



STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL

Vol. 20 No. 2, June 2016

The newsletter for women with stories to tell

2015 Sarton Women's Literary Award

The Story Circle Network is proud to announce the winners of the 2015 Sarton Women's Literary Awards™ in three categories: Memoir, Contemporary Fiction, and Historical Fiction.

In 2010, SCN established the Sarton Memoir Award, a literary competition named for May Sarton (1912-1995), distinguished American poet, novelist, and author of twelve outstanding memoirs and journals. The award program was designed by a team of Story Circle past presidents and approved by the Story Circle board of directors. Paula Yost and Susan Albert serve as program coordinators. Two teams of judges (one group of Story Circle members, another

group of professional librarians not affiliated with Story Circle) volunteer to read and evaluate the submissions. For information about entering your memoir in the competition, visit www.storycircle.org/SartonLiteraryAward/.

The Sarton Award program has just completed its fifth cycle. For 2015, we named three winners and seven finalists. Each is an outstanding example of women's writing, an inspiration to readers, and a demonstration of the way women's stories document the private and public lives every woman lives. We believe that May Sarton would be especially proud of these fine books.

Memoir Category

Winner:

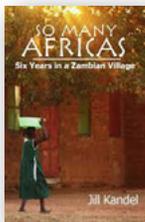
- ◆ Jill Kandel, *So Many Africas: Six Years in a Zambian Village*

Finalists:

- ◆ Kathryn Ferguson, *The Haunting of the Mexican Border*
- ◆ Leah Lax, *Uncovered: How I Left Hasidic Life and Finally Came Home*



Jill Kandel



Susan Marsh



Contemporary Fiction Category

Winner:

- ◆ Susan Marsh, *War Creek*

Finalists:

- ◆ Lisa A. Kramer, *P.O.W.E.R*
- ◆ Tammy Flanders Hetrick, *Stella Rose*
- ◆ Bonnie ZoBell, *What Happened Here*

Historical Fiction Category

Winner:

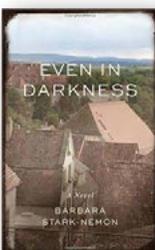
- ◆ Barbara Stark-Nemon, *Even in Darkness: A Novel*

Finalists:

- ◆ Susan Signe Morrison, *Grendel's Mother: The Saga of the Wyrd-Wife*
- ◆ Julie Weston, *Moonshadows*



Barbara Stark-Nemon



SARTON WOMEN'S BOOK AWARD

STORY CIRCLE NETWORK

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Letter From SCN's President



Dear SCN Sisters,

One of our board members recently surveyed a list of SCN's projects and programs and made the awed remark, "It is staggering for me to see, all in one place, how much SCN is doing!" Fervently, I said, "Amen, sister." For a small organization without a lot of cash resources, we are doing one heck of a lot. Just take a look.

- We just held our *eighth* biannual writing conference—and the evaluations are all very positive. We're already starting to think about our 2018 conference!
- We've opened the fifth Sarton Award cycle and expanded the program from memoir and fiction to women's biography—thanks to our team of nearly 40 jurors and judges, whose hard work makes this award program possible.
- Our women's book review site, the largest on the Internet, is celebrating its fourteenth year.
- The Internet Chapter's writing e-circles continue to grow: see Lee Ambrose's article on the new fiction e-circle on page 14.
- We're planning our 2017 LifeLines programs—for a peek, see page 14.
- Our Circles program is expanding: read Mary Jo Doig's interview with Judy Watters on page 12.
- The Story Circle *Journal*, which began in 1997, is in its twentieth year of continuous quarterly publication.
- Our anthology, *Real Women Write*, has been published for 10 years; we're planning to publish selections as a book later this year.
- Our online class program is expanding: see Joyce Boatright's article on the appointment of Len Leatherwood as the new coordinator (page 15).
- Our personal essay contest has been held every year since 2000—17 wonderful winners!

And there's more, of course. Our online Writers Roundtables, our Authors Circle, our Bloggers Circle, our OWL and Circles program, our Facebook and Twitter and Pinterest pages, our Weekend Writers' Toolkit, our One Woman's Day and HerStories blogs, and even more . . .

But I hope this gives you an idea of the energy and commitment of the women of this writing community, dedicated to helping women find their voices and share their stories. For we believe that *every* woman has a story to tell—and we want to help her. That's what we do here at Story Circle. It's who we are. We hope you'll find a way to become an *active* participant in our writing community.

With joy for your journey,
Susan

P.S. You can find a handy summary and links to many of these activities on our webpage: "How SCN Can Help You Tell Your Story" <http://www.storycircle.org/howscncanhelp.shtml>

Susan Wittig Albert is the founder and current president of SCN. A NYT bestselling author, she writes mysteries, memoirs, and historical fiction. She lives in the Texas Hill Country.

Story Circle Journal

The quarterly newsletter of Story Circle Network, published in March, June, September, and December. It is written by and for women who want to share their experiences. Its purpose is to encourage readers to become writers, guide women to set down their true stories, and encourage the sharing of women's lives. This newsletter is provided for information and is not intended to replace qualified therapeutic assistance. If you have special mental-health needs, please see a healthcare professional.

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This Month's Contributing Editors:

Susan Albert
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Joyce Boatright
Pat Bean
Mary Jo Doig
Jeanne Guy
Linda Hoye
Pat LaPointe
Susan Schoch
Jo Virgil

We welcome your letters, queries, and suggestions.

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

Susan Wittig Albert Lifewriting Contest 2016

It's time to start planning your entry in SCN's annual lifestory personal essay competition! **Place and the environment** seems to be on everybody's mind these days, so let's take that as our topic for this year.

Some questions to think about: What kind of place do you live in? How do you feel about it? Is it a "mirror" of yourself, a "lens" into what you might become—or something else altogether? How does your place on this planet define you—and if it doesn't, why not? If you were a place, what would you be? Why? How has your place shaped your story—and your story nurtured your place?

Some women's words to consider:

"If I were a place, I'd be Labrador: improbably, impossible, tempestuous, serene, thinly populated. I'd be smooth boulders carried by great rivers of ice, plopped down at random, and balanced precariously against the odds of gravity for thousands of miles. I'd be spired mountains, crumbling ridgelines, and winds that literally make the water smoke. I'd be purple sunsets, bedrock that looks like marshmallows, and relentless green waves beating against the shore..." —Jill Fredston

"The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing that all of us share. It is not only a mirror of ourselves, but a focusing lens on what we can become..." —Lady Bird Johnson

"As much as we live in a place, we live in place... We live where we have made definitions, and in the process of making definitions, we create a place in which to live." —Sallie Tisdale

"Stories nurture our connection to place and to each other. They show us where we have been and where we can go. They remind us of how to be human, how to live alongside the other lives that animate this planet. ... When we lose stories, our understanding of the world is less rich, less true." —Susan J. Tweit

For contest entry form, details on awards and publication, and further information visit <http://www.storycircle.org/Contests>. Look for more details in the June SCJ and in our upcoming monthly e-letters. Contest Entries Accepted. May 1 through June 30, 2016.

Previous Years Winners

2015: Failure

Claire McCabe of Elkton MD
Lorna Lee of Ridgefield WA
Linda Marshall of Centerville OH
Debra Winegarten of Austin TX

2014: Balance

Sara Etgen-Baker of Anna TX
Lois Ann Bull of Easton CT
Brenda Black of Prairie Grove AR
Lois Halley of Westminster MD

2013: Family

Jo Virgil, Austin, TX
Karen Dabson, Columbia MO
Denise Jacobs, Baton Rouge LA
Lucy Painter, Sarasota FL

2012: Solitude

Janet Lucy, Santa Barbara CA
Debra Davis, Cle Elum WA
Peggy Christian, Missoula MT
Bonnie Frazier, Brookings OR

2011: Courage

Marlene Samuels, Chicago, IL
Susan Flemr, Fairfield Bay, AR
Nancilynn Saylor, Austin, TX
Stephanie Dalley, Forestville, CA

2010: Letting Go

Khadijah Lacina, Shih, Yemen
Susan Kasper, Georgetown TX

Jo Virgil, Austin TX

Margaret Stephenson, Austin TX

2009: Overcoming Obstacles

Mary Lee Fulkerson, Reno NV
Linda Hoye, Auburn WA
Linda Sievers, Arcata CA
Michelle Welch, Bakersfield CA

2008: Evolution and Growth

Amber Polo, Camp Verde AZ
Victoria McNabb Wheeler, Stockton NJ
Carol Hyde, Round Rock TX
Karen Appleberry, Grapevine TX

2007: Birthings & Beginnings

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

2006: Truth

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

2005: Womens' Friendships

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

2004: Mothers and Daughters

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

2003: Our Environment

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

2002: Our Identity

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

2001: Pain

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

2000: A Revealing Relationship

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

Stories from the Heart 2016 – Magic Moments

Compiled and Edited by Mary Jo Doig

Call them serendipitous, magic, mysterious, divine order, or synchronistic, those moments arrive with the conference opening and pop up everywhere until it ends. They've been abundantly present in every conference and, though never advertised, I believe they are a silent part of the conference package. They are superlative, delightful, goose-bump-raising, and can be profoundly moving. I call them magic moments. On the next few pages are some that our attendees shared recently, and a few of the smiling faces.

(Editors note: photos are placed randomly, and are courtesy of Joyce Boatright and Jane Steig Parsons.)

My magical moments throughout the weekend were when I was emceeing the conference. I felt so embraced by the sea of women looking back at me that I still tingle thinking about it. We were smiling at each other, laughing and supporting each other, and enjoying each other's company—so happy to have been brought together. The bonding and camaraderie was palpable.

I feel so honored and grateful to be a part of this organization, this sisterhood. Story Circle Network has put joy into this writer's world.

~ Jeanne Guy, Austin TX

Long-time member Judy Alter was unable to attend the conference in person yet connected with it via the Internet:

As I looked at the pictures of joy and enthusiasm on the part of conference participants, I realized even more how important community is to us as writers. We feed on each other, learn from, encourage, try out ideas—all those good things. Right now I have few people to talk to about writing—and I'm aware of it. Friends and family are supportive but it's not the same. And I so wish had heard Brooke's keynote.

~ Judy Alter, Fort Worth TX

Many of us sign "Hugs" on our correspondence to each other, but it was wonderful to actually put our arms around each other at the conference.

~ Joyce Boatright, Navasota TX

There are two moments that stand out in my memory:

The first moment is of Dawn Wink and Susan J. Tweit when they attended my workshop "Selling Your Book on Amazon is not a Marketing Plan," They sat down on the



front row right by me and were just like two young racehorses pawing at the gate, giggling, laughing, like they couldn't wait for the race to start. Only in this case, the race was my presentation. And the wonderful thing about that moment is that they were that fun and participatory during my entire talk--willing to answer questions, get up and dance, lend me their phone to take pictures, whatever I asked for, they were there 100%. And with all that, I think they still got a lot of value out of the workshop, which in no small part to them

lending their incredible energy to me, was the best marketing talk I've given so far.

The other is the wonderful dinner that I organized for the SCN WIP group. I got to sit at the head of the table. And as we ate our food and talked, there was a moment when I shared something about missing my mother so much, and just burst into tears about how I really would like for her to be here so she could share in my successes. And without missing a beat, Mary Jo and Jude, in one breath together said something like, "We will be here for you. She would be so proud of you," or something to that effect. In that instant, I felt completely enveloped in a warm comforter of love and support, buoyed up by their support and love, and with my heart surrounded and held close as it was bursting into a million pieces. I'll always be grateful for that instant.

~ Debra Winegarten, Austin, TX

•My favorite memories include sharing a room with Pat Bean, and talking about writing projects, and girl talk in general. Also--hearing her read her





Flash Fiction story that won the SCN award.

•All our meals together--it always feels like Homecoming. This time Sam brought her Prince Charming, Tony, and it was good to put a face to the man we have read so much about.

•Lastly, Janice took me on a side trip to Lady Bird Johnson's Wild Flower Garden. If God(dess) lives anywhere on earth, it would be there in springtime. What a soul rocking experience!

•Another lastly: Several of us stayed over Sunday night and had supper together. It was so wonderful to get to know Peggy, Patty La Pointe, and other board members a little better. Again I felt like I had known these women forever, and to actually spend time together was terrific!

~ Caroline Ziel, St. Louis MO



I still keep saying to myself "attending Stories from the Heart 2016" is the best gift I have ever given to myself. The warmth of the group, the quality of the workshops, the bookstore and sharing of meals were the best. Oh, and did I mention dessert night? Looking forward to seeing everyone again in 2018.

~ Margie Witt, Lafayette CA

This conference was full of serendipitous moments. I went down for an early breakfast on Sunday morning and someone who had been in my workshop the day before asked if they could join me. We ended up having a wonderful discussion about the many ways that writing allows us to integrate the myriad of things that happen to us everyday. On a couple of other occasions, I met people, by chance, in the hallway between workshops and had impromptu, but deep and meaningful connections with people. There was a special atmosphere of openness and congeniality throughout the weekend. I think this conference helps people connect with all aspects of

writing, from the nuts and bolts of getting things down on paper, to the sheer joy of creation and the pleasure of sharing.

~ Ruth Crocker, Mystic CT

A million thoughts paced with my racing heart as I stood ready to share at open mic Saturday night of my first Stories from the Heart Conference. Scanning the smiling faces, it hit me: these are my peers now. My five year journey from Texas Game Warden to published author brought me through challenging uncharted territory. My heart brimmed with gratefulness for the three instructors that taught me how to edit, write a query letter and prepare my manuscript for publishing. I cherished the journey and the view from this new mountaintop--thankful for my guides and mentors that helped along the way.



Knowing there were writers in the rooms who aspire to publish, I wanted to shout "Hey folks, if this ole Game Warden can do it...you can too!"

~ Cinda Adams Brooks, Spicewood, TX

The entire conference was a wonderful moment, permeated by wisdom, love, and fun.

~ Susan Tweit, Salida CO

I happened into Jan Seal's poetry workshop on Sunday morning by mistake. I was late so I sat down even though I had planned on going to another workshop. Jan was asking about losses we had experienced in our lives and I said I needed a minute to think about that. She circled back round and I said, "Losing four of my five siblings." I felt an emotional rumbling inside but ignored it. Later, she had us write the pros and cons of our loss and when she got back round to me, I dissolved into tears. I hadn't expected to cry, but all of a sudden I was sitting there sobbing.

She looked at me and said, "You needed to be here today, didn't you?"

I nodded, unable to speak.





This was at the end of the hour. As everyone got up to leave, my Circle-6 sister, Janice Kvale, came over and wrapped her arms around me. "It's good to cry," she said, hugging me tight. I cried more.

It was one of those moments when I felt seen, connected, and loved.

Wow.

~ Len Leatherwood, Beverly Hills CA

There were several especially wonderful moments for me at the conference, actually, but I want to mention the dinner I shared with Jude, Connie, and Mary Jo at the Magnolia Cafe on Friday evening. It wasn't something I could have arranged, yet it fell into place quite beautifully, and that's one aspect that I enjoyed—the serendipity. But, oh my! That transformation in relationship from virtual to physical is powerful. There all three of you were, with me, all of us so full of things to say to each other, and all of us enjoying that pleasure of deepening our connection. That time at the Magnolia, and the whole conference, left me confirmed in the feeling that I belong in SCN, that I have a place at the table so to speak, and I was once again awake to the power of women. (Which made me ready for that big, beautiful, loud with laughter WIP dinner on Saturday, which Deb has already praised so well. And for the sweet poignancy of the closing luncheon, and Susan Albert's apropos discussion of community. And I haven't even touched on the excellent workshops...)

~ Susan Schoch, Idledale, CO

I was in the middle of a "The Power of Writing Short" online course with Len Leatherwood when I attended the conference. Len AND three of us in her class also attended. We got to meet face-to-face, rare for an online course, and spend some relaxing time together. It was such a pleasure!

~ Maya Lazarus, Caldwell TX

The entire conference was special and held so many outstanding moments for me:

- *Getting an e-mail on Thursday telling me I had won the flash fiction contest; then receiving the warm response when I read my story at open mike.*
- *Helping Robin set up the silent auction display, and getting to know this remarkable women just a little better after working only with her online for the quarterly journal. I also was thrilled that my donated painting got a couple of bids.*
- *Seeing and sitting with, at lunches, all my huggable friends from writing circle 6. There were seven out of nine present for this conference. I got to share a room one night with Caroline and for two nights with Janice. What fun.*
- *Seeing Jude and her infectious smile again, who—because I was wearing a butterfly T-shirt at the first conference I attended in 2010—gave me a butterfly bag. I haven't missed one since and each time I've brought my butterfly bag.*
- *Getting hugs from Susan T, meeting Dawn Wink, and enjoying their great workshop on with the subject of place, one of my most favorite things to right about. Ditto for Len*

Leatherwood's class, which I always take because I learn something new every time, and she inspires me. And I hope everyone knows what a great hugger our Jeannie is. It was so great to see her again, and everyone else I hugged, too.

- *Being inspired by our own Susan Albert, yet once again. We are the same age and I love how she keeps going and going, outdoing—in my opinion—the Energizer bunny.*

~ Pat Bean, Tucson AZ

So many memories-favorite: actually sitting in circles, in person, with on line writing circle 6 members, as we wrote in person together and enjoyed meals together.

Biggest surprise: when Jude asked me when I was going to publish my poetry book! I sheepishly and honestly admitted I did not know where to start. she said "you NEED to meet Deb Winegarten!" She took me immediately two rooms down and made that introduction. Wonderful, caring women this Story



Circle Network.

So many new friends, so many good Presenters-another stellar event!

~Nancilynn Saylor, Austin TX

•*Being at the WIP dinner. Such fun. Such friends!*

•*Talking with Sarton Winner Tammy Flanders Hetrick at the WIP dinner and finding out what her publishing experience was like.*

•*Seeing the faces of the people in my workshop as we wrote, shared (optional) and Dug Deeply. Then getting a LOVELY thank you note from one of the attendees.*

•*Having to take home only 3 of my own books. I filled the space with newly acquired ones. =)*



She remarried and moved to New Mexico. I put the file away. Maybe it's time to resurrect it, now that I know so many SCN women write various genres.

~Connie Spittler, Omaha NE

My moments: Watching my daughter, Robin Wittig, work so creatively setting up the silent auction. Listening to Peggy so compassionately, patiently

explain something to a "lost" person. Thinking how blessed I am to have these two women--and so many others--in my life.

~ Susan Albert, Bertram TX

•*Putting faces with names—one face per name—and knowing that you are my supportive sisters in writing.*

~ B.Lynn Goodwin, Danville CA



The familiar looking woman approached my coaching desk and introduced herself, "I'm Lisa Dale Norton." She wanted to talk about Nebraska and its writing communities, since she visits her Nebraska family cabin during the year. I told her about the Nebraska Writers Guild, which sponsors two conferences at different ends of the state, one in fall, one in spring. Suddenly, in a magic moment, I remembered I'd visited with Lisa several years ago in Tucson, AZ, after her memoir presentation at the Society of Southwestern Authors Conference. At the time, I was preparing a proposal for my agent, Rosalie Grace Heacock, for a book about different genres for women who wanted to/or were already writing. It would use only women author interviews and examples.

Incidentally my proposal for "A Cup or Wisdom, Writing the Wise Woman Within" made the cut with the editors at Simon Schuster, but the salesmen wanted me to add men interviews and examples. I said, "No." My agent said, "Think about it." Then 9/11 happened and she told me all nonfiction money for the next few years would be dedicated to books about the Middle East, terrorism, etc.

Seeing my reading circle buddies Susan, Jeanne, Penny again, and catching up on life and hugs. Reconnecting with so many SCN friends after 2 years: Pat, Mary Jo, Jude, Robin, and so many more.

The most magic, though, was Sunday luncheon—I was blown away by the loving words and generosity of all the past and present board presidents and Susan Schoch (and her husband!) with the presentation of the



stunning ceramic work of art. I was touched beyond belief, and cannot thank them all enough. Having these women show me so much love was overwhelming and affirming. I am honored and blessed to have each of them in my life.

~ Peggy Moody, Estes Park CO

The women at this conference all bring their own stories of joy, heartache, pain and renewal. They have written them, spoken them, carried them and we all joined together in making them real. The story that was my experience—returning to Austin, facing my past, meeting new colleagues and integrating the new with the old—is now part of my heart. It was an honor and a privilege to be a part of this extraordinary group of women and I look forward to making it a part of my work and my life for years to come.

~ Cindy Eastman, Watertown CT



(Editor's Note: the above is the final paragraph of a 1,000 word story Cindy wrote about attending the conference as well as journeying "home" to Austin.)



Susan, left, presents appreciation to Peggy, right.

Ode to Peggy

She Without Whom Nothing Is Done

by Susan Schoch

Honoring our extraordinary Executive Director, Peggy Moody, was a special and important part of our 2016 Conference. She received a piece of ceramic art by Colorado artist Bob Smith, presented by his wife, Susan Schoch, editor for our Anthology and Story Circle Book Reviews, and a superfan of Peggy. So that all our members can share in this appreciation, we are reprinting the text of Susan's presentation here. With lots of help from Susan Albert, Jeanne Guy, and other member sisters, it was a complete surprise for Peggy.

Thank you, Jeannie. And thanks to all of you, for being part of the Story Circle Network and sharing this joyful conference.

I'm here to recognize a fellow member, a woman who's helped me tremendously as I have grown into greater participation in Story Circle. There is no better support for women who want to write than this organization, and this woman. Her help is always a positive experience – she is unfailingly insightful, efficient, kind, and a technical marvel. And her organization and intelligence have gotten me over many hurdles.

As our fearless leader and current President, Susan Albert, has described her: "She is the single indispensable person in our community." Her title: "She Without Whom Nothing Is Done." That person is Peggy Moody, our Executive Director.

Susan and other Story Circle matriarchs first met Peggy through the Austin Reading Circle in 1997. She was working part-time for IBM then, and it wasn't long before she joined our first Board of Directors. SCN was new at the time, with no online presence or infrastructure. Susan wisely recognized that the Internet could allow us to grow, and that Peggy's skills and commitment would engage us with the world. Without her, as Susan puts it, "it would have been just a little local group" and many of us would not be here today.

Over the years, Peggy has been instrumental in making these heartfelt conferences happen. She also built and maintains our ever-improving website, the publications that showcase our members' writing, the Story Circle Book Reviews site, our online class program, our new "Weekend Writers' Toolkit," the powerful Sarton awards, and she manages the many communications among the Board and our members. Peggy does it all. She does it ALL!

And while doing the work, she is remarkably gracious.

She has a devoted following in SCN, and I'd like to read some of their comments about Peggy. I might add, these women are all great participating members themselves, most of them past Presidents of Story Circle.

Pat LaPointe, for instance, said, "If not for Peggy, all my member emails, promotions and announcements would be lost somewhere in cyberspace."

Jeannie Guy told me, "Oftentimes, I've sent her emails asking for help. And I swear, before I even hit the send key, the reply shows up in my inbox. It's like she has ESP – a little spooky. I love Peggy to pieces and she's the reason (along with Susan Albert's arm twisting) that I keep on keeping on with Story Circle Network. It's a heart thing."

Lisa Shirah-Hiers said, "Peggy is a treasure. Her wisdom and advice made all the difference to me and to the organization. But beyond her phenomenal contribution to SCN, Peggy is a wonderful woman – caring, gentle, calm, gracious, generous, sweet and sincere. I am glad to have known her!"

Penny Appleby also met Peggy through the Austin Reading Circle. She said, "We hit it off right away, and in the years since, I have often been the beneficiary of Peggy's thoroughness and dedication. Peggy has been the glue that has held Story Circle together. I am delighted to see her get the recognition that she has long deserved."

Judith Helburn commented, "Peggy Moody has been an angel for SCN, and was an angel for me when I was Prez. Any information I needed to put on the website or on the conference site was placed within a day. There were moments when I asked her for guidance, and her calm, sensible advice helped me so much. And, of course, she has excellent taste in jewelry, since she has purchased at least one of my silent auction items at conferences. She is a jewel all by herself."

Jude Whelley had this to say, "I am going to tell you something about Peggy that even Peggy doesn't know! She has a nickname. I call her Minute Moody. Why? Because whenever I have asked Peggy for some information she gets it to me in about a MINUTE! How can you not love this woman!!"

The leader of our Internet Chapter, **Lee Ambrose**, "met" Peggy in a virtual way 15 years ago when Lee joined SCN. She wrote, "Since that time, even though we've never met in person, by email and phone we have been through all sorts of ups and downs in both the life of Story Circle and our own personal lives, and have forged a deep friendship. Peggy has been a confidante, a supporter, a sounding board and, of course, a computer guru without whom I'd be lost! It has been a delight to work closely with her, and one of these days we will raise a glass of "white zinky" to toast a long-standing friendship that grows ever-sweeter."

Many more women here could testify about the wonderfulness of our Executive Director, but I'm going to close with these apt remarks from **Joyce Boatright**. "For nineteen years, Peggy Moody has been the woman who has made the Story Circle Network Board successful in developing and expanding this marvelous organization. Every idea the Board votes to implement, she's the person who makes it happen. She is both the muscle and the memory of Story Circle, keeping intricate and accurate records for us, and she does it all with a great heart. Because of her skills and stewardship, we've grown into an international organization, connecting and giving voice to women's stories far beyond the city limits of Austin. Her efforts are stellar, and we are forever grateful for her dedication. With Peggy in our midst, we look forward to the years ahead, as our story of success continues...."

This sums up, at least in a small way, the gift that Peggy is to Story Circle Network. We hope she feels our appreciation every time she sees this remembrance.



Peggy Moody and conference co-chair, Jeanne Guy

Real Women Write Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Lives

Volume 15 of our annual anthology by members of Story Circle Network will be published in January 2017. To meet that date, the production schedule requires that submissions open on July 1, 2016. It's definitely not too soon to be thinking about what you want to create for Real Women Write, and it's the right time to get that submission date on your calendar.

We include fiction, lifewriting, poetry, and images. Please get to work on a subject that appeals to you, and help us make this the strongest collection yet.

Real Women Write accepts up to three submissions per member, on a subject of your choice. It's a great publication opportunity and your participation is important. Entry details and a link to the submission form are at http://www.storycircle.org/journal/anthology_submissions.php

If you're not an SCN member, it's easy to join. We'd love to have you in our circle of writing women. We can offer you a bouquet of benefits, too! (Registration form on page 31.)

*Warmest regards,
Susan Schoch
Real Women Write editor, 2016*

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 and to join a group, go to:

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



An Interview with Sarton Winner Jill Kandel

An Overwhelming Need to Write

by Pat Bean

Jill Kandel, winner of the 2014-15 Sarton Memoir Award for her book, *So Many Africas: Six Years in a Zambian Village*, believes in the power of words and the power of women telling their stories. This is a happy time for this mother and grandmother, who has lived and worked on four continents. But it wasn't always so for the writer.

Kandel grew up in North Dakota, and after earning a college degree, married a man from the Netherlands whose heart was set on teaching agriculture techniques to African farmers. Her book is about the first six years of her marriage, which she spent in a primitive and remote African village. In those years, she gave birth to two children.

After ten years of living abroad in Africa, Indonesia and the Netherlands, the couple moved to the North Dakota/Minnesota area in 1992, and have lived there ever since. While her husband works full time, teaching agriculture to farmers and doing research in farmer's fields across North Dakota, Kandel enjoys her children and grandchildren and the "extra" hours she has for the first time in her life.

"I teach journal writing to female inmates at a local county jail," Kandel said. "I teach about the power of words and the power of telling our stories. I write for a local women's magazine and love meeting the most amazing women. I also am a member of a church and especially love encouraging young women and young mothers. It's hard to be young. It's hard to raise a family well. But it's so very important, to us as women and to society as a whole."

In an interview for this journal, Kandel explained more about her journey to become winner of the Sarton Award.

When did the act of writing call out to you, and how did you go about answering it?

When I moved to Zambia, I thought living in a village would be a cinch. I was young and naïve. My husband loved Zambia and had a dream job, but we were really foreigners to each other. I didn't understand his culture any more than he understood mine. So we came into a new marriage and a new job and moved three thousand miles away from my family. For most of our six years in Zambia, there was no phone or Internet. It was a 10-hour canoe ride

to the nearest town. How can anyone be prepared for that kind of isolation? For the first nine months we lived in Zambia, we didn't have a house—just a room in a hotel. I was overwhelmed with culture shock, survival, finding food, cooking, washing, disease.

When we moved back to America, I needed to find the words in order to understand those years. When I started writing about Africa, what I was doing was putting words into a time which was basically a big silence in my life. I was allowing myself to say what I hadn't said. I needed to articulate both the grief and the glory. I needed to take away the silence.

Writing about Zambia changed everything. Words have always been an important part of my life and I was living in a village where the act of talking (I didn't know the language) was a daily struggle. When you lose the ability to speak in a language you know—to really communicate—there is a sense of loss and isolation. And something odd happens: when you stop talking, you stop hearing yourself. You forget who you are.

The writing definitely called out to me. I had to write. So I sat down and wrote. And every year I went to one writing conference, or workshop, or retreat. Writing was a refuge. It was also a long process to learn how to write better. I put in the hours. I did the work.

Parts of your book were published in literary journals. Were the short pieces your original goal, or was it a book that got written piece by piece?

I didn't have a goal when I started, just an overwhelming need to write. Writing short pieces is easier when you are beginning. And it's a great way to hone your work. The essays grew as I read literary journals and fell in love with them, and wanted to see my work within their pages.

The book came later, after nine essays were published. I saw that the essays could fit together and make a bigger whole. I did this by using the Voice of Innocence (a voice that in effect says first this happened, then this) and mixing it with the Voice of Experience (a more mature authorial voice that establishes thought and reflection), and then adding in an overall emotional arc.

What does winning the Sarton Award mean to you?

Winning the Sarton Award is very confirming. It's great to see my book get some extra notice and publicity because then more women might find it and read it. I enjoyed the trip to Texas and meeting so many fantastic women. And now I have some shiny gold stickers to put on the front of my book, which is also very sweet!

What is your next big writing project?

My next book is about half completed. It's a continuation of my first, written in the same voice, but focusing on my relationship with my father-in-law. He was a young man in the Netherlands when Nazi Germans invaded and occupied his country for five years. WWII affected his whole life, and yet he seldom talked about it. The book will thread my life as it intersected with his, his life as a child in Occupied Netherlands, and the decisions he made at the end of his life.

Do you think other women can relate to your experience of being pushed into becoming Super Woman-like as you dealt with overwhelming situations, but at the same time felt invisible? Have some female readers commented to you about similarities in their lives?

I never tried to be Super Woman. I don't believe in the concept. I don't try or even want to live up to those aspirations. There is too much pressure on women today and they often feel like they fail. I would say that I survived. The hard work came later. The hard work was learning how to let go of bitterness. Learning how to write. Learning how to take the sorrow, and the isolation, and the drought, and the pain, and let it grow into something of beauty. It's so easy to hang on to our pain and to clutch it to ourselves and let it define us. Letting go of it, finding a way to move beyond it, that is the hard work of life.

I have had many women write to me and say they've never been to Africa but that my book inspired them. One woman said, "Wonderful! Makes me almost brave enough to write about my own Africa." A woman in jail said, "If you could do Africa, I can do jail." My book gave her courage. I find that a remarkable thing. I'm grateful that my writing is out in the world, and that women are reading it and finding courage for their own lives.

Describe your writing space, if you have one, and your writing habits.

I joined a writing club at the age of 41. At that time, I was homeschooling my four children so I'd get up at 5 a.m. and write till 9 a.m., when the school day started. I wrote six days a week, four hours a day. Early mornings were my only alone time. I'd wake up, drink coffee, and write. My

writing routine has varied somewhat over the years, but mostly, I'm an early morning writer. I read, research, blog, and do the business side of writing after I've done the creative work.

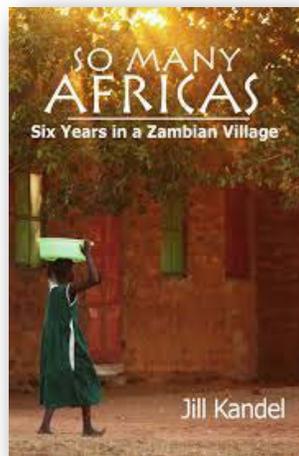
My first writing space was in a corner of our house. Later, I moved to the basement. I didn't need much, just a corner and a desk and a computer. Now that I'm older and some of my children have moved out of the house, I have my own room. It's light and airy with four windows. The walls are white and lime green and it has a lot of bookshelves in it. I have one shelf for local authors and one for favorite books, and one for books on writing. My desk is an old metal army desk that I found for free on the curb. I painted it turquoise and have bright yellow chairs. I like white and color splashes.

I made a paper chain and hung it on one wall. Each link in the chain represents 1,000 words. Every time I finish writing another 1,000 words in my next book, I tear one chain off. It's a visible encouragement to me. I love seeing that chain growing smaller. When I reach the end of the chain, my book will be complete. Well, at least the first draft of it!

In the room, beside my computer desk, I have a space for making art. I play with acrylic painting and book making. In the evenings, when I'm tired of words and writing, I like to paint.

How does your family feel about your writing success?

Writing is my job just like agriculture is my husband's job. My family is happy for me, but they also see the long hours and hard work I put in. They cheer me on. But they also take it for granted, "Mom is a writer. That's what she does." My son, who is a videographer, made a two-minute book trailer using old 8mm film footage, photos, and scanned documents. My daughters are both photographers and they help me constantly. They help me design my bookmarks, business cards, and a lot of the visual details.



Pat Bean is a retired, award-winning journalist who traveled around this country for nine years in a small RV with her canine companion, Maggie. She now lives in Tucson, Arizona, where she is putting the finishing touches on her book, *Travels with Maggie*. She is passionate about nature, birds, writing, art, family, reading and her new dog, Pepper.



Circles: The Heart of Story Circle Network

Ladies of Legacy

by Mary Jo Doig, Chair, Writing Circles Work Group

The words *Story Circle Network* evoke a striking image in my mind of a large 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. In this issue we introduce you to Judy Watters, facilitator of Judy Sheer Watters’ OWL Writing Circle in Spring Branch, TX.

Judy, a former SCN Board member, is secondary principal of a new school, owner of Franklin Scribes Publishers, and a freelance writer and editor. She is founder of and facilitates Hill Country Christian Writers and Ladies of Legacy writing groups. Her first book, *The Road Home*, tells a story of life lessons learned while growing up on a farm in Pennsylvania.

Congratulations on your inspiring commitment to your Older Women’s Legacy (OWL) Workshop, Judy. I clearly remember your deep enthusiasm at the 2014 Stories from the Heart National Conference when you presented a workshop on becoming an OWL facilitator.

Tell us about when you started your OWL workshop. What was your motivation, and what was the size of your group?

I presented an OWL workshop in March, 2012, following the 2012 SCN conference, where I heard of the OWL manual and the easy step-by-step instructions set up for a facilitator to lead a group. At that time, I was getting really close to finalizing my memoir and knew the importance of women writing their legacies for the generations to come. We started with ten women. One moved out of the area, but the other nine wanted to continue learning how to write their legacy. We named ourselves *Ladies of Legacy*.

When, how often, and where do you presently meet?

We meet every second and fourth Tuesday from 3:30 to 5:00 pm at a member’s home. For the first year, I taught the class basics of writing, i.e. misplaced modifiers, using action verbs, cutting out being verbs, -ly adverbs and -ing words. We practiced a lot using our five senses and adding dialogue. I gave a prompt every week; we wrote for 15 minutes and then shared our writings. Today, we still follow the same writing time, but usually we take turns offering a different prompt. Sometimes someone will bring a writing she has done and wants to share it with us.

I’m wondering how the writing practices you started with the five-week OWL workshop manual have evolved through the years.

The most popular prompt given in the OWL manual asks the writers to draw a dining room table with six

friends/relatives, either living or deceased, seated at the table. They write about one guest at the table. Years later, they still ask to go back to write about one more of those relatives or friends.

Have any of your OWL circle members’ written memoirs or other genre they have published or are interested in publishing?

Besides my own memoir, *The Road Home*, Sheri Hunt has published two books while in our group. The first, *The Oldest Sin in the Book*, is a memoir and self-help book on overeating. Her second one is a book of her past poetry (*Journey In and Out*). Alma Wakefield published a poignant memoir (*Amanda*) based on the character traits that her Downs syndrome daughter has taught her through her daughter’s 31 years. Two other writers have memoirs very close to completion.

That is quite remarkable. Does your group accommodate giving feedback on works-in-progress readings?

We don’t give critiques at our Legacy meetings; however, with the ladies’ encouragement, I started a writers’ critique group at our public library. The Hill Country Christian Writers’ group meets every Tuesday night from 6:00-7:45. That group has 12-15 faithful writers who bring 6-8 pages every week for the group to critique. We have a fun time of sharing and helping to grow each other.

I’ve facilitated two six-week workshops here in Virginia this year and am always so moved by how the members grow close bonds through the process of telling their stories. What are the richest parts for you of being part of your OWL Workshop?

When my group started, they ranged from 52 years old to 83. Now they are all four years older and they invigorate

me in my own writing every time we meet. We laugh and cry—tears of joy as well as empathy for each other through our writings.

Has your circle experienced an ebb and flow in activity or participation level? If so, do you have tips for other facilitators on how to revive and re-energize the Legacy Ladies again?

Personally, I have become more involved with other jobs. A year ago, I answered the call to help start a new Christian school in the area. I am secondary principal and in the thick of writing policies and procedures for accreditation. My commitment of two years will be done next summer. This, and the acquiring of a publishing company, has taken me away from the group at times. It has been a joy to watch the group continue as usual with the ladies taking turns leading the group and bring prompts to share. Sometimes travel, family, other commitments make for a smaller group; however, even if it's just three, they still meet. I think, most of the time, we try to move heaven and earth to be there.

Over the years, have certain writing gatherings become unforgettable in your memory for a particular reason? If so, can you tell us about one or two?

Oh my, too many to count. In our prompt writing times, we have written about chewing gum, hats, shopping, most embarrassing time, most challenging moment. We all cried with our 86-year-old when she wrote about the illegitimate daughter her mother talked her into signing papers to give her up to adoption. We wept tears of joy when we learned through her writing that she met this daughter 50 years later and learned that the two had knelt in prayer together at the same Billy Graham Crusade. We felt anger and violation when one lady read about the abuse she endured from her father. Our rule is not to tell the story, but to write it down then read it to us.

Life-writing story circles are so powerful and multi-layered, whether online or face-to-face. How would you describe some of those gifts to someone who's contemplating joining or starting a writing circle?

My legacy group invigorates me. They inspire my writing. Listening to their writings, I realize that they have the same struggles, fears, and hopes as I have. We have all learned universal life lessons; our stories have just played out in different ways to teach us those lessons.

Some writing groups have undertaken special projects such as compiling a publication of their work. Has your circle ever chosen to do a unique group project? If so, kindly tell us about it.

We are just beginning to put a book together of our writings that we have done in the past four years. It's been

difficult since we are all working on our own projects. For the last two years, our group has headed up a Christmas daily devotional book that our church handed out the Sunday after Thanksgiving. We invited other writers from the church to join the fun, but the Legacy group did the majority of the writings.

What sage advice would you give to a new OWL facilitator? To existing OWL facilitators?

The OWL manual is a great place to start. I realize it is designed for a facilitator to lead a five-week memoir-writing class. Then the facilitator is to start a new group. I think I failed my mission; however, through my failure of following the course, I have developed nine lifelong friends. I say "lifelong" because I know them inside and out from their very honest writings and I wouldn't give that up for anything.

Lastly, is there an aspect about your OWL circle I've not asked about that you'd like to add to complete this portrait?

I think of the future of our group at times. On April 18th, we will take an Amtrak trip to Austin at 6:00 am and return the same day. During the day, we will write in a park and a couple coffee houses, and maybe a museum too. We have an invitation from a lady outside of our group to come to her beautiful home and write out by the pool on Canyon Lake. We are now in our fifth year together, and I don't see an end to it. Sometimes I think of starting another group and letting this group continue without me. But that's only a fleeting thought. I would miss out too much on the rich fellowship and growth in my writing that this group allows me.

Thank you so much, Judy, for your time in sharing your experience with us in starting and dedicating yourself to long-term continuation of the Legacy Ladies. You give us an exemplary OWL model! We also wish you a continued abundance of the rich layers of writing and bonds born of such gatherings.



Mary Jo Doig joined SCN in 2001. She is a member of the SCN board, a reviewer and editor for StoryCircleBookReviews.org, a Sarton juror, "True Words" editor for 13 years, and facilitator of w-Ecircle 7 for several years. She is near completion of her memoir, *Stitching a Patchwork Life*. Visit her blog: <https://maryjod.wordpress.com/>



Internet Chapter: Internet Chapter Launches Fiction Writing e-Circle

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

In March the Internet Chapter announced its intent to create a fiction writing e-circle. It was an idea whose time had come and in no time at all, the fiction e-circle was launched under the leadership of Pat LaPointe.

The fiction circle is open to Internet Chapter members and functions in a similar fashion to the other SCN Internet Chapter writing e-circles—with a few variations. The number of participants is limited to five, the facilitator does not submit writings, the duration of the circle is a short-term commitment (with an option to renew) and there is a 600-word limit each month.

This circle was created in response to our members' growing interest in fiction writing. But we remain committed to creating a safe environment for women of all levels of writing experience to participate in a writing e-

circle. Additionally, we stand by our “gentle responder” philosophy. The new group, like all of our other writing circles, is not a critique group.

When the circle was announced, it didn't take long to fill. In fact, in less than 48 hours we had our five and then some. We have started a waiting list of others who may be interested in participating in a fiction circle. Once we have an additional five women, we will put together a second fiction circle.

If this sounds like something you might like to try, contact Lee Ambrose (leesmuse2@gmail.com) for more information. You must be a member of the Internet Chapter to participate in any of our writing circles. You can learn more about the Internet Chapter—and join—at our website: <http://www.storycircle.org/scnonline.shtml>.

Lee Ambrose has been a member of Story Circle Network and its Internet Chapter for several years. She serves as the president of the Internet Chapter. Lee's lifestory writings take form in the poetry and prose she shares in her writing e-circles. Lee is a reviewer for the Story Circle Network's Book Review Site. One of the most challenging and rewarding roles she has within SCN is to write the weekly Women's Wise Words and writing prompts.

In addition to her many SCN activities, Lee is working on a historical fiction book, a chap book for her poetry and a collection of stories and poems that chronicle her very special relationship with her grandson, Caleb.

Plans for May 2017 LifeLines Underway

Story Circle Network's LifeLine weekend retreats give you the chance to reflect on your life and explore the challenges and prospects of your next writing project. In May 2017, our retreat leader will be Jeanne Guy, a reflective-writing coach, author and teacher for 22 years. Known for her wry wit and entertaining style, Jeanne is skilled in developing a safe space for listening deeply to your heart's desire and tapping into your creative energy to sally forth.

Watch this space for more information!





Online Classes:

Online Classes Expanding Under New Coordinator

by Joyce Boatright

Len Leatherwood, the new coordinator for SCN's online classes, is on a mission to expand the online course offerings and increase enrollment over the next 12 months. She has hit the ground running and from her to-do list, appears enthusiastic and unstoppable.

As soon as Len was selected for the position, she sent letters to current and past faculty, letting them know she wants to enlist their help in growing the program. Then she created a LinkedIn account for Story Circle to expand the program's advertising reach beyond its current website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts.

At the national conference last month, Len met with current and past faculty for team building, and to solicit their thoughts on ways to improve the online classes program. She says she ended up speaking at length with at least six teachers or potential teachers, three of whom were presenters. In addition, she hosted a Meet and Greet at the conference, primarily comprised of women interested in teaching.

Encouraged by the interest from the Meet and Greet, Len hosted an Online Classes table on Saturday night to build a connection with students and teachers (past, current and potential). "We had a big table for this event, with at least fifteen people participating," she reports.

When Len returned home, she followed up with many of the women with whom she had spoken at the conference. She created a teacher-exchange program with current teachers so they can take one free class each term they teach in exchange for offering one free class to a fellow teacher. "This is not only a morale builder," she says, "but also a way to help train new teachers."

She adds that she also created "a lively exchange via Yahoo group on ways to spread the word about the SCN Online Classes. I've received a strong response and some good ideas."

One idea is to create a flyer for the Online Classes program to be distributed by faculty (and interested SCN members) at local libraries, English and gender study programs at colleges and universities, online writing

programs, coffee shops, etc. Several teachers have committed to distributing these flyers in the area where they live, but anyone can help. If you'd like to help, email storycircle@storycircle.org and request an Online Classes Program flyer.

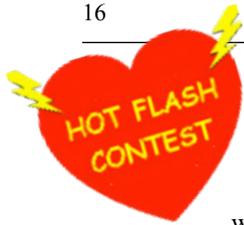
Over the summer, Len plans to review a survey she sent to selected faculty. She also wants to "research certificate programs, learn more about how to expand our Internet footprint for marketing, continue to build a connection to faculty and students, work on adding new information and photos to the SCN Online Class page, explore other options besides Yahoo groups to use for class base, and encourage teachers to offer classes that will draw a wide range of students."

Whew. Len is definitely a woman on a mission. Surely, Story Circle Network will benefit greatly from her tireless service.

Watch storycircleonlineclasses.org for the Summer schedule, posted in mid-June. Classes run July 18-September 12. Class topics include Memoir and Lifewriting, Journaling and Self-Discovery, Sharpening Skills, Poetry, and Independent Study.



Joyce Boatright received her first byline at age 15. Since then she has published over five hundred articles about American lifestyle, women's issues and educational trends in newspapers, magazines and trade journals. The former journalist has been writing memoir since 1995 and conducts workshops around the country. Her book, *Telling Your Story: A Basic Guide to Memoir Writing*, is available on amazon.com and on her website. She teaches writing at North Harris College in Houston, Texas, and steadily posts on her blog.



Hot Flash Contest Winners

Story Circle members were invited to enter their flash fiction (no longer than 600 words) in our Hot Flash contest, open only to SCN members who attended our 2016 Stories from the Heart conference in Austin.

What is flash fiction? It's a short-short story that usually contains the four classic elements: protagonist, conflict, complications, and resolution. But there are no rigid requirements.

The Contest Committee would like to thank all the creative women who entered our Hot Flash Contest. A

Pat Bean is a retired, award-winning journalist who traveled around this country for nine years in a small RV with her canine companion, Maggie. She now lives in Tucson, Arizona, where she is putting the finishing touches on her book, *Travels with Maggie*. She is passionate about nature, birds, writing, art, family, reading and her new dog, Pepper.

Letishia Watt says this about herself: Writing soothes my soul and clears my mind. I began writing my weekly blog with the purpose of building a repertoire of stories for telling aloud, and experimenting with style. Now I write because stories hidden in the recesses of my mind are begging to be shared.

Noëlle Sickels is author of the historical novels *Walking West*, *The Shopkeeper's Wife*, *The Medium*, and *Out of Love*. Her story "In Domestic Service" won the annual fiction award from the journal *Zone 3*. She was also editor of *Time Was*, an anthology of reminiscences by Los Angeles senior citizens.

special thanks to our judges for sharing their time and helping to make our first Conference Contest a success.

The flash fiction topic for this contest: *Stories from the Heart*. The winner of our first Hot Flash Contest is Pat Bean for "Heart of a Dog." Second place goes to Letishia Watt for "The Tide Pool," and third place to Noelle Sickels for "Lover Boy." Winners were invited to read their stories at Open Mike Saturday Night.

Congratulations to all!

—Pat LaPointe, Contest Committee Chair

The Heart of a Dog

by Pat Bean

The dog appeared at Clarissa's door eight weeks after she had received her new heart, a gift from someone who had died suddenly was all the doctors would tell her. The pitiful animal was on the porch of the home that had cloistered her all but seven months of her un-lived 23 years. Born with an inoperable hole in her heart, her hovering mother had been her caretaker, teacher and lone companion. The only dogs Clarissa had seen before today had been on a television screen. Once she had asked for such a pet, but her mother had said they were dirty animals and wouldn't abide one in her house.

This dog certainly fit that category. But while the flute-thin animal's fur was thickly matted, it wagged its tail enthusiastically as it watched Clarissa easily climb the three steps onto the porch, the same steps she had barely been able to get down when a social worker picked her up and took her to a nursing home the day after her mother died.

At the home, she was seen by a doctor and placed on a list for a donor heart. He wondered aloud why she wasn't already on the list. Clarissa didn't tell him that the last time she had seen a doctor was when she was seven, and had fallen off a chair while trying to sneak a cookie. After that, her mother rarely left her side.

Clarissa couldn't stop herself. She sat down beside the tail-thumping animal, and stared into encrusted golden brown eyes while they stared back into blue orbs that had begun to leak. A whole lifetime of not being was washed away in that second. Finally looking away, the small black dog collapsed its head onto Clarissa's chest; and in unison two hearts beat as one. Almost before she was aware of what she was doing, Clarissa

had the dog in her arms and was carrying it into the house, which except for a layer of dust still looked as spotlessly clean as her mother always kept it.

"OK girl, it's a bath for you."

It took a while, but with the help of soap, scissors to cut away matted hair, and some lavender-scented conditioner to help un-snarl tangles, Clarissa found herself toweling dry about 15 pounds of a sweet-smelling dog. She named her Angel, and for the next week, the two were never more than a few heartbeats away.

Then Clarissa's social worker arrived. The woman, kindly but firmly, insisted Clarissa take the animal to a vet, both to make sure the dog was healthy, but also to see if it had been chipped.

"Perhaps this dog has an owner out there who is heartbroken over the loss of her pet," the social worker emphasized. Not brave enough to ignore the command, Clarissa did as she was told. She learned that the dog, now weighing 19 pounds, was healthy, but belonged to a Sheila Bingham. Clarissa broke into tears, but took the information the vet provided, and promised she would phone the owner. Three days later she placed the call.

"Oh my God, I'm so sorry," replied a soft-spoken voice. "Are you a friend? Sheila was killed in a car crash two months ago. Her dog was with her, but ran away and hasn't been seen since. They were never apart."

When Clarissa hung up the phone, Angel jumped into her lap and snuggled so her fuzzy left ear was over her new owner's chest—beneath which beat her old owner's heart.



From the Blogs:

One Woman's Day

by Linda Hoye



At One Woman's Day blog we share stories about ordinary and extraordinary days in the lives of SCN members. Our life experiences are unique but we find connection through the power of story. Learn more here: <http://onewomansday.wordpress.com/about/>

Recently we were pleased to publish a piece about a day in Barbara Rady Kazdan's life.

Another day, she thought, with underwhelming enthusiasm stretching in the bed she shares with her 55-pound sheepdog, remembering how during last night's storm he'd walked back and forth over her, then brought her to full attention by sitting on her head. Now she indulges his need to snuggle--wondering for the umpteenth time, "What canine companion cuddles first, then goes out?" And grateful to have a snuggling partner, since everyone she loves is impossibly beyond arm's reach.

His furry tummy rubbed, her pillow-creased face licked, she commands the TV to wake up, checking the weather before switching to Charlie Rose and crew, hitting pause, then over to Morning Joe, pause. All set. Time to pee—she lets the dog out and heads for the bathroom. Lets the dog in on her way to the kitchen, pushes the Keurig button on, inserts the single-serve cup du jour, and decides which mug to use: the one her husband, gone these six years, favored; one from her daughters—a "Mom" mug with college logo or the brightly colored ceramic memento from Israel; or her sister's 10th anniversary party favor, celebrating a late-in-life love match. Decision made, mug filled, she heads back to her bedroom—her lair. She starts her day there, checking email, listening with one ear to the political pontificating of Mika, Joe and whoever happens by, or the slightly more wide-ranging CBS chitchat. A glance at the calendar reveals when she absolutely must show up sans nightie, appropriately attired, at appointed times and places.

Since she's had the house to herself—3 bedrooms up, master down, open plan picture-windowed living, dining, kitchen and breakfast room, and an inviting nook her son

fashioned overlooking the patio with a comfy chair and ottoman, she has lots of choices when she sits down to write, to read, to (ugh) make calls. Plenty of places to plant her "This Is My Workspace" flag. That used be her office, where the PC, printer and paper files—yesteryear's paraphernalia—sit abandoned along with the framed print her daughter bought to enhance her first downtown office after a 17-year timeout; the framed letter from Barbara Bush commending the literacy initiative she'd created; the primitive, exuberantly-painted plaque from InFOCUS Tanzania, the eye care program she'd co-founded; the thank you notes from social innovators she'd mentored; the bulletin board with "I love you grandma" printed painstakingly in raggedy letters, and her son's wry birthday card, announcing: "In Dog Years You'd Be Dead;" all duking it out for prime real estate with ticket stubs and snapshots. That office, those memories: nice to visit from time to time.

Liberated by a laptop, documents dumped on Dropbox, she can work anywhere. Like Goldilocks, she's tried the living room sofa, the comfy chair, the breakfast table. Unlike Goldilocks, none of these would do. Her choice? Where she spends most of her time writing? On her bed.



Tapping 30 years of non-profit leadership, Barbara founded Achieving Change Together to advance social justice. In her "encore career," this Silver Spring, Maryland grandmother writes personal essays and memoir. A contributing author to *Contagious Optimism*, *10 Habits of Truly Optimistic People*, *BetterAfter50.com*, *NextAvenue.org*, and *LivingBetter50.com*, her work appears in *Forbes.com*, *ChangesInLife.com* and *Airplane Reading*. Find her online at <http://www.achievingchangetogether.com/>.



True Words from Real Women

A selection of short pieces of lifewriting by our members, edited by 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 (the back page). This month's topic is Travel Tales.

The Shape-Shifter

Susan Marsh, Jackson WY

The first evening of a winter's week in Yellowstone, I leave my bags in the rented cabin and head for Geyser Hill. The snow-blown path to the snow lodge snakes between shoulder-high drifts. With the temperature at twenty-below, people crowd against the lobby's frosted window – sullen teenagers staring at snowboard movies, their parents holding ceramic mugs that smell of rum.

I murmur “Hello, excuse me,” and head into the night.

Columns of white vapor billow into the dark. Where hot springs lie, the snowdrifts peel away. Bare earth rises like a blister. Geyser cones stand like bumps on the blister. *Dangerous ground*, a sign warns. *Do not approach wildlife*.

As the lights at Old Faithful recede to distant points, I enter a funnel of dense and urgent sounds. A rapid boil erupts at my feet. A spurting fumarole splatters scalding water across the trail. Cauldrons thumping underground send vibrations through the soles of my boots.

I have nearly completed the loop around the upper boardwalk when a large shape appears in front of me. A bull bison, I guess, from his size and solitude. Facing away, he reclines on the warm ground, his shoulders rising into a great hump. He doesn't seem to notice me, and for a moment I debate whether I could get away with sneaking past. The warnings return: *Dangerous ground. Do not approach wildlife*. No point in provoking a 1,000-pound animal when no one knows I'm out here.

By this time, I am well chilled and anxious to join the rum-drinkers at the lodge. I hurry back around the boardwalk.

I seem to be approaching the bison again. Had I walked past, oblivious, already?

From this angle the steam-shrouded hulk looks less like a bison. Since it still has not moved, I edge closer for a better look. It is Beehive Geyser.

At Home in the World

Rhonda Wiley-Jones, Kerrville TX

I slump, chilled, on a London street bench as the sun sets, uncertain of my choice. A string of lonely decisions, this is just one more – maybe the last! I can stay through next week, or I can change my flight to leave tomorrow. Each costs \$300. The cost will not make the decision for me.

A tear slides to my chin and drops into my lap. Letting go of one tear releases an avalanche. I do not know if I am crying because I am tired and hungry, or because I am frustrated and disappointed. I laugh through the ridiculous tears that I'm drying with my shirt sleeve.

What I cannot admit to myself is that I am embarrassed by my weakness, the loneliness I am unwilling to tolerate for another week. I have come seeking that next level of independence, found it, and found it lacking in the excitement and worldliness I had expected. Instead, I discover I'm a crybaby.

There is a loneliness I walked this month of May – arms swinging, knees advancing, feet trekking, carrying the weight of these motions into the world. Unlike the motion of a ship, this effort lands on solid surface, grounded in space. The heel to toe touching earth, then lifting in space, while the other foot lands and creates a solid awareness that only I can make this movement, no one else. A soft padding rhythm in the grass makes the sound of one's own feet in motion, of someone approaching from a nearby place within.

I return home with a new level of confidence that I can be alone in the world with all I need on my back, and that I can propel myself through the landscape when lonely, tired, hungry, fretful and disappointed – but at home in the world.

Friendship Redux

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The dissolution of a 40-year friendship begins with a trickle of discontent flowing in an arroyo of unspoken disappointments high atop a mountain of suppressed emotion. The dry wash, a favored walking path, erupts in a flash flood, carrying the friends down a dangerous descent.

Flooding from neighboring areas contributed to the destruction. Linda's marriage was navigating uncharted seas. Her husband Jack had a band and the younger female singer, freshly hatched from her own marriage, set her sights on the crumbling foundation of Jack's union.

Divorce was trendy among our friends, and soon mine was the last marriage standing. Embittered by their own divorces, most of Linda's friends quickly heaped vitriol at Jack. I felt strangely vulnerable and my silence became suspicious. War was declared, and after many battles, Linda moved across the country.

Linda and I met during our senior high school year through a mutual friend. Danny, a gifted dancer, did not look the part with his apple-shaped body, but his moves were original and we all wanted to learn them. Danny moved to Manhattan, channeling his creativity in hairstyles far ahead of their time. Before Lady Gaga, there was Patty Labelle and her famous fan hairstyle, a Danny original. We vicariously shared in Danny's celebrity, and loved to hear his New York adventures. Danny made it big but died before his killer, AIDS, had a name. "Remember me" was his dying request. He lived on in our hearts and our minds and in the stories we told and retold whenever Linda and I were together.

So after a five-year hiatus, we sit across from each other in a restaurant in her new Southwestern hometown. We bathe in the Elysian waters of our rebirthed relationship. Danny's spirit silently soars through our hearts.

"We've known each other a long time," Linda says, as tears fill our eyes. Had it not been for Danny, we wouldn't have met. And if it had not been for Danny, we would not be sitting here, 45 years later.

The Bathroom Saga

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"Pat, I have booked us for a Road Scholar train trip across Switzerland," my husband announced one day as I was passing through the living room.

"Whoa!" I said. "Remember I had a hip replacement several years ago and this trip will prove to be an active one if we are going to be hopping the on-time trains in Switzerland."

An added challenge for me was that this was also going to be a Pajama Tour. This is when you land in one hotel for two days and on to the next for another two days. That's why I never had time to know where the bathroom was, much less which button or knob to push to actually take a shower.

One of the highlights, though, was seeing the Matterhorn in its entire splendor as the blue sky framed the white cap rising up between the Alps. We gasped and gawked in awe at this wonder of nature.

"Time to prepare for the next train," our tour guide with the duck umbrella stated very firmly.

"How much time do I have before the next train?" I asked.

"Oh! At least 20 minutes," she said.

To myself, I knew I could make time for a potty break in 20 minutes. I scurried to get as close to the front of the line as possible. Just as I was in position I heard this loud voice yelling for someone named Pat.

"Nah, that couldn't be for me," I thought. When the deed was completed, again I heard this voice yelling even louder for PAT.

"That must be for me," I thought.

I pulled up necessary attire and made my way to the voice. The train was boarding. I still wonder if all clothing was properly positioned.

Lions in the Tree

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We found them in a little dell
high up on the tree –
four docile lions
too relaxed to pay us any heed.
They looked so calm lying there,
like they didn't have
a care in the world.
Or had they just come back
from a kill,
exhausted from tearing
their prey apart,
eating their fill, and leaving
the rest to the vultures.
No wonder they look so content.
They've done their day's work,
and all that is left
is a big long nap.

The Power of a Single Word

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After several weeks backpacking in Turkey, we found ourselves on the southern Aegean in the magnificent coastal community known as Patara. It is an area full of history – at one time the largest seaport of ancient civilization, visited by St. Luke and St. Paul, and also a major center in Roman times. Damaged by severe earthquakes in the years 141 AD and 240 AD, the harbor silted up. The remains of the amphitheater, a spectacular arch and an acropolis affording magnificent hilltop views of the 18-kilometer local beach, are still to be seen today. There was little English spoken in this region. Given that the spectacular beach was a three-kilometer walk from the village through protected land, there was barely another traveler.

Our accommodations were spartan – a family-run pansiyon (a lodging house) called Likya, which was hand-built in the youth of the now-80-year-old mayor, a proud man who wore ties and crisp pressed shirts even in crushing heat. Likya appealed to us because of the friendly owners, Abraham and Emmal, and the vine-shaded restaurant patio. We speculated that the mayor was most likely Abraham's father.

In this beautiful bucolic place, we would swim, explore ruins, and visit the village. At dusk we would share a beer on the patio, searching for a breeze while the old man would visit us with a plate of grapes. No words were spoken, but we tried to communicate with all our might that mosquito netting was required, as we were tormented nightly by masses of mosquitos and would enter the day bleeding and exhausted.

One evening, the old man appeared unexpectedly with a package held firmly. We could tell he was very pleased with himself to arrive with bed netting and he smiled broadly as we welcomed him into our room. Mike and I were both fresh from the shower's intimacy. None of us appeared shy, and my lover gestured that he could assist with the installation of the netting. As he stepped forward, his towel fell from his hips to the floor. At first there was only silence, and then, as the mayor lowered his eyes at Mike and then raised his eyes to mine, he said "Normal."

Internal Travels

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I have always loved seeing new places, getting beneath the surface into the heart of a place and a people, and hearing the sounds of different languages. Three years ago, my husband, a polio survivor since 1953, had a serious fall which ended his ability to travel very far. At first I regretted

this, but then I began to remember how difficult our travels had become.

Our last trip by minivan to see our adult sons and their families covered 2,400 miles, took 18 days, and involved 12 different motels. At each one I had to load the luggage cart with all the supplies and equipment needed so my husband could function safely in motel rooms which didn't meet his particular needs, despite being called ADA compliant by the AAA tour guides we used.

We both came home exhausted from that trip. At the time, I wondered to myself if that was the last such trip we'd make, because the physical difficulties had begun to outweigh the emotional benefits of hugs and face-to-face conversations.

We were back home for only six weeks when he fell, effectively ending our traveling days. After the accident, I realized I would have to take internal trips rather than external ones. I discovered that there is a lot of exploring one can do within one's own mind and heart. Where have I gone on these travels?

I've been to *The Other Side of Silence* with Morton Kelsey; to the place of understanding my *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language*, led by John Sanford; to the ever-expanding consciousness of the divine presence within me, thanks to the daily practice of meditation. John Main's *Silence and Stillness in Every Season* is the inspiration for my internal travels.

I have found the place where the scattered soul is restored and the joy of being alive is celebrated, where the shadow of death is lifted by the light of Jesus' words, "My peace I give to you." It is enough to remember past external journeys with a grateful heart, while enjoying the riches of new internal ones.

Escaping the City

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As summer approached, the city felt stifling. The heat, traffic, noise, and crowds made my husband and me long for nature. We received a brochure that couldn't have been more alluring: A luxury resort in a remote region of the Midwest, located on a wildlife preserve, that offered hiking, horseback riding, golf, tennis, an Olympic-size indoor pool, and gourmet meals. We loaded our car and were off.

Upon arriving, we felt it strange that there were no other cars in the parking lot. "It is mid-week," we reasoned, "and early for the tourist season." Undaunted, we thanked our lucky stars about getting away from it all.

At the desk sat a tiny white-haired woman with skin almost the shade of her hair. "You must be the Halleys," croaked a voice like dried leaves. It began to dawn on us

that we were the only guests expected.

We were led down a long, dark corridor. Every few steps, our guide stopped to turn on a wall sconce, and we could see that the carpeting was plush and red, the walls papered in a pattern of purple and gold. She finally stopped at a room and turned an old-fashioned key to unlock the door.

“Enjoy your stay,” she cackled.

Never mind that the room had no TV, radio, or phone. We applied lots of insect spray and went for a hike. About a mile into the woods, we were attacked by mosquitoes and chiggers so desperate that they bit through the insect spray and our clothing. We hurried back to our room, turning on wall lights as we traversed the dark corridor.

At dinner, we tried to ignore the pair of eyes staring at us from the window in the kitchen door. We learned from the server that the cook liked to watch people enjoying his food.

Overnight, the temperature dropped 35 degrees. We located two sway-backed horses at the overgrown stable area. The tennis court was in disrepair, the golf course deserted, the pool freezing cold.

We signed out and headed for Chicago, the nearest big city.

Letters Home: Learning to Live in Tokyo

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The three of us arrived safely in Tokyo. We only had the clothes in our suitcases until our air shipment arrived in a week's time, but at least our apartment's furnishings would allow us to feel more at home.

On the first day, Theo, our eight-year-old son, moved his things into his room, came out and said, “I love our new apartment.”

Bill left for Australia the day after we moved in. Theo and I spent the week exploring the neighborhood. We first ventured up Hiroo shopping street, where we saw old-style shops: a rice-cake maker whose sweet smells permeated Hiroo; a maker of samisen instruments; a bakery with delicate tea ceremony cookies and bean paste treats; a take-out takoyaki (octopus balls) shop; and noodle shops with windows filled with plastic foods representing their menus. We also found other modern stores right next to a Buddhist temple. Walking back to our apartment, we looked up at a sign that said “LaJolla,” a Mexican restaurant that became Theo's favorite place to eat.

Theo started school the next Monday. The first day he played with some other children and told me, “I made some friends, but I don't like them very much.”

Theo is adjusting slowly to our new life, and I caught him skipping down the steps as we walked home through Arisugawa Park. He hasn't said “I hate Tokyo” for two days.

The buses prove Theo's line: “The people here are so friendly.”

One day I was about to get off a bus and stepped down the stairs at the back door. The doors wouldn't open. I felt a light tap on my shoulder. A woman gestured to me to change position. I did, but I stepped in the wrong place. The door still didn't open. I looked up and the entire group in the bus lightly raised their hands at me. Not a word was spoken as I stepped up one more step. The door opened.

I mumbled “Arigato (thank you)” as I exited, feeling humbled and embarrassed by the kind attention of the bus riders.

Miles to Go

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I crossed the border into a foreign land when I arrived at my childhood home to accompany my mother on the last miles of her journey to life's edge.

I am slow to get out of the car that sunny July afternoon after my foot-dragging cross-country return, in spite of the fact that my mother, sister, daughter, and soon-to-be daughter-in-law are waiting to greet me. They heard my car coming haltingly down the driveway, still hidden around the curve. They tell me they knew I was taking pictures of the Burma-Shave-style signs they had nailed on the fence posts welcoming me home. Maybe they also knew I was stalling, but they don't say.

Home. There are no fresh daisies in my bedroom like there were on my annual visits in years past. My cat sniffs around our two basement rooms with more interest than I feel, then retreats under the bed, from which she will emerge only for food for several days. I want to join her. I sink onto the bed instead, jolted by the realization that I will never again return to my childhood home for a visit. It is my home now. For all its familiarity, it could not feel more alien.

They say old age is not for sissies, but I can tell you living with the old-old is no walk in the park either. I find myself on a road with no map; Siri has given up. I'm on my own. I wander through the maze of my mother's increasing dementia, wondering if I am the crazy one.

My mother was 96 when I arrived four years ago. I committed to stay one year. But once on the road, the next curve beckons. And the next. I've become her companion on the journey and, in a way, I suppose she has uncomfortably become mine. How can I abandon her now? I can't put her on a ship accompanied by strangers for the final passage. I've become an expat.

Still, I thought there would be fewer miles.

Wanderlust

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 e-circle 4, e-circle 6, e-circle 2

Embracing the emotion as it washes over me,
 I leave this place of concrete and mortar to walk in open meadow-land,
 exhaling, as the tugging tension of life's ordinary too-busy-ness
 cracks open my weary spirit and yields...
 Yields to my aching for sweeping vistas
 filled with dew-kissed wildflowers,
 blankets of blues and dazzling oranges,
 paint the landscape surrounding me.
 The morning Sun warms the land somewhere on a
 Seemingly endless drive down a country lane, where
 Train whistles and bird songs are the solitary sounds.
 Colorful butterflies flitting, feeding here,
 I steep in nature's wonderment.
 Watching the clouds in the sky, idly,
 building, drifting silently overhead, as
 I walk this untrod path to an all but forgotten stream.
 Here in this place, resting on a fallen oak limb, I watch as dragon and damselflies
 perform a delicate ballet over trickling water in the dappled late morning shade.
 I trust this feeling when it comes,
 larger voices call out to my spirit from beyond
 and beckon the wistful traveler in my soul.

Tears Are an Ocean

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My tears are an ocean
 That I sail in a boat
 Made of my hardened heart
 That's been carved out to float

On all the pain, hurt, and strain
 That your abuse gave me,
 And used up all my love to drain
 And left me with no energy.

Now I'm on top of all your memories!

I row and row gracefully
 Until I reach my shore.
 My little island will give me plenty to eat
 And so much more.

Train Watcher, Train Rider

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I grew up a train watcher.

First, I'd stand in the sunroom of my Grandma Bessie's third floor apartment in Chicago and watch the El trains as they descended or rose from the elevated tracks just outside of the Ravenswood Station, the end of the line for part of the El system. I was a very little girl and the movement, the going-somewhere rhythm, was wonderful to me.

Often, in those childhood years, I'd actually ride the El system downtown with my mother. She'd get me the little seat in the front end of the front car, right next to the engineer's booth. I could see where the train was going, as well as the engineer as he drove. If that little seat was occupied, I'd sit at a side window with Momma and marvel at how our train was passing within inches of windows of apartment buildings along the elevated route. Many of the windows were open in those long-ago summertimes before air conditioners. I could look right at people in their kitchens, sitting at their tables. Sometimes they looked back

and we were part of each other's lives for just a second. It was strange and wonderful.

A most exciting chapter in my life with trains was the trip we took riding the Santa Fe El Capitan route from Chicago to California. We went by coach – fun for me, although probably not for them! We were surrounded in our car by young soldiers who were very kind to a curious five-year-old girl. In later years, I realized that those sweet soldiers were going west to get to the Korean War. I still feel sad, wondering how and if they got home safely. But back then I had no knowledge of war and was busy falling in love with train riding. I was seeing my beautiful country go by in front of my eyes, so varied and so magnificent!

In all the years between then and now, I've had many more train rides. The fascination and experience of train travel is a treasure that I wish for many other little girls and boys and elders and anyone who loves the going-somewhere rhythm of the rails.

What If?

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I have been painting little pictures,
revealing tiny pieces of my soul.

And I am afraid to share them.

I am afraid that the one who is closest to me
will judge my life by these snapshots.

I am afraid he will get the wrong idea about me and be angry,
Or get the right idea and be angry,
Or be so shocked at my view that he will be angry, and turn away,
thinking he does not know me at all,
which, of course, he may not.

So, if I cannot share with my most intimate
Who can I share with?
What would a stranger think of my revelations?
Would loved ones shun me, make huge assumptions,
suddenly bear me malice?

Why does it cost so much to be true?
How can I give birth to such eloquence
and not be free to turn it loose?
What am I willing to gamble that what I bring forth has value?

Maybe, just maybe, because one true friend said,
“These are powerful; you speak for many women,”
Maybe I can light the fire that will illumine my life
without burning away my past.

Travel

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I love to travel.
I pour over brochures and maps.
I spend hours on the computer. My eyes blur.
I plan my itinerary; revise and edit, edit and revise.
I buy my ticket with airline miles.
I feel so smug.
I pack my bags two months ahead.
I forget my toothbrush.
I take off my shoes at security. My socks get dirty.
I hassle others getting on the plane with my bulky backpack.
I sit down on the aisle seat. And get up for my seatmates.
I buckle my seat belt tight. I can't breathe!
I sit back and wait for take-off.
Airborne the flight attendant says, “Enjoy your flight to Alaska.”
Oops! I was going to Mexico! Oh well,
I love to travel.

Something from Nothing

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A singular suitcase, all essentials neatly in place – three outfits, underwear, pajamas, a notebook, and comfortable walking shoes. With my passport in one hand and my Polaroid camera slung over my shoulders, I waved goodbye to my parents and boarded the jetliner for my trip abroad. And for 30 days, I traversed Britain and Europe, experiencing secret coves, haunted castles, quaint country gardens, Swiss chateaus, Dutch windmills, and legendary churches. The days and terrain whizzed by leaving a blurred impression until I stepped inside the Accademia Art Gallery in Florence.

There before me stood David, 17 feet of magnificently carved marble. I simply couldn't stop gawking! How did Michelangelo create David in his mind, and then painstakingly chisel away for three years to create something from nothing? The next day I found myself inside Vatican City gazing up at the Sistine Chapel, mesmerized by the colors, details, and strokes of the artist's brush. Four years after creating David, Michelangelo began work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, a project that consumed another four years of his life. Again, Michelangelo created something from nothing. Just how did he have the patience to dedicate himself to such an enormous project?

Days later, I returned home and I believe I took a bit of every place I visited with me. It was as if the act of touching those places, walking those roads, and asking those questions added another dimension to my being. And the only possible explanation I found for that feeling was that a spirit existed in many of the places I visited, and that a spirit existed in me, and that the two had somehow met in the course of my travels.

Now, some 45 years later, I often stare at the blank page before me, overcome with the enormity of a writing project, much like how I imagine Michelangelo stared at unfinished marble or a blank ceiling. And with each stroke of my pen I create something from nothing, just as perhaps the spirit I experienced during my travels was the same one I witnessed in Michelangelo, and is the same one I possess today.

Gelato

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 e-circle 9

Here I am, sitting with my husband at a round glass-topped table on a cobblestone side street on the Isle of Patmos, eating gelato out of a Styrofoam cup. Cool, smooth, fruity Italian ice cream served up at a Greek deli. Sun-warmed afternoon air keeps us from shivering.

It's a holy day here on Patmos. Minutes earlier we wandered past a sharing-of-bread ritual in a Greek Orthodox church and were offered pieces of freshly baked crusty bread. Now the rites are completed and a priest in a long black robe strolls through the town center, greeting those of his flock who have errands there. His friendly, fatherly eyes shine above a bushy gray beard. No one hurries.

We notice two small children squatting in a doorway near us, and surreptitiously take their picture. They are intently peering at an iPhone and don't seem to notice us, the obvious foreigners.

We giggle when a family of five rides by on a red Vespa scooter. Papa drives, while Mama manages to hang onto him and several string bags of groceries. A child perches on the handlebars, another clings to Mama's back, and still another nestles in Papa's lap. None of them wear helmets or any sort of protective gear.

We and our fellow cruise ship passengers are intruders here on this island on this holiday, but no one pays us any mind. We try not to stare too much at local people as we enjoy our first ever taste of real Italian ice cream. We're not world travelers; other than trips to Vancouver, BC, as teens, neither of us has ever been outside the United States. We've rarely traveled beyond the West Coast. We look at each other in smiling disbelief that we're actually in Greece, sitting at a sunny table, eating gelato. This morning we stood, solemn with wonder, in the cave where St. John received his revelation from God nearly 2,000 years ago. Yet it is this ordinary moment in a tiny Greek marketplace that fills us with awe.

San Pedro Island, Belize

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Love the water? You'll love Belize. White sand beaches lined with palm trees and crystal blue water. In the western Caribbean, at the southern tip of Mexico, Belize has the second largest coral reef in the world. A direct flight from Houston gets you into Belize City in about two hours.

Scuba dive in the Blue Hole, or view the marine life while diving – you descend 50 feet straight down to a giant

underground chamber. Try wind surfing, parasailing, kite surfing, or take out a catamaran. Paddle your own kayak; lessons are available at the dock. Hotels are on the beach and have their own piers.

Don't have energy for such activities? Try snorkeling. A short lesson, available from any native or the store where you purchase the gear, and you will be ready to enjoy the underwater world.

Need some rest? Pull a lounge chair under a bit of shade and watch the world pass.

To get around, you walk the beach, ride a bike or rent a golf cart. Just go out the back of the hotel and you are on a street which is plenty wide enough for a golf cart. Take a nap in a hammock. Walk or get a massage for those achy muscles. You can go local and rent a bicycle, or there is the limo of transportation – the golf cart.

Catch your own fish and have the hotel fix it. Don't forget to stop by the lobster shack, try conch soup in season, coconut shrimp and rum punch – the island specialties. Beans and rice are a staple. Take your coffee and fresh baked banana nut bread to the beach and watch the sun come up.

Take a day trip to the main land to tour the jungle, spot orchids growing on the side of the bank. Climb to the top of one of many Mayan ruins.

"No shirt, no shoes, no drugs, no problem" is the slogan. Shorts and tank tops are the normal attire.

Belize was once a British colony. Major credit cards are accepted, although a small fee is charged for the transaction.

Sacred Spaces

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 w-circle 6

Shinto shrines dot my walks through the city streets of Kyoto, Japan. I am in awe of the gardens and temples, the sacred spaces that are throughout this city. Lingering at a small Buddhist temple tucked between two large high rises, I feel a sense of peace engulf me. I am taken by how space is used in this crowded city. Hallowed grounds are found throughout the busy city blocks in the form of Shinto shrines, gardens and Buddhist temples. These sacred spaces are part of the landscape of Asian cities I have visited. They offer quiet retreats throughout a busy day.

I linger in a garden, one of many that grace this city. Walking the path, I look out upon a beautiful pond surrounded by trees shaped by the winds. It is fall and the colors astound my senses. Reds with backdrops of gold and yellow create a kaleidoscope of exploding vivid shapes of various hues. I hear a cuckoo bird and get lost in its melody.

Sitting quietly for a moment centers me before, once again, entering the busy stream of foot traffic.

There is an immense sense of joy as I observe the weaving together of different faith traditions. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples stand side by side. Space is created for gardens, temples, and shrines offering places to reflect and pray. It comforts me to rest in the peace of these sacred spaces. I am reminded throughout the day to slow down and be present to all that surrounds me.

Traveling in Circles

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Four years since my last trip to Austin, Texas, and maybe I had left it too long to pick up where things had left off. Time and distance tend to make us outcasts in our own minds. In the pre-dawn darkness, as my husband drove to the airport, my insides were rumbling with worry. My anxiety was not about flying. It was about fitting in once I arrived.

My sense of belonging is already tenuous. Too many travels and too many homes in too many places have exhausted me. Now in my 60s, I wonder if I have enough energy to make the efforts required to bond with new people. And yet this circle was radiating some sort of magnetism that had reached all the way from Texas to Rhode Island.

I asked myself, “Why am I going?” I remembered then what had propelled me the first time: Gail Straub and our Red Thread writing circle. Three years of trowel and scalpel work with our pens, scraping debris away from the reasons on the surface of our lives and lancing the cysts discovered underneath, swollen with memories we had not dared to poke before.

I couldn’t have done that kind of work alone.

Despite decades of writing and journaling I had not dared to go there, not until others were going too, counting on me to be as brave as they hoped to be. Explorers united. Joint intentions fed our courage, which rebounded because our discoveries were shared in a circle, strong enough to hold it all. The medicine of being together had carried us past the places where pain or shame or trauma had stopped us before. Each woman had gone wherever her red threads had led and seen her journey celebrated.

Gail had been invited to speak about the Mythic Journey at a conference in Austin and I had followed her. There I discovered the Story Circle for women with stories to tell. The Red Thread had led to the next life preserver. Things were going to be alright. I could trust these rounds in real life.

Renewing My Passport

Susan Jordan, Newport OR
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Today I checked off a highlighted item noted in the middle of my tedious, multiple page To-Do list—some tasks transferred from previous weeks, months, and years. Although neither an overseas jaunt nor journey within the Americas graced my current calendar, the siren’s call to pack a duffle bag and take non-selfie photographs in distant lands rose from a gentle lullaby to a shriek when I noted the expiration date of my only official government document with a decent photograph.

Before attaching an updated photo to the renewal application, I needed a good-hair day. Significant expensed dollars later—because blonde, not gray, remains the color of my hair on identification papers, be it a driver’s license or passport across borders—I stoically sat on the uneven stool at the local emporium offering passport photo services in addition to its mixed merchandise of used sports equipment and infants’ clothing. The placement of multiple air fresheners near the well-loved but still usable sports shoes perfumed the air with an unpotable fragrance.

The clerk apologized for the harsh lighting and his instructions to remove my glasses and tuck my hair behind my ears, explaining the post-9/11 requirements in fulfillment of facial recognition software now used in most countries. He waited patiently as I dug into my purse for lipstick. The resulting photograph did not disappoint. It carried an unofficial caption: DO NOT TAKE CANDY FROM THIS WOMAN. I didn’t ask for retakes at \$15 a pop.

The application, along with my previous passport and a healthy check to our Department of State, filled a Priority Mail envelope. Our friendly post office representative noticed the mailing address.

“And where are you going?”

“To the library to research countries with the shortest passport control lines.”

“Ah, bad photo?”

Maybe I should have asked for re-takes.

“I soon realized that no journey carries one far unless, as it extends into the world around us, it goes an equal distance into the world within.”

– Lillian Smith

October at the Beach

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One October, we traveled to Manzanita, Oregon, for a vacation, renting a wonderful house a block from the ocean – which does not mean we worked on our tans. During most of our days there, rain fell and the Oregonians apologized. But we enjoyed the sensation since we'd had virtually no rain at our home in South Dakota since May.

Vacations, of course, are for enjoying oneself, relaxing from daily work. For me, however, a vacation trip requires that I take work along, though it's usually work that's not usual. Last year, for example, I went through dozens of cooking magazines and my recipe books and organized my recipes into a handy file that helps me find the recipes I really use.

Having a work space with notebooks, pens, and paper ready means that when I can't sleep, my mind can work. Surprising thoughts sometimes emerge, ideas that might not have surfaced in the busy-ness of home. I wrote one draft of a poem into the house journal:

Vacation House

Coffee steams from the smooth curve
 of a yellow cup. Two dogs and a good man
 sleep in a darkened room.
 The joints of the house creak
 as warm air flows around me.
 This is not our house,
 but we've settled into its worn couches,
 laughed with family around its long table,
 created good food in its kitchen.
 We've splashed in rain in the streets
 leading here and away.
 We watched kites leap and twirl
 above the sandy beach.
 Stared at Neahkahnie's bold brow,
 the froth around her feet.
 Laughed and dined, read and played
 games and the piano in the living room.
 Listened to the sea advance
 whirling, coiling, seething, falling,
 always falling toward the land.
 Perhaps we heard the contented sighs
 from ghosts glad for our company.

Tomorrow we'll head home
 to dry grass, dusty sky,
 cattle grazing on rumpled hills.
 Tonight we'll sauté scallops
 from that muttering sea
 in rich gold butter, seasoned
 with rosemary from the bush
 outside the door. Rosemary,
 that's for remembrance.

In the Beginning

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 w-circle 6

Everything has a starting point. Our journey through life begins with a gulp of air. The path to adulthood is opened the first time we put another person's needs ahead of our own wants. When we finally accept that life is not fair, we begin traveling the pot-hole strewn road that might lead us to happiness, an internal road whose map is ever-changing.

The more easily mapped starting point for my six-month meandering journey to New England began in Camden, Arkansas, a small southern town that sits on a bluff above the Ouachita River and is populated with an abundance of churches and friendly people. On a Sunday morning, the day before I began my travels, I found myself chatting with a young Black man while the two of us were waiting in the check-out line at the neighborhood grocery. The conversation ice-breaker was the dog food in both our carts.

The man's sharp-chiseled face was softened by a broad smile when he told me his dog was an old lab that his father had asked him to take care of when he moved in with his sister in Little Rock.

"Bo's 12 now, and beginning to slow down," he said. The pride for his hound was evident in the smile that lingered as he spoke. Mine, I said, was a spoiled cocker spaniel I had rescued from a Utah animal shelter and named Maggie. Our conversation then turned to the weather, the perennial hello-icebreaker that would be repeated everywhere I went in my travels. On this occasion, we both wished it were cooler and less humid.

I found a pleasant kinship with this Black man, one my Southern grandparents would not have understood. It was a good beginning for a journey that would expose me to both the darker and lighter sides of America's history, down one road that led past a busy canal built by slaves and then up 259 steep steps to view a lighthouse built to honor Mark Twain, who believed that travel was fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness. And so it was.

"Travel is more than the seeing of sights;
 it is a change that goes on, deep and
 permanent, in the ideas of living."

– Miriam Beard

My Favorite Place

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e-circle9

How wonderful it would be to be in Tigh-Na-Mara, a resort on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Despite the very long travel, my spirits are immediately lifted as I climb the stairs to our favorite room. The luggage is quickly dropped near the door and, before I even consider unpacking, I am out on the private balcony. As I step out, I see the water rippling toward the shore. I lift my eyes and see the mountains in the distance. I inhale the comforting scent of the pine trees. My emotions run the gamut between a sense of peace and pure exhilaration.

There is something magical about that place.

I feel so very different when I'm there. I don't want to sleep, but when I do it is on the sofa facing the patio door, drapes tied back, door slightly opened, the scent of pine filling the room. Then, when I wake up early, as I always do when I'm there, I will see the sunrise over the mountains and the water.

The magic doesn't end with the sunrise. With a full kitchen, I cook our meals. Perhaps it is just my imagination, but the food tastes better, feels more comforting.

The weather is usually warm and dry enough for me to take my laptop and cup of coffee out to the balcony. The words I write flow so easily on to the page. When my writing falters, I look again at the mountains and water and inhale deeply the scent of the pine trees. They are my muses. They guide me through many days of writing. And in turn, I feel more exhilarated and joyful as the words fill the page.

Mystic Place: Classical Chinese Garden, Portland, Oregon

Barbara Smythe, La Verne CA
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Serenity, sheltered from a seedy city,
Reflected only in its peaceful pools;
An outside reality shimmering surreal;
Tranquility and harmony remain undisturbed.

Exotic floral fragrances soothe the senses.
Surrounding stillness calms the soul.
Sunlight and shadow delight the eye,
Changing perceptions of color and image.

Transformed and illuminated with sun's rays,
Golden-leafed Ginkgoes become gloriously celestial;
Dark green shore pines, a mystery of dark clouds.
Earth and heaven scarcely separated in this mystic place.

9/11 Memories

Judy Watkins, Myrtle Creek OR
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In September, 2001, we were on a Globus Tour to Spain, Portugal, and Morocco. On September 11, we were in Seville, a city dating back to the Romans. Our day started with a historical tour of the city.

On our tour we learned that the Cathedral of Seville is the third largest in the world, after St. Paul's in London and St. Peter's in Rome; Columbus's tomb is located there. The Spanish Pavilion was built for the 1929 World's Fair and is a major tourist attraction. We walked the narrow and winding streets of "old town" and the old Jewish Quarter. Although Jews were once an important part of Seville's history, today there are only 18 Jewish families living there.

That evening we were scheduled to go out for dinner and a show. When our group began assembling in the hotel lobby, somebody asked if any of us had been watching TV. They said something was happening in the States and we all rushed into the bar to watch on CNN. We witnessed the planes attacking New York and Washington, D.C. At first it was hard to grasp what we were seeing. The tragedies on TV were happening in the morning, yet where we were it was evening and dark outside. Was this a TV drama? It couldn't be real, could it?

Our bus came and we continued with the plans for the evening but our thoughts were not on entertainment. In our minds there were so many questions. Was our country at war? Would we be able to get home again? Our tour was only beginning; would it continue? In the days that followed, we heard of airports closing and new security precautions that would follow. Some tour members had family in the disaster area and couldn't contact them.

A trip that should have been a dream trip was tainted by the history that was unfolding around us. We returned home as scheduled on nearly empty planes, as flying was limited to citizens returning home.

We will always remember where we were on 9/11.

Jo Virgil, True Words Editor, has been a Story Circle Network member for many years and recently accepted a position on the SCN Board (Publication and Program member) and to serve as editor for True Words. Jo has a Master's Degree in Journalism and has worked as a reporter, as a writing workshop teacher, as Community Relations Manager for Barnes & Noble, and as Community Outreach Coordinator for the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. Writing and sharing stories are her passion.



Counting Hawks: The Story of a Loved One's Spirit

Ann Haas, Akron OH
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Hawks have come to symbolize my husband Paul's spirit for me since his death seven years ago. Although these full-chested, manly birds had probably been nearby all the time before my husband died, I took little notice of them until my sister mentioned to me that hawks come back to represent the spirits of our departed loved ones. Now I see them all the time in my travels back and forth to New York to my second home. Urban hawks have also begun to appear and whistle to me in the trees around my apartment.

Hawk sightings are a comfort and joy to me. My family and I compare our counts of hawk sightings we see on our walks, during our drives, and at special moments in our lives when Paul is nearby. The day I was packing my car for a much anticipated month-long camping trip out west last fall with my family, my urban hawk soared from a nearby rooftop, swooped over my head, and perched in a nearby tree and whistled his greeting to me. I knew at that teary moment my husband was wishing me safe travels and would be nearby and at my side on my Western journey.

As we traveled west, we spotted hawks almost every day. When we arrived one afternoon at Yellowstone Lake, three hawks appeared circling overhead, drifting on the air currents and greeting us from above. This also happened to be the day of my forty-fourth wedding anniversary. As we entered the lodge at Yellowstone Lake to enjoy a celebratory drink, a violinist was playing the Ashokan Farewell, the song I played at my husband's memorial service. My family and I burst into tears. Upon thanking the violinist and sharing the song's special meaning to me, I discovered that she had played the Ashokan Farewell recently at her mother's funeral. I believe her mother was circling above us on that day as well.

Announcement!

Mary DeVries
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w-ecircle 6

Travel, they say, expands your world, and after leading student tours for years, I would agree. Watching students experience new foods, new customs and new places has expanded my appreciation of the effect travel has on people. My memories are many and varied; however, one experience always gives me a giggle when I recall it.

Kay Lynn was from rural South Dakota and had never been more than 90 miles from her hometown, so touring Europe for ten days would open her eyes in numerous ways.

England was interesting and not too shocking for the country girl. France, however, was to be a different matter. The food and the language put this meat-and-potatoes child on the alert that this was different and not quite to be trusted. Still, she carried on as if it were no big thing – until the Louvre.

Although we had a guide, he gave us time to wander the museum freely. Kay Lynn joined a group that was following me to a Greek and Roman exhibit. We did not walk rapidly, but Kay Lynn soon was behind us and her usual rapid-fire chatter became less evident. Passing the statues of classical Greek era, we entered an exhibit of Roman statues. My group kept walking, engrossed in the art, and lost sight of Kay Lynn. But not for long.

Surrounded by nude statues of males and females and paintings of naked cherubs, the group was busy talking about the age and preservation of these items. People around us were doing much of the same thing. We stopped at the Venus de Milo where I counted heads and realized Kay Lynn was not close. Suddenly her voice resounded loudly from behind us.

“Has no one taught these people about underwear?”

My group moved on quickly. The memory remains.

A Vacation from a Vacation

Lily Iona MacKenzie, Richmond CA
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For several years, each August we've taken off for most or all of the month and traveled. For the remainder of the year, we swim in memories of our travels and anticipate our next trip. This year, for a variety of reasons, we've decided to vacation from vacationing and stay home, taking a short trip here and there near the Bay area.

I find I'm anticipating this vacation as much as I have the others, and perhaps more so. I'll get a real vacation, meaning I can truly rest from my travails. Not that a vacation spent traveling can't be restful, but there's usually so much preparation needed – making reservations, finding reliable people to care for the yard and pets, enduring the final press of packing and getting away, not to mention the physical wear and tear of the actual traveling, whether by plane, train, or car. Just thinking about it makes me tired.

As a writer and a teacher, I'm looking forward to just *plotzing*. Instead of frantically trying to fit in my hour or more a day of writing while my husband drives us to our destinations, or while we're traveling by plane from city to city, this year I'll devote that time to my work. I'll also reacquaint myself with my garden and the Bay area, discovering what I've missed each August while I've been biking in the Maritimes, or strolling along Prince George Street in Edinburgh, or cruising down the Rhine.

Night Travelers

Nancilynn Saylor, Austin TX
 Mimi10417@sbcglobal.net, <https://nancilynnmyblog.wordpress.com>
 e-circle 4, e-circle 6, e-circle 2

As if on cue
 they waft through the night
 Settling over the garden
 In twilight
 Just after the nocturnal exit of the hummingbirds.
 They drift in,
 Dipping and gliding
 As they descend
 it begins...
 A brief flash, then a twinkling
 not unlike steamships in the dark of night
 SOS-ing, their presence.
 We are here.
 Often they drift into the darkness
 In waves...
 Mostly summertime
 before storms,
 As heat lightning scorches the western horizon –
 Sky watchers nod to them.
 It is that kind of night.

Frankincense

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

The sun retires, suffocating
 stinking heat retreats,
 twilight hastens cool darkness
 as friends gather to share curry
 and Kerala red rice
 in a mean island lean-to.
 A man in a white shirt,
 startling in the black night,
 lights an outside pyre
 to dissuade biting insects.
 Waves of frankincense envelope eaters,
 ennui vanishes, energy returns.
 Restless rats rustle in reed thatch overhead
 taking their leave we hope.
 Strains of a sitar refrain
 and a throbbing tabla entertain,
 we lean into pleasure.

Frankincense, a treasure that heals,
 calls the faithful to the altar.
 An omen, born of the wounded Boswellia tree,
 a gift for a newborn Jesus,
 a balm for the dying Christ

Pisa Retrospective

Ethel Lee-Miller, Tucson AZ
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On our first trip to Italy, I was compulsively over-prepared. I read guidebooks, listened to tapes, and pored over my mother's notes in her Italy-1972 photo album.

Our experiences were memorable – the romance of Venice canals, walking back in time over the Ponte Vecchio in Florence. Then a Pisa day trip.

My husband barely blinked when I said, “We’ve got to get to the top of the tower. I have this picture of Mom and Dad from their album.” I showed him the faded color photo of my parents by the bell. “I promised Mom I would replicate the same pose.”

Getting to the top is not as easy as it was in 1972. Today, visitors wait in line to buy a ticket telling their tour time. Glitch: Our tour time and bus departure gave us only twenty minutes to most likely run up, take the picture, run down, and be late for the bus.

Hank looked dubious.

“Hank, I came all this way to get this picture for my mom. I’ve got to do this.”

Mother love won.

The curving, tilted stairway was narrower than my comfort level allowed. Keep walking. My feet lifted onto worn steps. The guide at the top was smiling broadly. But a chain blocked off the area where my parents had stood in 1972. I pointed to the other side of the chain.

“No. No,” he said, with an unmistakable back-off gesture.

“Please.” I pointed to the photo. “Mia mama. Mia papa.” Hank pantomimed photo taking, pointing to me, then himself.

The guard peered at the picture, then at us. Looking around, he motioned us just inside the chain and next to the bell. In one swift movement, he took the camera from Hank's hands and SNAP. Done.

I was effusive in my gratitude. “Grazi. My mother, she’s eighty-nine. She will love this!”

“Okay, okay,” he said, brusquely waving us away from the chained section, but the smile on his face told me he enjoyed the moment.

Not as much as I did when I shared the Pisa Retrospective photo with Mom.

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Jeanne Guy: Author, speaker and self-awareness writing workshop facilitator. She is a member of SCN's Board of Directors & the 2014 & 2016 Conference Co-chair. www.jeanneguy.com **Teacher**

Linda Hasselstrom: Poet and nonfiction writer who conducts writing retreats on her ranch on the plains of southwestern South Dakota. With a BA in English and Journalism, and a MA in American Literature, she has been a teacher of writing for more than 40 years. www.windbreakhouse.com **Teacher/Coach**

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Khadijah Lacina: Writer who is passionate about helping other authors build their tribes, create a strong online presence, and market their books. <http://bizforge.net/> **Freelancer, Marketing Services, Web Services**

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Donna Marie Miller: Donna Marie Miller is the author of *The Broken Spoke Legend: More than 50 Years as Austin's Favorite Honky-Tonk*, to be published in 2016. Her articles have appeared in several magazines including: *Elmore*, *Creative Screenwriting*, *American Rhythm*, *Austin Food*, *Austin Fusion*, *Austin Monthly*, *Fiddler*, and *The Alternate Root*. <https://donnamariemillerblog.com> **Freelancer**

Sallie Moffitt: Award-winning author whose work has been anthologized in Story Circle's *True Words Anthology* and published in literary journals such as *Ten Spurs Vol. 5* and *Ten Spurs Vol. 9*. She has worked as an editor and has judged writing contests. **Author, Freelancer**

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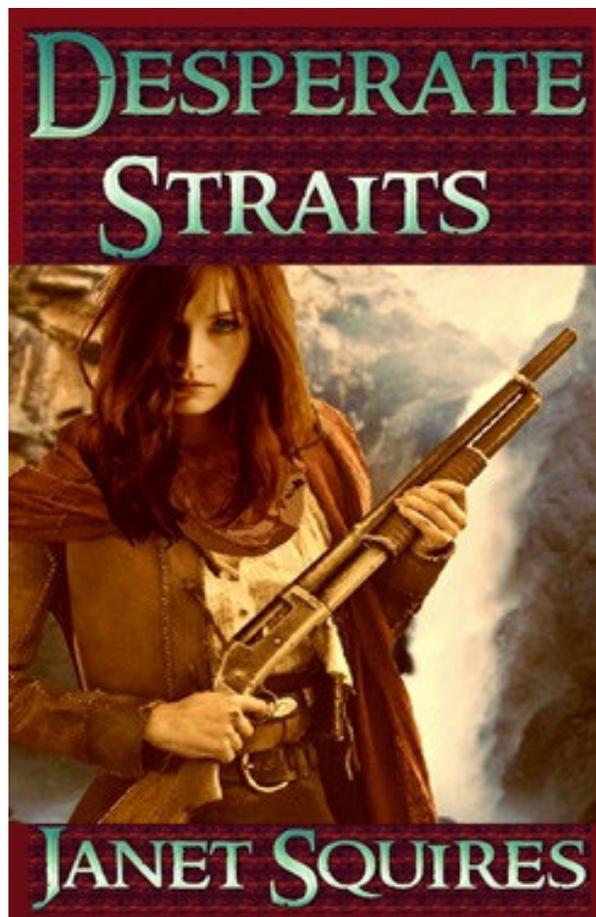
Sarah Ryan's hope for a new life in the Arizona Territory is shattered in an instant by gunfire. Suddenly, she has to rebuild an uncertain future with her orphaned nephew, Will, and take on the challenges of a cattle ranch.

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/>



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- December, 2016 (due October 15)—Tall Tales and Little Lies



Get Involved!

We're looking for a few good women: we need several volunteers to help with some ongoing and upcoming projects such as: Sarton Women's Book Award Jurors, Story Circle Contest Judge, Story Circle Facilitators, Book Reviewers.

If you can help us, please send a note to:
storycircle@storycircle.org.

Story Circle Network's Mission

The Story Circle Network (SCN) is dedicated to helping women share the stories of their lives and to raising public awareness of the importance of women's personal histories. We carry out our mission through publications, websites, classes, workshops, writing and reading circles, and woman-focused programs. Our activities empower women to tell their stories, discover their identities through their stories and choose to be the authors of their own lives.