



STORY CIRCLE JOURNAL

Vol. 21 No. 3, September 2017

The newsletter for women with stories to tell

2017 LifeWriting Winners Announced

This year's winners of the Susan Wittig Albert LifeWriting Competition have been chosen for their freshness and originality, and the clarity and authenticity of the author's voice. They are:

FIRST PRIZE: *I'm Ready* by Leah DeCesare

Leah DeCesare is the award-winning author of *Forks, Knives, and Spoons* and the nonfiction parenting series *Naked Parenting*, based on her work as a doula, early parenting educator, and mother of three.

Leah's articles have been featured in The Huffington Post, International Doula, and The Key, among others. In 2008, she co-founded the nonprofit Doulas of Rhode Island, and in 2013 spearheaded the campaign to build the Kampala Children's Centre for Hope and Wellness in Uganda. Previously, Leah worked in public relations and event planning. She now writes and volunteers in Rhode Island where she lives with her family.

SECOND PRIZE: *Nancy* by Sarah Byrn Rickman

Sarah Byrn Rickman has written seven books about the women flyers of World War II. Number eight is due out in the fall of 2017. A journalist first, Sarah began her career at The Detroit News and concluded it as editor of the Centerville-Bellbrook Times (Ohio).

A graduate of Vanderbilt University, she majored in English and, in 1994, earned her Masters

degree in Creative Writing from Antioch University Midwest.

She earned her Sport Pilot license in 2011, flying a sweet little Aeronca Champ, a taildragger that she lands on a grass runway.

THIRD PRIZE: *The Tree of Life* by Debra Bowling

Debra Bowling graduated from The University of Alabama with degrees in social work and criminal justice, then worked on community issues such as domestic violence, runaway teens, and child abuse, while also writing articles and stories, taking photographs, and producing video documentaries.

She was a Finalist in the 1989 Home Town USA Video Festival for *Stories of Survival*. Her documentary, *Walking Without Music: Raymond Andrews and the Storyteller's Tradition*, was purchased by Emory University to include with Andrews' papers and books in a special collection.

The Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs awarded Debra a grant in 1991 to complete *Three Southern Writers*, video documentaries of authors Tina McElroy Ansa, Terry Kay, and Sara Flannigan. Debra has published short stories, creative nonfiction, poetry, and photographs. Her first novel, *The Memory of Flight*, was published in December 2014 by Little Feather Books, and was awarded the 2015 Georgia Author of the Year Award for First Novel by the Georgia Writers Association.

The winning stories can be found in this issue. We know you will enjoy reading them. Congratulations to the winners!

WATCH FOR
SCN's Annual
GoFundMe Campaign!
Coming in October via
your computer or mobile
device



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Letter From SCN's President



Dear SCN Sisters—

We're celebrating our twentieth anniversary this year. Twenty years! Can you imagine that? When we began, back in 1997, we were a group of about a dozen like-minded Austin women, all of us inspired by the very same conviction: that every woman has a story to tell, and that every woman's story is vitally important—to her, to her family, to her communities. That conviction has sustained us for two decades now, and empowers and vitalizes everything we do at Story Circle. We hold it in our hearts. We share it with the world.

But back then, we had only a few ways of sharing this conviction. We published the quarterly *Journal*, we offered local workshops, we sponsored a local conference. But very early in SCN's life, we had the good luck to discover Peggy Moody, whose Internet knowledge and programming skills gave us an important early entry to the World Wide Web, thereby extending our reach beyond Austin. With her help, and with the remarkable dedication of the 101 women who have served on our Board of Directors over the years, we can look back at many significant milestones:

- In 1999, we received a major grant to fund our Older Women's Legacy project: offering writing workshops for older women, creating an instructor's manual. Our collection of writings from that project, *With Courage and Common Sense*, was published in 2003.
- In 2001, we launched StoryCircleBookReviews.org, now the largest and longest-lived women's indie book review site, with over 2000 reviews.
- In 2002, we began publishing an annual anthology of our members' writings, and have continued that publication every year.
- In 2004, we began the task of compiling and editing women's writings for our important anthology of women's writings about the Southwest, *What Wildness Is This*. The book was published by the University of Texas Press in 2007 and launched with a conference at Southwest Texas University, *A Land Full of Stories*
- In 2009, we began an editorial service, offering developmental and copyediting skills to members and nonmembers.
- In 2010, we launched StoryCircleOnlineClasses.org, offering writing classes by, for, and about women.
- In 2011, we launched the Sarton Award program for women independent authors. For the first three years, we awarded prizes for memoir.
- In 2014, we expanded the Sarton Award program to fiction. In 2016, we expanded it to nonfiction. Now, we offer awards in five different categories.
- In 2016, we held our *eighth* national women's writing conference. Next year, we will hold our ninth! We hope you are already planning to join us.
- In 2016, we began planning a new award, the Maya, for an unpublished memoir to be published via She Writes Press.
- In 2017, we began work on a new anthology, *Inside and Out*, which is on track for publication later this year.

That's quite a remarkable list of achievements for a small nonprofit organization, don't you think? It's testimony to the skill and determination of women who—when they decide to roll up their sleeves and get to work—can accomplish anything.

We are grateful to all the wonderful women who have worked to make the Story Circle Network an enduring success. Without you—without each one of you—what we do simply wouldn't be possible. Thank you.

*With joy for your journey,
Susan*

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

“Everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.” — Sylvia Plath, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*

Story Circle Journal

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

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We welcome your letters, queries, and suggestions.

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

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

Thank You, SCN

Sometimes we like to be reminded that SCN makes a real difference in women's lives. This summer we received a remarkable testimony to this from long-time member Sara Etgen-Baker, who gave us permission to reprint this excerpt from her essay, "Beacons in the Darkness."

In May 2010, I retired early from a 24+-year teaching career. I was a broken woman, disillusioned with the profession to which I'd dedicated my life. ... I faced deeply painful, internal questions as well as the criticism and harsh judgment of many who simply didn't know of my pain and didn't understand my decision to write. ...

In the ensuing months Kate [Farrell] told me about Story Circle Network and suggested it might be a place for me to connect with other female writers who, like me, were searching for their voice and for their meaning. I joined and have enjoyed the support and expertise of other female writers who have a story to tell. Story Circle has given me and other women a network and a venue for our writing and a comfortable space free of doubt, others' judgments, and unkind criticisms.

I am grateful for Story Circle's publications and contests that provide ongoing opportunities to share my words and voice with others. Likewise, I've learned much in reading what other women write. I've learned from their strengths and vulnerabilities; I've learned about the writing craft itself as I've watched many of them express themselves, exploring different styles and techniques. I am humbly grateful for such a quietly powerful organization. I am undoubtedly thrilled to be a member.

Now I'm seven years a writer and member of Story Circle Network; many of my pre-existing wounds have healed, replaced with extra-tough scar tissue. ... I am indebted to Story Circle Network, for it and many of its members unknowingly and quietly gave me comfort, purpose, direction, and hope. They offered me a life preserver during one of the most difficult times in my life; it truly was one of the anchors I needed as I navigated through some murky, tumultuous waters. ...

Thank you, Story Circle Network, for all you do to honor women and their voices.



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.



Stories from the Heart IX

Widening the Circle, Opening Our Hearts

2018 Women's Writing Conference
July 20-22, 2018

Conference Hotel

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

www.wyndham.com/hotels/AUSWC

To get the conference rate (\$109/night plus tax, double occupancy), call the hotel directly (512-448-2444); please be sure to say that you are with Story Circle Network, and make your reservations early! Room rate includes complimentary airport shuttle service, parking, and high speed wireless internet.



Muriel Rukeyser once asked, “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.” Story Circle Network is dedicated to helping *every* woman give voice to her personal story. And the world is listening.

Mark your calendars and plan to join us for the ninth national women's writing conference of Story Circle Network. Whether you are just now exploring the stories of your life, or you are a seasoned writer, you will find what you need for inspiration to carry you through the year. In the safety of the story circle, meet like-minded women who listen with their hearts to the stories you have to share.

“*Widening the Circle, Opening Our Hearts* is the theme of our national conference in July,” announced Susan Albert, SCN president. “Our theme focuses on SCN’s intent to widen our circle to be more inclusive and to listen with open hearts to the richness of each other’s story.”

Conference co-chair Joyce Boatright said, “We’ve always been an organization that seeks women of all ethnicities, from age 20 to 100, from all walks of life, so this year we want to celebrate that diversity.”

Here are some highlights you can expect in July 2018:

- Presentation topics will include fiction as well as nonfiction, memoir, personal essays, poetry, and other creative arts such as dance, music, and art – for writers at all levels.
- Open Mike – an opportunity to share your writing or listen to others share theirs.
- Keynote speakers to kick off the conference on Friday night and close the conference on Sunday.
- Pre-conference coaching sessions from experienced writers to give you guidance with your writing.
- Pre-conference Specialty Workshops (additional fee).
- Opportunity to enter our flash fiction contest (\$10 entry fee).

According to attendees’ evaluations at the last conference, **you will not be disappointed!** Here are two of the typical glowing remarks on the 2016 conference.

“I am so glad I came as we ‘women with stories to tell’ truly need regular infusions from our ‘tribe.’ These conferences are like milestones in our writing journeys . . . these shared experiences become ever more precious. They are like fuel for the soul.”

“It was one of the finest conferences I remember! All SCN does for women is so helpful, so huge, and just plain extraordinary. Thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you pours from my heart!”

Yes, the bar is set high for 2018, but the SCN Conference Committee is committed to delivering the best yet. No matter if this is your first conference, your ninth, or somewhere in-between, we want you to feel what one happy woman wrote in her evaluation: “It always feels like coming home.”

Call For Proposals For SCN's 2018 Conference

You Can Be a Star @ Stories from the Heart IX

Writing teachers, coaches, memoirists, novelists, poets, dramatists, publishers, the Story Circle Network invites you to star in our 9th women's writing conference. Here's why you should be a conference presenter:

- Our writing conference is *unique*. It's all about women. It brings together women writers from all over North America to celebrate and explore women's writing and women's lives.
- Our 3-tiered program invites you to submit proposals aimed at novice or experienced writers, or at all levels.
- The conference program offers a large showcase for your work. We covet your creative proposals in personal writing, writing as craft, the writing life, publishing, marketing, and the business of writing.
- Have a favorite format? Want bells and whistles? You can propose either a workshop or an interactive lecture. We can accommodate your PowerPoint or online presentations, too.

- You can participate in our popular face-to-face coaching sessions and gain extra advance publicity as a coach.
- You won't get lost in the crowd. Our conference is personal-size, about 120 participants, with lots of networking opportunities.
- Our conference bookstore will feature your book.
- Our advance publicity (national email mailings, *Story Circle Journal*, print advertising) will feature you, your work, your website, your blog—YOU are the stars of our show.
- And if you've got a little extra before-or-after time, the Texas Hill Country invites you to get acquainted with all it has to offer.

Start thinking now about the proposal you'd like to make. And for details, guidelines, deadlines, and application information, watch for our coming emails!

Sarton Award Program 2017 Midyear Update

We are midway through 2017's Sarton Award program, with awards in five categories: Memoir, Contemporary Fiction, Historical Fiction, Young Adult and New Adult Fiction, and Nonfiction (Biography, Collective biography, Edited diaries, Scholarly studies of women's literature, Anthologies). For more details about the program, go here: <http://storycircle.org/SartonLiteraryAward/>

The 2017 "early bird" entry period ended on July 31, with more than three times the number of entries we received during the same period in 2016! If entries continue to arrive at the same rate, by the deadline (November 16) we will have greatly exceeded our expectations for 2017.

This means that we will be depending heavily on our team of Sarton jurors. If you are already serving as a juror,

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 Dicke Smith
Twister, Genanne Walsh

you know how rewarding it is. If you'd like to help out, please go here: http://www.storycircle.org/SartonLiteraryAward/juror_information.php

If you are planning to submit a book this year, you shouldn't apply to be a juror. But if you're thinking of submitting in the future, you will find this experience invaluable. Many of our jurors and judges have been with us ever since we began, and they tell us that their work has made them more careful, thoughtful readers and writers. We're sure that you'll feel the same way!

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

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

I'm Ready

by Leah DeCesare of East Greenwich RI

I may soon become the mother to a little boy I've never met. I've never seen him, not even a picture.

He crashed into my heart on December thirteenth, while I was shopping for Christmas gifts for children in need with our church's youth group. Back at church, wrapping the presents, I read each of the kids' summarized stories; one heart-wrenching tale followed another. I felt a deep ache for them all.

One in the pile was short, but it reached out to me. It's impossible to say why it leapt out; in rereading it, there's nothing especially moving or pivotal. What drew me to it the way it did?

It said, "Eight-year old boy," it was short with few details, and the final line stated: "He wants his forever family." I was overcome with needing to love this child. Why him? I can't explain. It was a feeling more than a thought.

With him on my heart and mind, I returned to wrapping. I happened to be next to our agency connection to the children and I blurted, "I want to adopt that eight-year-old boy." Every moment has felt like something beyond me was in control and those words, spoken aloud, were the first step on a journey we never expected to travel.

My husband, Nick, and I have been married twenty-three years and have three awesome kids, who are kind, witty, and loving. One in high school, one off to college, and our youngest in eighth grade. We have a blessed life, the family I always dreamed of, and we're savoring the dwindling years with them under our roof. Both savoring them and looking ahead to warmer climates once they're all on their own. We weren't looking to extend the years before we can travel and have an orderly house with the scissors always where they're supposed to be and a shoe-free entryway.

But suddenly, on a regular Sunday evening, what can only be described as divine changed that. At home, I said to my ever-supportive husband, "You know how I always volunteer us for things?"

He laughingly rolled his eyes.

"This is different," I said, "I want to adopt an eight-year-old boy."

Even knowing me as he does, he didn't think I was serious, and threw out reasons why this was impulsive, impractical, and frankly, a bit crazy.

I could understand his protests and reasoning, but in every part of me, I felt peace, completely assured and calm. I felt a calling. Not to be just any little boy's mother, but

this little boy's mother. I couldn't be dissuaded.

I googled things like "How to adopt a child from foster care." I read and read, I filled out online forms requesting information, printed articles and started a file. I was suddenly on a path to motherhood not everyone takes.

I lay awake that night, and the next, envisioning the emotional aspects of meeting him, building trust, and learning to parent a child I hadn't known from birth. A child whose young eyes have seen things that I haven't, a child whose story I haven't been a part of. During all those nighttime thinking sessions, I considered every practical angle, too, like figuring out where he would sleep, settling him into our schools, paying for another child's activities and college. I thought of him in all my waking hours.

Nick and I talked more. A lot more. And we talked to the kids – this would have to be a family decision. Making us proud, each of our children was not just open and welcoming but eager and filled with love at the idea of having a new brother. Within one week of that ethereal December moment, we were on the way with trainings and forms, background checks and interviews, fingerprints and more forms.

Finally, we got his name. Only his first name, and I hold that name in my prayers, in my smile, in my being. I think of him – all the time. I think about him and yearn to know more. What is he doing today, right now? Does he like science and math or does he prefer reading? As I'm grocery shopping, I wonder, does he like eggplant, or pineapple, or cucumbers? I am eager to know him: When is his birthday? What makes him laugh? And what makes him cry?

I crave details about this child who may one day be my own. I hungrily absorb and record the tidbits gleaned from his counselor and agencies we're now involved with, treasuring every nugget. We're told he's sweet and appreciative, an old soul.

Since the day this little guy burst into my heart, I've pondered in a whole new way what it means to be a mother and what it means to be a family. I impatiently wait for the privilege of meeting him and getting to know him. And while I wait, I wonder what's ahead.

Will this even happen? Will we have the gift of him being a part of our family? How will I jump into becoming a mother to a kid who doesn't know me?

In some ways, mothering him will be like being a first time mom all over again. I may have over eighteen years of parenting experience but I am inexperienced at being his

mom. I won't have the baby photos or the birth story to retell on his birthday. I won't have the details of his first steps, his first words, or his first day of school.

We'll have different special dates to celebrate and new traditions we create. I think about our family videos and the stacks of photos without him, and I think about those he'll become a part of as we make memories together.

We may not have a shared history and I may not know him yet, but I do know that being a good mom isn't related to how we enter motherhood. I cannot wait to tuck him in and read him bedtime stories, to hold his hand and kiss him goodnight, and good morning, and welcome home from school.

I may sound idealistic and naive, but with any decision in life, we never know how it will turn out. With our own pregnancies, our births, our biological children, our choices for schools, marriage partners, or careers. We do our best with what we know at the time. We have faith.

We calculate the risks or we dive in feet first, we wing it or we plan it, but the outcomes are never guaranteed.

Early on, I told Nick, "I hope we get the privilege of loving him."

He said, "You already do love him."

And he's right. I do. I already love him.

As we move along this path, only months since I read that tiny snippet of his story, I feel total peace, complete calm, and utter love. I feel a rightness, the sense that if this is our road, we are on it and ready to be his family.

We've never met him, but I am ready to be his mother.

Nancy

by Sarah Byrn Rickman of Colorado Springs CO

Nancy Batson Crews walked into my life and everything changed.

"Sayruh" – she was from Alabama – "I want you to write about Nancy Love and the WAFS."

"How?" I asked, dumbfounded. I began to babble about why this was an impossible undertaking, why these women would never hear me out. "I'm an unknown, a former small-town journalist – I've never published a book."

I didn't bother to mention that I was enmeshed in this fantasy of selling my first book. I had left my newspaper-editor's job to write the Great American novel. I had just acquired an agent.

Writing fiction was not Nancy's idea of meaningful work.

I was a professional freelance writer and wannabe

author with limited resources to go running around the country. Besides, it would take an introduction, credentials, and travel money to interview the other eight surviving original WAFS.

WAFS stands for Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron and the 28 women who first carried that name were the nucleus of the larger group of women later known as WASP who, in 1944, played a significant role in the winning of World War II.

Why should these women take me seriously when I called and introduced myself? "Hi, I want to write about your time in the WAFS. May I come to your home and interview you?"

This was May 1999. By then, these women – 79 years old and up – had been burned by countless well-meaning but clueless journalists and writers of books and films wanting to tell their stories and getting it wrong. Why should they trust me?

"I'll have a reunion in Birmingham," Nancy said. "How soon can you be available?"

Nancy was still flying. She had just qualified – at 79 – to fly copilot in a corporate King Air turbojet with her pilot friend, Chris. She fixed me with her keen gray aviator's eyes and waited.

This was a woman who had, over the previous 15 years, built a successful real estate venture on land she inherited from her father. Before that, she had run a glider-towing and small plane business in the California high desert. She had raised three children. As a young woman, she had flown the Army's fastest World War II aircraft.

To say that I felt simultaneously out of control and gratefully awestruck is an understatement.

"Let me check my calendar," I managed to say.

That day, the rest of my life began.

Four weeks later, I met "BJ" Erickson London, Teresa James, Gertrude LeValley, Florene Watson, and Barbara Shoemaker. Counting Nancy herself, six of the remaining nine WAFS were sitting at a table in a hotel bar in Birmingham, Alabama, and we were getting acquainted. In a heartbeat, unlimited access to and personal contact with them was mine.

I listened to their stories. I earned their trust. I had to pinch myself to make sure it was real.

When the three-day reunion was over, I visited the WASP Archives at Texas Woman's University to do further research. TWU is Mecca for WASP scholars.

Then I started writing. I wedged some travel between my freelance jobs. I spent a week in Florida with Teresa James to gain additional insight. I visited two of Nancy Love's daughters in Virginia to learn about their

extraordinary mother, who birthed the idea of the WAFS back in 1940.

Nancy Crews and I spent a year-and-a-half working on *The Originals: The Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron of World War II*. In the middle of our efforts, Nancy was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer.

My agent, Liz, was trying to sell *The Originals* to New York. "Great story, but we can't sell it in today's market," was New York's response.

Liz was ready to start the rounds of the mid-sized presses.

We didn't have time.

"I'll pay the bill," Nancy said. Liz and her husband, Greg, who ran Disc-U's Books, a small press, would publish *The Originals*. Liz and Greg, like Nancy, believed in the book.

I believed in the book, though reality kept intruding.

With the specter of the Grim Reaper pursuing Nancy across each page, I wrote; I made four trips to Birmingham between June and December 2000. I watched Nancy's health deteriorate, but never her spirit. Doctor Jim – her physician, and personal friend, Chris – the corporate pilot who tapped Nancy to be her copilot, and I – her coauthor, formed the trio that, along with Nancy's incredible strength of character and will to live, kept her alive.

"We know an airplane's not gonna get me," she quipped.

Nancy approved the finished manuscript on December 22, 2000. She gave me, and the book, her blessing. When I left to drive home for Christmas, we both knew it was our last meeting. Her son, Paul, was there to care for her. She died January 13, 2001.

I had to finish the job without her.

Released in July 2001, *The Originals* is Nancy's epitaph.

Now, sixteen years later, I have written six additional books about the women who flew for the Ferrying Division – two are novels. *The Originals* has out-sold them all. All 4,000 copies Nancy ordered are gone.

The second edition of *The Originals* will be released this fall (2017). This volume commemorates the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron.

On September 10, 1942, Nancy Love took command of the WAFS. She and Colonel William H. Tunner, Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, set out to recruit experienced women pilots who, with no additional training, could ferry small trainer aircraft from the factories to the newly established flight training schools around the country.

America had been thrust into a war we were not prepared to fight. The adjustments people had to make in 1942 in order to cope with that reality were far reaching. Who would have thought that women pilots would deliver military aircraft, thus releasing male pilots to go overseas and fight?

Gifted women like Nancy Batson (Crews), Teresa James, and BJ Erickson, joined Nancy Love and Colonel Tunner and made a difference.

I knew little of the WAFS story when I met Nancy, but she found in me a willing and enthusiastic pupil. She schooled me in the story of the women who flew for Nancy Love – the story she had lived – delivering increasingly more complex aircraft for the Ferrying Division.

In 1944, flying those splendid new fighters – the P-51D – became THE priority for the women ferry pilots. The P-51D was the "Game Changer," the tool that would deliver the killing blow to Germany. The women were called on to fly them to the docks at Newark, New Jersey, to be shipped to England and the war abroad.

P-51Ds could protect four-engine bombers intent on delivering devastation to the interior of Germany. P-51Ds could go the distance, escort the bombers to the target and protect them from enemy fighters on the return flight to England.

The women of the Ferrying Division delivered 926 of those P-51Ds in 1944.

Nancy had lived it and she wanted the story told. Somehow she decided that I was the one who could tell it for her.

The Tree of Life

by Debra Bowling of Stone Mountain GA

I dreamed that I drove my car up a tree and onto a limb. I looked down below, my heart pounding. This limb will not be able to hold my car. Then a new thought flashed, if the limb breaks, it will fall on my dog. I got out of the car, backed off the limb and down the tree. Once on the ground, I realized that now the car would probably crash down on me and my dog. Why did I not drive the car back down? Later, the answer to the question popped into my mind, because driving the car back down would mean defeat. The dream was a message and I wrote every detail down.

In my Penguin Dictionary of Symbols (1996), the tree quickly becomes the Tree of Life and is so significant that the dictionary notes that the information about it could fill several volumes. Most frequently, it symbolizes the cyclical character in death and regeneration through seasonal changes. It connects to the three levels of the cosmos – the underworld of roots, the earth's surface through the trunk and lower branches, and then the

Heavens with the upper branches and tip-top reaching out to the light. And a third symbol is that of the inverted Tree of Life – rooted in the heavens with the branches enfolding the whole earth – noted by some as the symbolic shading of the Tree of Life into the Tree of Knowledge.

I think about my early years literally climbing up apple and pecan trees and sitting on limbs. School years were spent with my mother and siblings on my grandparent's farm. Made tricky, in part, from my mother's mental illness and my grandfather's complicated authoritarian personality, both of which were repressive to one trying to grow into one's true self. My rebellious acts of freedom were usually small – mostly hopping out on the limbs of saplings that could bend low so it didn't seem that risky and well worth the risk to crack some of fear's grip. But the chance of going away to college was a climb on a big limb and I inched myself out, delighted when heroes guided me further out. And once on that limb, I knew I could not fall – there was no alternative. Later, when capable of seeing the patterns of the past, I saw the significance – like the ancient trees with big limbs that grow out and then dip down to root with the ground before reaching back up in a new life trajectory.

I began writing in earnest in seventh grade – mostly poetry. I loved symbolism; it was like a kind of secret language between writer and reader. I was motivated by an English teacher, so I decided to go out on a limb and show him some of my poems. After school, I sat out under a big pecan tree beside our house and began typing the chosen poem using a manual typewriter lugged outside to a chair. The slow mechanical pecking unnerved my mother so much that she was sure the keys were striking her instead of the paper. I started again, this time moving to a back bedroom in my grandparent's house. A few lines later, she was at the door insisting that I stop pecking her. So I copied the words and took the poem to Mr. Baker, the teacher. He read it several times, pointing out a line he liked and one that needed work. I took poems to him that whole year, convinced that my reader, unlike anyone else at the time, really understood me. Writing and sharing those poems opened a door.

After years of being disappointed in my experiments with short stories, I wrote a piece based on a story about my mother. After many rewrites, and feedback, I knew this was the story I had to write. I would write about a character based on my mother's life – using events I had either heard or knew about firsthand. The bigger part of the novel would be fiction. I got out on the limb, but I knew it would be painful. To keep myself from getting off, I told friends and family I was working on a novel. Only a few people knew what the book was based on, particularly my critique group.

The novel included several real events from my mother's life because I knew how she reacted and what she

said, which gave me hints to her thoughts – this would help me remain true to her challenges. The dive into the abyss of her life and our family history tore my heart out over and over for years. I cannot adequately describe the various "techniques" I used to get grounded into her personhood and to stay in that space while writing, to do justice to the character that would highlight her experiences. I added a new character – the chapters would alternate points of view of both characters, which required much rewriting. Once again, all kinds of doors opened when I allowed the second character to express some of my own experiences and interactions. It altered me and my perception of family.

I rewrote a chapter to submit to Playhouse 30, a program of Public Television that made stories into short movies. A contract was offered for the piece and gave me validation. The contract was cancelled later due to funding cuts. With increasing bouts of depression and anxiety, it became increasingly clear that writing this novel was just too much. With a simple press of a computer button, I accidentally deleted the novel. Later, I retyped the chapters, but did not go back to working on the novel for six years.

I completed it 27 years after starting it. In the final draft, fiction made Marilyn and Ginny real characters and not just parts of the people who inspired them. *The Memory of Flight* was published in December 2014 by Little Feather Press. From that moment, through most of 2015, I still worried that the limb might break – how would family feel? or the public? The first radio interviewer pushed to know how I could write a story like this – was it based on a true story? After a moment of dead air, I managed a vague response. After *The Memory of Flight* won the 2015 Georgia Author of the Year Award, I was invited to speak at a library. With a dear friend in the audience for support, I started off talking about where the idea for this novel came from and a great discussion began and I didn't die or fall off the limb.

By now you may be wondering about the dream that started this story. It is about my second novel. After finding my story, I wrote several chapters, but stopped working on it for over a year. I lost my dear brother, had a health scare, and was too afraid to write again, and so on – life keeps moving. It seems that we have to be brave to be fully alive, and especially to be fully creative, so keep climbing out on limbs.

“The biggest adventure you can ever take
is to live the life of your dreams.”

— Oprah Winfrey



Helen Ginger

Helen Ginger's Book Release Party at Wildflower Terrace in Austin on Sunday, June 25, 2017, offered plenty of reasons for smiles, hugs, and applause. It was a celebration on many levels.

Helen's recently published new mystery novel, *Deadpoint*, is a story that shows her passion for storytelling, characterization, and plot twists with unexpected turns. *Deadpoint* tells the tale of a dead maintenance supervisor and an intrusive firebrand preacher who popped up at a park in the Hill Country, and a skilled, ritualistic killer who arrives to steal newly developed technology and seek revenge on an old enemy. Those who have read Helen's previous mysteries (*Dismembering the Past*, *Angel Sometimes*) know how her tales can keep the reader eager to turn the page to see the next twist.

The personal twist to Helen Ginger's recent novel, though, is a story in itself. Helen was recently diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's, a form of dementia that strikes people much younger than typical forms of dementia. Helen had suspected for a while that this could happen, since it has a strong genetic component and she has other family members with the disease. But Helen, with the loving support of her family and friends, knew that she had to keep working on this mystery and get it published; her passion for writing has always made her feel more alive and helped her keep her focus on things that matter.

Many of us SCN members know Helen; she has been a long-time member and supporter of Story Circle Network and was former coordinator of SCN's Editorial Service, as well as former Executive Director of the Writers' League of Texas and former President of Sisters in Crime Heart of

A Special Book Release

by Jo Virgil

In this article, Jo Virgil reflects on the strong community support of Helen Ginger, a long-time member of SCN and former coordinator of SCN's Editorial Service. We're touched by this story of the loving circle of friends that has enabled Helen to publish her novel—a reminder of the power of circles and their importance in our lives.

Texas chapter. We know how her strength of character, her sense of humor, and her focus on the positive helped her to continue work on *Deadpoint* until it was ready for publication. A team of friends and family worked with Helen to edit the book and get it published in time for her to be able to celebrate its release.

And celebrate she did! Terri Schexnayder, a SCN supporter, hosted the Book Release Party, inviting folks from all branches of Helen's life. Friends and family took some time to share their personal stories about Helen, and how she has always encouraged writers of all genres to stay dedicated to their work. One writer friend said, "Helen always has a sense of humor, but often without a smile, so that kind of throws you! She is one lovely woman to work with. And I've never seen her angry." At that comment, Helen's son raised his hand and, using his mother's sense of humor, said, "Oh, yeah, I have!" Everyone, including Helen of course, laughed. Another writer friend shared her comments about having read *Deadpoint*: "I love Helen, but who knew she could be so maniacal?" Of course that got a laugh from everyone, too.

At the beginning of the event, I read the first page and a half of *Deadpoint* to the audience, ending on a scene that made people gasp and reach for their wallet to purchase the book and read more. Helen Ginger loved the hugs, the stories, the community support from those at the event. The joy was obvious in her face.

Deadpoint, as well as Helen's previous mysteries, is available now on Amazon in print or e-book. To order an autographed copy of the book, you can contact Helen's husband, Dave, at dave.ginger@gmail.com.



Jo Virgil is SCN's True Words Editor, and has been a Story Circle Network member for many years, recently accepting 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.



Online Classes

A New Adventure for Madison Stingray, Our Social Media Intern: Off to Cambridge University!

by Len Leatherwood

Traveling to a foreign land is not new for Madison Stingray, our intrepid social media intern, who has volunteered her time at Story Circle Network for the past year. The truth is that Madison, at the ripe old age of 21, has already visited more countries than most people will see in their lifetimes. Currently, the number is hovering right around 51. This has happened with the aid of Madison's mother, Joanna Stingray, who decided early in her daughter's life that she wanted her to experience the vast richness of different world cultures through firsthand experience. Not only has this created a wonderful bond between mother and daughter, but it has also allowed Madison to develop a keen interest in history, people, and culture.

After graduating this past spring from Georgetown University in American Studies, Madison will now dig deeper (literally) by working on a Master's degree in Archaeology at Cambridge University. She has promised to keep us abreast of her adventures with periodic check-ins while in England. Though she will no longer serve as our intern while pursuing her studies, she has hinted she may try to whittle out some time to take one of our online classes so she can keep working on her fiction writing.

Writing is Madison's "number one passion," and she has been busy writing short stories and memoir pieces since she was in grade school. In fact, between 7th and 12th grade, she won regional awards every year in the Scholastic Artists and Writers contest, the oldest and most prestigious contest for youth in the United States. She also

received a national Scholastic award and was honored at Carnegie Hall with other "Gold Key" winners. She continues to be an ardent fan of fiction and fantasy, and has participated in numerous online classes at Story Circle Network because the classes "not only provide deadlines, but also have a teacher and peers who will hold me responsible for getting words down on the page." She loves using different cultures, histories, and geographical locations in her writing, and believes that her future studies at Cambridge will enrich her writing even more.



We here at Story Circle Network wish Madison the very best on her new educational endeavor and look forward to hearing news along the way. We thank her very much for her hard work and dedication as our social media intern and deeply appreciate the time, talent, and enthusiasm she brought to her job.

Here's to new adventures, Madison. Be sure and take your notebook with you so you can jot down details that will make your stories even richer. We can't wait to read them!

Welcome to Rachael Beaty, Our New Social Media Intern

We are happy to announce that Rachael Beaty will be joining Story Circle Network as our new Social Media Intern. Rachael is a graduate of UCLA in American Literature, a freelance writer and a writing tutor in Los Angeles. She is also one of our instructors in our Online Classes program. She is excited to help expand Story Circle's Internet footprint so that more and more women will be encouraged to tell their stories. We are delighted to have her help, and look forward to a fruitful collaboration.



Len Leatherwood, Program Coordinator for SCN's Online Classes, has been teaching writing privately to students in Beverly Hills for the past 17 years. She has received numerous state and national teaching awards from the Scholastic Artists and Writers Awards. She is a published author in flash fiction and memoir, and daily blogger at 20 Minutes a Day, found at lenleatherwood.wordpress.com.





An Interview with Sarton Award Winner

Mary Dingee Fillmore

by Pat Bean

“Keep the faith with your work. When you find something important to write about, find many different ways to investigate it, and never stop making it better.”

The author of *An Address in Amsterdam*, which was the winner of Story Circle Network’s May Sarton Award for historical fiction, Mary Dingee Fillmore is not just a writer, but a writer with a cause. And considering recent news events, Mary believes it is a timely cause.

“As we see hatred and xenophobia increase in our own country, we are again faced with the same question as people in (Nazi) occupied Amsterdam. Will we collude, collaborate, or resist? I hope my book will motivate people to be mindful and make good choices.”

Mary’s book is the story of a young Jewish girl who risks her life as a secret messenger for the Anti-Nazi underground. It was a finalist for the International Book Awards, and was selected as a Kirkus Indie Book of the Month. “But the Sarton Award has special meaning for me,” Mary says, “because I am such an admirer and follower of May Sarton, and have been for decades.”

The inspiration for Mary’s book came when she was living in the Nazi-defined Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam and learned that roundups of Jewish people had taken place on her very own doorstep.

“It brought the Holocaust home to me, a gentile with no known Dutch connections, as never before. The next year, I lived in another apartment where Jewish people had been hidden in the attic, and I felt compelled to write their stories. While I would never know what happened to those specific individuals, I could learn a lot about people in their situation ... That was the point when the novel began.”

During the 13 years it took to research and write the book, Mary says she learned a lot about the perils of the hatred of any group of people as a group.

“I saw how quickly a civilized society could change into one where it was possible to roundup and murder 80 percent of the Jewish population – and I was deeply inspired by seeing that resistance was possible, even in those circumstances. Rachel Klein, my 18-year-old heroine, risks her life to deliver messages, underground newspapers, and ultimately false papers. Women like her were the backbone of communications for the resistance, and they haven’t received nearly the credit they deserve.”

Mary began writing as a child, but it was only when

she was in her fifties that she became brave enough to take what she had written beyond family and friends. “I was galvanized by the stories of the Holocaust and Resistance in the Netherlands. At last I had a subject that was more important than my fears.”

An Address in Amsterdam is not Mary’s first book. She also wrote a non-fiction book in

1987, *Women MBAs: A Foot in the Door*, that was published by Macmillan. It is a qualitative study of what happened to the women who thought they only needed an MBA to succeed. Mary says that while she cares about that issue and that book, *An Address in Amsterdam* has become a passion. So much so that she plans to devote two years to getting the ideas in this book out into the world before beginning another major project.

As for winning the Sarton award, Mary says, “It is an affirmation of the value of 13 years of hard work ... It touches and delights me, and will help me keep up the good work for the rest of my life. It’s in my kitchen where everyone can see it.”

Between 2001 and 2015, Mary lived in Amsterdam off and on for a total of 30 months. She started her book in 2002, and while writing and researching it, she also managed to earn a master of fine arts degree from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. She says the best piece of writing advice she received came from a faculty member, Larry Sutin, who taught her about the benefits of revision, “which many writers think of as a nasty chore rather than as an opportunity to deepen the story. I actually enjoyed it, which is good because no page of my book has been revised less than a dozen times.

“Sutin told us not to tinker with the words first, but to close our eyes and re-vision the scene, i.e., to see it more clearly. Look for the details, the people in the background, a stray gesture. Slow the action down so you can really see it all.”

“The hardest thing about writing the book,” says Mary, “wasn’t the 13 years of delving into archives and doing all the rest of the research, or the arduous process of making the dates accurate that every historical novelist goes through. It was coming to terms emotionally with the fact

that the place I lived and loved, which seemed so civilized to me, had been occupied by the Nazis, and that they had succeeded in their diabolical plans.

“Allowing myself to believe that, and to feel the loss of people I didn’t know but whose presence I nevertheless felt, was extremely painful – though not as painful, of course, as it is for people who suffered the actual losses. To write the predicament of my characters, I had to search my own heart and experience for the times when I had felt terrified, persecuted and in fear of my life. That was much harder than figuring out if my characters had been banned from the park by March of 1943.”

An offshoot of Mary’s book has been a blog she calls Hidden Amsterdam; <http://seehiddenamsterdam.com/>. She began writing it during the early months of 2015, when she was again living in the city, and doing the last of her many revisions to *An Address in Amsterdam*.

“Many people travel to Amsterdam,” Mary says, “and I wanted to share my discoveries with them or with armchair travelers. In the course of my research, I discovered many unmarked, or unmarked in English, places of interest. I attended commemorative events and visited endless museums and archives. It was satisfying to have an outlet for that information – and a great relief to write a post fast, put it up and let it go, rather than the long labor of love that the novel represents.”

In addition to featuring Amsterdam’s many charms, Mary’s blog also guides people to places that speak of collaboration and betrayal, resistance and honor. “If the words ‘Never Again’ are to have meaning, we need to learn enough to make them live,” she avers.

In her non-writing life, Mary helps people and organizations change for the better through reflective

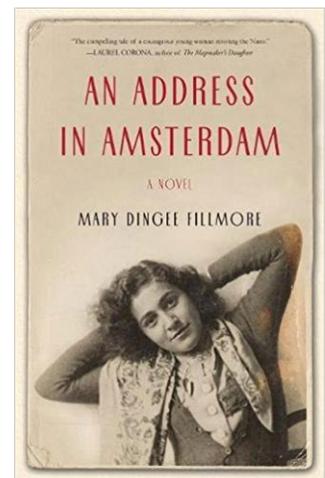
retreats, strategic planning, mentoring and training. <http://changingworktogether.com/> During her earlier career years, she worked for the Environmental Protection Agency, and was editor of three science and society newsletters. In 1981, she set up her own consulting service.

Now living in Vermont, she splits her practice between work in her own community and clients elsewhere in the public sector, nonprofits, and socially responsible businesses. Mary says she builds strategies on the conditions prevalent in an organization, rather than imposing a formula and trying to fit the client’s needs within it.

At home, Mary loves writing longhand in her grandmother’s Victorian chair, which is perfectly proportioned for her. “It looks out a glass door to the grape arbor and shade garden I’ve created. In winter, the shadows of the trees and grasses on the snow are just as beautiful as the vegetation I see now. I never revise or outline in this spot, or use the computer; it is purely meant for creation.”

As for her advice to other writers, it is to “keep the faith with your work. When

you find something important to write about, find many different ways to investigate it, and never stop making it better. Everyone’s work can be revised and improved. It takes a village!”



The Maya Prize for Unpublished Memoir

Memoirists, this exciting new project is especially for you! SCN and She Writes Press are teaming up to co-sponsor 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 women’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 e-letter for details!



An Interview with Sarton Award Winner

Jenni Ogden

by Pat Bean

“Find the story you absolutely want to tell and are excited about because you will be living with it for a long time.”

Winner of the SCN 2015-16 May Sarton Award in contemporary fiction for *A Drop in the Ocean: A Novel*, Jenni Ogden grew up in a country town in New Zealand in a home bursting with books. Sickly as a child, she spent three or four months bedridden every year between the ages of eight to thirteen. As a result, she became an avid reader, and by the time she was twelve, she had read all of Charles Dickens. “I didn’t particularly like his books; I’d just run out of other books.”

Jenni says she grew up wanting to be a veterinarian, but struggled with chemistry and physics, and eventually found psychology to be more interesting. She went on to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in animal behavior and psychology.

Love came along when she was 23. This was followed by a move to Canberra, Australia, followed by marriage to an ecology lecturer with two children, followed by the birth of their daughter, and finally followed by the adoption of a young boy from Sri Lanka.

“While living in Australia, we went on lots of camping trips and spent summers on islands on the Great Barrier Reef, where I worked as a volunteer turtle tagger.” Jenni uses this experience in writing *A Drop in The Ocean*. In fact, the book draws a lot from Jenni’s own background. The protagonist, Anna, is a Boston neuroscientist, and the main part of the book is set on an island in Australia’s Great Barrier Reef.

During the early years of her marriage, Jenni earned a post-graduate diploma in social sciences by correspondence, and when the family moved to Auckland, New Zealand – “When our youngest was two and our eldest ten” – she enrolled part-time at Auckland University, where she earned a master’s degree in psychology.

“I loved being a student again, and followed that with a three-year clinical psychology degree, followed by a PhD in clinical neuropsychology, and a postdoctoral fellowship at Auckland Hospital,” says Jenni. “We then all went to the U.S. for a year, where my husband had a research fellowship at Harvard, and I had a postdoctoral fellowship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I was in the right place at the right time and was privileged to have worked with H.M., the most famous amnesiac in history.” Jenni

blogs for “Psychology Today,” and you can read about H.M. at <http://tinyurl.com/ycj6pay6>

Back in Australia, Jenni became director of the Postgrad Clinical Psychology program at Auckland University, and her psychology career, and psychology-writing career, blossomed.

“For the next 24 years I immersed myself in my job, and wrote 60 chapters and peer reviewed articles for academic journals, and two books, *Fractured Minds: A Case-Study Approach to Clinical Neuropsychology* and *Trouble In Mind: Stories from a Neuropsychologist’s Casebook*. *Fractured Minds*, first published in 1996 by OUP, New York, with a second edition in 2005, is still a good seller after 22 years, and delivers me a worthwhile royalty check every year. In 2015, I was honored with the Distinguished Career Award by the International Neuropsychological Society.”

During this period, Jenni was also a mother to four children, who now, according to their mom, are “all very independent, very active, warm and intelligent, share our left-leaning values...and the two middle ones have provided us with five grandchildren.”

Jenni says she loved her job as a university teacher, researcher, and supervisor of clinical psychology students, and the nonfiction writing that was always a part of it. But she admits nursing a fantasy “way back then, that one day I would write a novel, and in the acknowledgements of that first edition of *Fractured Minds* in 1996, I thanked my editor who took a punt on a new author who wanted to write a novel disguised as a textbook. At that point, I was in my late forties, and in truth had no time to write fiction, even though I daydreamed about it. I had been an avid fiction reader since childhood, but usually only managed to read novels in bed at night before falling asleep.”

Eventually, as Jenni rose higher in the academic system and became more locked into administration tasks, she and her husband purchased a holiday home on Great Barrier Island, and began dreaming up ways to live there full time – where Jenni could write fiction.

“We went part-time when I was in my mid-fifties, with an agreement that we would retire fully on my 60th birthday ... We wanted to enjoy living in such an idyllic

place while we still had our good health, and for both of us, simply living by the ocean gave us joy and enormous pleasure. We also planned on many more years to indulge new passions. For me, that was taking my fiction writing seriously,” says Jenni. “It had always seemed to me that many people work long stressful days for most of the year in order to be able to afford two weeks annual holiday on an island like ours. How much better to wake up here every day.”

Reluctant, however, to let her university job and learning go, it wasn't until late 2010, Jenni says, that she finally focused on fiction writing. “I spent lots of time joining webinars on writing, and querying agents, and book publicity and book publishing models. Then there was all that social networking I discovered writers had to get involved in, and that was another enormous learning curve. But I loved the time when I was actually writing or revising, the only hard part was banging away on the computer while the sun shone outside and the beach was just a two-minute walk away.”

Jenni persisted, however, and completed novel No.1 – and then learned about rejection. *A Drop in the Ocean* is Jenni's third novel. She considers the first two unpublished books as her degree in creative writing. “I certainly learned an enormous amount while writing them, so I refuse to see them as wasted time.”

After what, she says, was exhausting research, Jenni decided to publish *A Drop in the Ocean* with She Writes Press, a partnership press that follows a traditional publishing process. She blogged about the process for Writer's Digest: <http://tinyurl.com/ybr2ozwt>

“I had no real idea how much work getting the book buzz out would be, and for months before and after the book comes out, life becomes a round of social networking, writing articles, blog posts, in addition to the proof reading, cover design decisions and all the other things that go into making a fine book. How writers find time during this process to write new novels, I have no idea.”

Now Jenni is thinking ahead to her next “two” novels, which will be in the same narrative voice as *A Drop in the Ocean*, “because I received glowing feedback about having a strong narrative voice,” she says.

Jenni has completed one of the books, *Call My Name out Loud*, with the title taken from a line in the Carol King/James Taylor song “You've Got a Friend.” The book is set

in Far North Queensland, and is the story of a long-time friendship between two couples. Jenni is currently pitching it for publication.

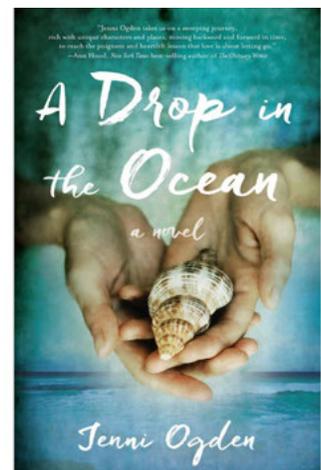
“While I'm waiting, I am writing my next novel, which is based on the youngest child of one of the couples in *Call My Name Out Loud*. It involves Kenya and elephants. I have been on safari in various African countries ... so this is the inspiration and background for this book.”

Jenni writes from her home on Great Barrier Island, where she has a desk in the guest room. “It has bookcases with my writing books ... and two walls are windows that look over a rural landscape of hills with not a single house in sight. I need quiet when I write, no music. “I do a lot of my thinking while walking on the beach, which I do at least once a day. I can't write when I'm traveling or in coffee shops. When we are at our small place in Australia, I write on the kitchen table and that works well. I use Scrivener, and aim for 1,000 good words a day. Every few chapters I compile it for my Kindle and read it on that, highlighting places where I want to revise. Then I go back to my computer and revise. I am a planner, and revise as I go rather than churning out a very rough draft first.”

Jenni says it was “wonderful” to receive the Sarton Award. “I well knew how good the other books in the shortlist were ... I am sure any of them could have equally won.”

Shortly after receiving the Sarton award, *A Drop in the Ocean* won the Gold Nautilus Award for Fiction, Large Publisher. The book also won the gold in the Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPYS) for Best Fiction, Australia and New Zealand, and the Silver in the 2016 Readers' Favorite International Book Awards for Women's Fiction.

Jenni's advice for fiction writers, “Find the story you absolutely want to tell and are excited about because you will be living with it for a long time.”



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.



True Words from Real Women

A selection of short pieces of lifewriting by our members, edited by Jo Virgil. Contribute your own True Words to the Journal. Future topics are listed on page 32 (the back page). This month's topic is: Music and Memories.

You Put Your Right Foot In ...

Marilyn Ashbaugh, Edwardsburg MI
Ashbaugh108@gmail.com

During my fourth summer, my parents walked me to a nearby park where the winter ice rink was transformed into a dance floor. People of all ages were gathered in a large circle. I squirmed through the crowd to the center circle.

“You put your right foot in ...” the music implored, and so I did.

Next I knew, my mother enrolled me in ballet classes where I lasted until pointe—too painful! Chubby Checkers suggested twisting again, which I loved. I was too young for sock hops, but I would dance anywhere there was music, and the transistor radio assured music at both beaches and parks. High school found me at the usual concerts. I preferred the dance floor where my shyness vanished in the freedom of movement. I danced anywhere at any time. This gave some the idea that I was bold and brave, but I was neither. Some called me a show-off, and I probably was. But it was for the love of movement rather than the need for an audience, although I did dance in a few musicals.

While in graduate school, I developed a fascination for all things Eastern, including belly-dance, which provided a welcomed release after sitting for hours at a cramped library carrel. I learned to play a doumbek drum that I strapped around myself. As I danced, I was transported to another world through its hypnotic beat.

“Dance your prayers!” announced the flyer for the dances of universal peace—and so I did, until the circle’s leader retired ten years later.

Blue Eyes

Judy Watkins, Myrtle Creek OR
judywa@frontiernet.net
w-circle 3, w-circle 6

The old man sat alone in a room where the only furniture was a straight-backed chair in the middle of the floor. Three walls of the room were covered with shelves full of radios, stereos, large speakers and a collection of records, tapes and compact discs. Along the other wall was an assortment of regular and electric guitars, and harmonicas. This was my father’s music room, his sanctuary, the place where he preferred to spend large portions of his days. In that room he strummed his guitar and sang along with his favorite artists of long ago. I could hear him harmonizing with Boxcar Willy, Hank Snow, and Hank Williams singing songs like “I’m Moving On,” “The Golden Rocket,” and “I Don’t Hurt Anymore.” That room was his peaceful and happy place to be.

Although my Dad passed away in 2007, he left happy memories of the friends who regularly dropped by his home to pluck guitars and sing with him. The family reunions with his many cousins were one big jam-fest filled with laughing, clapping and dancing.

When I was growing up, my Dad’s music was a constant in our home. It was the only music that I knew, and it became part of my life, too. When I learned to dance, it was to the beat and twang of country guitars and fiddles. Is it any wonder that my happiest memories are about dancing?

Country music in any form was next to heaven for my Dad. I am certain that when the day comes that I leave this earth I will find my father sitting on that main bandstand in the sky playing “Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain” with Willie Nelson, and I will spend eternity dancing to the best country music ever.

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (A Little Night Music)

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It was an autumn afternoon—far enough from summer to have lost the heat, and not close enough to winter to have that bite of cold. And it was the kind of day when even a feather would fall without drifting one way or the other. The grass was straight and silent, and the leaves dangled more as if they had been painted there. Should a person be able to feel the beating of the birds' wings, that would have been the only breeze. It was still, utterly still, and silent.

Hoping to fill that silence, I retrieved my transistor radio from my knapsack and fiddled with its tuning dial. But the twisting brought no reward—just the steady whoosh of white noise. As the sun went down, I turned my attention to the campfire; the flames licked at the wood, and the red sparks warmed the cool evening air. Night closed in around us and brought such a silence that the crackle of the campfire was all that I could hear. To no avail, I again twisted my radio's dial.

"We're in the boonies." Pop continued washing and polishing the arrowheads he'd found earlier that day. "Probably no signal out here."

"It's too quiet! I'm going stir-crazy."

"But there's plenty of night music."

"Night music?"

"Yes! It's floating through the air. Listen carefully; what do you hear?"

I strained. "I hear nothing, Pop."

"It takes practice to hear the night music. Close your eyes; try again."

I shut my eyes and focused. This time I heard owls scolding one another, the pine trees whispering, fireflies flitting, and waters lapping over rocks in a nearby stream.

"Eine kleine Nachtmusik, Ja?"

"Yes, a little night music!" I opened my eyes and smiled triumphantly.

"See! Why listen to a radio when the night plays its own symphony?"

And at that moment I began appreciating Pop's love for the great outdoors. Now, whenever I'm outside at night, I close my eyes and listen for his night music as it fills the air, cherishing the memory that the Nachtmusik stirs within me.

Songs That Tickle My Brain

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Whenever life stirs a memory of a childhood song, it tends to play in my head for a while; I readily recall how and where I learned it. My siblings and I loved singing "Bill Grogan's Goat" while Mom pounded out the tune on our old pump organ:

"Bill Grogan's goat was feeling fine, ate three red shirts from off the line.

Bill took a stick, gave him three whacks, and tied him to the railroad tracks."

We knew all four verses of "Grandfather's Clock," but I only remember the chorus:

"Ninety years without slumbering, tick-tock, tick-tock.

His life seconds' numbering, tick-tock, tick-tock,

But it stopped ... short ... never to go again when the old man died."

Even though the train engineer killed the goat and the clock stopped when Grandfather died, they were fun songs we kids sang surrounding Mom as she happily pumped the organ pedals and sang with us.

In elementary school, Mrs. Baere's bright red lipstick formed the perfect "O" in songs such as "Go Tell it on the Mountain" and "Over the River and through the Woods." I could strum out "Home on the Range" and "I've been Working on the Railroad" on the autoharp better than anyone else (or so I thought). We memorized patriotic songs like "My Country 'tis of Thee" and "America the Beautiful." We sang songs that aren't sung as much today: "Oh, Susanna" and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again."

At the Welsh Settlement Congregational Church, we sang old favorites like "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "In the Garden," and "The Old Rugged Cross." When my brain plays those hymns, I hear my dad belting out the tunes in his sweet, off-key voice.

I don't know much more than the first line of any newer songs from the '60s and '70s. However, I can sing all four verses of "The Old Rugged Cross" and "Bill Grogan's Goat," and that's good enough for me when I sing those favorites to my grandchildren as a part of my legacy for generations to come.

One Last Time

Marian McCaa Thomas, Leawood KS
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“I think we should go see Grandma before it’s too late,” said our eldest son.

My husband and I agreed, so Peter flew from Chicago, and our second son, Steven, flew from New Haven. We drove with them and our daughter, Julia, from Kansas City to Columbia, Missouri, 125 miles to the east. Our children had been fortunate to know both their paternal grandparents from childhood. They knew that Grandma suffered from dementia and that Uncle Brian took both parents into his home so his mother could fulfill her wish to die at home rather than in a hospital.

Not knowing what to expect, we were sad to find Grandma unresponsive, silent, seemingly absent. As we sat around Brian’s table eating supper, he lovingly fed his mother bits of food and sips of liquid, which she accepted willingly. His way with her touched me deeply. Later he helped her move to the sofa. She slept sitting up, with Grandpa sitting beside her. Knowing how much she had enjoyed singing together as a family, we had brought Welsh hymnbooks with us. Grandpa sang out with gusto, and the rest of us joined in: Brian played the soprano part on his recorder; I played the piano and sang alto; and Peter, Steven and my husband filled in the bass and tenor lines. Julia, not in the mood to sing, listened.

Our spirits lifted as we drew the deep breaths needed to project our voices. The hymns’ words pointed to joys to be experienced in heaven, living forever in the loving presence of God. As the third hymn ended, I glanced at the woman I had come to call Mom, and realized that she was opening her eyes!

She smiled, turning her head to look into the eyes of each one of us in turn. She had come back to us through hearing those beloved hymns, and she silently blessed us with her smile of recognition before disappearing into her distant place. When she died two months later, we had the precious memory of those moments to assuage our grief.

The Winter of ’73

Ariela Zucker, Ellsworth ME
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Sometimes a sentence or even just a line from a familiar song can bring back a whole period of life. That is how I felt sitting in the back seat of my daughter’s car when the song came up on the radio. The car had just emerged from around the last curve on the road from Rosh-Pina to Tiberias, and I could see the first lights of the town mirrored in the surface of the lake, The Lake of Galilee. On the other side of the lake, I could make out the outline of the mountains, the Golan Heights.

“We are the children of the winter

Of the year ’73 ...”

The song, usually performed on Memorial Day, brought back a flood of memories. The winter of ’73 was the winter of the Yom-Kippur war. Hearing the song, I remembered myself at 23, during the war, sitting in a small café in Tiberias, looking at the same dark water.

We got together that night, a few soldiers, and managed to find a jeep and drive down from Kuneitra, where we were stationed, searching for a hot shower and a cup of coffee. Dado and I sat on the open deck, talking. I told him how I would like to go back to school but thought I was too old to take on a new commitment. He, at least 20 years older than me, giggled softly in the dark. “It is never too late to do something you truly like.”

My army service started with the war of 1967 and ended with the Yom-Kippur war. In the spring, the war was officially over. I did not return to my teaching job. Instead, I left for the U.S. to study for my master degree in counseling education.

“It is never too late to pursue something you like.”

The sentence is going with me ever since. It takes me back to that night on the deck over the calm black water, and the promise of peace still waiting to be fulfilled.

• We are the children of winter 1973—

<http://www.hebrewsongs.com/song-choref73.htm>

Mistaken Identity

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One afternoon, I took my developmentally-delayed granddaughter to her favorite fast food restaurant. She loved chicken nuggets, crispy French fries and creamy chocolate milkshakes. Standing in line to order, I noticed Taylor kept her eyes on the woman in front of us. She was dressed in a tight, short, cherry red skirt, frilly, chartreuse

green blouse, and a small, white crocheted hat. Long, spindly legs supported her protruded, plump, round stomach. Letting go of my hand, Taylor walked over to the unsuspecting woman, tugged on her skirt and blurted out, “Hey, lady, are you a tomato?”

One More Time

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I've always hungered for more in life: Just one more chapter before my bedtime; Just one more game— maybe this time, I'll win; Just one more wish on every single birthday;	Just one more paycheck for lagniappe after the bills; Just one more dance boot-scooting 'cross the floor; Just one more time to taste sweetness in life; Just one more chance to find True North and sail away.
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Wild Woman Meltdown

Maya Lazarus, Caldwell TX
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Did you ever have one of those days
when you completely flip out?
Curse, holler
jump up and down
throw yourself on the bed
hurl your phone
toss your glasses
swear that no one understands
what you're going through.

You have an audience—
your grown daughter, your husband,
your little dog looking up at you
and wondering
What is wrong with her?

Well, that day was today.
I said to my daughter,
I hope you didn't video that.
I don't want to go viral.

*No, Mom. Sometimes
you just have to let loose.*

I said to my husband,
Oh, that was embarrassing.

Don't worry, he assured me.
You were justified. Besides
we're used to you.

Lil Mama came back
to lie on my bed.
Meltdown over.
I'm normal again.

The Wedding Dress

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In the morning, my life would change forever. Kent and I had dated for two years, were best friends for 19; I had just turned 43 and was ready.

I should have been exhausted when Kent woke me at 7:00, having been up all night contemplating the new chapter about to begin in my life, but I was exhilarated. I lit the tree lights, made a pot of tea, and heated the quiche. A dozen presents had tags with my name on them. Kent insisted I open the big present first. So predictable. Didn't men usually hide the tiny ring box in a big package? Teasing him back, I opened the small ones first. They held clothes I'd never wear and sweets I didn't like. I could see his devious mind setting me up for anger and disappointment just to turn things around when I saw the ring.

He handed me the biggest package. I took my time unwrapping it. Kent sighed in distress.

"Okay, okay," I said, and gave him a pre-opening kiss.

The package held a brown leather jacket. He knew I didn't care for leather jackets, either. I nonchalantly slipped my hands into the small pockets fingering them for the ring. I hadn't misunderstood him. I knew I hadn't. The hints were blatantly there. I scanned under the tree. There were no unwrapped presents. I pretended I wasn't heartbroken, suspecting this too was part of his plan.

Later, Kent and I had a silly fight which made me angry enough to ask, "What happened to the proposal? I'm hurt."

"How dare you do this to me!" he retorted, and stormed out, forever.

Confused and alone, I stared into the festive tree.

I slid open my closet door, took out the lovely white rayon dress with soft, delicately embroidered pink and blue flowers around the lace collar, folded it, and slipped it under a pile of sweaters.

The woman at Goodwill loved it.

Tap Shoes

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I was in my mid-50s when I saw a newspaper ad for adult tap-dancing lessons in the local paper. I cut out the ad. Could I still dance? Would I remember any of the steps? Would friends and family laugh when they heard of it? Did I care what others thought? No, it was time to think about me.

On that note, I made the call and enrolled in classes. I went to the dance togs store and purchased a new pair of tap shoes. I wore those shoes for tap lessons and dance recitals for 10 years. Yes, I danced in recitals along with all the little kids. Didn't I work as hard as they did? I was proud of what I was doing and I believed when other mothers and grandmothers saw me, they might enroll in classes too.

Finally the shoes wore out and the screws would no longer hold the taps in place. It was decision time. I was 61—should I quit taking lessons or should I buy new tap shoes? How much longer would my knees hold up? Should I spend the money on shoes that may never see much wear?

Yes, I planned to dance in the June recital. I danced with a wonderful group of ten ladies and one man, all over 40. How could I not continue? I knew that I wanted to dance as long as my health held out and as long as I could find an instructor. After all the years of lessons I could still mechanically perform the steps better than anybody in our class but I knew that didn't make me a performer. Most of my classmates had theater experience and performed locally. That was not important to me. For me dancing was pure joy, fun and satisfaction, and I enjoyed the classes more than anybody.

Yes, I bought the new shoes and it was the best investment of my life.

Authentic Self

Maya Lazarus, Caldwell TX
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My hidden self appears
raggedly clothed and unwashed
after years of imprisonment.
Shadows disintegrate.
White lotus flower opens.
I reclaim my piece of the earth,
my right to be here.

Singing Our Hearts Out

Catharine Dalton, Martinez CA
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In sixth grade we got a new songbook that was unlike any we'd ever seen. No more dittoed pages, the sallow tint of age nearly obscuring their purple print. No faded brown cover, as on so many of our other textbooks. For this was the real thing, from its textured and padded silver covers to the bold pen and ink illustrations, to the astounding variety of songs inside: "Juanita" to "John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt" to "A Capital Ship."

Given the size of our combined fifth/sixth-grade class, we had to pair up on these books, and we had no more than a pitch pipe to get started. But our motley group (in those pre-social-promotion days it ranged from shrill-voiced ten-year-olds to teenage farm boys, their voices newly, startlingly descended to the baritone range, and from shy and skinny poppets to already-buxom young ladies of 11 or 12) put an astounding amount of life into songs both old and new.

Sturdy Mrs. Abbott helmed our classroom, which stretched the length of the massive brick school building; miraculously, she managed to provide the three Rs plus social studies plus an after-lunch storytime of folk tales, Norse sagas, and adventure yarns from around the world. Singing hour was best of all, though.

The day was always Friday; the time, mid-afternoon. Mrs. A would list five songs on the chalkboard and elicit three more from the good citizenship winners of the week. A show of hands determined the day's repertory of three, and off we went. Two songs—"Solomon Levi" and "A Spanish Cavalier"—were meant to be sung together and were consistently chosen. None of us had experienced the haberdashery trade or old-world romance, but most of us knew good songs when we sang them.

The first renditions were ragged, as kids forgot which melody or words their group was singing. As time went on, though, the two melodies became both distinct and compatible. I know this because, over 60 years later, I can call up a recognizable (and rousing) rendition, as well as the buoyant mood we virtually floated home on at day's end.

"We have to dare to be ourselves,
however frightening or strange that
self may prove to be."

— May Sarton

When Memory Calls

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When the phone rang I almost didn't pick up.
I was writing—a call would break my concentration.
But, I picked up. This is Carl, he said.
I thought, Carl who? I knew a Carl from work.
Was he calling to break his racquetball date with Bob?
My caller talked about his knee replacement surgeries
and recent bipolar diagnosis and needing to take lithium
and that he's been sober for seventeen years
ever since the birth of his daughter,
and that his thirty-year son is in jail for selling dope.
And he thought—just fifteen minutes before—
of a little house with a white picket fence,
and if he had these last forty years to live over again,
he would have stayed married to me
in that house, instead of going on
to wives two through five.
That's when I knew it wasn't Carl from work.
This Carl conveniently forgot he had no choice.
I left for a chance of happiness without him,
to protect myself from his drunkenness,
drugs and disregard for my feelings.
I wondered how he envisioned me now.
He only knew me from his memories
of the naïve twenty-one-year old girl he married.
Back then a house with a white picket fence
with a devoted and loving husband
might have been nice.
Now it is much too small.

Ode to My Zayde (“Grandfather” in Yiddish)

Abby November, San Diego CA

You are my sunshine ... He sang to me!
I was his favorite
My only sunshine
He loved me without strings
when skies are sunny or blue
Made me happy by his smile
when skies are cloudy and gray
Gave me laughter and candy
He'll never know how much I loved him
until the hospital took my sunshine away
I never had my sunshine again

Tonight

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e-circle 6

For more than 20 years, I have spent a week in August in Carmel, California at the Carmel Bach Festival listening to beautiful music day and night. My mother and I began the tradition about 22 years ago. We both loved music, so it was our special time together. As a yearly gift to her I created bound journals of our musical weeks.

When my mother decided she no longer had the energy to travel, I began to go it alone. Though the first year was hard, I made up for it by calling her daily to give her reports on every detail, and to send her good wishes from friends we had made over the years.

Now I have even more friends and a very active life there, doing volunteer work, meeting new people, hiking, living a life of independence and enjoying the freedom, knowing that I have my husband to go back to when it is over. I continue to keep a journal, but my audience changes each summer, depending upon my needs and desires.

The e-mail that follows was written to a friend and festival lecturer who once sang opera with the group. This night I included David Gordon as part of my audience. It was written July 23, 2012:

David,

I am so glad you asked Janet Seed to speak about her Baroque flute today at the pre-concert talk. Her performance tonight was beautiful, but I wouldn't have appreciated it nearly as much if I hadn't learned what goes into playing those notes on that very old instrument.

Flexibility was the key.

I also wanted to say that I loved the final piece of the concert, “Oblivion.” I am still imagining myself in a long, slinky black dress, fishnet stockings, a cigarette dangling from my left hand, dancing a sultry tango to a live orchestra in a smoke-filled nightclub. My voice is soft and raspy; my body is wrapped tightly around my dance partner, and I am entranced by the music and the mood.

Were there supertitles? I never saw any because I never took my eyes off the musicians.

Such a sexy piece.

What would Bach say?!

Marion

Fantabulous Night

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Music is an amazing invitation to feeling, as well as being universal.

Each and every time I hear, “Well, it’s a marvelous night for a moonance ...” I am transported to the independent happiness experienced on December 10, 1981—my twenty-third birthday. Although Van Morrison’s lyrics had helped to make him famous in the early ‘70s, I had never heard the song until I entered The Cow Pub in Queenston, New Zealand, with others who met at the youth hostel hours earlier. Having just completed the unforgettable adventure of hiking the four-day Routeburn Track, a renowned rainforest route on the southern island, we were assigned to share a co-ed dorm that evening.

Two months previously, upon leaving Australia, I had been given money to use on this particular day as a celebratory present from my bartender lover. Charles had gifted me a dollar for each of my years on earth, to be spent in his home country any way I wished. At the time, it was an incredible sum which I concealed in a separate compartment with my Canadian passport.

“To the sound of the breezes that blow”

It had only made sense, in turn, to treat others to a place popular with backpackers at the time, offering us a chance to mingle with locals in a cozy and rustic joint known for its cheap eats. After having spent a total of 18 nights in the previous three weeks hiking on the coastal mountains alone, I selfishly wanted company. Believe me when I say, one is never more popular in a budget shelter than when offering to pay for a burger and a pint.

My four new global friends, who joined in with the grizzled folk-singer as we found a table near the roaring fire, all sang “And I’m trying to please to the calling” in unison, as I enjoyed their harmony and instantaneous comradery. It was such an entrance that the singer sung it one more time, and then another, as the rowdy existing crowd started to join in and I learned the beautiful melody: “Of your heart-strings that play soft and low.”

In Concert

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The crowd grows restless. Suddenly a deafening roar fills the theater—a combination of cheers from the audience and music blasting from the giant speakers. The curtain rises, revealing a set in bold colors of gold contrasting with black shadows. A man of slight stature emerges from the shadows and I hold my hands over my ears to escape the increasing cacophony.

The man, who would disappear into his surroundings if not for the white hat, steps up to the piano and a hush comes over the auditorium. He does not interact with the audience nor gives any visible signal to his band. Like a well-oiled machine, they begin.

Every seat is filled, and as I look around, I see all age groups. Many of us have been fans since the 1960s, but I spot just as many from younger generations.

It is all business, as song after song keeps my husband Joe, my friend Alice, and me enthralled. At times the singer’s voice sounds gravelly and full as rust and we strive to hear the words, for his poetry is what we like best. In and out of the shadows, he sings and plays piano or harmonica, but no guitar tonight. Many consider him a genius.

He croons, “Tangled up in blue,” a new version of an old favorite. Joe squeezes my hand before placing two fingers in his mouth to whistle, while Alice claps as hard as she can. I am screaming “YEEEEAAA” as loudly as possible.

After two hours, the curtain falls. The crowd will not go unquenched. “ENCORE! ENCORE!” we all scream. The curtain rises again, and in a voice as smooth as silk, he performs a spiritual. “All roads lead to Thee,” he sings, and tears form in my eyes.

In a way, the words were prophetic, for this was the last live performance my husband would attend before he died. He now rests in happy memory, as does this Bob Dylan concert.

Radios Are My Life

Ann Haas, Akron OH
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As far back as I can remember, radios and music have been a constant in my life. It was thrilling to buy my own transistor radio in the 1960s with the money I earned babysitting and doing household chores. I thought I was the coolest teenager in the neighborhood to listen to the latest hits on my portable radio in our backyard while sunbathing. A portable radio gave me the teenage freedom to escape the country music stations my parents tuned into on the family radio.

More radios would appear every few years after I was married. My husband, Paul, surprised me regularly with an ever advancing parade of the latest radio models. I still have the first radio my husband gave me on our first wedding anniversary, which could record as well as play cassettes. One of the requests my husband asked of me using this radio was to record Ernie Harwell’s last baseball broadcast for the Detroit Tigers.

Throughout our marriage, radios were our mutual entertainment choice, either listening to our favorite radio stations in the car or tuning into a “Prairie Home Companion” in the early days of this Saturday night radio show. We would eat popcorn propped up in bed as dusk fell and laugh ourselves silly listening to Garrison Keillor’s radio skits. One evening, we laughed so hard that my husband fell out of bed as he clutched his side to catch his breath when he tried to stop laughing. Uncontrollable laughter continued the next half hour each time we looked at one another.

As a fiftieth birthday present, my husband gifted me with a pricey Bose radio, considered the Cadillac of radios twenty years ago. One last radio entered my life after my husband died—his Sirius satellite radio. It still sits by his chair. Although I have never mastered its use, it reminds me of his love for music and his generosity through the years with each successive musical gift I received from him.

Last Train Home

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It had been a pleasant breakfast visit with my parents and brother’s sister-in-law Rita, but when I got to my office and turned on Pandora I found myself sobbing at my desk.

My brother Tom and Mom shared a love for Pat Metheny, and especially his instrumental, “Last Train Home.” An audio techno-wizard, Tom made a recording of it so Mom could listen to it anytime she wanted.

When Tom’s metastatic kidney cancer finally overtook his body, the Tennessee branch of our family traveled to his Florida home to spend his final days with him. It felt ironic that when we arrived and walked into the house, “Last Train Home” was looping through the smart TV from YouTube.

For Tom’s memorial service, his wife chose a lovely outdoor setting facing the Braden River. I learned later that my sister-in-law asked a friend assisting with the service to go through Tom’s cell phone and randomly select six or seven songs to be playing as guests gathered. The friend didn’t know Tom’s preferences in music, but when my sister, our remaining brother and I arrived, it was to the strains of “Last Train Home.” It felt like Tom approved when a train, whistle blowing, crossed the river as the service began.

Some say our loved ones who have passed send us messages to let us know they are close. A few months after Tom died, my sister observed four birds sitting in a tree and was moved to tears when one flew away while the

other three remained. Our niece sent a picture she snapped of a stunning Florida sunset that created a bright cross (or was it a T?) of light.

So it was not surprising when our waiter arrived that morning, when Mom, Dad, Rita and I had breakfast, that his name was—Thomas. But I was surprised when I got to my office afterwards and “Last Train Home” popped up on Pandora. I hadn’t heard it since Tom’s service last year. And I had not added it to my Pandora playlist.

He may have taken his last train home, but clearly Tom hasn’t left us.

Memories of Music

Connie Katusak, Burnet TX
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It was a frightening period for Italian Americans during the early 1940s when war was raging on the Italian peninsula. Worried about family members who remained in Sicily, the *paisan* (friends and family) would often congregate at our house to listen to the radio broadcasts and share what news they had. On the weekends, families would often bring beat-up guitars, mandolins, and their voices to play and sing to ease their tensions while women congregated in the black-and-white kitchen to cook and gossip.

My earliest remembrances were of my father, dark hair curling over his shirt collar, sitting at the old upright piano in the tiny room with bright yellow flowered wallpaper. It housed the piano, a lumpy red plaid fabric covered couch, a rotary-dial telephone, and a large old-fashioned radio. It was crowded, but after dinner the sound of my father playing poignant Italian folk songs relieved his stress from working in the hot family dry cleaners. In the summer with the window wide open, his renditions could be enjoyed by the neighbors.

Our town housed industries important to the war effort. We were subject to blackouts when all lights were extinguished so as not to be a target for enemy bombers. Dark curtains covered the windows; even stove pilot lights were extinguished. We huddled in the kitchen and my father strummed quiet music on his mandolin until the all clear was sounded.

I would often sit and finger tunes on the piano, so it was decided I should have music lessons. I was four-years-old and it was a sacrifice, but I learned to read music and even composed my own. I remember joining the group in the little room, sitting on the tall round stool and playing while my father fingered his mandolin or guitar. Long ago memories of a blessed time for me.

In Dreams

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 e-circle 4, e-circle 6

Transistor radio tucked beneath my pillow, rocked my
 teenage self to sleep. Roy Orbison whispered,
 “Only the Lonely,” and I knew that he knew how I felt.

Gene Pitney knew it too. His “Only Love Can Break a Heart”
 I felt on a cellular level. “She Cried,” sang Jay and the Americans and
 “Tears on my Pillow” made famous by Little Anthony—My damp pillow at dawn
 was evidence their messages penetrated the airwaves and my tissue paper heart
 “It Hurts to be in Love.” It hurt, it really did hurt.

A decade of heartbreak under my belt and love emerged more real
 “Town with Pity,” “Big Girls Don’t Cry,” and “She’s a Rebel” replaced “Love Me Tender” and “Cry, Cry Baby!”

The Beach Boys, the Beatles, and Vietnam changed the Pollyanna me, waking now to “Sounds of Silence”; I, too, believed
 we were on “The Eve of Destruction.”
 I turned to the newest prophets: Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and the Byrds.
 One night, in 1971, I woke up to “American Pie.” I remember those words today—
 an anthem of my life:

“The day the music died,” he sang, but it never really died for me.
 I moved on to disco and dancing and Saturday Night Fever.
 Jazz-smooth or not, then Blues (of many colors)
 These nights sound machine waves and rainstorms are now the backdrop for the music in my memories.

Mind-Body

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Sheila Varian, recently deceased, was one of the
 greatest horsewomen and Arabian breeders in America. On
 her Facebook page, someone described training a horse
 with her bloodlines as “only riding the hair.” I had never
 heard that expression, but I immediately knew it meant a
 horse so sensitive only the lightest touch was needed.

My first horse was responsive and willing. I raised
 him from a colt and trained him myself. I thought all
 horses were like him. When I bought my first Arabian
 mare, Cricket, she was more intelligent, not quite as
 athletic, yet responsive. If I put my seat down firmly in the
 saddle and flicked my wrist ever so slightly, she stopped.
 A small shift of my body left or right and she turned.

Holly, my daughter, was a natural rider, but she didn’t
 love it and she quit riding after junior high. Once I let her
 ride Cricket in a 4-H show. They needed another entry for
 the reining class and asked Holly if she would enter. She
 wanted to try, so I said yes. The judges explained the
 pattern. She rode into the arena and performed the lope,

stop, back, side pass, and figure eights with lead changes.
 For the roll back, she made the tightest circle possible.
 Since we showed only in Western Pleasure, Cricket had
 never been taught the roll back, keeping one back foot
 planted while her body made a 360-degree turn around it.
 Still, she placed second.

With my first two horses, I had such rapport, such
 communication. I didn’t realize those special horses
 usually come along once in a lifetime, and I had two in
 succession. Buck Brannaman, the trainer in the
 documentary *Buck*, said at the end of his film that riding a
 well-trained horse is “one mind, one body.” I know that
 feeling.

Sometimes I dream about my old horses. It takes a few
 minutes of wakefulness before I realize they have long
 been gone, yet I remember the sensation of oneness, and
 riding only the hair.

Seasons

Sally Jean Brudos, Atherton CA
sallyjean@brudos.com

(Editor's Note: This poem contained an error in the June SCN Journal, so we are re-publishing this corrected version)

They say there are no seasons in California.
They think they are right.

Gold seekers traveling westward
Turning fertile farms into concrete cubes
Digging for Silicon Valley gold.

They are wrong.

Like all natives, I feel the seasons in my bones.
The air chills—
Apple harvest, grape crush, golden hills of wheat.
Fall has arrived.

Wind whips branches bare
sending warm blankets of fallen leaves
to coat the cold earth.
Rain and snow blow in from the north sky
Filling lakes and rivers, covering mountains white.
Winter has come.

The air warms—
Trees begin to bud, daffodils show their beauty,
Light rain showers refresh
the fragrance of jasmine and daphnia.
It is Spring.

Long light evenings, a dip in the pool,
Hot dogs, hamburgers, parades,
The sun is warm. A lazy life flows
Into Summer

We don't live by the gold-diggers
calendar. We live by the seasons.

As I Gaze

Maya Lazarus, Caldwell TX
deblazarus@yahoo.com

upon nature's blessings—
a wild blackberry,
blushing Indian paintbrush,
ebony caterpillar, stiff oak leaf,
cagey roadrunner,
tall grass,
and purple spiderwort flowers—
they move me
to a spiritual place,
a soul connection.
I lift my face to the burn
of noontime sun. My eyes closed,
I feel safe and loved.

Sad Songs Played Fast

Sarah Fine, Toronto ON
e-circle 3, e-circle 4

Bluegrass songs play in the Catskill mountain towns.
The trees are so thick they crowd the highway with a
curtain of green. The houses have old rusted pickup trucks
and American flags. The country churches are white and
holy. Purple wildflowers grow in fallow fields where
scarecrows get scarcer as farming fades. The tarmac is
black licorice melting on a back country road.

I breathe in country. I breathe out memories.

We are immersed in bluegrass music. The musicians
wear shades, face west into the sun, and play up a storm of
sound. The day unrolls and I hit a wall of heat and music.

“There's a girl with a hula hoop twirling on the beats,

While we're sweaty and sticky and glued to our seats.”

I like the way people dance to the music, either on the
grass or on the path, with babies or children, and sometimes
by themselves.

At the Songwriters' workshop, I hear talk about a point
of view, a place of mind. The literal of what's happening is
a story song. Or you sing about emotionally-based
vulnerable philosophy stuff.

“It's a spiritual journey. Forgive, figure out your own
stuff, and then write.”

Bluegrass songs are about robbery, murder, trains,
falling in love and breaking up. They call them “sad songs
played fast.” I wonder if some of my poems are really
songs.

It's about putting poetry to melody, being affected by
what's going on in the world, and writing something that
might rattle the audience.

I think about my Metis grandfather, playing the fiddle
by ear, and jigging at dances in rural Manitoba. The
voyageur in my blood should help me write those French
Canadian songs that suit bluegrass so well.

It's cooler now, but I'm feeling damp, having stood too
long under the misting tent. The moon is up and the clouds
are pink. You can see more clearly the beauty of this place,
this farm with mountains all around, where once a year we
gather for the music and the memories.

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl
into the space between the notes and curl
my back to loneliness.”

— Maya Angelou

Simple Pleasures

Mary Jo West, San Clemente CA
mjwestsc@gmail.com

As the radio played
Mom and Dad
danced to a melody
that stirred memories
of their youth.

Like ballroom dancers,
they floated across the living room
in perfect syncopation
swaying and gliding
gracefully with the music.

He waited for the grand finale
to put his cheek
next to hers,
and in slow motion
dipped her
toward the floor
then swept her up
like a feather and
softly pressed his lips against hers.

We children clapped
and cheered with delight.

Song for Two Voices

Shelley Thrasher, Tyler TX
Sthrasher39@gmail.com, <https://shelleythrasher.wordpress.com>

They rarely sang duets.

In his big walnut chair,
he grunted for coffee,
drew winter days of silence
around him like a cloak.

In her kitchen cage,
she twittered with the birds outside
feeding freely on sunflower seeds,

peanut-butter ball
suspended in blue plastic netting.

He made her sing
to hide his quiet—
rebuked her narrow, shaky range.

But on sunny days, arm in arm,
they gazed out the kitchen window,
watched grosbeaks crack big kernels,
titmice and chickadees peck from webbing.

Then they sang in harmony.

Music and Memories

Patricia Hollinger, Westminster MD
woodschrone@gmail.com

Practicing the piano for me was a pleasure,
An accomplishment I will forever treasure.

I would spend hours playing and singing,
Imagining the applause it was bringing.

I performed through my paper dolls,
My father could hear me through the walls.

He wanted to watch me while I performed,
But for me, well, that would have brought
alarm.

I performed at church and school,
Dad thought that was really cool.

For now he was allowed to sit and listen,
I could see his eyes light up and glisten.

Piano playing has brought such relief,
For I play to express both joy and grief.

Music Man

Abby November, San Diego CA

Tattered man dragging the remnants of his life stuffed in a Vons shopping cart
overflowing with old books, yellowed music scores, assorted rags and tools.
All neatly topped with a cobbled together guitar.
Fondly touching the decrepit strings, he plucks a cord or two
humming a tune known only to himself, lost in thoughts of good ole days.
Sixty years of memories contained in a metal wagon cloaked with dust, grease and tied with a shredded bungee
Told me he lives on the street, sleeps at the "Sally,"
code for Salvation Army.
"I used to teach music, I did in Illinois
yes, I did."
Blue eyes twinkling, as if hearing sounds of music resonating in the classroom decades ago, now vanishing as in a mist.
On his way to the "bird park" where music of pigeons replace the once melodic sounds of happier times
He listens to the birds: his eyes closed as if in a concert hall,
Absentmindedly fondling his patchwork guitar. Does this instrument have a genetic memory of its once glorious time?

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.



Year Twenty-Three

Geri Guadagno, Canyon Lake TX
geriguad@yahoo.com

Humming the tune, I borrowed keepsakes
From milestones—
Silvery, paper knight masks from
Your holy grail, your twenty-first,
When you and your friends chose to drink nothing
Stronger than lemonade, and
Swirling streamers and tie-dye napkins from
My mountain peak, my fiftieth,
When my friends and I sipped champagne.
The hodgepodge of vibrant festoons and
Chivalry worked somehow—
Better than the upside down cake I baked
Because you love blackberries.
It was almost syrup in the middle, with
Two candles propped against each other
To keep them from toppling into the center.
Then I sang the song, and everyone joined in,
Even though you rolled your eyes.
I insisted on photos, too.
Someday, they'll help you remember
Vanilla ice cream in the crater of a cake,
Candle wax on a spring-green tablecloth,
Decorations in the bright kitchen, and
Me, singing my heart out—again—
To you,
For you,
Because of you.

Looking In

Mary Jo West
San Clemente CA
mjwestsc@gmail.com

When he glances into the full-length mirror
framed with hammered sheet metal
he sees the image of his father
young and robust
but wrinkled from years of
toiling in the sun.

A welder by trade, his father
could have handcrafted
a work of art like this.

But, he'll never know
what his father
might have accomplished.
He was only ten
when he lost him
to a tragic welding accident.

As the image fades,
it's replaced by the reflection
of a gray haired man
wearing bifocals.

A tear runs down his face.

Reflections Personal Essay Contest Opens Sept. 15

Story Circle Network is seeking entries to its second annual Reflections Personal Essay Contest. **“Finding Common Ground”** is the topic this year.

We each have unique traditions, customs, beliefs, and values, and we are encouraged to embrace those unique qualities. However, upon closer examination, people – especially women – can almost always find common ground with each other, no matter their race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political bent, or upbringing.

In an essay of no more than 1200 words, tell us about an event or time where you encountered a person or group from who you felt very different. Show how finding common ground made it possible to come to some sort of consensus and agree to a workable solution for an issue. What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about community?

There is a \$15 entry fee, and the contest is only open to current members. Deadline is Oct. 15.

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

Awards will include one prize of \$100, one prize of \$50, and one prize of \$25. Winning stories will be published in a special section of the December issue of the Story Circle Network 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 and on-line publications.

For a complete list of rules and how to submit, go to:
<http://www.storycircle.org/Contests/reflections.php>



From the Blogs:

One Woman's Day



by Linda Hoye

Recently Debra Dolan wrote about her recovery and how, despite challenges, writing remains a constant in her life. Learn more, and find out how you can contribute to our One Woman's Day blog, at: <http://onewomansday.wordpress.com/about/>

Never did I imagine this recovery journey would take this long or so much from me. Post-concussion syndrome feels like an immense case of jet-lag: where your thoughts don't always link immediately with your words and where your mind and body feel disconnected from one another and from all around you while you struggle with exhaustion. As time goes on, with little relief, this creates much irritability. Learning how to cope is a continual process and dealing with constant head pain is a full-time job.

My rehab forces me to leave home every day and sometimes I dread the prospect of seeing someone I know and having to listen to more unsolicited advice or saying a polite, "Fine, thank you," to the ubiquitous "How are you?"

It takes a tremendous amount of energy and planning to do anything in public. I return home depleted, often in tears. Although others try to be understanding, even patient, they don't understand what is happening for me. How can I expect anyone to see it? When I look in the mirror I don't see it either. Disabilities have usually been accepted by their visibility yet for those of us who experience an invisible one, we want you to know, "We are not crazy. We are not lazy. We are not avoiding work or social interactions. This is all we can do right now."

I am trying to make peace with my limitations, maintain an optimistic outlook, and to understand my

relationship with pain so I can stop reacting to it. Through self-inquiry and self-understanding, guided by a counselling psychologist, I am examining the unity of my body with my mind. While living with a much lower level capacity, I am learning to pay attention to my personal beliefs and interactions with pain and illness so that I can function more fully.

At my core, I always knew a balanced life would serve me well and was never one to delay or to think about when I am retired, or when I have more time and money, I will do such-and-such or see this-and-that. Make no mistake, I am absolutely saddened for the loss of what I can no longer do with friends, my love relationship, employment, and a vast array of social and intellectual interests, yet I do not sit alone with regret for what I have not done: my life is still tremendously blessed as I seek to understand its new direction.

One aspect of my pre- and post-injury life that has been consistent is my priority to write each day. The words used to come easier and the passages were longer, yet I continue. A frustrating aspect is that my internal life feels so rich with creativity and thought and the external physical reality is that it takes such effort and time to act upon it. A review of my writings, however, informs that there have been small incremental improvements to my quality of life and this gives me hope for the future.

Debra Dolan lives on the west coast of Canada, is a long time (45+ years) private journal writer, and an avid reader of women's memoir. She has been a member of Story Circle Network since 2009.



SCN's "Telling HerStories" blog is written by women writers and teachers who want to share their passion for women's stories. You can visit us here: <https://storycirclesnetwork.wordpress.com/> Our topics include the art, craft, and publication of women's memoir, fiction, biography, poetry, drama, and more. And yes, we *do* accept reprints from your blog!

If you're a Story Circle member (a writer, teacher, coach) who would like to be published at "Telling HerStories," please email herstories@storycircle.org and tell us about yourself. Or you can go here <http://www.storycircle.org/members/frmblogpost.php> to submit a post you have already written. We'd love to hear from you!



StoryCircleBookReviews.org
Review by Lee Ambrose

SCN's Book Reviews

Featured Review

Hug Everyone You Know

by Antoinette Martin
She Writes Press, 2017

Antoinette Martin is a Stage IV breast cancer patient. *Hug Everyone You Know* is her compelling memoir about the importance of community while navigating a life crisis such as cancer. It is also a testament to the importance of mustering courage and not allowing a cancer diagnosis to define one's self. Initially diagnosed in 2007, Martin's cancer battle has spanned more than seven years. In 2014, her cancer returned. At the time of the writing of her memoir, she shared that the cancer has spread to her spine.

Martin always knew that she wanted to write about this experience. That's why she saved all of the e-mails and her hand-written journal throughout the cancer journey. But she found it a very difficult story to write. She credits the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) writers' program, "Visible Ink," with providing her the encouragement she needed to write the book. Visible Ink pairs current cancer patients with former patients who mentor them in writing about their experiences. *Hug Everyone You Know* is the result of that effort for Martin.

Martin refers to her circle of friends, family and colleagues as "My Everyone." Recognizing that the written word has always been her most powerful form of communication, she began to journal her cancer journey and craft e-mails addressed to "My Everyone." She viewed her cancer as a detour that required a community of caring individuals to keep her grounded. Martin wrote her emails to inform, update, encourage and reassure the people who mattered most to her. She did this because she recognized that her cancer diagnosis was not solely about her. It

affected everyone who mattered to her. And she felt that her regular, honest (sometimes gut-wrenching) communications would be mutually supportive.

Some members of her My Everyone had already experienced their own cancer journeys. Others would begin their cancer journey during Martin's treatment. ALL members of her My Everyone would be an important link for her throughout the course of diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer. "I credit the magic of e-mails with saving my sanity," she writes. "Because of e-mailing, I did not have to explain over and over again the latest episode of cancer treatment; instead I was able to send a single note to My Everyone. This saved me from hearing and saying the words out loud."

This memoir reflects the many different voices and loving intentions that were found in the e-mail responses from her My Everyone. These responses were validation to Martin that she was never alone. She credits her My Everyone with helping her learn to find courage through their loving responses. The book is also an honest depiction of the trials of navigating the healthcare community, dealing with side effects of treatment and the challenges of trying to live a 'normal' life despite cancer treatments in progress.

As an oncology nurse of many years and a cancer survivor myself, I found Martin's writing to be a refreshingly real depiction of life as a cancer patient. Her writing also is a testimony to the endurance of the human spirit, the importance of love and community and the need for hope each and every day of the journey.

Antoinette Truglio Martin is a speech therapist and special education teacher by training "but really wants to be a writer when she grows up." She has been a regular columnist in local periodicals and had several essays featured in newsletters and literary reviews. Her children's picture book, *Famous Seaweed Soup* was published in 1993 (Albert Whitman Co.). She is a Stage IV breast cancer survivor who lives in her hometown of Sayville with her husband Matt.

Lee Ambrose recently celebrated her 100th review for SCBR and became a "SuperNova" Star reviewer. Reflecting on this achievement, she wrote:

When I looked over the list of books I've reviewed over these many years, I was given pause at the number of new voices, strong writings, enjoyable hours of reading that are represented there. SCBR is not only great for the promotion of new, emerging

and/or lesser known women authors, it is great for expanding the reading experiences of its reviewers.

It's true. Our SCBR reviewers have the best of all possible worlds: they get to read interesting books and publish their reviews. If you're a reader/writer, you can be a reviewer, too! For details, write to: bookreviews@storycirclebookreviews.org. In the subject line: Becoming a Reviewer.

PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

Our SCN members offer writing-related help in 9 areas: Author; Editors (content, manuscript, copyediting, proofreading); Freelancers; Ghostwriters; Marketing Services; Publishers / Publishing Services; Speakers; Teachers / Coaches / Mentors; Web Services. If you're looking for help, look here first. If you'd like to be featured in our new directory here and online, please go here: www.storycircle.org/frmjoinscn.php

Brief Bios of SCN's Professional Members

Susan Wittig Albert: Author of mysteries, historical fiction, memoir, and nonfiction. She is available for a limited number of speaking engagements. www.SusanAlbert.com
Author, Speaker

Stephanie Barko: Literary Publicist specializing in pre-pub nonfiction & historical fiction adult book shepherding, including platform creation, endorsement & review acquisition, positioning, publishing advice, social media, and radio pitching. Guidance on web & book design, trailer production, list building, and author events. www.stephaniebarko.com **Marketing Services**

B. Lynn Goodwin: Owner Writer Advice and blynngoodwin.com. She's drafting a memoir, has published a self-help book and a YA, and has numerous short pieces online and in print. She's an experienced editor, reviewer, writing coach, interviewer and mentor. www.writeradvice.com **Author, Editor, Teacher**

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**

Mary Jarvis: Librarian, quilter, and author currently living and working in the Panhandle of Texas. Email: mejarvis@suddenlink.net **Author**

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

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**

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. salliemoffitt@yahoo.com **Author, Freelancer**

Krista Nerestant: A psychic/medium, NLP Life Coach, and Qi Healer, she hosts a biweekly podcast, is a board member of Save the Essex, Motivational Speaker and member of Latina Surge, MFONJ, Writers Circle and MWG. Currently she is writing a book titled Survival Mode — Child abuse, traumas and how I healed by tapping into the sixth senses. krista@self-ishlifestyle.com **Author, Speaker, Teacher**

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. kim@kimpearson.me **Author, Ghostwriter**

Amber Starfire: Well published, she offers comprehensive editing services for fiction and nonfiction works. She also provides publishing services, including print and ebook formatting and limited cover design. Amber has developed a series of online classes and coaching techniques to help people deepen their writing practice and make their way toward publishing. amber@writingthroughlife.com.
Author, Editor, Teacher

Judy Watters: Writes memoir and creative non-fiction, and taught high school English for many years. She now devotes her time to writing, the teaching of writing, and helping new authors navigate publishing through her company, Franklin Scribes, publishers. She leads a women's legacy writing group and an authors' critique group. sheermemoirs@gmail.com. **Author, Freelancer, Publisher**

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Real Women Write – They don't wait!

The **deadline has been extended** for submissions to our 16th annual anthology, *Real Women Write: Sharing Our Stories, Sharing Our Lives*. You have a final chance to send us your fiction, nonfiction, or poetry, until **September 15th**. After that you will have to wait another year to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to share your writing.

This members-only publication is one of the great benefits of membership in Story Circle Network. It is always an important and meaningful gathering of the diverse voices we value, and every issue provides thought-provoking insights into women's lives and experiences.

Our latest edition will be **published in print and online in January 2018**. Submission guidelines are on our website under the **"SCN In Print" tab**. (You will need your members-only username and password.) We allow up to three entries per member, on any subject. Selection is limited by space and editorial considerations. Each entry may be up to 1,000 words for prose or 40 lines for poetry.

So be a real writing woman, and a sister to your fellow SCN members, by sharing the words that mean so much to us all. You have things to say, and we want to hear them! Every participant increases the range of writing and adds to the vitality of this beautiful annual collection. We hope to see your work in *Real Women Write* this year!

Shop On Amazon—Support SCN

Did you know that the many programs SCN offers – such as this publication, e-letters, our book review site, our many writing communities both online and in-person, the annual anthology *Real Women Write*, the OWL Project, and so many more – cannot operate solely on the annual dues we all pay?

One EASY way you can contribute is by making the purchases you are already making on Amazon.com through **smile.amazon.com**, and designating Story Circle Network

as the recipient of the charitable contribution. For every eligible purchase you make on AmazonSmile, SCN will receive 0.5% of the purchase price. It doesn't seem like much of a contribution at first, but it adds up.

Just go to smile.amazon.com; the first time you visit you'll be asked to sign in with your Amazon password and then designate your charity. **It's that easy.**

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True Words

We're always looking for stories rich in evocative detail, showing the struggles, challenges, and resolutions of real people living real lives. 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*:

- December, 2017: Lessons Learned (deadline October 15)



Save The Date

July 19-22, 2018

SCN's biannual women's writing conference 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.

Inside and Out: Women's Truths, Women's Stories

A Collection from SCN's Annual Anthologies

We can happily report that this project is on track to become our latest Story Circle Network book! SCN will be publishing a compilation of lifewriting essays drawn from eight years of our annual anthologies, 2009-2016. The project is being readied for publication under the direction of Susan Schoch, who has served as our anthology editor for several years, with the help of Susan Wittig Albert, our founder and president. The book, to be titled *Inside and Out: Women's Truths, Women's Stories*, will be published in both print and e-book formats.

Women experience life on two planes, our private inner lives and the lives we share with the world outside. Our six-

person volunteer editorial board, including the two Susans along with members Pat LaPointe, Mary Jo Doig, Jude Whelley, and Jo Virgil, selected works that powerfully illustrate both of those realities. And our own Sherry Wachter has created an engaging cover that beautifully reflects this duality.

Authors of selections to be included in the published collection have been notified, creating much excitement and prompting plenty of enthusiastic posts on social media. We expect that response to grow once the writers have this wonderful book in their hands, which won't be long. *Inside and Out* will be published later this year!