our cousin Jeanne, who, at nearly two-years-old, still was not weaned. Proof of this was the fact that she was still not drinking from a cup; Patty and I had to sit up and use a cup. Our parents told us later that we would stand near and make faces as Jeanne drank, and since I was the oldest, I was deemed to be the instigator.

One Sunday afternoon in December, snow began to fall. It came not as single flakes but in dump-truck loads. By suppertime, it was obvious that no one was going anywhere that night. Perfect timing. The parents were too busy with cards and weather talk to notice what Patty and I were up to. We gathered all the nipples, even the ones on pre-filled bottles, and tossed them into Grammy's wood burner. The smell of rubber brought adults running, but the deed was done. No bottles for as long as the snow kept us at the farm, and it kept us there three days.

Jeanne was weaned.

Snowy Day

Bonnie Frazier, Brookings OR
bonnotes@gmail.com

Snow days in Seattle? No way. I can't recall a single one.

What a treat for us, though, when a few inches of the frozen white stuff actually stuck to the ground. Whole families trooped up the hill behind our house, dragging skis, sleds, flying saucers, inner tubes, and cardboard boxes – anything that would slide.

The very best snow of all time? The one and only Christmas day when we woke to falling snow. My siblings and I, in bare feet and pajamas, danced for joy in it.

We never had enough snow to dim our delight in it. Snow was simply magical stuff that we reveled in. Only one thing ever dampened my enjoyment of it. In those days, the '50s, girls at my school wore dresses. Always. When it snowed, Mom made me wear flannel-lined pants under my dress for warmth. I don't recall what the other girls wore, but I remember the humiliation and uncoolness of those bulky pants.

Based on my growing-up experiences with snow in Seattle, the newspaper article tucked away in my baby book describes a fairy tale that couldn't possibly be true. I wouldn't believe it now if the article hadn't included pictures for proof.

Several days before I was due to enter the world, the weather service predicted a big snowstorm. My parents weren't concerned because, after all, it doesn't snow much in Seattle. My mother's doctor, however, recommended that Mom get herself to the hospital or risk having my father deliver me at home. Since they wisely decided to follow his advice, Mom was safely tucked away in the maternity ward at Swedish Hospital when the storm hit. Good thing, too, because *three feet* of snow fell on the city the day of my birth.

Except for the flannel jeans, every snow experience I've ever had has been nothing but good, clean, cold fun. I still live where snow rarely falls, I still delight in the magic of it, and I can't help feeling sorry for people who have so much snow that they're jaded to the fun of it.

A Winter Ride

Annabelle Bailey, Southbury CT
abelle35@gmail.com
w-ecircle 4

It weighed a ton
The massive, ill-conceived bobsled you built
My brothers and I
Drafted for family fun
Dragged that tree-like sled through the dense forest

A merry, maniacal look on your face
You led us to the top
Where our mother stood on the sidelines
Vague diminished
Your personal cheerleader

You roared with laughter as we pummeled down the slope
There were screams
I don't know about my brothers
Mine weren't joyous as we crashed into a tree

The wind picked up
The cardboard tableau of family fun
and flattened it on the ground

That Winter Day

Letishia Watt, Norman OK

Lettywatt65@gmail.com, <http://literallyletty.blogspot.com>,
w-ecircle #4: Jazz Jaeschke

That winter day after Christmas, my forty-eighth birthday, was not a celebration. The packers arrived early and by day's end our country home was packed neatly away, ready for the movers. I was not ready for the movers, nor for the move. I couldn't believe my husband had taken a job in Kansas.

I loved our ten acres east of Norman, Oklahoma, once called the *cross timbers* by early settlers. On many of my walks I sauntered along with deer, turkeys, one red fox, birds of many colors and sizes, snakes in season, scorpions, spiders, bobcats, abandoned dogs and cats, and through stickers, burrs, and stinging thistles. Every one of those encounters revived me. That winter day I began my last walk down the narrow winding path through the wildflower patch, in between the blackjack oaks, then out through the grove of sumac and prairie grasses. I angrily kicked the stones away from our fire circle. I didn't want anyone else to share that spot.

I stood under the Mother Cedar tree growing by the russet red ravine, then climbed her sticky limbs one last time. We talked quietly, one mother to another. How many cedarlings she must have cast over the decades, I wondered. Her limbs were long, heavy, and gnarled with age and wind. She comforted me.

I stumbled along the path that often displayed rose rocks in the spring after the rains washed away layers of earthen clay. It was dry, and only roughened rocks showed through. I dug one out, just for me, just to hold until I could let go of the land. I still have that red rock.

Suddenly, I heard the jabbering of children up the hill. Judy and the girls had arrived to help us. Together we emptied all of the left-overs from the refrigerator and dropped them into bags. Then, traipsing over the trails, tossing foods, hanging fruit and breads for Mother Nature's children, we sang Christmas carols in the unusually warm southern breezes. I smiled through the tears, and said thank you.

Snow

Lanie Tankard, Austin TX

etankard@aol.com, <https://lanietankard.wordpress.com>,
Sharing Our Stories Circle

Snow fell one cold, dark night, long ago and far away. A grassy slope in an Ohio park patiently awaited its white coat, shivering in cold anticipation as the powdery layers piled steadily higher. And I, watching those snowflakes from my bedroom window in Cleveland Heights, also quivered with a frisson of joyous expectancy.

The streetlamp illuminated each downward drifting crystal while I, warm in my flannel footed pajamas and snug in my bed, pressed my nose against the cold pane and exhaled. Frost formed from my happy breath. I knew with certainty I'd be taking my sled to Forest Hills tomorrow, for it would be Saturday and my father would be home and my sister would want to go ice skating and my mother would stay in the warm kitchen baking treats for us after our trek in the bitter chill. We'd wrap our noses and cheeks, but the moisture in our breath would freeze in hard teardrop-shaped pellets clinging to the insides of the scarves. My sister would glide across the ice with her friends. I'd drag my sled to the hilltop. My father would stand at the bottom cheering me on as I flew downward, my tummy flat against the wooden slats, my mittened hands gripping the flexible steering bar, amidst a convoy of my peers, all traveling downward in varying trajectories toward enthusiastic sets of arms waving encouragement.

When I reached my father's hug, I'd coax him up the hill to get on the sled behind me. I'd wave at my sister to watch. Then I'd fly down the slope again, metal runners slicing through icy ground cover. I'd lean into my father's warm overcoat while his leather-gloved hands steered the rope. He, then in his mid-fifties, would laugh as I brought youthful glee back into his heart.

Years later, I'd realize I was likely a midlife mistake. No matter. On that snowy day long ago and many more, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was deeply loved, and that there would be hot cocoa awaiting when we returned home.

Warmth of Sun and Music

Sherry Johns, Penrose CO
penrosehistory@yahoo.com,
www.sherryjohns.com

Warm winter sunshine floods into the den where I sit, in a red tank top, after walking on the treadmill.

I soak up the golden rays like a hungry lioness gorging on the kill brought home by her mate.

Harmonious strains of a Chopin prelude soothe me as my daughter's nimble fingers dance over the keyboard.

Chinook wind flutters dead strands of winter-dead tumbleweeds, loosening their soil-grip, setting them free.

Cotton-ball clouds drift miles above, playing peak-a-boo with blue sky while my garden lies fallow,

Waiting for the sun to stay a while, warming the fertile soil, yearning for the nourishing snows of spring.

Returning to my humming laptop, lessons to be learned and completed, I relish the warmth of sun and music.

Winter Memories in Florida

Cindy Flora, Clearwater FL
lonestargs@aol.com, [https://
cosmiccochiticowgirl.wordpress.com/](https://cosmiccochiticowgirl.wordpress.com/)

When you've lived in Florida your entire life, winter memories, the traditional kind you see in Christmas cards, just don't exist, at least not outside your kitchen window.

But you learn how to compensate and adjust. There may not be snow in my driveway, but there are fluffy white drifts on the unpaved road beside the adobe home in the framed print in the living room.

In the family room hangs another snowy scene, this one of the Tetons. It is by my own hand, but not from my own memory. It is one, instead, borrowed from a postcard.

If one associates winter with snow and the West, well, then I do have some memories of that combination from visits to Flagstaff in February: slipping on ice in front of Coco's restaurant, driving very slowly, very silently, on a barely discernible Interstate dotted with stranded cars. But those are ephemeral moments from journeys, not defining ones.

A defining moment is when the unexpected happens. Like snow in Florida. It's waking up one morning to a car lightly dusted with snow and watching my young stepsons write their names across the window. Or flash forward 15 years later when it does everything but snow, like it did one December evening when a storm blew in across the gulf with the power of a hurricane. Startled awake by the sound of the patio umbrella banging fiercely against the French doors, I awoke my now-much-older adult stepson who wrestled the umbrella down, but not before my cherished chiminea became collateral damage in the battle. My much younger daughter and hubby slept through it all, pretty much making it my memory and my stepson's, but he now has his own western winter memories living and working in Golden, Colorado, for the past seven years.

And that's how it works with winter memories. Two years ago, my daughter made one of her own memories, sliding down ice-covered slopes on her college campus in northern west Florida on a makeshift sled, a plastic container lid.

Sort of like the winter memories in a Christmas card....



My Maternal Grandparents

Cheryl Bazzoui, Bradford PA
wcbazzoui@atlanticbb.net, anmccauley.com

Olive fell in love with her teacher in that one-room country school back in 1902. His energetic bearing, short stature, auburn hair, dancing blue eyes and intellect charmed her in a way she'd never dreamed possible. Charles was equally impressed with Olive's demure mannerisms, flashing brown eyes, long dark hair and quick wit. Careful not to jeopardize his teaching position, it was not until Olive graduated that he made his intentions known to her and her parents.

They courted for 10 years, until he'd saved enough money to start a family. Traveling the 80 miles from his work as an accountant in Altoona to her father's farm in northwest Pennsylvania required diligence and determination. The trip took between 14 and 18 hours, depending on conditions: a train for the first 30 miles, another train for the next leg of the journey and finally the bumpy ride in a horse drawn wagon. There were few paved roads in western Pennsylvania in the early 1900s.

Charles lived for those weekend visits, though he spent most of his time helping her father with farm work while there. Sometimes the two of them were able to get away for memorable picnics on a grassy hilltop. He was 32 and she was 28 when they married.

Olive and Charles spent their honeymoon wallpapering her parents' farmhouse, a gesture of respect. A month later it burned to the ground with her mother inside. Olive's father never recovered emotionally from the losses he suffered that day.

Charles moved his bride to the McCauley Farm in southern Clarion County. Olive and Charles moved into the larger of the two farm houses; they had five children over the next 11 years.

At age 40, Olive fought colon cancer for two years; Charles paid cash for her treatment in the best hospitals in Pittsburgh. She wrote cheery letters to Charles telling him what seeds to order for their summer vegetable garden and to give the children kisses from their mother. She was counting the days until she could return to the life she loved with her family on the farm. Yet, she returned only to die, leaving a dazed grieving husband and five motherless children.

Christmas at the Farm

Kristie Vincent, Willard MO
k-vincent@sbcglobal.net

I grew up on a farm with my Granny, Grandpa, Great-Grandpa, one uncle, four aunts and my daddy. The old white farmhouse fairly exploded with adults and kids during the Christmas season and there was always a huge pot of coffee sitting on the kitchen counter. Even the kids would have a bit, if you could really call it coffee. It was more like a splash of coffee with milk and sugar, but it was an important rite of passage. With a cup of coffee, you could sit at the table, talk with the adults and eat an extra helping of dessert. One story would lead to another and, before you knew it, it was time for the next meal.

There was never a shortage of food at Granny's table. Even during lean times, she could pull food out of her root cellar and fix a meal fit for a king. Christmas was no exception. One of her more famous recipes was Mashed Potato candy. Mashed potatoes, butter, powdered sugar and vanilla extract. What could possibly be wrong with that? Nothing, I tell you. Absolutely, positively nothing. She would create little balls of the potato dough, dip it in chocolate and then roll it in coconut or chopped pecans and let it chill. For even more variety, she would use mint or orange extract.

Another piece of our family tradition was Brach's candy. A trip to Richard's Brothers grocer would get us numerous boxes of hard ribbon candy, orange slices, haystacks and assorted chocolates. The living room corner was filled to the brim with candy and a huge cedar tree dressed with homemade ornaments. The smell of cedar and orange slices can transport me back to my much younger days very easily!

While our Christmas gifts were lean, our family's love for each other made up for it, plus some, and the memories of four generations under one roof are shared to this day. Our Christmas celebrations usually begin with "Do you remember that one Christmas when ...?" and we are off and running with lovely memories.

Winter Peace

Lucy Painter, Sarasota FL
lp3951@comcast.net, w-ecircle 8

I was six. It had snowed for two days. Cars slept under soft white pillows. Marshmallow puffs covered the prongs of our wrought-iron fence, hiding its scary pointed ends; today they stood harmless as snow drifted against their railings to form a gentle slope into the yard.

Heading into my back yard, I stepped into an expanse of white that reminded me of the freshly washed sheets spread over my bed. Yard and alley lay under a wintery blanket, gray light filtering through a leaden sky.

The crunch of my galoshes on the powder broke the silence. My ears caught the rustle of flakes, falling fast enough to ping and sizzle off gutters. Crystals snapped under my feet, and wind-tossed tree limbs groaned in the gusts. Sharp flakes spit against my face where they clung to my eyelashes and frosted hair that escaped my cap. My lips and cheeks stung, and I had to close my eyes against the whirling grains of ice.

No cars chugged up the hill, no boys yelled from the ball field next door, no birds gathered like little old men on the black telephone wires above. Was all this space for me? All of this quiet for me?

I felt secure in my pea coat, its collar tucked into my cap, fingers warm inside wool mittens. It was my world – cold, stark and beautiful, so unlike the overheated, busy house where blue cigarette smoke hung in the air, where my parents argued and the TV blared.

I wandered further into the snow blanketing my yard. The old oak in the back looked tired from the white weight in its branches, the same branches that held me all summer as I lay there to read. Today I grasped for a hold on its slippery limbs and climbed to my reading spot, that seat created where two limbs intersect. I sat in those arms until dark, surveying my kingdom, knowing in the way that only children know that I had found my only peace.

Gray Waters

Doris Shaw, Colorado Springs CO
dj_shorty40@hotmail.com, www.doris-shaw.blogspot.com

You ought to see the beach in winter
Most people don't venture to the shore
When the wind is icy
and feels like it hurts your bones
There's something so personally lonesome
in the gray water and gray sky
The way the water moves slowly to shore
that mimics your own slow, lonely thoughts
It's frightening to watch the sun take its last
strands of life
into the west and leave the water
to sit in cold blackness
til morning
It's hard to look across the lifeless sand
and feel impenetrable
Coldness, damp coldness,
seeps into your clothes
and through your skin
until you move to remind yourself
that you are, indeed, alive
The gray on gray world of winter is definitely
something to see
But maybe seeing isn't the point
Maybe it's the feeling of it,
the taste of darkness it offers,
that is the more precious experience
Mom, Wish you were here.
Jeanna Pruitt

Midwinter Madness

Catharine Dalton, Martinez CA
mudlark10@att.net

It exists today only online, but in my childhood it was a popular destination for amateur skiers: the Underhill Ski Bowl, nestled at the foot of Mt. Mansfield, Vermont's highest mountain. The Bowl was open evenings, illuminated by primitive floodlights and the moon. And it was an affordable option in a time when skiing was beyond the budgets of most Vermonters.

My clearest memory of the Ski Bowl is the time my stepfather, Ned, made an epic descent of its main slope. This was in the early 1950s, probably on a Friday night, as Ned was wearing his office clothes. Ned had been, in his youth, a formidable all-round athlete. He'd played baseball and hockey in school, farm league baseball as an adult. He still negotiated a hockey rink pretty well, and he probably reckoned that skiing wasn't likely to pose much more of a challenge. He knew nothing, in other words, about traversing a slope to insure balance and safety.

Ned's adventure doubtless began with the tow-rope, the only lift in the Ski Bowl back then. Our mother was probably chatting with friends out in the crisp night air, my sisters and I plying saucers on the baby slope. Suddenly I was drawn from my pursuits by an audible gasp among those at the bottom of the hill. Seeing all heads turned toward the main run, I looked that way.

And there was Ned, trouser-legs flapping, posture erect, skis parallel, hurtling down the hill. I mean straight down the hill. I could hear comments on all sides: "Darn fool." "Omigod." But on he came, undaunted. We all made way, assuming he knew no more about stopping than about turning. Somehow he reached the bottom without incident, but how he ended his ride I don't recall. Snowplow? Friction? In any case, we all released our held breath in unison.

Ned was chided amiably. "You could've killed yourself, fella." And there was no repeat performance. Presumably chastened, he went back to hockey. We girls learned to skate. And skiing fell—deservedly, I think—into benign neglect in our family.

The Shore in Winter

Nancilynn Saylor, Austin TX
nancilynn@gmail.com,
nancilynnmyblog.wordpress.com
w-ecircles 2,4, and 6

Waters!
draw me to your edge..
liquid beacon
with glints of sunlight
lift from the horizon,
golden pathway leads
from sun to shoreline.
Soaking, soggy sand
lures me nearer
to the shore.
There is an exhalation
heard from soul
to soul each daybreak
On every beach
On this globe.
Bring us here...
Lull us by the lapping
water against our
feet, up our ankles,
shins, and calves
to creep inside
our senses.
Returning us again
to our watery births.
Once a year
in winter, I come to the shore
to breathe, to listen
And to heal.
Muse and Mother Waters
Reclaim your earth-bound soul.

Worst and Best Christmas

Judith Grout, Glendale AZ
j-grout@cox.net, <http://judithgrout.com>

1966 was a momentous year. I married my sweetheart in January, completed my senior year of college in June, found my first job in July, and learned I was pregnant in August.

It was the height of the Viet Nam war and my husband Daniel, recently drafted, went off to war shortly after the doctor told me we were pregnant. While my spouse guided fighter jets onto the flight deck of the USS Ticonderoga, I lived my life on the opposite side of the world in Mahtomedi, Minnesota, at my parent's home, sleeping in the same bed I'd known since 1947.

When we first learned we were pregnant we were both thrilled and scared at the same time. Were we capable of being parents when both of us still felt like newlyweds? Then my husband sailed away just as I was beginning 'to show.' Tearfully, we vowed to write daily and send recorded messages weekly on a small portable tape recorder.

The morning of December 21st dawned frosty cold as I began feeling twinges. I felt my first contraction at my weekly doctor appointment. A smile passed across his face as he said, 'Looks like today will be birth day. See you in the delivery room this afternoon.' Our baby was born at 8:23 PM that evening.

My father, the elementary school principal in my small hometown, knew the publicity director at the hospital. This gentle man visited me and saw my tape recorder and photo propped on my hospital bedside table. He asked my permission to put our 'great holiday story' in the local newspaper for December 25th. We all must have been a big hit because Christmas evening, the paper called asking permission to use the story on the national UPI feed. After that, our story ran nationally and Dan got over a hundred copies of our picture from all over the country. And to this day, my husband and I agree that the Christmas of 1966 was the worst and the best ever.

Christmas Collage

Betsy Kelleher, Granite City IL
goduseseshorses@aol.com
w-ecircle 15

My winter memory is a collage of moments that will never come again—anticipation of holiday meals with family all together, last minute Christmas shopping in crowded stores with carolers in the mall, snowflakes swirling down around bright street lights, a Christmas tree loaded with garlands and ornaments, a Christmas eve candlelight service centered around a manger scene, beautifully wrapped gifts torn open by eager childish fingers on Christmas morning, and a sad but precious longing for past Christmases with my Dad, seeing him open his door when we arrived late and feeling the welcome of his hug. Memories are precious, especially when 'family' is no longer the same. Sometimes it is difficult to look beyond the past to the joys of a different tomorrow. I focus on blessings of now, including a warm home where my loving husband and I celebrate together, the two of us.

The Man

Anna Isgro, Hamilton OH
israeldinah@me.com, <http://www.annamarieisgro.org/poems.html>

As I viewed the pain and agony of the Man who knew no sin,
The Roman soldiers slashed His back so many times within
That dark and lonely hour of torment, mock, and shame.
His face was of the Man Who, in times of hurting, came.

I saw the face of Him adorned
With His head so crowned with many a thorns.
His face, I sought with all my heart in my younger days
Is Whose presence I have yearned to worship and to praise.

This face replaced my father when he went and left me.
This face was my Boyfriend when I had none I wanted to see.
This face was my Husband Who won all my affection.
He even became my Commander-in-Chief to Whom I gave my attention.

But now I see in my past a cheerful girl, so bright as day,
Who gave her soul to the Man, for His awesome Love, to repay.
She's older now, raped and torn,
And wonders, "Does He love me anymore?"

He was to me my Father, Boyfriend, Husband, and King,
To Whom I would so affectionately sing."
But things are different now, she's lost her dreams.
"Does He still love me?" Not so, it seems.

With all that Love
Endorsed with Blood,
How could it be
That He doesn't still love me?



Christmas Markets

Judy Watkins, Myrtle Creek OR
judywa@frontiernet.net
w-ecircle 10

I had always wanted to visit the Christmas Markets in Germany, but when I saw them, it was not the happy time that I dreamed of.

I was in Speyer, Germany during the Christmas season of 2006 while my husband spent four weeks in intensive care fighting for his life. I was alone in a foreign land, not knowing the language and scared to death about how the hospital bills and my living expenses would be paid and I had no idea for how long that might be necessary. I didn't feel that anything could be spent that wasn't absolutely necessary.

Yet, there were many good things about being there and the Christmas Markets were part of it. As the holidays grew near, I watched as the charming small town was transformed into the scenes of Christmas Cards in preparation for the markets and the many tourists that would be visiting. The main street was closed to traffic from the historic city gate, built in the 13th century at one end and the Cathedral of St. Mary & St. Stephen, Germany's largest and most important Romanesque building at the other end.

Large, live, elaborately decorated trees adorned every corner of the main street. The large ice-rink was near the tower and the town's children laughed and played there from morning into the evenings. Rows of booths were set up on the street nearest the church where vendors would sell German-made products of every description, baked goods and hot sausages. Musicians roamed the streets and there was dancing at night. While the tourists loved the 'authentic German atmosphere', the locals and the people living downtown complained of the noise that didn't end until 10 p.m.

I have many wonderful memories of the sights and smells of Speyer, but not one souvenir of my visit there, although it was a blessing that I was able to bring my husband home again on his 80th birthday, December 19th.

Remembering Helene Benardo

Helene Benardo, 80, passed away on October 5 after a short bout with cancer. For many years a literature teacher at the Bronx High School of Science, Helene edited the school's feminist magazine and taught a much-loved course on women in literature. Her piece, "Getting a Life" reminds us of the changes she saw and experienced in women's opportunities over the course of her own long life. We miss you, Helene!

Getting A Life

Helene Benardo, Bronx NY

The occasion of Gloria Steinem's 80th birthday got me thinking of the past. How different life was forty years ago. I remember working in an office during summer vacations from college and having an executive tell me to make his coffee because his "girl" was out that day. I remember wanting to open a checking account in the bank where I cashed my weekly paycheck and being told that I needed a man's signature – father, husband, brother, guy on the street—presumably any male would do.

I remember wheeling my first child to sleep in his carriage with one hand, and reading "The Feminine Mystique" with the other, and realizing that I was crying. What a wake-up call! I became the first in line at the "new" Women's Movement. I was re-born. A whole new world was out there and I was, along with so many other women, shown a life we hadn't even dreamed of.

My parents told me that my first word was "no." Well, I didn't say it again for 35 years. The changes in my life brought on by the Women's Movement are far too numerous to list here, but suffice it to say that the second part of my life has been far more meaningful and satisfying than the first part. I have been lucky in that I had no great struggles at home. My husband became as staunch a feminist as I, and you can bet that my sons and their children know about grandma's philosophy!

All told, it's been a rocky ride, with huge boulders in our path (some of which still exist), but on balance, the woman I am today looks back with sorrow on the years when it was often said, "Girls don't...."

Now they do!

SCN's Donors' Circle

Thank You to Our Generous Donors!

We are enormously grateful to all of our wonderful donors, who help to support our programs, publications, and projects.

Albert, Susan	Lightle, Juliana
Appleby, Penny	Marshall, Linda
Bell, Denise	McCombs, Maryglenn
Blumberg, Sharon	McCreary, Betty
Boatright, Joyce	Newman, Jackie
Byrne, Candi	O'Toole, Pat
Dabson, Karen	Painter, Lucy
Dalton, Catharine	Pando, Trilla
Devries, Mary	Rourke, Kali
Doig, Mary Jo	Shirah-Hiers, Lisa
Francell, Beth	Smallwood, Carol
Freeman, Bonnie	Terzian, Mary
Ginger, Helen	Turkelson, Jinni
Goodwin, Lynn	Watt, Letishia
Guy, Jeanne	Winegarten, Debra
Harris, Janet	Wixson, Florence
Helburn, Judith	Wlodkowski, Charlotte
Hollinger, Patricia	GoFundMe Donors (96)
Hulka, Laura	anonymous
LaPointe, Pat	

47 donors have donated \$ 15913.55 during 2014 - 2015.

And another big thank you to all of the members who upgraded their basic membership to a higher level. You, too, greatly aid in supporting Story Circle's mission.

Albert, Susan Wittig (benefactor)	Leatherwood, Helen (friend)
Ambrose, Lee (friend)	Lightle, Juliana (friend)
Bazzoui, Cheryl (friend)	McCreary, Betty (benefactor)
Borstner, Sonja (friend)	Miller, Judy M. (organization)
Broeker, Teddy (friend)	Moffitt, Sallie (donor)
DalGLISH, Sonja (donor)	November, Abby (supporter)
DeMars, Bonnie (donor)	Quinn, Annie (supporter)
Dunn-Fierstein, Patricia (donor)	Rose, Leilani (donor)
Feinberg, Barbara (friend)	Ross, Jane (friend)
Francell, Beth (donor)	Samuels, Marlene (benefactor)
Goodman, Tanya Ward (donor)	Sasser, Danelle (donor)
Goodwin, Lynn (friend)	Sharples, Madeline (friend)
Harris, Janet (friend)	Slavin, Martha (friend)
Jack, Daphne (friend)	Sullivan, Carolyn (friend)
Jaeschke, Jazz (supporter)	Troccoli, Susan (supporter)
LaPointe, Pat (friend)	Whitmore, Julie (friend)
Lazarus, Maya (supporter)	Williams, Judy (friend)
	Yost, Paula Stallings (friend)



Sarton Prize Entries Set New Record!

For the 2014-2015 Sarton Prize cycle, we received 60 applications, nearly double last year's entries. We accepted entries in three categories: women's memoir, contemporary fiction, and historical fiction. Twenty-one first-round SCN-member jurors read and evaluated 3-6 books each; another group of jurors (librarians, non-members) will read the second round. This year's winners will be announced at Stories From the Heart.

In the 2015-2016 cycle, we will add a new category: women's biography. If you'd like to be a juror, our application form is here: http://www.storycircle.org/members/sarton_juror_application.php We're expecting

a larger number of applications, so we'll need more jurors. Please apply!

Our prize is named for May Sarton (1912-1995), an American poet, novelist, and memoirist. While she is widely acclaimed for her fiction and poetry, her best and most enduring work may lie in her journals. In these honest, probing accounts of her solitary life, she deals with such issues as aging, isolation, solitude, friendship, sexuality, self-doubt, success and failure, envy, love of nature, gratitude for life's simple pleasures, and the daily challenge of leading a creative life.



Available Now in Kindle and Paperback

Sarah Ryan's hope for a new life in the Arizona Territory is shattered in an instant by gunfire. Suddenly, she has to rebuild an uncertain future with her orphaned nephew, Will, and take on the challenges of a cattle ranch.

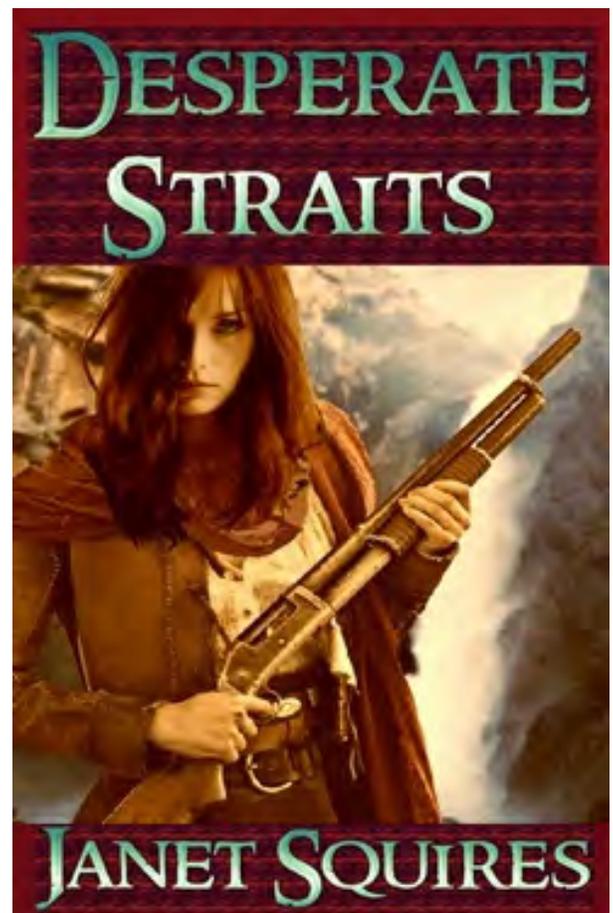
Just when order returns, veteran lawman, L.T. McAllister rides in. He's a dangerous man determined to do what's right regardless of the personal cost. L.T. believes himself ready for anything until he meets Sarah. Her ideas about the man he's become soon pit his lifetime of duty against desire.

L.T.'s and Sarah's loyalty to Will catapults them into a life for which neither one is prepared. And when L.T. and Sarah defy Sheriff Grant Simpson, they trigger a cataclysm of retaliation that escalates into kidnapping and murder. L.T. and Sarah are forced into a battle for justice... and their lives.



About the author:

I began my career writing short stories and nonfiction articles and I've won awards in fiction and nonfiction. I provide presentations on writing and teach workshops. My interest in the historic West stems from the stories I heard growing up. My family pioneered their way through Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona as ranchers, miners, and lawmen. Visit my website: <http://www.janetsquiresbooks.com/>



Stories from the Heart VIII Registration Form

Send this form with your check to:
Conference Registration, Story Circle Network
PO Box 1670, Estes Park, CO 80517-1670
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		Members-Only Registration (through 12/27/15)	Regular Registration (12/28/15 to 3/11/16) member/non-member	Late Registration (after 3/11/16) member/non-member	Amt Due
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Registration (Fri keynote / Sat / Sun)		\$325	\$365/\$420	\$405/\$460	
Partial Registration (please check all that apply):	<input type="checkbox"/> Friday (Keynote/ dessert reception)	\$35	\$40	\$45	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday only (includes lunch)	\$166	\$195/\$220	\$224/\$249	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday lunch only	\$35	\$40	**	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday only (includes lunch)	\$122	\$130/\$155	\$138/\$163	
	<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 each	\$40 each	\$50 each	
	<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
- Opportunity to sign up for free 15-minute Coaching Session

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 17, 2016 will have a portion of their registration fee applied to their dues.

** You MUST register for lunches by April 3, 2016! Registrations for these events will NOT be accepted at the door.

Refund Policy: Cancellations are accepted until March 11, 2016, 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, 2016.

 <p><input type="checkbox"/> This membership is a gift.</p> <p>My name and address:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>My phone and e-mail:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Join the Story Circle Network!</h2> <p>Annual Membership if receiving printed, mailed publications:</p> <p>_____ Canada & Mexico: \$85 (International MO)</p> <p>_____ International \$90 (International MO)</p> <p>_____ USA: \$65</p> <p>_____ Annual Membership for ALL locations receiving <i>online</i> publications only: \$55</p> <p>_____ Internet Chapter: \$20/yr (in addition to your national dues)</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____ Amount enclosed _____</p> <p>Become a supporting member and help Story Circle Network grow. Check here:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$90 Friend</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Supporter</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustainer</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$400+ Benefactor</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Donor</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Contributor</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$325 Patron</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Organizational Membership</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90 Friend	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Supporter	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustainer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$400+ Benefactor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Donor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Contributor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$325 Patron	<input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Organizational Membership	<p style="text-align: center;">Make your check to Story Circle Network PO Box 1670 Estes Park, CO 80517-1670</p> <p style="text-align: right;">12/15</p>
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90 Friend	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Supporter	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustainer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$400+ Benefactor						
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Donor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Contributor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$325 Patron	<input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Organizational Membership						

Introducing A New SCN Membership Category

Pat LaPointe

Have you written a book? Do you offer editing, coaching, copyediting, research, writing workshops, retreats, or conferences? Do you own a writing-related or publishing business?

If so, SCN is offering you an exciting new way to spread the word about your writing-related services. In January, you will be able to upgrade, renew at, or join in our new Professional Membership category.

The Professional Membership comes with a package of advertising opportunities and a listing in our new Professional Directory. Your listing, photo, and bio will be featured on your own personal page, as well as on the pages that list authors, editors, freelancers, ghostwriters, speakers, teachers/coaches, marketing services, publishing services, and web services.

You can choose from four different Professional Membership packages, depending on your needs.

- \$99.00. Listing in our Professional Directory for 12 months online and in 4 issues of the *Journal*
- \$129.00. 12-month Directory listing **plus** 1 12-month ad online at StoryCircleBookReviews.org
- \$159.00. 12-month Directory listing plus 1 12-month ad online at StoryCircleBookReviews.org **plus** 1 12-month ad online at StoryCircle.org
- \$189.00. 12-month Directory listing plus 1 12-month ad online at StoryCircleBookReviews.org **plus** 1 12-month ad online at StoryCircle.org **plus** 1 12-month ad online at StoryCircleOnlineClasses.org

You'll hear more about this new opportunity as the new year opens. But don't forget! In January, you'll be able to click on the join/renew link on the SCN website and upgrade your current membership to a Professional Membership.



Story Circle Network, Inc.
PO Box 1670
Estes Park, CO 80517-1670

Nonprofit Org
U.S. Postage
Paid
Austin, TX
Permit #215

Looking Ahead

True Words:

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:

- March, 2016 (due January 15)—Topic to be announced
- June, 2016 (due April 15)—Topic to be announced

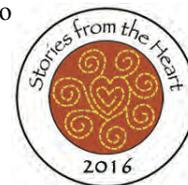


Stories from the Heart VIII

Story Circle Network's
Eighth National Women's Writing Conference
April 15-17, 2016
Wyndham Hotel, Austin, Texas

This issue is PACKED with information and articles about the 2016 conference in Austin. See pages 1-9 for all the info. The “old-fashioned paper” registration form is on page 30. You can also register online TODAY at:

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



Conference attendees have a chance to earn prizes in the Hot Flash Fiction contest. See page 9 for details!

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.