



STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL

Vol. 21 No. 1, March 2017

The newsletter for women with stories to tell

LifeLines Weekend Retreat

Explore the purpose and possibilities of your writing life

By Joyce Boatright



We are all natural storytellers, and it is crucial that we listen to the stories we are telling ourselves.

Are you the kind of writer you want to be?

Whether we are novices or seasoned writers, there are times when we need to clarify our goals and aspirations—as well as our motivation, commitment and determination.

On May 5-7, Jeanne Guy will welcome us to LifeLines Weekend Retreat in beautiful Fredericksburg, TX, for a deeply reflective experience to explore our lives as writers.

For three days, Jeanne, known for her irreverent wit and engaging style, will call us into a safe, nurturing and fun circle of trust where she will guide us through the powerful process of re-storying ourselves as writers. It is an opportunity to make a shift in consciousness and attitude so that we can be more authentic and productive in our writing lives. And no extra charge for having a good time doing it

“Come. Sit in a Circle. Practice reflective writing. Share as you choose. Listen. Spend time getting to know yourself, look at what’s not working, or what’s holding you back,” Jeanne invites, “and make a shift. Come and reframe the way you see yourself and see your life. You just might find clarity, courage, purpose and possibility—and perhaps an improved sense of humor.”

She promises you a unique experience: “Reflective writing will give you the opportunity to get in touch with what you really want your life to be... explore what is holding you back and allow you to start crafting your life, via a healthier, more self-loving path.”

Four years ago, I participated in a Writing from Life workshop, sponsored by Story Circle Network, with Jeanne Guy using her Re-story, Reflective Writing Process as the workshop facilitator. The experience was a game changer in my writing life. For months before, I was stuck and frustrated, and to be honest, a bit scared about my future as a writer. Jeanne’s workshop helped me readdress and reframe the narrative I was telling myself. By changing my story, I began writing with an amazing, creative fervor that I had lacked.

Hold the Date: July 19-22, 2018

Stories from the Heart, SCN’s annual women’s writing conference that is held every two years, is scheduled for July 19-22, 2018, in Austin, TX.

The Wyndham Hotel, site of the last five conferences, will again host the event. Room rates will be \$109/double occupancy.

The SCN board decided to move the conference from spring to summer to avoid a room rate increase. “The Wyndham Hotel has excellent air conditioning,” says Joyce Boatright, conference co-chair, “and we think the summer dates will work well for many, especially teachers.”

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Letter From SCN's President



Dear Story Circle Sisters:

As you undoubtedly know, March is Women's History Month. I was struck recently, by the theme of the National Women's History Project: "Our History Is Our Strength." *So true!* I thought. And if the wider world around us were more aware of women's history, they would be much more aware of—and impressed by—our strength.

Here at Story Circle, we are entering our 20th year of celebrating women's lives and women's stories—women's history. Over that time, our small organization has had a transformative effect on the lives of over three thousand members. We have published their work in 120+ quarterly *Journals* and annual anthologies. With the University of Texas Press, we have published two books of women's writings and three other books under our own imprint.

We have created the largest and longest-lived book review, an online writing class program, and a unique and highly successful award program—all of it by, for, and about women. We sponsor writing circles, workshops, retreats, and conference. As our history demonstrates, we are *strong*.

So much for looking back. What's ahead for us, as we continue to celebrate women's lives and tell women's stories? Here is what our board of directors has planned for you—for all of us—this year.

- We're working (with She Writes Press) on a new and unique women's memoir award program, the Maya (see Page 14)
- We're planning the publication of a new book, *Inside and Out: Women's Truths, Women's Stories*. This collection of SCN member writings will be available in both ebook and print formats (Page 27)
- We've established a scholarship fund to bring more women of color to our national conference and have joined Amplify Austin to support it (Page 3)
- We're planning a spring LifeLines in Fredericksburg, with an outstanding teacher (Jeanne Guy) in one of the loveliest small towns in Texas (Page 1)
- We're restructuring our Circles program to make our eCircles more accessible to more members (Page 9)
- We're inviting you to share *your* stories for publication and recognition in our *Journal*, the anthology, our book review website, and two writing competitions
- We're inviting you to expand your reading/evaluation skills by participating as judges in the Sarton Women's Book Award program, which we expect to grow even larger this year (Page 15)

We all have quotations we love and live by. My favorite—*If you rest, you rust*—comes from Helen Hayes, who won the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1986 for her acting achievements and her philanthropic work. Helen Hayes didn't rest, and she certainly didn't rust, and neither do we, here at Story Circle. I am so glad that *you* are a member of this active community of women writers who believe passionately in the importance of women's stories. I hope you will find a way to make your membership count this year—for yourself and for others.

*With joy for your journey,
Susan Wittig Albert*

*"The most important thing one woman can do for another is to illuminate
and expand her sense of actual possibilities."*

—Adrienne Rich

Story Circle Network's Mission

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

Story Circle Journal

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

Editor: Robin Wittig
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This Month's Contributing Editors:

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We welcome your letters, queries,
 and suggestions.

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 International Postal Money Order.

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

Change of address: If you move,

Story Circle Joins Forces with Amplify Austin 2017!

If you live in the Austin TX area, you're likely familiar with Amplify Austin, our city's annual community-wide day of online giving. The Amplify program inspires the people of Austin and their neighbors to make a difference by connecting them with the causes they're passionate about on one easy-to-use platform where they can donate to charities in their neighborhood. The 24-hour period (this year, March 2-3) provides an easy and exciting way for our entire community to give together while helping local nonprofits. Over the past four years, Amplify Austin has raised over \$24.7M for hundreds of local organizations. In 2016, it raised \$8.5M for over 600 Central Texas nonprofits. This year, the Amplify team hopes to raise over \$9M for almost 700 organizations.

Conference Scholarships for Women of Color

For over 20 years, the Story Circle Network has encouraged women to share the stories of their lives through story circles, reading circles, retreats, workshops, classes, conferences—and through SCN's many print and online publications. With author Barbara Deming, we believe that "we learn best to listen to our own voices if we are listening to other women, whose stories, for all our differences, turn out to be our stories also."

For our 10th Austin conference (July, 2018) we are focusing on diversity, difference, and community. The conference will feature workshops that encourage us to explore and share our experiences of diversity, difference, and similarity. *Our project for Amplify Austin Day: raise \$4,000 for conference scholarships for women of color.*

If you live in the Austin area, you will already have heard from us via email about this project, inviting you to participate on March 2-3, Amplify Austin Giving Day. If you live elsewhere, or if you miss that window, our project—Conference Scholarships for Women of Color—will be continuing throughout the year. We invite you to contribute to it. Simply go to our "donate" page <http://www.storycircle.org/frmdonate.shtml> and designate your gift to Conference Scholarships for Women of Color. Or you can send a check: *Story Circle Network, PO Box 1670, Estes Park CO 80517-1670.* Include a note designating your gift to the scholarship project.

Thank you for supporting the work of the Story Circle Network!



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I'm signing up for the May 5-7 LifeLines because I want a "booster shot." I'm also bringing two friends. They are "newbies" to the writing life. One is an artist and the other is a banker, and they've dabbled with writing their family stories. They want to delve more deeply into this avocation. I believe this retreat will give them the experience they need to create a new perspective of their writing lives.

Wherever you are in your writing life, I encourage you to join Jeanne Guy, my friends and me for a weekend of respite and empowerment.

HERE ARE THE MAJOR DETAILS:

Dates: Begins Friday evening May 5, at 6:30 pm and ends on Sunday, May 7 at noon.

Location: Fredericksburg Inn & Suites in Fredericksburg, TX, the heart of the Texas Hill Country

Registration: \$220 for Story Circle Network members; \$275 for non-members (includes a 1-year membership)

Lodging is separate: Call the Fredericksburg Inn & Suites at 830-997-0202 to make your room reservation. Mention that you're registering for the Story Circle Network LifeLines retreat and you will get a special room rate of \$150/night double occupancy. **IMPORTANT:** Be sure and request a ground floor if you cannot climb stairs.

Go here: <http://www.storycircle.org/LifeLines/> for full details and registration. Reflect, reassess, rekindle, rejuvenate. But hurry—space is limited.



Joyce Boatright is our LifeLines coordinator. 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.

Offering a New Online Class that Explores Race

Story Circle Network is committed to bringing more diversity to our ranks. We as an organization recognize that the more representative we are of *all* women, the better we can serve our mission statement:

"The Story Circle Network is dedicated to helping women share the stories of their lives through memoir, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and drama, and to raising public awareness of the importance of women's personal histories."

We want women of every shape, color, faith and sexual preference to feel embraced and valued within Story Circle Network because we are aware that diversity brings multiple perspectives and a broader world view. We can learn from one another as we share our personal and family stories, our poetry, our fiction, whether these works are joyful, mundane or sorrowful. Getting personal, going deep, being authentically open will help all of us to form bonds based on similarities, transcend differences and form a deeper sisterhood that will facilitate healing for ourselves and our fractured world.

With diversity in mind, the SCN Online Classes will offer a course this upcoming spring term entitled, "Writing Through the Lens of Race." This will be taught by Maya Lazarus and Lauren Ross, who have both advocated for social justice all their adult lives. This class will encourage students to explore what role race has played in their lives and will include videos, articles and thought-provoking questions to aid in self-discovery. By looking critically at personal experiences that have shaped attitudes and values, each student will have the opportunity to learn, grow and deepen her self-awareness.

For further information, here is the link to the class: http://www.storycircleonlineclasses.org/classes/lazarus_ross.spring2017.php

All proceeds from this class will go to Story Circle Network's *Women of Color* Scholarship Fund.

Len Leatherwood, Program Coordinator for SCN's Online Classes, has been teaching writing privately to students in Beverly Hills for the past fifteen years. She has received numerous state and national teaching awards from the Scholastic Artists and Writers Awards. She is a daily blogger at 20 Minutes a Day, found at lenleatherwood.wordpress.com.





StoryCircleBookReviews.org
Review by Paula Martinac

You had me at "Hollywood's Golden Age."

In *Such Mad Fun: Ambition and Glamour in Hollywood's Golden Age*, historian Robin R. Cutler undertakes a daunting task—a biography of her own mother, Jane Hall, who worked as a screenwriter, fiction writer, and journalist during the 1930s and early 1940s. Jane Hall is a character worthy of her own Hollywood movie, and thanks to Cutler, she pops to vivid life from these pages.

Born in 1915, Jane Hall inherited her father's gift with words: Dick Wick Hall authored numerous short stories for *Saturday Evening Post* and others before he died prematurely in 1926. Throughout her adolescence and teen years, Jane published stories, essays, and poems, and her prolific output garnered her praise as a "literary prodigy."

When Jane's mother passed away in 1930, an aunt and uncle in New York City took in the teenager and her brother. In her tony life as a debutante, Jane flitted between Park Avenue and the Virginia countryside, but she still focused on pursuing her dream—a career as a writer. While she was in her early twenties, her work found homes in popular women's magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Good Housekeeping*, building a steady income that afforded her independence. Her stories about college girls and single working women appealed to a new demographic of middle- and upper-middle-class female readers; magazines touted her as "a deb with a difference."

It wasn't long before Hollywood came knocking. As part of MGM's stable of screenwriters, Jane worked alongside and befriended F. Scott Fitzgerald, whom she called "a charming burned-out genius." She wrote women-centered films such as "These Glamour Girls" and "It's a Date," and penned backstage reports for magazines about

SCN's Book Reviews

Featured Review:

Such Mad Fun: Ambition and Glamour in Hollywood's Golden Age

by Robin R. Cutler

the filming of classics like "Gone with the Wind" and "The Wizard of Oz"—all while living at the legendary hotel and villa complex, the Garden of Allah. At only 24, Jane Hall's career was at a peak.

But her life took a U-turn when she married theatrical producer Robert Frye Cutler in 1943. She found herself torn away from writing by the demands of her spouse's

alcoholic neediness, and her previous subject matter—single women—felt remote to her. Just a few years after her marriage, she wrote with regret in her diary, "What a fool I was to throw such a career away." Her writing had come to a complete halt by the early 1950s. "I feel peaceful, quite resigned, and also, much of the time, dead," she confided in her diary. With her marriage faltering, Jane embarked on a long-term affair with a married Swedish count.

Cutler has carefully pieced together her mother's story through diary entries, letters, and other documentary evidence. Her portrait of Jane Hall is a rich, poignant account—not just of one woman's life or of a single glamorous decade, but of a time when women writers forged names for themselves and enjoyed fulfilling careers.



Paula Martinac is the author of three novels, including the Lambda Literary Award-winning *Out of Time* and the Lambda-nominated *Home Movies*, as well as a collection of short stories. Her historical novel-in-stories, *The Ada Decades*, a love story between two Southern women set against the backdrop of the Civil Rights era, will be published by Bywater Books in March 2017. She has also published three nonfiction books and numerous articles, essays and short stories, and has had plays produced in Pittsburgh, New York, and Washington, DC. She teaches creative writing to undergraduates at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Visit her website: <http://paulamartinac.com>



Susan Schoch

An Interview with New Board Members Susan Schoch and Sonja Dalglish

by Pat Bean



Sonja Dalglish

Susan Schoch, editor of Story Circle Network's annual anthology, and **Sonja Dalglish**, a minister who is working on a collection of family stories, were recently named to SCN's Board of Directors. Both these women bring with them a lifetime of rich experiences.

Susan, who has been an SCN member for 15 years, was one of eight children. She lived in the small town of Ferguson, Missouri, until she was in the sixth grade, when her mother remarried and the family moved to a farm. Susan's own dad, a test pilot who was her hero, had died when she was only four.

"I loved the farm. It confirmed a romance with nature that I had realized by the time I was five, finding the outdoors never failed to bring solace. We had cows, horses, and a series of dogs. And we had fields, woods, and even a cave along our creek, which we explored as far as we dared. It was on the farm, when I was 12, that I knew I was meant to write," says Susan.

"I had been writing poems, and one night, outside under a starry sky, as I questioned whether my poetry could ever be worthwhile, I suddenly felt that the world needed human observation, and that I was meant to be a witness to life through my writing, however good or bad it might be. But it was much later before I had the courage to follow that dream."

Susan married her high school boyfriend, then went to work for McDonnell Aircraft, where she worked with the Gemini space program, while at the same time taking college classes. The Vietnam War, however, intervened. Her husband joined the military, and the couple were first stationed in Alabama, and then spent 15 months in Germany, during which time Susan gave birth to her first daughter,

Back in the states, however, the marriage foundered.

"In 1970 I was divorced. As a single mother, at a time when divorce wasn't common and there was little support for women, I went to work again at McDonnell. When it became apparent there was no way to move up in my job, I quit and found another. That was a remarkable experience,

as my employers were Masters and Johnson, of sex research fame. I am always grateful for what I learned there, and for the encouragement I received to continue my education."

Susan eventually remarried, had two more daughters, and moved to Colorado, where she now lives in the small town of Iledale in the foothills west of Denver.

"I've worked all sorts of jobs while always continuing to write and make art whenever I can find the time ... I am never bored, having more interests than I can reasonably follow, but Story Circle has helped to keep me focused on writing."

Sonja was born in 1953 in Corpus Christi, Texas, and in August of the following year, contracted polio in one of the last epidemics before the vaccine was declared safe in 1955.

"Polio shaped my life ... I was sick quite a bit as a child, and found many friends in my books. I had two younger brothers to whom I read and recited poetry at night to put them to sleep, when I was not singing to them or bossing them around."

Sonja recovered, and went on to obtain bachelor degrees in both physics and mathematics, while also taking some fun courses in anthropology, sociology and premed courses.

"I had a hard time deciding on a career. I decided when in sixth grade that I did not want to be a teacher, because I did not like the way the children treated the teachers. I considered medicine and ministry, and dreamt of writing."

But Sonja felt that if she went into medicine, she couldn't have a family. She chose the latter and married a semester before graduation. She became a researcher, using the math she loved in her work – but discovered she liked the people she worked with more than the research. Then, in her late 20s, she had three children in just a little over three years.

"That was the most stressful job I had ever had, being at home with three toddlers. During this time, I set up a

writing schedule and worked on short stories. I got rejected but finally started getting very nice notes with the rejections. And, then, my life changed again. I got divorced and had to return to full-time employment. The writing was pushed off the table.”

While the desire to become a minister was frequently on her mind, Sonja hesitated to go in that direction.

“I didn’t feel that I was good enough ... and I did not want to fight the battle of women in ministry. It seemed the Texas Hill Country was not the most liberal place in regards to women’s rights.” Sonja was also embarrassed to admit aloud that she wanted to be a writer because of fears she couldn’t measure up, fears that she now understands to have been a common theme in her life, as they are in the lives of many women.

While working as a research scientist, she met a research engineer who had been accepted to seminary. They talked, dated, talked and married.

“He went to seminary, and when he finished, I began,” says Sonja. “I remember thinking the first semester of seminary that I was an imposter. As soon as they discovered who I really was, I’d be out.”

But she persisted, and after graduation Sonja worked for almost 15 years as a hospice chaplain, hearing life stories, encouraging people to share their stories, encouraging them to reconcile to their families, their God, and their lives, before beginning an interim ministry, which she continues to do today.

The two new board members answered the following questions:

Tell us about your Story Circle experiences, and how they have impacted your writing.

Susan: I’ve been a member of SCN for 15 years this February, thanks to my Austin aunt who invited me to come for a weekend workshop, and gifted me with a membership to get me started. I have volunteered at conferences, been part of the Book Review team, and have juried for SCN awards. In 2014, I became the editor of our annual anthology. But only recently did I realize that it was time to give more to this important group. Story Circle represents many things I value, including helping women to grow as writers, to value their own stories, and to recognize the powerful impact those stories can have. Certainly, SCN has impacted me in all those ways. Early on I won a second place in the Susan Wittig Albert LifeWriting Competition, and felt my writing efforts were supported and encouraged. SCN has continued to give me confidence to write, and is a powerful part of my growth as

an author.

Sonja: I met Marcie Bashore, a former board member, in 2005 at a women’s retreat and took her workshop. It was an exercise in writing about your life ... I was interested in the OWL workbook and purchased one. I then followed up and joined Story Circle. My oldest daughter told me one day that I should tell people about my life because it was interesting. I have been a member of the reading and writing groups, and have led the reading group for the past year. I’ve taken several courses that have helped me to create a blog, write better essays, and write poetry that springs from my life. Without SCN, I would not have a blog and would never have written any poetry. I began with the course “Poetry for the Truly Terrified” and I was – truly terrified. I have followed up with writing more poetry about different memories. Some of these will be added to some short narrative pieces and combined with photos to create a book about my brothers and my childhood.

What would you like to accomplish as a board member? What do you envision as the organization’s future?

Susan: As a new board member, I have a lot to learn about this complex and energetic organization. I am working with the Publications Workgroup, which is busy with many projects. Most exciting right now is the new book we are planning for this year, which is a collection of pieces from past editions of the Anthology. As time goes on, I hope to help SCN expand our membership with more diverse and younger women. That seems key to keeping us growing and relevant. Also important is continuing to bring more professional writers in as members and as teachers for our conferences and online classes. We have a fine range of programs and possibilities for participation, so I believe public awareness and outreach are perhaps the most significant ways to ensure that we help as many women writers as we can, which will keep SCN thriving for years to come.

Sonja: I hope to encourage more women to join and to write about their experiences. Everyone is an expert about her own life. I am probably not the only one out here who does not feel very competent at writing, or at many things. I’m probably not the only one to wonder if anyone at all would be interested in what I have to say. And, yet, I found while working hospice and hearing the life stories of many people that everyone has a tale to tell. There are so many different ways of living. Together, we create a kaleidoscope of life experiences

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Talk about your own writing, and anything you have published. What is your current work in progress?

Susan: In the early '90s, I was co-publisher of a magazine, *Grapevine: the arts, environment, and well-being*. Prior to that I had only published a few essays. But once I learned desktop publishing and grew skilled with my Mac, I developed a small business writing and editing people's life stories. My most recent book, a biography of a couple famed in ceramic circles, is *The Clay Connection: Jim and Nan McKinnell*, and is available on Amazon. A poet at heart, I continue to write poems, and have a group based in the metaphors of the heart that I hope to publish soon. My current work-in-progress is a set of historical diaries from the Civil War era, which I'm editing to book length, and will likely also turn into a YA novel.

Sonja: I published a few things in a school publication, self-published a mystery, *Crown and Anchor*, have written several articles for the local paper, write sermons every week, and newsletter articles once a month. I have had one piece published in the *SCN Journal*. I have several poems that I have written about my life that are the output of several courses that I've taken from SCN. I have two or three more mystery novels that are partially fleshed out that need to be written or abandoned for a better idea. I am working on some family stories to put with photographs that I have scanned from my mother's and grandmother's photo albums. I have done one book for my brothers and children about the general stories of the family. I want to expand and put together more stories so that they are not lost.

What's the best piece of writing advice ever given you?

Susan: "Perseverance furthers" says the ancient Chinese wisdom book called the I Ching. In life and in writing, I've found that to be useful. And I have many more wise sayings taped to my kitchen cabinets.

Sonja: Write every day. Every day. Every day.

What are some of your favorite books?

Susan: There are so many. I will read anything by Alice Munro or Margaret Atwood. I especially love Atwood's *The Tent* and Munro's *The Love of a Good Woman*. There are many poets I love, Richard Wilbur, Robert Frost, Mary Oliver and Jane Kenyon come to mind, all of whom use simple language to express profound ideas. From the Brothers Grimm to the science fiction of Ursula LeGuin, I enjoy a broad range of books, but one of my all-time favorites is *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert Heinlein, published in 1961 and remarkably relevant to current culture.

Sonja: Oh – so, so many. When I was young, it was *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle ... When I had to choose a way to make money, I remembered that Meg's mother was a physicist. Somehow, knowing that made it easier for me to do physics. And, of course, I devoured Nancy Drew, Judy Bolton, and the Doubleday Children's Classics... I loved science fiction as a teen and into my 20s and 30s, with Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke being three of my favorites. When I was about 17, I thought *Dune* was the very best book ever written. I would have taken it with me to a desert isle, along with *The Way Things Work*. I fell in love with Charles Dickens and discovered the Russian writers. I fell in love with Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Chekhov – but primarily Tolstoy. In college, I discovered Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. And, I was reading every mystery I could find ... delighting in a wide range of detectives, including Kay Scarpetta, created by Patricia Cornwell, and China Bayles, the creation of Susan Wittig Albert, our founder. I enjoy the mysteries built around a woman Episcopal priest by Julia Spencer-Fleming. In recent years, I've discovered a new genre of urban fantasy mysteries with fantastic creatures and a coyote heroine by Patricia Briggs and those by Anne Bishop. I enjoy the Austin author Elizabeth Moon and many more. I love poetry, having been introduced at a young age to Robert Louis Stevenson, Robert Burns ... I love Emily Dickenson. I think of all the writers I have thought that I'd like to emulate, it would be P. D. James. And, isn't that a hoot with her detective, Adam Dalgliesh, whom I met before I ever married a Dalgliesh.



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.

"Everybody is a story. When I was a child, people sat around kitchen tables and told their stories. We don't do that so much anymore. Sitting around the table telling stories is not just a way of passing time. It is the way the wisdom gets passed along. The stuff that helps us to live a life worth remembering."

—Rachel Naomi Remen

Exciting Changes Are Around the Corner!

By Lee Ambrose

Story Circle Network's Internet Chapter has been an integral part of this organization for more than sixteen years now. In that time period, some things have changed while some have remained the same. We've added first a poetry circle and then a fiction circle. We've tried co-facilitating, group facilitating, guest facilitating and the traditional single facilitator model. The one thing we have always done is honor a woman's request to become a part of a circle where she can be free to write her own deeply personal story.

As is true with all organizations, there comes a time when it is important to reassess where we are, where we want to be and how we are going to get there. Now is the time to reassess the way things have always been at Story Circle's Internet Chapter and how they might change to better live into the vision and mission statement of the organization.

Last year I expressed a desire to step down from my long-held role as President of the Internet Chapter so that I could pursue my own personal writing project and concentrate on my new role as a hospice RN. Since that time, I have worked closely with Susan Albert and the Board to map out a plan for transition. Susan and the Board looked for the opportunity in my upcoming departure and began to dialogue about how Story Circle could expand its Circles program beyond the Internet.

In a reorganization effort that will take several months to fully implement, the Story Circle Internet Chapter will become one part of the larger Circles program. This new

structure will include face-to-face circles in addition to the internet-based circles we currently call the Internet Chapter. To better allocate resources for the day-to-day activities of all of our circles, Mary Jo Doig will be the SCN Circles Coordinator. Sonja Dalglish will assume the role of "eCircles Coordinator." She will work closely with Mary Jo.

Members of the current Internet Chapter will continue with their same benefits – they will just no longer be called the Internet Chapter. Rather they will be part of the larger SCN Circles group. A Circles newsletter will replace the Internet Chapter newsletter. I will continue to write the weekly writing prompts that members receive as a part of their membership.

All this to say that there are exciting changes coming for members of our current Internet Chapter. Changes that we hope will provide more opportunities for even more women to enjoy the benefits of Story Circle Network. The name is changing, yes. The leadership structure is changing as well. But the one thing that isn't changing is the commitment to provide a safe place for women from all walks of life - and at all stages of writing experience - to enjoy the warmth, encouragement and safe haven that is uniquely Story Circle Network.

Watch for future announcements as we implement these changes more fully. It's a great time to belong to Story Circle Network and its Circles Program!

Advertising with Story Circle Network

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

Here's where you can advertise:

StoryCircleBookReviews pages, National and StoryCircleBookReviews e-letters, Combo Ads on the SCRB website AND in the e-letters, Quarterly Story Circle Network Journal, Annual True Words Anthology

For details and submission forms visit:

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

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



Circles: The Heart of Story Circle Network

A Pen For Good Health?

by Mary Jo Doig, Chair, Writing Circles Work Group

Do you ever think of your writing life and your health as an integral connection? While many of us have a variety of exercise routines that use our muscles to benefit our health, I was recently reminded of another muscle that also contributes to our health. Which muscle would that be? Putting pen in hand and writing our thoughts and feelings. While we may not burn the calories of walking or other aerobic activity, researchers have long known there are significant health benefits to writing.

A few weeks ago our writing group, *The Circle of Memories*, gathered at the Crozet Library to share stories to the prompt, “The Story I Don’t Want to Tell.” Many stories were deeply personal and I tenderly reflected on each as I drove home later. One member’s story in particular had such an important message that I asked if I could share it with Story Circle Network. “Yes,” she said. “I’d love for all women to know my story.”

Our circle member, Carolyn, has had an incurable medical condition for the past twenty five years and recently saw her doctor for a check-up. One question her doctor asked was, “What activities do you do regularly?” Carolyn replied she participated in an exercise program three times weekly and wrote stories about her life for two life-writing groups in our area: *The Circle of Memories* and another writing circle she facilitates. When her doctor asked if she thought she could write each day, Carolyn hesitated. “Well, I have so many other things to do...,” she demurred and was silent briefly as she thought more, then said, “Well, writing daily could be a very good goal for the new year.”

Her doctor asked, “Would half-an-hour be a reasonable goal?”

Carolyn said she would manage to commit to writing 30 minutes daily. They concluded the visit and set a follow-up appointment in six months. When she got home, Carolyn reviewed her Visit Summary Sheet and found that under Doctor’s Orders, her MD had prescribed that Carolyn write for half-an-hour every day.

“How’s that going?” we asked.

Carolyn smiled modestly. “I’m writing every day.”

We cheered!

At home that evening, I pulled out my old book friend, *Opening Up, The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions* by Dr. James Pennebaker, the research psychologist who accidentally discovered the power of emotional writing during an experiment more than 30 years ago. Dr. Pennebaker randomly instructed his participants to write about either a traumatic or a superficial event for four consecutive days for fifteen minutes a day. He found that those who wrote about trauma required less medical treatment in the six months that followed versus the previous six months. Now the author of several books, Dr. Pennebaker has devoted much of his life’s research to understanding the mysteries of emotional writing.

Today we have significant research which tells us that writing supports our physical and mental health in a variety of ways. Some additional benefits include:

Improved retention of information. Writing by hand on paper is a physical act that helps us better retain the information we write about by sending a second message from our hands to our brain, in addition to the first message: our thoughts.

Writing feelings can speed healing. *Time* magazine reported a New Zealand research project that showed that writing down our emotions through words after a traumatic incident can speed healing. Some participants wrote about their feelings while others wrote, but not about their trauma-related feelings. Subsequently a biopsy was taken on each person’s arm, creating a wound. Follow up wound care showed that those who had written expressively healed faster than those who hadn’t.

Writing can help cancer patients improve their quality of life.

The New York Times reported that people, in a study by University of California at Davis and the University of Miami, who wrote in a gratitude journal once a week for two months were more optimistic about life compared with people who did not keep such a journal.

Psychology Today reported study participants who wrote at bedtime a list of what they were grateful for

experienced better quality and length of sleep.

Writing provides both psychological and physical benefits. Many studies show that expressive writing has been linked with the psychological benefits of improved mood, well-being, stress levels and depressive symptoms, as well as the physical benefits of lower blood pressure, improved lung and liver functioning and decreased time spent in the hospital.

Writing can help those with diseases such as cancer and other chronic illness change the way they think about their disease. Attitude is particularly important for people experiencing a life-changing medical diagnosis. A study in *journal The Oncologist* showed that expressive writing could help cancer patients not only think about their disease in a different way, but also improve their quality of life. Initial findings in the pilot study suggested that a

single, 20-minute writing exercise led to changes in how some patients thought about their illness and was related to the patients' reports of improved quality of life.

Following my research on this topic, I am so pleased to know that our circle member, Carolyn, and our other area residents have such an enlightened medical provider.

And, so, dear writing sisters, I invite you to consider if there's a way that writing can further support your health.

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/>



Sharing the Writing Journey: SCN's Writers' Roundtables

"Writing can be a desperately lonely affair, and having someone who believes in us and supports our efforts can make a huge difference. It can help us believe in ourselves, and that belief can change our lives." —Susan Wittig Albert

If you're looking for support and encouragement with your writing, we can help. Via Yahoo Groups, we currently offer two online Writers' Roundtables, designed to connect writers at different levels of experience.

In the words of one of our facilitators, these groups bring women together around a table with coffee or tea and cookies—chocolate, of course!—sharing our goals and dreams. We discuss the issues and questions arising from our writing practice, learn how other writers work, and share ideas that enrich our writing lives.

Pat Bean facilitates our Writer2Writer Roundtable. Here's how she describes it. "Writer2Writer is an online forum for all writers, from published writers to want-to-be writers, including those who may just want to write for themselves. I guess you could say it's for any writer who wants to talk about any aspect of writing. There are only about six active members, currently, but more members belong to the group, and are probably eavesdropping. But that is fine. I try to provide a few writer's tips each week,

daily quotes for writers, and sometimes an ice-breaker question to encourage conversation. And often the conversations are started by the participants."

Susan Albert facilitates our Work-In-Progress Roundtable. She says, "Our roundtable began in May, 2014. We have 23 members, with about 15 active participants. Some of us are published, some not yet—but we all have a current work-in-progress. We are working on novels (contemporary, historical, young adult), memoirs, and short stories. We talk (or rather, email) about all aspects of the writing process: research, writing, publishing, marketing, platform building, using social media, working with agents, and so on. Over the years, we've grown close to our writing sisters and find it easy to share the challenges, difficulties, and (yes!) triumphs of our writing lives.

The wonderful thing about our online roundtables is that the seating is unlimited! To join one of our groups, go here: <http://www.storycircle.org/WritersRoundtables.shtml>



From the Blogs:

One Woman's Day



by Linda Hoye

One Woman's Day contributors were recently asked to consider a place they hold dear and to write about a special day they spent there or, perhaps the day they left. Madeline Sharples accepted the challenge and wrote about the bittersweet leaving of her family's home in the South Pacific. Learn more, and find out how you can contribute, at: <http://onewomansday.wordpress.com/about/>

From January 1977 to September 1978 I lived with my family on an island in the South Pacific – Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. The island is a military base, and my husband Bob managed a military-funded program there. We had a slow and easy life on the island, filled with all kinds of beach and water activities. When we arrived our sons Paul was five and Ben was two and a half. When we left Paul was seven and Ben four. Ben was glad to leave; Paul could have stayed forever.

However, when we first stepped off the plane (a military carrier with no windows) I wanted to be any place but there. I had had to take a leave of absence from my job at the same company where my husband worked, so on Kwajalein I was a stay-at-home mom for the first time.

It took me six months to learn to love and accept my life of leisure. Still I had plenty of things to keep me busy: playing tennis every weekday morning after taking the boys to Kindergarten and preschool, running, going to the beach or the pool with the boys in the afternoons, snorkeling, taking Yoga classes, painting and doing needlework, volunteering at the preschool, going to the boys' t-ball games, managing the Micronesian handicraft shop, taking a course in Cobol programming, teaching a children's art class, vacationing in Micronesia and Hawaii, and entertaining several dozen people at small dinners and large parties in our home.



Only 3000 people lived on this small island – only three-quarters of a mile wide and a mile and a half long, and we became quite close with the people Bob worked with and many of the other families from other companies. We are still connected with many of them to this day.

Being on the island also was the beginning of my writing days. I got up early with Bob, and after he left by bicycle for the flight that would take him to another island for his work, I wrote in my journal until the boys woke up. That writing resulted in my first published piece – an article about our life on the island for my company magazine.

Eventually the day came to leave. With shell and flower leis draped around our necks we drove off to the airport – one of the few times we traveled in a van on Kwajalein rather than by bicycle. Across the street

many, many friends – Bob's work colleagues, our social friends on the island, my tennis buddies, and our Marshallese house keepers – were waiting under a tree we called "Yum Yum," for a familiar ritual to bid us goodbye with champagne in hand. They had come to say "Yukwe Yuk," sort of like saying "Shalom" in Marshallese.

I was happy and sad as we boarded the same military airplane for the states. Leaving Kwajalein is such a final thing. I never got used to that finality.



Madeline Sharples is the author of *Leaving the Hall Light On: A Mother's Memoir of Living with Her Son's Bipolar Disorder and Surviving His Suicide* – in poetry and prose (Dream of Things) and co-author of *Blue-Collar Women: Trailblazing Women Take on Men-Only Jobs* (New Horizon Press). She co-edited *The Great American Poetry Show Volumes 1, 2, and 3* and wrote the poetry for *The Emerging Goddess* photography book (Paul Blieden, photographer). Her articles appear at *Naturally Savvy* and *Aging Bodies* and on her blog, *Choices* [madelinesharples.com]. She is currently working on a novel.



Amy Newball, Robin Wittig, Susan Wittig Albert

More From the Blogs: Seeing Double: Writing from Photos

SCN's "Telling Herstories" blog, (<https://storycirlenetwork.wordpress.com/>) began in 2012. If you're a writer, teacher, or coach who would like to be published at "HerStories," please email herstories@storycircle.org. We look forward to getting to know you! Here's a recent post from Susan Wittig Albert we'd like to share:

For most of us, a photograph is a way of holding the past in our hands—seeing what happened, when, with whom. Photos are a testimony to a time now gone, and to our intimate connection with people who may no longer be alive. They are a way of "seeing double"—recalling past events and reliving them in the present. For those of us who want to write about our lives, photographs can be a fine resource.

Using Photos to Remember

Here today, gone tomorrow—the past is as slippery and hard to hold as a wet fish. But when we have a photo to write from, our memory of the past may become much clearer—or we may find something new to notice, some new discovery about the past that has eluded us. Try this: find a favorite photo of yourself with someone who has influenced you—your mother, your father, a much-loved aunt, a husband or lover. Look at it for a moment, thinking about your relationship with the person and putting yourself back into the perspective of the girl or woman you were at that time. Then write. Who were you, back then? Who was this person? Why was he or she important to you then? What lessons did you learn, at that time, from him or her?

A Later Perspective

As you wrote the passage above, you were seeing the photograph from the point of view of the person you were at the time it was taken. Now, let's try a different perspective, take a later point of view. We know that influential relationships are often double-edged: that is, we may be influenced to change in ways that might not be altogether right for us. Look at the photo again, but this time from the point of view of the woman you are now. How might your life have been different if the person in the photo had not been there? What did you learn from this person that you now wish you hadn't? Is there something in the photo that gives you a clue to this more problematic aspect of the relationship? Perhaps there is something in the posture, in the facial expression, in the setting, that helps you see something different. Viewing the past from your present perspective may help you to uncover a

different understanding of the events and relationships you have experienced.

Seeing Double: Finding the Truth

We've all heard the old saying, "Photographs don't lie." But this isn't always true. In a workshop a few years ago, an older woman named Pearl brought a photo of herself as a small child, sitting on her mother's lap. Both were smiling, both looked happy. "But those smiles were lies," Pearl wrote. "My father had abandoned both of us. We had no money and we were afraid. But Mother didn't want her parents to know how bad it was, so she sent them the photo to show that we were doing fine. 'Just keep smiling,' she would say, 'and nobody will know the difference.' Deception was the first lesson I had to unlearn," Pearl adds, "when I began to search for my real self." If you look through your photograph collection, you may find one that you can "see double"—that is, one you can see with the eyes of the person you were then, *and* with the eyes of the person you are now. What truth can you find in this photo? What new thing does it show you about the past through which you have lived?

Memoir Albums

If you have lots of photos, you might consider assembling a memoir album: a book of photos and your interpretations of the people and the events depicted—together with your own history, of course. You may be surprised by what you learn from this. Photographs can be a key to the treasures, and the traumas, of the deeply buried past. —Susan Albert

The Past in Pictures

You can learn a great deal about your past by studying the photos you have collected, particularly those of the family you grew up in. Use these questions to help you get started writing. *Who? What? Where and When?* How do you feel about these occasions now, as you look back on them? Write about the events, including not just the details of the event, but your feelings, as well.

Out On a Limb

LifeWriting Competition

May-June, 2017

*You are invited to enter SCN's eighteenth annual lifewriting competition—
a chance to win a cash prize and see your work in print and online!*

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

Topic: Out on a Limb

Sometimes we have to go out on a limb to get what we want or need. We have to take a risk, even though we're afraid it won't pay off—or we're just afraid, period.

"Fear's contagious, but so is courage."

—Betty Williams, Nobel Laureate,
winner of the Peace Prize

*"There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud
was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."*

—Anais Nin

*"The trouble is: If you don't risk anything,
you risk even more."*

—Erica Jong

Awards: One prize of \$100, one prize of \$75, and two prizes of \$50 each. Winning stories will be published in a special section of the September *Story Circle Journal* and will be featured on the SCN's award-winning website. Upon the judges' recommendation, other entries may be published in later issues of the *Journal* and in other SCN print or on-line publications.

We invite you to write about a time you've gone out on a limb. This might be an occasion when you discovered that you had little control over your situation and were left hanging, with little expectation of success. Or it could be a time when you dared to stretch for something out of your reach, or you took a huge risk with little expectation of reward. Tell us your out-on-a-limb story.

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

Announcing the Maya Prize for Unpublished Memoir

Memoirists, this exciting new project is especially for you . . .

SCN and She Writes Press are teaming up to cosponsor a competition for an unpublished book-length memoir. SCN will accept and jury the manuscripts; She Writes will make the final selection. The winner will receive an award of \$2400 toward publication by She Writes Press. In addition, both SCN and She Writes will sponsor a crowd-funding project to help the author raise the remaining cost of publication (about \$2400).

The Maya Prize is named in honor of beloved poet, memoirist, dramatist, and essayist Maya Angelou, who worked tirelessly to support women writers. She Writes is a woman's press and an important new voice in the publishing community. Brooke Warner, one of the She Writes publishers, was our conference keynoter in 2016. SCN is delighted to be teaming up with Brooke and She Writes for this important project.

The competition will open in January, 2018. Watch the *Journal* and SCN's monthly eletter for details.

Sarton 2016 Moves to Round Two

January is always a busy month for those of us who work in SCN's Sarton program. We have the job of tallying up the results of ten months of reading, evaluating, and scoring by our hard-working team of 36 first-round jurors, all members of SCN. Then there's the task of creating the shortlist of winners in each of our five categories, notifying them, and publishing the shortlist online. After that, we have to arrange for the shortlisted books to be sent to the second-round judges, librarians who are not SCN members. They have until the end of March to complete their work, and then we'll be able to tell you who has won our 2016 competition.

The Sarton awards are given annually to women authors writing chiefly about women in memoir, biography and fiction published in English in the United States and Canada and selected from works submitted. The awards are limited to submissions originally written in English and published in the United States and Canada by small/independent publishers, university presses, and author-publishers (self-publishing authors). The program is named in honor of May Sarton, accomplished and much-loved memoirist, novelist, and poet.

Congratulations to the 24 authors whose books were selected for our 2016 shortlist!

Memoir

Elder Care Journey, Laura Katz Olson
Secondhand Scotch, Cathy Curran
The Outskirts of Hope, Jo Ivester
The Space Between, Virginia A. Simpson
Walking the Llano: A Texas Memoir of Place, Shelley Armitage

Contemporary Fiction

A Drop in the Ocean: A Novel, Jenni Ogden
After the Dam, Amy Hassinger
Fill the Sky, Katherine Sherbrooke
Hidden Shadows, Linda Lucretia Shuler
In the Context of Love, Linda K. Sienkiewicz
Original Cyn, Sylvia Dickey Smith
Twister, Genanne Walsh

Historical Fiction

American Tumbleweeds, Marta Elva
An Address in Amsterdam, Mary Dingee Fillmore
 Eliza Waite, Ashley E Sweeney
Lum: A Novel, Libby Ware
What Gold Buys: A Silver Rush Mystery, Ann Parker

Young Adult Fiction

Soldier Sister, Fly Home, Nancy Bo Flood
Talent, B. Lynn Goodwin
Teresa of the New World, Sharmon Apt Russell
The Stone Collection, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm
Upside Down in a Laura Ingalls Town, Leslie Tall Manning

Biography

Finding Dorothy Scott, Sarah Byrn Rickman
Lois Lenski: Storycatcher, Bobbi Malone



SARTON WOMEN'S
 BOOK AWARD

STORY CIRCLE NETWORK



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 Buried Treasure

The Illusion of Power

Carol Ingells, Santa Fe NM
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This is part of a blog post I wrote several years ago, but it speaks to what I fear now and how I might not need to be so afraid.

I've learned a lot from animals, including the three who currently share my home: Tessa, the little dog; Nellie, the sleek black cat, and Willie, a young, large tiger cat and the only male in the house. Nellie preceded the other two and has had to adjust. She and Willie, who used to compete and fight, are now allies in the struggle for use of my home, against an 11-pound dog, who, in three months of residence, has kept both cats in the basement most of the time. The cats have claws; they are larger than she is; and there are two of them. Still, when Tessa lunges ferociously to the head of the stairs, they run for dear life.

Sometimes we are afraid of people and things which, in fact, have very little power over us. Only in our heads do they loom large – that person who might break into the house, or rape you in the night, or act in some manner you see as inappropriate, or get some of your share of the goodies. The fear of those persons (or groups, or religions, or government systems) is often an illusion, which we perpetuate by our decisions, attitudes, lifestyle, or loud barking.

Funny thing! Tessa doesn't have the claws!

Where I Live

Lynn Edge, Tivoli TX
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When I moved to Tivoli 51 years ago, there were few trees. Our town is a farming community on the Coastal Plains of Texas. Rows of maize and cotton stretch for miles on three sides, and the Guadalupe River flows northeast of town.

Now the highway through Tivoli is edged with sycamores and ash, their branches shaped in giant U's. Residents planted saplings too close to electrical lines, and the tall trees have been pruned through their centers. The proliferation of pecan, ash and sycamore in the last 50 years remains a mystery. Why didn't the original settlers plant trees?

A few days ago, my husband and I were sitting in Canales Cafe. Built in the 1940's, the cafe has a strip of glass on the southern side, and we usually chose a booth so we can look out. Hummingbird feeders hung from the eaves. Down the road, towering pecan trees thrashed in the autumn wind. A lot across from the cafe, once filled with farm equipment for sale, was empty. The cafe remains a constant in Tivoli, population 500.

Construction of a new school will be completed by next year. There are only 140 students in grades K-12, and part of those are transfers from neighboring towns. With a new school, maybe families will move here instead of moving away, and like the pecan, ash, and sycamore, Tivoli will thrive.

From Buried to Treasure: Activism

Gretchen Staebler, Centralia WA
<https://writingdownthestory.com>

I am not an activist. A child in the 1950s and 60s, I narrowly missed most of the great protest movements of my time. Since then I have hidden in the bubble of my white privilege, keeping silent about what doesn't affect me. But I have become uncomfortable.

I joined millions who participated in the Women's March following the inauguration. Marchers came in peaceful, palpable passion for many reasons, evidenced by the signs they carried. It gave me pause to reflect on my reason for being there. That day I became an activist, discovering treasure that has been dormant in my silence.

I marched because I sense a threat to the rights and privileges guaranteed by our Constitution.

I marched because I fear that the hard-won strides women have made toward equality will be erased.

I marched because of the hatred I hear in the rhetoric toward immigrants in America and those who will seek refuge in the land of the free in the future.

I marched to protect the marriage of my daughter and her wife, and for my bullied transgender sisters and brothers.

I marched for all who were not born into white privilege.

I marched to send a message that, as the greatest nation on earth, it is our responsibility to assist, to the full extent of our abilities, those countries whose people struggle.

I marched because the lives of my grandchildren and their grandchildren depend on what we do now about the damage we have been inflicting on Mother Earth for decades.

I marched for my grandmothers whose generation fought for my right as a woman to have a voice.

I marched for my 100-year-old mother whose generation fought for the freedoms I take for granted. I marched so that my young grandsons will have the freedoms my generation fought for.

I marched because I feel the moral core of our nation is under attack.

Saturday I stepped out of my comfort zone, and I'm not going back. I have discovered my voice, that I have a voice, that I am America. What affects my sisters and brothers, affects me. I marched to show the world I care. And caring will change the world.

Hidden Gems

Debra Dolan, Vancouver BC
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On a rainy winter afternoon, feeling particularly unenergetic and alone, I flicked the TV remote in search of company, discovering *When Harry Met Sally* was about to begin. Even though I had viewed this movie gem many, many times, I was about to experience valued insight.

A month previously, I had received *The Most of Nora Ephron* as a birthday gift from Mike – the huge collection of the writer's work compiled by her son Jacob after her death. Mike knew that Nora's writing resonated with me – her brilliant takes on life with humor and raw emotional honesty intertwined. Knowing that the screenplay had been included in the publication, I convinced myself to read along with the actors on screen. After a significant amount of hunting on many shelves I found the hefty volume, opening its cover to the first page, and discovered the inscription. It was from my lover, the man who rarely has purchased me a card in all our years together.

Suddenly, with every fiber of my being I realized what an immature, unrealistic partner I had been for feeling utterly disappointed that he wouldn't visit Hallmark and write sentiments of love on special occasions. I had spent angst-filled evenings with friends uttering my disbelief and sadness over this romantic condition that I had imposed onto our relationship.

"I don't do cards on demand," he would say. I would sob.

That day I realized that love language comes in many forms, and that I had blinded myself by only accepting my contrasting desired expression. Each partner needs to be able to comfortably share their feelings in their own authentic, natural way for love not to be blocked. Given that I had always thought there was simply nothing sexier or more joyful than reading with your darling, he had indeed been expressing love and friendship by honoring our shared experiences since 2002 with books.

As I moved through my apartment, I learned that each book had been intimately inscribed with a handwritten message that often was a narrative of its own. I discovered that, together sequentially, they are a love letter.

A Slice of Time

Ariela Zucker, Ellsworth ME

I can clearly recall, even after so many years, how it felt holding it in my hand. It was one of the Jerusalem Second Temple period freedom coins, a silver half-shekel dating back more than 2000 years – rather old, but not all that rare. Jewish officials had minted this coin and others like it in the first year of the revolt against the Romans in 66-67 A.D. A branch with three pomegranates and the inscription “Holy Jerusalem” adorns one side of the coin. The other side, decorated by a chalice, was inscribed “Half-Shekel.”

As an archeologist, I come upon many buried treasures, but this coin felt different. I looked at it lying in my hand, rolled it slowly from side to side then closed my hand and for a minute felt the warmth radiating from it as if it were conveying a message as old as time itself.

Like any other child growing up in Israel, I was familiar with the relevant history of the time. The great revolt against the Romans brought in its wake enormous destruction and suffering, the issues emerging – surrender versus rebellion – forever embedded in the fabric of Israeli society and coming back to haunt the collective memory when talking about the Holocaust. “Masada will never fall again” was the motto I grew up with; it referred to the last stronghold in the Judean desert, where a fistful of desperate men and women chose suicide as opposed to slavery.

I stood there for a while moving my fingers along the rough, jagged edges of the time-blackened coin. And then, as if against my will, I raised my hand and tossed it back into the open space. It shined for a minute in the sun, rotated in the open air, and I thought I could hear it landing, making a soft flat sound.

It does not belong to me, I thought, with a touch of sadness. Just a hand sent from the past that touched me for a minute and then was gone.

Fear is a question: What are you afraid of, and why? Just as the seed of health is in illness, because illness contains information, your fears are a treasure house of self-knowledge if you explore them.

—Marilyn Ferguson

Family Buried Treasure

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e-circle 6, e-circle 3

The partially embroidered pillow-top lived in a memory box in an attic for more than 60 years. Why was it there? Why would anybody want it?

The project was purchased in 1919 by a young bride, Tillie – a picture, or actually a pillow-top with an image of Chinese girls riding in a rickshaw, framed all around with flowers. Whether Tillie got tired of it or found that she was just too busy with her family, nobody knows, but it was set aside for another time.

It wasn't until 1930 when the project came out again. Lola, her 12-year-old daughter at the time, wanted to learn to embroider, and what could be a better thing to learn on? The pillow-top had straight stitches, X's, and French knots. She was so careful with her stitches – but she, too, eventually lost interest and the pillow-top was put away again.

There was another daughter in the family, Marvis, and in 1943 she was old enough to want to learn embroidery. The pillow, only half-finished, was brought out for her to work on.

Sadly, nobody ever finished the pillow, but it was not discarded, either. It stayed in the memory box until 2005, when I found it. The picture was old-fashioned and, although carefully done, the stitches were not perfect, yet it was a piece of family history. Who would care? What would happen to it?

I cared, and I packed it up to take home with me. At home I finished the embroidery, even though matching the colors was not easy. The back of the pillow was cut away and the remaining part was framed in a beautiful black and red frame. In each corner of the frame, a small photo of each person working on the picture was inset, each at the age they were when they first worked on it. What a wonderful keepsake, a wonderful memory piece. On the back of the frame, the story of the picture is taped.

To the future generations: Please read the story before you toss this buried treasure.

The Accidental Charter

Sara Etgen-Baker, Anna TX
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I sat with Mother at our kitchen table, and together we opened Granny's antique file box. We pored over its contents and discovered coupons, photos, mementos, newspaper clippings, and, of course, her favorite recipes. The box also had all sorts of tabs to categorize those recipes, yet there was no discernible organization to the box's contents. There was a futile attempt at arrangement, but the separation of meat dishes from desserts had long since been abandoned. I laughed, for my grandmother and I apparently shared the same familial talent for recipe organization.

The disorganized, dog-eared recipe cards were written in Granny's penmanship and spattered with grease stains and marked with her thumbprints. And the hand in which they were written had visibly changed between the first recipe and the latter ones. As my fingers graced the same cards hers had many years ago, I imagined Granny long before she was a grandmother, first as a young bride, then as a mother of four flipping through the cards trying to prepare a meal to fill her children's bellies during the Depression.

Most certainly, those jumbled recipe cards and the memorabilia were a road map of my grandmother's life – a life that had survived two World Wars and the Great Depression, and had encompassed a long marriage that included raising four children who had gone on to have their own children. Because Granny was a practical woman who lived a utilitarian life, she wouldn't have poured her heart into a diary. So, her file box and recipes were the nearest approximation to a diary and the most intimate thing she left behind. It was full of time, memories, and love; it was bigger than her. It was also an accidental charter of her family's history, values, and traditions rendered on 3-by-5 index cards.

Undoubtedly, Granny's file box and recipe cards were more powerful than unearthing an old photo album or treasured piece of clothing that held the lingering scent of her perfume. That box and its contents gave Mother and me the opportunity to peek into my grandmother's everyday life and better understand family.

Buried Voices

Shelley Thrasher, Tyler TX
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Mama's pots and pans sometimes complained
of cooking three meals a day.
Their early morning, aluminum clatter
jangled us from our unsuspecting dreams.

Once, her silver pressure cooker exploded – boom,
fresh spinach caught in its valve.
The leafy green veggie fine-sprayed
her white ceiling and refrigerator, ash cabinets.

Perspiring, she scrubbed for days,
the green remnants almost indelible.

Now, as I cook and sometimes explode,
I understand her clatter and boom.

Buried Treasure

Patricia Roop Hollinger, Westminster MD
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I wondered what to do on a rainy day,
Ah! maybe a neighbor could come to play?

That rarely happened living on a farm,
For we were just too busy keeping warm.

"Let's see," I wondered aloud,
As I looked out to spy a dark cloud.

"I know," there's an attic to explore,
With dress up clothing and so much more.

Ah! a pile of magazines caught my eye,
As I turned the pages I felt like a spy.

Whoa! "So that's what a man looks like naked?"
I knew these photos did not fake it.

Other magazines I found letters written,
'Twas then that with words I was smitten.

The treasure found was not silver or gold,
I found the power of words and I felt bold.

To this day the power of words I explore,
Forever and ever these words I adore.

Excavating Ron's Room

Lavon Urbonas, Rancho Cucamonga CA

I stand heart-deep in the quiet chaos of his den,
like an amateur archaeologist
gearing up for the dig.

He was a saver, loath to toss anything.
What if I need it someday?
he'd plead when I'd chide.

His somedays are gone in the messy rooms
of this earthly mansion,
amassed artifacts left behind.

I hadn't the heart, while he still had breath,
to disturb the disordered strata
through which his story percolated.

My mission now is to begin the excavation,
to sift through seven decades
of striving, loving, living, dying.

I dust off each gadget, photo, paper and book,
tenderly handling each memory,
separating treasure from trash.

I discover precious treasure in a pocket of his
favorite jacket: a receipt for a dozen roses,
the last he ever brought me.

I dissolve in gratitude that he was a saver,
not tossing something
I didn't know I'd need

heart-deep in the quiet chaos of his den.

My husband claims I have an unhealthy obsession with secondhand bookshops. That I spend too much time daydreaming altogether. But either you intrinsically understand the attraction of searching for hidden treasure amongst rows of dusty shelves or you don't; it's a passion, bordering on a spiritual illness, which cannot be explained to the unaffected.

—Kathleen Tessaro

Buried Treasure

Judy Watkins, Myrtle Creek OR
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e-circle 3, e-circle 6

My husband is 90, and at times he can't remember what happened ten minutes ago, but he is beginning to remember and share the stories of his youth.

Born in 1926, he was the third child, each one eight years apart. Highlights of his memories include:

As a boy he did chores to earn money to buy an old, used bicycle, then one day while watching trucks being unloaded at the grain elevator he slipped on the loose grain, fell, and a truck ran over the treasured bike. He was safe, only his heart was broken.

His parents enjoyed dances and they took him with them. He slept on the benches where the coats were piled while they danced.

In 1942, his father traveled by train from Washington State to NYC to see the Joe Louis/Buddy Baer heavyweight fight. Can you imagine his disappointment when Baer was knocked out in the first round?

He enlisted into the Navy when he was 17, and served through World War II and Korea. There were many stories to recall, including his memories of the frightened and homesick boy who made the invasion of Okinawa in 1945.

President Roosevelt was his first president and he was respected by everybody. It was a sad day when the president passed in April, 1945.

During the Korean War the propeller planes on the ships were being exchanged for jets. There was an interesting learning curve to make this happen.

So many friends he remembered from the war years, including names and personal history.

Recently there was a historical movie about Churchill, and I listened as he told story after story about his personal memories. I never did get to see the movie – maybe at another time.

As I listen to his many stories, I try to be patient and enjoy the buried treasures of getting to know the boy and young man that I never met before. It is an unexpected joy for me to hear the stories that were never shared before in our 58 years together.

Unseen People

Abby November, San Diego CA

We walk past the street denizens, avoiding their eyes
 as if infection is a possibility.
 Where is God? Where is Our Uncle ... Sam??
 But wait, these folk may be me ... or mine.
 I volunteer to feed the indigent at risk for homelessness.
 As I sign them into the program and hand them out food bags
 I avoid their outstretched hands, imploring eyes.
 What were the dreams of their mothers for them?
 What were their own hopes in this great nation?
 There is the stuff of our life we consider we debris:
 Leftover jam, butter packets from IHOP,
 Unused hotel shampoos, soaps are their treasures.
 I bring them to my friends, they are as thankful as if it is the Gift of the Magi.
 Our stuff discarded is coveted and stuffed into their raggedy pockets or shopping carts.
 Half-eaten bagels and leftover pizza are a feast.
 I've learned the names of a special few: Blue-eyed Phil, lovely Michelle with a rainbow adorned walker
 and Milton, aka "Milton Berle," who shares corny jokes with me.
 No longer avoiding their eyes or hugs, I look forward to brightening their day and by that, bringing joy to my heart.

True Love

Mary Jo West, San Clemente CA
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One afternoon, Mom decided her companion's gray toupee needed some sprucing up. She threw it into the washing machine with dark brown Rit Dye, and when the cycle was complete, she put it in the dryer. Shrunken and full of static, it curled up and looked like a steel Brillo Pad.

In the process of combing out the tangles she broke several combs. Throwing up her hands in exasperation, she grabbed a bottle of glue and smeared it all over the liner. Then she plopped his frizzy hairpiece on top of his large, bald head.

"There," she said, and walked away.

For days, whenever he was near a metallic object, single hairs of his toupee would stand on end.

He never complained.

*There is more treasure in books than in all
 the pirate's loot on Treasure Island.*

—Walt Disney

Winter Hedge

Claire McCabe, Elkton MD
 cmccabe@udel.edu

Stark shrubs hung with leaves
 desiccated and gray;
 thorn-studded vines
 so raw they are blue.

I disturb the stillness,
 jolt the sanctum of winter.

Leaves, twigs, wings
 a flurry of brown
 whirls in the wind
 rushing for shelter.

Yet my presence won't halt
 winter's deeper work.

On this desolate day, cloistered
 under rock and root,
 hushed chants, vows whispered
 preserve an ancient covenant.

Wind blasts through the hedge,
 spreading rumors of a sleeping sun.

Lost Connections

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Until the day my mom died she always said, “I never could believe you.”

Mom and I weren’t friends, and we didn’t understand one another. My lack of connection with my mother impacted my life in more ways than I can count.

My arrival into the world was bad timing, especially since I wasn’t wanted in the first place. Mom, a nurse, was nursing her mother, who was dying of cancer. Mom decided her job would be easier without a newborn, so she tried to abort me – unsuccessfully. The feelings of stress, anger, and loneliness left my pregnant mom and entered my tiny body. My grandmother died shortly after I was born.

As a toddler, learning to be potty-trained, in the middle of the night, it was not unusual to find me wandering around our 3,500 square-foot, two-story house, or outside in the midst of our acreage, lost and crying. Invariably, I had wet a spot on the floor or on my bedspread. My eyes would be open, but I wouldn’t know what I was doing. Mom would ask me why I hadn’t gone to the potty or why I was up. I didn’t have the foggiest idea. I didn’t even know what I was doing. Mom didn’t believe me and threatened to hit me with her hairbrush. Terrified and to prevent being punished, I would make up a story, only to be found out and punished anyway. I was an extreme sleepwalker, but mom didn’t understand that I honestly didn’t know what I was doing.

For the rest of my life, I feared telling the truth to anyone. Connecting and trusting women with authority was a serious problem for me as I was afraid of standing up for myself.

The tragedy is that once I started writing, researching, and learning about the impacts of stress on children, the reason for Mom’s and my disconnection jumped right out and hit me over the head! If only I had learned this fact years ago, so that mom and I could have talked these issues out, to possibly have become friends.

Treasures of the Past

Kali Rourke, Austin TX
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In the cold mid-winter about ten years ago, I was bored and clicking around on the Internet. A cursory search popped up a site I had not heard of before called Ancestry.com. I looked around at what seemed to be an online genealogy search engine and investigated a feature called Bulletin Boards.

I typed in my dad’s last name and poked around in the results but nothing looked very familiar. Then I typed in my mother’s maiden name and although there were plenty of entries, again, nothing looked like it was my family.

I decided to give it one last try and typed in my maternal grandmother’s maiden name – Standish. As you can imagine, a cascade of postings and threads appeared, but amazingly, so did my grandmother’s name.

I was shocked and clicked on the thread to find that a historian in Oregon had been trying to find my grandmother, mother, and their family for many years. She was married to my grandmother’s nephew and she wanted to let us know that she had used her curiosity and expertise to trace our family back to Myles Standish of the Mayflower!

I responded to her message and began a friendship that resulted in new headstones for our dearly departed relatives, and amazing insights and stories to add to our family lore, in memberships to the General Society of Mayflower Descendants and Daughters of the American Revolution for my mother and me, and unexpected connections with distant relatives I will never know personally, except through the Ancestry.com communications.

I met saints, sinners, the occasional scoundrel or community leader, and have been thoroughly entertained along the way.

Genealogy is a buried treasure just waiting for many of us and the Internet has made it so much easier to research our family lines. You must be careful, check sources, and guard against relying on others’ family trees that have few or even no citations for source materials, but with a little caution and practice, it is a wonderful journey through time to enjoy and share with your family.

Time to start digging? “X” may mark the spot!

Concealed Paragon

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 e-circle 4, e-circle 6

Mid-December in the greenhouse;
 “Brrrr,” I shivered, it was ice-cold outside and this
 the most frigid air so far this winter.
 Both little heaters hummed,
 keeping everything inside cozy.
 Stepping inside with my watering can,
 to great surprise, I see four monarch caterpillars greedily munching
 on the scant remains of summer’s milkweed plant.
 Two newly opened seed pods now a buffet for
 these very tardy extremely ravenous stragglers.
 I spent some time wistfully watching,
 Wondering what would become of them.
 Two days later the plant was gone,
 so were the late comers. Looking about,
 I noticed several cocoons attached to greenhouse uprights
 and long stalks of night blooming Cereus plants.
 I lamented their odd timing,
 as a stiff north wind rattled the tin roof.
 This past January weekend brought us spring-like weather again.
 Once again, I went in to water, just
 as three monarchs were wiggling free and flexing brand new wings.
 Eventually, wings dry, off they sailed,
 fluttering out through the rooftop vent.
 I watched, smiling as the tiny, tardy trio
 floated upwards on strong little wings ...

Funny Antics

Mary Jo West, San Clemente CA
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When I think of my mother, I remember how much she loved
 dancing at the Moose Club every Saturday night.

One evening, while dancing the waltz, her partner said
 something to make her laugh and when she threw her head back,
 the upper plate of her false teeth flew across the room. Thinking no
 one had seen what happened, Mom asked him to maneuver her
 across the floor to the spot where her teeth landed. Gracefully, she
 swirled, then dipped down far enough to snatch her teeth, and slid
 them back into her mouth.

She never missed a beat.

Gone Long, Gone Gray

Marilyn Ashbaugh, Edwardsburg MI
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I have bad hair luck; all my best stylists head
 to Chicago. Well, one ended up in jail, but that’s
 another story. I am often left with new graduates
 who collectively share the illusion that a poodle-
 cut is desired by all women beyond a certain age.
 Others have given up on me altogether.

Once, in the dead of winter I was left to sit
 with wet hair when my stylist disappeared.
 Desperate, I took the hair dryer, dried my hair,
 and walked to the front desk, where the
 receptionist charged me for a blow-dry. I
 explained the situation and she gave me a
 horrified look. She ran to the back room, and then
 out walked my stylist. It seemed her manicure
 appointment was late and in a hurry, but she said
 she now had time to finish with me. I was done, I
 assured her.

Standing appointments don’t work with my
 unpredictable schedule but gray roots are always
 on time, so I would be stuck until someone,
 somewhere, could fit me in. And then, another
 horrified look provoked by my gray roots! One
 stylist shuddered as she told me I should never let
 anyone see so much gray.

“Imagine if I wore a bikini or a sleeveless
 blouse,” I said jokingly.

I was finished with the nonsense and decided
 to let my gray hair grow freely. You would have
 thought I was walking around naked – the eye-
 rolls, the whispers. It was an awkward time.

Doubt and fear surfaced in equal measure,
 but then something unexpected happened: Young
 women were bleaching their hair gray, and it was
 beautiful!

“Like your gray,” a young woman in the
 grocery store said to me. “That’s the color I
 want,” she told her friend.

The gray was embraced by the younger
 generation, but scorned by my own. A big-city
 friend looked aghast at me, telling me that
 women with gray hair are not respected.

“By whom?” I queried.

She had recently traded all her small
 wrinkles for one large horizontal gash along her
 forehead, which she covered with black bangs.
 Our lifestyles were headed in opposite directions.

Things in Boxes

Madeline Sharples
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He left a black canvas box
filled with his music recordings
next to his bed,
the cassette tapes neatly packed
in order of performance.

And on his closet shelf
we found a cardboard box filled
with little games, cars, toys,
1984 Olympic souvenirs,
and Russian buttons and buckles
his uncle brought back for him.

He fit these favorite things
together like an intricate puzzle,
before he left his body
for us to put in a box
in the ground.

Winter's Buried Treasure

Sarah Fine, Toronto ON
e-circle 3

As a child, I learned that buried treasure involves immense oceans, sailing ships, sandy beaches, pirates, maps and old wooden chests.

Growing up in the Canadian prairie, creeks and rivers were more likely to be found than oceans. I had never seen a beach or a sailing ship. As for maps, pirates and treasure chests, they were the stuff of imagination.

However, despite the limitations of my geography, every year at winter's end, I found "buried treasure."

Our winters were glorious. In November, the snow came, reliably deep and ubiquitous, and blanketed the world in white. Sometimes school was cancelled, but most days we cheerfully trudged between the snow banks to get to school early and build forts in the school yard.

On the weekends, we took our toboggans and headed for the hills. We would spend the day whizzing down icy slopes, falling, laughing, getting red-cheeked and snow-covered. Afterwards, it was back to a friend's house for hot chocolate and cookies.

Then in April, the snow would be gone and we would find the "buried treasure" that winter had left behind. Sometimes it would be the hats, scarves and mittens that had disappeared during the winter.

But if you were lucky, it would be keys or coins.

When you only got 50 cents allowance, finding nickels, dimes or quarters was a treat. Sometimes you could follow a trail of money, imagining someone with a hole in his pocket on his way home.

Sometimes there would be a pile of coins in one location and you might think of a lady, looking in her pockets for a key and, by accident, dropping all her change in the snow. If you have ever lost anything in snow, you know it makes no sound as it falls.

There were days I remember walking slowly, head down, looking for the gifts the snow left when it melted away. As an adult, I remain alert on the days in Toronto when winter is over, leaving behind the possibility of "buried treasure."

*"The human heart has hidden treasures,
In secret kept, in silence sealed;
The thoughts, the hopes, the dreams, the pleasures,
Whose charms were broken if revealed."*

— Charlotte Brontë

Discovery on a Beach

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e-circle 4, e-circle 6

Not long ago, on the beautiful winter beach, I stumbled upon a distraught pre-teen girl, crying and sitting apart from her friends.

“Why the tears, little lady?” I asked, and she, not looking up, sputtered, “I’ll never have a boyfriend! I’ll never be popular, not ever!”

“But why?” I persisted.

“I have ugly red hair and horrible freckles,” she hissed through clenched teeth and tears.

I sank down beside her and patted her head. “Oh don’t be so sure, little Princess,” I laughed. “I once felt the same as you, once felt that I would always be alone, alone forever. Here I am now, an almost old woman! I am pleased with the magic that time unraveled with my life. Why, I had children and grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. I have never been alone unless it was my desire to be alone! Be gentle with yourself, now. Come on – look up at me, look into the face of what is to come.”

She shyly turned up, her frizzy red locks framing a sweetly freckled face. We stared red-hair to red-hair, freckles to freckles, and bright shiny green eyes to green eyes. She smiled.

“Now, help this old lady get up,” I laughed, “and go take whatever you want from the world! Now, remember, only ten percent of the whole world has red hair. The other ninety percent are jealous!”

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.



I believe that all is illusion and vanity outside the treasure of truths slowly accumulated, and which will never again be lost. I believe that the sum of these truths, always increasing, will at last confer on man incalculable power and peace, if not happiness. Yes, I believe in the final triumph of life.

—Emile Zola

Jack Speaks

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through the bricks he lays –
evenly spaced, mortar recessed,
row on row of hardened clay;
through the letters he pens
into crossword squares;

through the records he plays at noon –
shaking the house
with “Watusi Trumpets,” “Tijuana Brass,”
“String of Pearls,” “In the Mood;”

through the TV’s blare –
waking us up at six a.m. to endure
“I’m gonna twist that guy’s head off;”
then “wildebeest begin their yearly migration;”

through his roaring chainsaw,
clattering tractor,
buzzing tablesaw,
chugging pickup,
patooley of “Redman.”

PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

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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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Pat LaPointe Psychotherapist who conducts both group and individual consultation. She uses this experience to create programs designed to enrich women's lives through interactive writing workshops. She facilitates online and on site writing groups including groups designed to assist senior women in legacy writing. www.changesinlife.com **Author, Editor, Teacher**

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**

Juliana Lightle: High School English teacher whose career experiences include college administrator, corporate manager, author, horse breeder and trainer, and educator. She currently writes, sings, and wanders the world. <https://julianalightle.com> **Author**

Maryglenn McCombs: Maryglenn McCombs is an independent book publicist based in Nashville. She graduated from Vanderbilt University. www.maryglenn.com **Marketing Services**


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**

Kim Pearson: Kim's ghostwriting services have helped over 45 others become authors of polished, professional, and compelling books and memoirs. Her book *Making History* shows writers, especially memoir writers, how an individual's life participates in and contributes to "big" history. **Author, Ghostwriter**

Annie Quinn: Author, publisher and speaker, Annie "Enjoys the Moments" of writing, reading, spending time with family and friends and sharing her journey in publishing with others. Annie supports her local writing community by hosting monthly writers meet-ups in Newport Beach, CA. <http://ballycottonpress.com> **Publisher, Speaker**

Judy Watters: Freelance writer and publisher, Judy Sheer Watters has been published in newspapers, Guidepost, and several devotional publications. She is author of *The Road Home: The Legacy that was, is and is to Come* and a contributor in *Moments in Time*. She and her husband live in Spring Branch, Texas. They love to spend time with their three grown children, one dog and two grandcats. <http://franklinscribes.com> **Author, Freelancer, Publisher**

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Inside and Out: A Collection From SCN's Anthologies

For some time, SCN has been planning to publish a collection of the best pieces from our recent anthologies. The project got underway in late November and is currently being prepared for publication under the direction of Susan Schoch, who has served as our anthology editor for several years. The book, to be titled *Inside and Out: Women's Truths, Women's Stories*, will be published in both print and ebook formats.

Susan worked with a volunteer editorial team of five SCN members: Pat LaPointe, Mary Jo Doig; Jude Whelley; Jo Virgil; and Susan Albert. For Round 1 of the selection process, Peggy Moody posted issues of the anthology for the years 2010-2015 on a website and created a form that the editors could use to record their selections. Each editor read all the pieces in two different issues and nominated 7-8

selections from each one. At the end of Round 1, the editors had chosen 74 pieces.

For Round 2, Peggy posted these selections and Susan's editorial team went back to their reading and evaluating. When that process was finished, there were about 50 selections remaining, with some further adjustments to be made. So far, Susan and her editorial team have invested 80-some hours in the process, with more work to be done to turn the selected pieces into a publishable manuscript.

Authors of selections to be included in the published collection will be notified in the next two months or so. *Inside and Out* will be published later this year.

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Austin, TX
Permit #215

Looking Ahead:
True Words

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

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

Use these topics, or write on a topic of your choosing for upcoming issues of the *Journal*:

- June, 2017: A Little Thing that Mattered (deadline April 15)
- September, 2017: Music and Memories (deadline July 15)
- December, 2017: Lessons Learned (deadline October 15)

Hold the Date:
July 19-22, 2018

Stories from the Heart, SCN's annual women's writing conference that is held every two years, is scheduled for July 19-22, 2018, in Austin, TX.

The Wyndham Hotel, site of the last five conferences, will again host the event. Room rates will be \$109/double occupancy.

The SCN board decided to move the conference from spring to summer to avoid a room rate increase. "The Wyndham Hotel has excellent air conditioning," says Joyce Boatright, conference co-chair, "and we think the summer dates will work well for many, especially teachers."

